

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS SHOFTIM

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Preserving the Nusach of Tefillah

שופטים ושטרם תתן לך בכל שערך אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך (טז, יח)

In his introduction to *siman* 68, the *Magen Avraham* brings in the name of the Ari Hakadosh that one should not alter the customs and *nuschaos* of *tefillah*, because in *Shamayim*, there are 12 gates for the acceptance of *tefillah*, and each of the 12 tribes has its own gate that allows entry to the *tefillah* said according to that tribe's custom.

Harav Shlomo of Bobov derived a hint to this from this *passuk*:

The acronym of the last letters of the words "*shoftim veshotrim titen lecha bechal shearecha asher Hashem Elokecha nosein lecha*" are numerically equivalent to 515, which is the same as the value of *tefillah*. From here we learn that just like judges were appointed to rule at the gate of each and every tribe for himself (see *Rashi*, beginning with the words "*Lishvatecha*"), so, too, each tribe needs to preserve its forefathers' customs in *tefillah* so that those prayers should enter the special gate designated for it, and should be willingly accepted Above.

Kovetz Imrei Kodesh (Bobov) V'Eschanan, 5769, p. 17

"Tzedek" Needs to Be Pursued In Order to Fulfill the Obligations

צדק צדק תרדוף (טז, כ)

The *Zohar* (*Tikunei Zohar Chadash* 132 1) explains that the word *tzedakah* hints to four holy things that a person should be busy with and fulfill every day, and they are: 90 (צ) *amens*, 4 (*kedushos*, 100 (ק) *brachos* and 5 (ה) *Chumshei Torah*.

While a person can fulfill his obligation of learning Torah by supporting those who learn Torah, the *brachos*, *amens* and *kedushos* (reciting *kedushah*) must be recited by the person himself. That is what the *passuk* hints to here: "*tzedek tzedek tirdof*" – the three things hinted to in the word *tzedek* are things that you have to be *rodef*, pursue, yourself in order to fulfill them, and not rely on others.

Eizor Eliyahu [by Rav A. Horoshovsky]

Strike One's Heart When Saying Viduy

יד העדים תהיה בו בראשנה (ז, ז)

Am Yisrael has the custom of striking the place over the heart when reciting *Viduy*, as the *Midrash* says (*Koheles* 7:9) that this shows that it is as if we are blaming our heart for dragging us down

to transgress sins.

Harav Chaim Friedburg, the brother of the Maharal of Prague, brought a beautiful reason for this custom: From the words of the *passuk* in *Iyov* (37:7): "*Beyad kol adam yachtom*" it appears that the hand itself is the one that testifies to the sins of a person, and as we also say in the *nusach* of *Unesaneh Tokef*: "*Vechosam yad kol adam bo*." In the *passuk* before us the Torah instructs, "the hand of the witnesses should be on him first." Therefore, one must strike the heart when reciting *Viduy* through the hand, because it is the one that testifies about the sin of a person.

Igeres Hatiyul, Vol. 5, 14

Avoid Foreign Thoughts During Krias Shema

שום תשים עליך מלך...לא תוכל לתת עליך איש נכר" (ז, טו)

A hint to the obligation of *kavanah* in *Krias Shema* can be learned from this *passuk*:

"Judges and Police Officers" In Every Shul

שופטים ושטרם תתן לך בכל שערך אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך (טז, יח)

In his *sefer Ateres Yehoshua* (in this *parashah*, p 104), the Gaavad of Yerushalayim Harav Moshe Aryeh Freund, *zt"l*, wrote:

On the day of the *hakamas matzeivah* for a certain Jew who would always strengthen everyone regarding answering amen in shul, I thought of the words of *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 119b): "One who answers amen with all his might, the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him." It seemed to me to explain the *passuk*, "*shoftim veshotrim titen lecha*" that the *passuk* is warning us that we should appoint in each shul "*shotrim*" whose job it is to supervise and to arouse the nation not to speak, *chalilah*, but to listen to the *chazzan* and answer amen after each *brachah*. With this, the *tzibbur* will merit "*bechal she'arecha*" that the gates of Gan Eden will be opened to them, as *Chazal* promised.

"*Som tasim alecha melech*" – when accepting the Yoke of Heaven, "*lo suchal lases alecha ish nachri*" – your mind should not be busy with foreign thoughts, but instead, focused only on the words coming out of your mouth.

