

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS VAYEILECH

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Power of Tefillah Not Only For a Tzaddik

לא אוכל עוד לצאת ולבוא...ה' אלקיך הוא עבר לפניך" (לא, ב-ג)
The Ma'or Vashemesh explains Moshe Rabbeinu's words to Bnei Yisrael through a beautiful parable brought in the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 78 7) about the lion, the king of the animals, who was angry at his subjects, the animals of the forest, and wanted to punish them. The animals did not know what to do, so they decided to call the wise fox, hoping that he could slyly and wisely appease the king. To their relief, the fox agreed and said that he had three hundred wonderful parables that had the power to appease the king, but asked that they wait three days until he prepared himself to stand before the king.

But to the animals' disappointment, after a day, the fox regretfully informed them that he had forgotten one hundred parables. But the animals pinned their hopes on the two hundred remaining parables. Then the next day, the fox told them with a scowl that he'd forgotten another one hundred parables. This time, as well, the animals hoped the one hundred remaining parables would do the job. But as they went to appease the lion, the fox informed them that he remembered just one parable, and they would have to approach the king themselves and appease him.

This is what Moshe told Bnei Yisrael: If until now you were sure that I would pray every time a trouble arose, and would save you, today you see clearly that I will no longer be able to go in and out before you as I used to. But do not fear; strengthen yourselves and know that "Hashem Elokecha is passing before you," and He is always there to listen to you. Repent and improve your deeds, and then He will accept your tefillos willingly and with love.

Weakness – The Root of Failure

"כי ה' אלקיך הוא ההלך עמך לא ירפך ולא יעזבך לא תירא ולא תחת" (לא, ו)

"He will not allow you to grow weak so that you will not let go of Him." (Rashi)

The Minchas Elazar of Munkatch offers a beautiful explanation of this Rashi:

Even according to scientists, despair and laxity are the root cause of failure. This fact is apparent when a person falls ill. If the doctor gives up, this causes the patient to also despair, and slowly, his body grows weaker and the doctors' predictions come true. But if the patient pays no attention to what the doctor is saying, and

instead, he intensifies his tefillah, emunah and bitachon in Hashem, in a lot of cases, he recovers. That is the brachah that Hashem gave Moshe in this passuk: Because Hashem will not put a weakness, a laxity, in your heart, then you will become strong in tefillah and trust in Him, and then Hashem will not abandon you.

Imrei Dvash p. 149

The Yeshuah Depends on Tefillah

By way of remez, Harav Mordechai Hakohen of Tzefas, author of Sifsei Cohen al HaTorah, writes:

If we look at the passuk we can see that it says the word "lo" twice, and the word "velo" twice. These four words are numerically equivalent to "kol", voice. The passuk is thus alluding that in the merit of the sound of tefillah in shuls and batei medrash, Am Yisrael is guaranteed that the words of the passuk "lo yarpecha velo yaazveka, lo sira velo seichas" will be fulfilled.

Amen During Aseres Yemei Teshuvah

Tishrei is numerically equivalent to 910, which is ten times the value of amen, to allude that in Aseres Yemei Teshuvah a person must be more scrupulous about answering amen, which has many segulos to help him get through the judgment.

Bat Ayin, Parashas Ki Savo, and see Chemdas Yamim, Yom Kippur 3 75

Harav Shlomo Leib of Stutchin explains in his sefer Hachanas Lev L'tefillah (in this parashah) the passuk that we recite in Pesukei Dezimrah (Tehillim 148:14): "Vayarem keren l'amo tehillah lechol chassidav liBnei Yisrael am kerovo." The acronym of "vayarem keren l'amo" is "kol", to teach us that in the merit of the kol tefillah, the might of Am Yisrael rises and they prevail over their enemies.

When May One Bring Children to Shul?

"הקהל את העם האנשים והטף" (לא, יב)

"Why did the children come? To give a reward to those who bring them." (Rashi)

Harav Yosef Greenwald of Pupa explained that Rashi means to ask: "And why did the children come?" Why did the passuk have to state that they

should bring the children? If the men and women were commanded to come, certainly the children would not remain home alone, would they?