Ari Bamistarim

Ein K'Elokeinu – Laying a Foundation

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך" (יה, יג)

Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, *zt"l*, was asked: Why does the *tefillah* of *Ein K'Elokeinu* begin with this statement, and only afterwards comes the question, "*Mi K'elokeinu*, who is like our G-d?" Wouldn't it make more sense to begin with the question of "who" followed by the answer "There is none like our G-d!"?

He replied: When a person enters a long tunnel, with many twists and turns, if he wants to make sure not to lose his way, he has to tie a rope at the entrance of the cave and to walk while holding onto the rope. So, too, with matters of faith and knowledge, one seeking to research and delve deeper, needs first to establish in his heart and mind, "*Ein K'Elokeinu!*", and when this is firm in his mind, then he can begin to research questions of "*Mi K'Elokeinu?*"

Chochmas Chaim

A Prayer That His Words Be Accepted

ונגש הכהן ודבר אל העם" (כב)

Harav Moshe Forhand, Av Bais Din of Makava, explained:

"*Venigash*" is a language of *tefillah* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 49:8) and from here we can learn that before the Kohein spoke to the nation, he preceded it with a prayer that his words should be accepted.

The sages throughout the generations did the same, as the *Gemara* says (*Beitzah* 38a) that before Rabi Abba spoke to those who came to hear him, he prayed that his words be well received, saying, "*Yehei rava d'eima milsa detiskabel*."

Ohel Moshe

Start With a Tefillah for the Klal

"כפר לעמך ישראל אשר פדית ה' ואל תתן גם נקי בקרב עמך ישראל וכנפר להם הדם" (כא, ח)

The *Alshich* says:

There's a rule in the *halachos* of *tefillah* that "anyone who asks for mercy for his friend and he needs the same thing, he is answered first." (*Bava Kama* 92a). Therefore, when the Kohanim came to ask for the members "of the city close to the dead person" the Torah instructed them to begin first with a general request for Am Yisrael: "*Kaper l'amcha Yisrael asher padisa Hashem v'al titen dam naki bekerev amcha Yisrael*," and only then to ask about the members of the nearby city: "*venikaper lahem hadam*" and through that they are guaranteed that their *tefillos* will be accepted.

DLROW SIHT NI-NEDE NAG FO SETAG

The *tzaddik* Harav Pinchas of Koritz (passed away 10 Elul 5551) once related to someone close to him that he had merited to see one of the *tzaddikim* while he was still sitting in Gan Eden. When one of his listeners asked, 'And isn't Rabbeinu here with us?' Rav Pinchas replied, "*Chazal* said (*Shabbos* 119b) 'Anyone who answers amen with all his might the gates of Gan Eden are open to him.' *Chazal* did not exaggerate and their intention is clear, that anyone who replies amen with all his might, as they established, merits that the Gates of Gan Eden are open to him and he can look inside. But regretfully, not everyone merits this."

(Shomrei Emunim, Pischu Shearim, ch. 2)

Replying Amen Opens Gates



Ashrei Yoshvei Veisecha

Three times a day we merit to praise and glorify Hashem in this wondrous passage that we call "Ashrei" in the name of its first word. Its *pesukim* are arranged in the order of the *aleph beis*, and they each speak about the greatness of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and His personal Hashgachah on each detail in Creation.

In *sefer Tehillim* (145) this passage begins with the *passuk* "Tehillah L'David" and concludes with the *passuk* "Tehillas Hashem Yedaber Pi", but the ones who arranged the davening established that we insert the *pesukim* "Ashrei Yoshvei" and "Ashrei Ha'am" in order to remind us that the primary reason that a person comes to shul is not to ask for his needs, but to praise and glorify his Creator, because that is the only thing that can bring pleasure and happiness to a person (*Tur, Orach Chaim*, 51, and see *Perishah, ibid* 9). Likewise, they established that we conclude *Ashrei* with "v'anachnu nevarech Kah" in order to conclude with the word "Halleukah" like the other *Pesukei Dezimrah*, as well as with a *tefillah* for the future, that in the merit of saying "Tehillah L'David" in this world, we should merit to praise our Creator in the World to Come as well. (*Sefer Hamanig*)

The Mashgiach, Harav Yeruchem Halevi of Mir testified that each time he accompanied his friends from Kelm to the room of the Alter, *zt"l*, they were surprised to see him dancing by himself in great euphoria. When the Alter noticed their surprise, he said to them: "Why are you surprised? Is it not worthy and proper for every Jew who merits to praise his Creator to recognize His greatness by reciting *Ashrei* with *kavanah*?" (*Tefillas Chana*)

Guaranteed to Enter the World to Come

As mentioned, this *mizmor* is recited three times every day. The source of this custom is the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 4b): "Rabi Elazar said, Rabi Avina said: Anyone who says *Tehillah L'David* three times each day is guaranteed that he will merit *Olam Haba*." Indeed, we should note the words of the *Rada"k* (*Tehillim* 145:1): "One who delves into this *mizmor* sees in it the wonders of the Creator and His judgments of His creations... and they didn't say (that he is guaranteed that he will merit *Olam Haba*) for just saying it with his mouth, but rather with his mouth, his heart and his tongue." Thus the *Magen Avraham* rules (*Orach Chaim* 1:7) in the name of *Rabbeinu Bechayei*, that in order to merit the *segulos* of the *mizmor*, it's not enough to just recite it, but one must concentrate and understand the explanation of the words, in order that through them, a person should come to recognize the miracles of Hashem.

Why In Order of Aleph-Beis

One who peruses this *mizmor* will see that its *pesukim* are arranged according to the *aleph beis*. By way of *pshat*, it is explained that every *mizmor* that David Hamelech wanted Klal Yisrael to know fluently, he arranged in order of *aleph beis*. (*Tikkun Tefillah*)

But many of the commentaries explain that the order of the *aleph beis* in the *mizmor* of *Tehillah L'David* corresponds to the Torah that was given in 22 letters, and the *Pnei Yehoshua* explains (*Brachos* 4b) that therefore, it is promised that those who recite it each day three times with full *kavanah* will merit *Olam Haba*. That is because through saying it, a person's *emunah* is strengthened that the universe and all its creations were only created for the Torah and those who study it,

and through that, he will learn how to discern between what is important and what is trivial, and to make his worldly toil secondary and his Torah learning permanent. This is a *Kal V'chomer*: If the Creator provides sustenance to all beings, even though they were not commanded to study Torah, and the purpose of their creation is only to benefit those who study Torah, how much more so the Torah scholars themselves—why should they worry about *pamassah*!?

Harav Yonasan Eibeshutz, *zt"l*, (*Yearos Dvash* Vol. 1, *Drush* 14) explained it differently, according to a parable of a person who was given a meeting with a very important king. When he entered the king's chamber and sought to praise him with all kinds of honorifics, as was worthy of his stature, he could not come up with words because he understood that any praise that he would say would be insufficient to express even a bit of his respect. Therefore, he took a smooth sheet of paper, and on the bottom of the paper wrote just one description, as if saying to the king: Here is a clean paper before you; if I could I would fill it with every praise in the world.

The same is true with *Tehillah L'David*, in which David Hamelech seeks to glorify and praise the King of the World. But because he recognized the fact that it is impossible to express one's praise to Hashem with honorifics, he arranged the *pesukim* in the order of the *aleph beis*, which all the speech in the world is comprised of, and thus, it is considered as though he said with his mouth all the praises in the world.

Open Your Hand and Satiat

The *Tur* (51) writes: "One should concentrate more on the *passuk* of *Poseach es yadecha*, because the main reason why it was established to say it every day (the *mizmor* of *Tehillah L'David*) is for this *passuk* in which the person mentions the praise of Hashem that He supervises His creations and sustains them." Regarding the *halachah*, the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*ibid* 7) that if he did not have *kavanah* in this *passuk*, he needs to go back and repeat it.

The Reason It Is Called Sefer Tehillim

In conclusion, we will cite the *sefer Mitaam Hamelech* (*siman* 670): A big secret was revealed in a dream many generations ago to one of the leading *mekubalim* who lived in Kafr Kabul near Tzefas: David Hamelech included all of the content of *Sefer Tehillim* in the *mizmor* of *Tehillah L'David*. It has (from the beginning of *Aromimecha*) one hundred and fifty words, equal to the number of chapters of *Tehillim*. Each word has a hint to the intended *kavanos* of one chapter. It also has 638 letters, with the numerical value of "Avraham Yitzchak Yaakov" and because David was considered the "fourth leg" of the chariot with Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov. That is why the *mizmor* is preceded by the *pesukim* of *Ashrei Yoshvei* until *SheHashem Elokav*, as together they have fourteen words, which is the numerical value of David, in order to join him to the three Avos.