That is why Rashi says "to give a reward to those who bring them." The passuk is teaching us that the children may only be brought to shul if those who bring them will be rewarded, meaning that they want to teach them to answer amen or other holy things. But if their presence disturbs other people, it is better to leave them at home; if they disturb the parents will certainly not get a reward for bringing them. [See the sharp words of the Shelah HaKadosh (Mishnah Berurah 98 3) who criticizes those who bring very small children to shul, which disturbs and mixes up everyone else.]

Vayeichi Yosef, Shabbos Shuvah

A hint to this can be found in that the world "taff," with the cheshbon of the letters (89 plus the two letters of the word) numerically equivalent to 91, or amen.

Betzel Yehudah

For Your Salvation I Hoped, Hashem

"הן קרבו ימין למות" (לא, יד)

The acronym of "karvu yamecha lamus" is the same as the acronym of "liyeshuascha kivisi Hashem." This alludes to the words of Chazal (Brachos 10a) about Chizkiyahu Hamelech, that even when the Navi said to him (Melachim II, 20:1) "instruct your home that you will die and you will not live" he did not despair and declared that "even if a sharpened sword rests on the neck of a person he should not withhold himself from mercy." Through his faith and bitachon in Hashem, he merited that the trouble passed.

Yalkut Me'am Loez

Until They Reach Integrity

"יידבר משה באזני כל קהל ישראל את דברי השירה הזאת עד תמם" (לא, ל)

Harav Shlomo Kluger asks: why does the Torah note that Moshe said "Es divrei hashirah hazos ad tumam". Is it possible that the master of all Neviim would miss even one iota of the Words of Hashem?

He explained: "Ad tumam," is from the root of "tamim" and the Torah comes to teach us that Moshe did not stop speaking to Yisrael until the words penetrated their hearts and effected that they repent and become completely "tamim" with Hashem.



As Yom Kippur approaches, and we all plead and ask to be sealed in the sefer of tzaddikim for a good life, let us accept upon ourselves to be careful about answering amen, through whose power Am Yisrael is called "tzaddikim"

as Rabbeinu Bechayei says in his sefer Kad Hakemach. (Emunah):

"For this middah of answering amen am Yisrael were called tzaddikim, as it says (Yeshaya 22) 'Pischu shearim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.'"

אבינו מלכנו
חתמנו בספר
חיים טובים
אמן

..... Amen – fill your hands with merits

Tefillas Kol Nidrei

It is a widespread custom throughout Am Yisrael to gather in shul as the sun sets on Erev Yom Kippur, and the *shaliach tzibbur* begins the prayers of Yom Kippur with *Kol Nidrei*, recited with awe and fear. He sings an ancient, haunting tune and is joined by the *tzibbur*, first in a whisper and then slowly louder.

This *tefillah*, despite seeming to be a purely halachic act of annulling one's vows, evokes great emotion among the worshippers, and many are even moved to tears. The reason for this, *tzaddikim* say, is that because on Yom Kippur the Satan has no permission to speak negatively about Am Yisrael. Hence, as the day sets in, he tries forcefully to prosecute as much as he can until Yom Kippur actually begins. Even though we cannot see this, our soul senses it, and that is why we are aroused to tears. (*Elef Hamagen*, 619 19 in the name of the Baal Shem Tov).

The Sar Shalom of Belz, *zy"l*, would recite *Kol Nidrei* with tremendous emotion and copious weeping, and even a heart of stone would be awakened to *teshuvah* when hearing him daven. He would take the opportunity to speak before his *kehillah* and explain the words of the *Mishnah*: "A person must say three things in his home on Erev Shabbos when darkness falls: *isartem, iravtem hadliku es haner.*"

"*Isartem* – Aseres Yemei Teshuvah have passed; *iravtem* – Erev Yom Hakadosh has passed, *hadliku es haner*, the candles of Yom Kippur have already been lit in shul, and still, we have not repented. How much longer will we wait?!"

When hearing his piercing words, the whole crowd would be aroused to *teshuvah* and they uttered the words of *Viduy*: "*Ana Hashem chatasi*" (*Zechus Avos*, Yom Kippur, p. 70)

Source of the Custom

The source of the custom of reciting *Kol Nidrei* is very ancient. Some Rishonim even attributed it to the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah (*Shitah Mekubetzes Nedarim* 23b), and the Zohar also mentions this custom (Vol. II, 116 a, and detailed further in Vol. III 255 1).