He further explained that that is why David Hamelech's *sefer* is called *Tehillim* and not *Mizmorim* or *Shirim*, even though there is only one "Tehillah" by contrast to many *Mizmor* and *Shir*. It is because this *Tehillah* includes all the *Mizmorim* and *Shirim*, as explained above. These words are truly wondrous for those who delve into them.

Surprising Ride in the Middle of the Night

The words of the wisest of men, Shlomo Hamelech (*Koheles* 8:5) "*Shomer mitzvah lo yeida davar ra*" is especially underscored in this story, from its moving beginning to its surprising end. This story was shared by the Maggid Harav Goel Elkarif, *shlita*, who was a firsthand witness:

It was late in the night. The last guests at the wedding held in the hall in the Netivot industrial center had already gone home. The last to leave were a few close family members.

The driver started the car and set out on the darkened roads out of Netivot towards the center of Israel... Suddenly, one of the passengers pointed out a person standing on the side of the road and vigorously gesturing to them. The driver slowed down, and when he saw that the man looked like a *ben Torah*, he stopped the car at once.

"Where are you going?" the young man asked. When he heard "Bnei Brak" he sighed with relief and his face lit up. "Thank you! Thank you! I'm sure you have been sent here directly from Above!" he exclaimed as he settled down in the car.

At first, the guest was quiet, but as they drove along, the driver could not contain his curiosity and wondered aloud to the young man: "I must understand what brings a young man like you to stand so late in the middle of the deserted road seeking something almost illogical—a ride straight to Bnei Brak?"

The guest, a bit taken aback by the directness of the question, seemed to be deliberating whether to answer or not. After a few moments of thought he replied quietly:

"I'll tell you: For many years, I have been strict to daven three *tefillos* a day with *minyán*. With *siyata diShmaya*, throughout the years, I have been able to meet my commitment without missing a single *tefillah*, even when I encountered all kinds of obstacles.

"Regretfully, today I was unexpectedly delayed for the last *minyán* of *Maariv*. I ran to the shul, but from afar I could hear the "Barchu" at the end of the *tefillah*.

"Because I knew that in Netivot—where I live—I would not be able to find another *minyán* at that late hour, I was faced with a difficult dilemma: should I give up on my *kabbalah* or make the effort to fulfill it? I almost gave in to my laziness, but in the end I decided that if there's no *minyán* in Netivot, I will travel to Bnei Brak, where I will surely find a *minyán*. But there was no more public transportation at that hour, and getting a ride seemed hopeless. Still, I decided to try, so that I would know that I had fulfilled my obligation of making an effort...

"I walked a great distance from my house towards the *simchah* hall in the industrial area, where I assumed I had a tiny chance to find what I was looking for. Indeed, as I was walking I noticed your car and decided to try to stop. I realized that you were sent from Heaven to help me fulfill my commitment."

These words, uttered so matter-of-factly, stunned the driver and his passengers into silence. Then one of them asked: "What will you do on the way home? How will you get back to Netivot at this hour?"

"That's not my job to worry about," the young man replied almost naively. "I'm sure that Whoever helped me till now will not abandon me, and in any case, if I don't find a way to get home tonight, I'll go to Yeshivas Ponevezh where I'll learn till morning. I'll daven at *neitz* and take the first bus back to Netivot."

The trip passed quickly and the car soon arrived in Bnei Brak. The driver decided to complete the *mitzvah* and take the young man to the Itzkowitz shul. Before he got out of the car, the driver took out a pen and paper from his pocket and asked. "Please give me your phone number. I'd like to call you tomorrow to find out how you spent the rest of the night."

The two parted with a handshake, and the next morning, the driver couldn't restrain himself and called the young man, and heard the remarkable end to the story:

"When I finished *Maariv*, I had already come to terms with the fact that I'd spend the rest of the night in Ponevezh. Suddenly, I heard someone there calling to his friend: 'Yossi, maybe stop chatting already... Did you forget we still have to get to Netivot tonight?!'

"I was shocked at the intensity of the *Hashgachah* that was so clearly revealed to me. I hurried to ask the pair if they were really headed to Netivot, and if I could join them. They agreed happily. We set out, and needless to say, I spent the rest of the night at home.

"I learned that Hashem does not abandon His Chassidim and those who obey His will. Such a miracle could only be orchestrated by the Creator and King of Kings, Who seeks only the best for His creations.