In the Gra's commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim* 619 2) he brings proofs from a *passuk* in the Torah, *Parashas Nedarim (Bamidbar* 30:6): "*VeHashem Yislach Lah*", and the day of *selichah*, forgiveness, is Yom Kippur; we learn from here that vows should be annulled on this day.

Nusach of Kol Nidrei

Most of the *nusach* we have today first appeared in the *siddur* of Rav Amram Gaon, and the *Rosh (Yoma* 8:28) and the *Tor* (619) in the name of Rav Saadya Gaon. However,

many of the Rishonim (see *ibid*) questioned the ancient wording that speaks only of past vows, and their main claim was how can one annul avow without *charatah*, regret, and three *dayanim*, especially as it may cause people to taking the act of making vows and oaths lightly.

Therefore, Rav Meir of Ramerupt, the son-in-law of Rashi, composed the *nusach* which focuses primarily on future vows and not on past ones. His words were disseminated by his son, Rabbeinu Tam, the *Baal Tosafos*, who wrote in his *Sefer Hayashar (Chiddushim* 100) that one should say "From this Yom Kippur until next Yom Kippur."

Reciting It Three Times

We recite the *tefillah* three times, as in every *hataras nedarim* where the one asking for a *heter* is told "*mutar lach*" three times. The three times are reciting quietly at first and then grow louder with each time. The reason for this is that we want to awaken the hearing of the *tzibbur*, so that with each time, they will all have *kavanah* to annul their vows in the end. (*Likutei Pardes, Rashi*, 12)

The *Machzor Vitri* explains that we say this as an opening for Yom Kippur because a person should enter the holy day the way he enters the king's chambers, at first hesitantly and quietly, and then with more confidence, and then with absolute surety that the king will hear his plea.

Al Daas Hamakom V'Al Daas Hakahal

Before reciting *Kol Nidrei* we declare: "*Al daas HaMakom v'al daas kakahal anu matirin lehisparallel im ha'avaryanim.*" This custom was established by the Maharam of Ruttenberg (*Shu"t*, Vol. I 653, and see *Mordechai Yoma* 8:725) according to the Gemara (*Krisos* 6a): "Any fast day that does not have in it some sinners in Yisrael is not a fast."

Some write that this declaration was first recited during the Spanish exile, when many Jews had to act like non-Jews for fear of the Inquisition. These Jews would gather with *mesirus nefesh* on *chagim* in dark cellars in order to preserve the glowing embers of their Jewish identities. This was especially the case on Yom Kippur, when young and old gathered in underground shuls, and they would begin the *tefillas* of Yom Kippur with announcing "*Al Daas HaMakom...*" in order to declare openly that their behavior in day to day life was only an external act, and deep inside they remain loyal to their Judaism. (*Chaim Sheyesh Bahem, Moadei Hashanah Yom Hakippurim*)

A Surprising Yeshuah After 28 Years

Kol Nidrei

Harav Tzvi Binyamin Auerbach, *zt"l*, author of *Nachal Eshkol*, was one of the greatest rabbanim of his time. He was known to all by the acronym of his name, Harav Hatzav"l, and that's how he signed his *sefarim*.

The Rav was a stalwart fighter for battles to preserve Yiddishkeit, most notably against the Reform movement, which tried with all its might to undermine Jewish tradition and replace it with the progressiveness and academia that was spreading rapidly in those times. They stopped at nothing to achieve their goals, and anyone who tried to come out against them was cruelly condemned. But that did not deter Harav Hatzav"l, who fought them fearlessly, even though he sometimes paid a steep price for doing so.

One example of this war was the efforts by the Reform to annul the *tefillah* of *Kol Nidrei*. In the community of Halberstadt, where the Rav served, it was customary that during the recital of *Kol Nidrei*, the Rav of the *kehillah* stood on one side of the *chazzan* and the elderly *dayan* Rav Wolf stood on the other side. That year, the *dayan* passed away, and the Rav decided that the *dayan* who succeeded him, Rav Ephraim, would stand in his place. But before he could do so, the Reformers took advantage of the opportunity and placed one of their leaders there.

Having no choice, the Rav decided to bring a case against the Reformers to the government, with the claim of *hasagas gvul*, overstepping boundaries. The Rav did not know that the Reformers had already prepared for this a long time ahead, and filed a countersuit to annul the custom of *Kol Nidrei*, claiming that with the power of its recital, Jews annulled all their promises and shrugged off everything they said, including statements regarding the authorities.

As expected, the authorities ruled that the custom must be annulled immediately, but the Rav had no intentions of obeying the ruling. He announced firmly that *Kol Nidrei* would be conducted that year as normal, and because the *shaliach tzibbur* was afraid of violating a government order, he added that he would daven for the *amud*.

After Yom Kippur, the Rav was summoned before the authorities, who wanted to punish him for violating the order. But with *siyata diShmaya*, he was able, in his great wisdom, to explain to them and persuade them how ridiculous the claims of the Reformers were. Ultimately, the order was annulled. The Rav recorded the story in his *sefer Toras Hakanaas*, so that everyone should see that one must never be deterred from standing up for principles of Yiddishkeit.

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The children of the Rav Hatzav"l all knew this story well, which clearly illustrated the holiness of the custom of *Kol Nidrei* and how deep rooted it is in the Jewish soul. Then the following story took place:

A terrible tragedy occurred in the home of one of the prominent families of Halberstadt. As a result, the young child of the family was ensnared by the local monastery. When this became known to his parents, it was a few years later, and he had already been inculcated with their teachings.

The parents tried to raise a hue and cry and even enlisted the aid of the best *shtadlanim* and community figures. But the Christians firmly insisted on keeping the child, claiming he was a born and bred Christian.

As the years passed, the child became more entrenched in his new home, and the people in the monastery did everything possible to tempt him and make him love the place. Slowly, he forgot the little bit he had known

from his past, and decided that he was part and parcel of the Christian church.

Despite the seemingly desperate situation, the child's parents did not desist in their efforts to bring their child back to his religion. One day, a new judge was appointed in their city; he was known to be friendly to the Jews and the parents hurried to appeal to him to do something to help save their son. The judge listened and summoned the representatives of the monastery to verify the story. But they claimed vehemently that the parents were lying and that the child was a born Christian.

Having trouble ruling in favor of one of the sides, the judge decided to give the parents one last chance to prove their position: "I'm ready to allow you to enter the monastery for five minutes," the judge said to the parents. "In these five minutes, you may do anything you can to get the child to want to return to you immediately. If you will be unable to do so, that is a sign that the church is right and the child will remain with them forever."

The parents left the judge vacillating between hope and worry. They had no idea how they could succeed, in five minutes, to kindle the Jewish spark in their son's heart. There was no doubt that over the years, the evil people had sullied his soul and made him forget his past.

Distraught, they decided to ask the Rav Hatzav"l who served as rav in that city. He listened carefully and after some thought, said to them: "Dear parents, strengthen your *emunah* that your *yeshuah* is at hand. Set the date for the meeting and I will come with you, and *b'ezras Hashem* I will succeed in persuading your son in the set amount of time to return to his roots."

When the day came, the parents knocked at the Rav's door. They were surprised when he opened up wearing a snowy white *kittel* and *yarmulke*, as though it was Yom Kippur, and wrapped in his *tallis*. Thus dressed, he set out with the parents for the monastery.

There was heavy silence in the room when the representatives of the monastery entered with a youth who looked very much like a Christian. The parents stood in shock, unable to utter a sound, but the Rav recovered right away. He pulled his *tallis* over his head, stood near the wall, and in a quiet, yet clear voice, began the haunting *niggun*: "*Aahhh...aaahhhaaaii...Kol Nidrei...*"

The boy stood on the side, looking interested. The hands on the clock ticked, and the parents' heart froze, but the Rav continued with his eyes closed, and his voice growing louder: "*Vecharamei vekonamei vekinuyei...d'indarna...ahhh...ahhaaa...*" until he finished.

Three minutes had passed, and when the Rav began the song again, the parents' patience was nearly at a breaking point. They did not know what he was trying to do. But then they noticed a small tear dropping from the eyes of the boy, and then another and another... Suddenly, as though from a dream, the boy leaped from his place and fell into the arms of his parents crying, "Take me out of here! I don't want to stay here for another minute! I want to go back to shul, where I remember that holy song from! I miss you all so much!"

Words cannot describe the joy of the local community who heard that the lost son had returned. Again they all saw how powerful this custom is, that it can return lost souls from the depths of the abyss, and how crucial their Rav's work was in preserving every custom to the finest detail.

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