

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

CHAYEI SARAH

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Everything Hashem Does Is For the Best

"ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל" (כד, א)

Harav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, the Rav of Krakow, explained:

People are used to complaining endlessly about problems they deal with in their day to day lives. Only when they get old, and look back at what they experienced in their younger years, do they realize that everything was for the best.

This is what this passuk is alluding to: "And Avraham was old, on in years," only when a person reaches old age, then he realizes "and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything," – that every event of the past was for the best.

Harav Yosef Nechemiah also explains the last brachah of Sheva Brachos based on this concept: "Kol mitzhalos chassanim michupasam" – we daven that already from their chuppah, from their early steps in life, the couple should realize the good that envelops them constantly, and they should not be among those who feel the pain and aggravation in their youth and only towards their old age do they realize that everything was for the best.

Drashos Rabbeinu Yosef Nechemiah, p. 403

Gratitude for the "Small" Successes

"ויקד האישי וישתחו לה" (כד, כ)

Harav Yehoshua Heschel Brim, Rosh Yeshivah Tiferes Yisrael Ruzhin, learns a wonderful lesson from Eliezer's announcement:

Sometimes a person aims to reach a certain goal and in order to get there he needs to successfully overcome several hurdles. But it is only after he is successful in reaching his goal does he thank Hashem wholeheartedly for it. From Eliezer, Avraham's servant, we learn that a person should not forget to thank Hashem for the "small" successes along the way, even before the entire wish is fulfilled.

Eliezer could have easily ignored the "small" achievement—encountering Rivka—because because he did not yet know if she would agree to go with him to Yitzchak. Nevertheless, he paused to thank Hashem for this success.

Marbeh Chaim, Vol. 1, p. 123

Tefillah With Kavanah Is Accepted

"אני טרם אכלה לדבר אל לבי" (כד, מה)

Harav Zalman Sorotzkin explained:

Eliezer said to Besuel and Lavan: Because I davened "el libi" – with kavanah in my heart, I am convinced that my meeting Rivka at the well was

Segulah for a Zivug Hagun

"הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך ולקחת אשה לבני משם" (כד, ד)

The acronym of "hu yishlach malacho lefanecha velakachta" amounts numerically to 91, or amen, and we learn from here that when one is careful to say amen, it is a segulah to merit a worthy spouse. (Even more: zivug hagun is numerically equivalent to amen.)

Rav Avraham Kessler, author of *Notrei Amen, Kuntress MeiHashem Yatzta Hadavar*, p. 321

In addition: In Sefer Tehillim (121:1) it says "Esa einai el heharim me'ayin yavo ezri" – the final letter of each of the words heharim me'ayin yavo –form amen. In the merit of amen, yavo ezri, may my ezer kenegdo, the woman, come.

Simchah Belibi, Tehillim 121:1

the result of that tefillah and that Rivka is destined to be the wife of my master Yitzchak. This is because it is well known that tefillah recited with kavanah is certain to be answered.

Oznayim LaTorah

Time of Tefillos Are Hinted to in the Avos' Names

Chazal say (Brachos 26b) that the tefillos were established by the Avos; Avraham established Shacharis, Yitzchak established Minchah and Yaakov established Arvis.

The Avudraham (Tikkun Hatefillos V'inyaneihem) writes: the second letter of the name of each of the Avos alludes to the time of the tefillah he established: Avraham, beis, is for boker, morning; Yitzchak, tzaddik, for tzaharayim, lunchtime; and Yaakov, ayin, is for erev, evening.

Based on this, Harav Shaul Moshe Silberman of Viershov writes in the name of the Chiddushei Hari"m, that tefillas vasikin was established by Lot, because the second letter in his name is vav, represents vasikin. It is possible that was the merit that saved him, as it says (ibid 19:23): "Hashemesh

yatza al ha'aretz veLot ba Tzoarah." (Hahagos Hagrama"sh at the beginning of the sefer Pardes Yosef, Vol. II)

Breisa D'Rabi Yishmael

"ויקברו אתו יצחק וישמעאל בניו" (כה, ט)

When the Rebbe, Rav Heschel of Krakow came of marriageable age, he was spoken for in the home of a famed gvir, a wealthy man. In order to find out what he was like, the gvir met with him at a small inn on the wayside. As there were no sifrei kodesh there aside from a Siddur, the gvir pointed to the Breisa D'Rabi Yishmael, and asked the sharp young man, "Do you have a chiddush to say on this Breisa?"

Reb Heschel thought for a moment and immediately began to share a thought: "I have three questions on this Breisa: the first – how is it possible that the holy Tanna was named for a wicked man like Yishmael? The second – why does it begin with the words 'Rabi Yishmael omer' –when omer follows the name of the Tanna it implies as though someone stated an opinion first and Rabi Yishmael is coming to differ. Third, I am wondering about how the middos of klal uprat and prat uklal can be applied. How is it possible to derive halachah from the fact that the Torah put the klal before the prat, or the opposite when we know that there is a rule (Pesachim 6b) that 'Ein mukdam ume'uchar baTorah, there is no order of time in the Torah'?

"In Maseches Bava Basra (16b), the sages proved from this passuk, in which it says Yitzchak before Yishmael, that at the end of his days, Yishmael repented, because if not, how did he allow his younger brother to precede him at their father's funeral? But we have to say that after he repented, he recognized the greatness of Yitzchak's Torah knowledge and honored him with walking ahead. But there is then another question here: How can we learn this from the order of the names in the passuk if "ein mukdam ume'uchar baTorah?" So we must drive from here that this rule of ein mukdam ume'uchar only applies when it is two different subjects or parashiyyos, but when it is in the same passuk on the same matter, the Torah is written in chronological order.

"This Gemara answers all three of these questions: One can be given the name Yishmael because he repented, and we can apply the middah here of klal uprat because within the same subject there is no application of ein mukdam ume'uchar baTorah. Furthermore, the words Rabi Yishmael omer indicate that we can learn all this from the words "Rabi Yishmael omer" and not that he is saying it to dispute a prior opinion.

Chanukas HaTorah, Kuntress Acharon, at end of sefer

רפאנו ה' ונרפא

אמירת ברכת 'אשר יצר' בכוונה ומתוך הכתב נודעה כסגולה נפלאה לישועה ולרפואה, ובספר 'סדר היום' (כוונת הברכות) הובא כי סגולה זו מועילה אף לבריאים שלא יחלו חלילה. ואם כה גדולה היא סגולת הברכה, על אחת כמה וכמה גדולה סגולת עניית אמן אחריה, שהרי אמרו חכמים (ברכות נג א): "גדול העונה אמן יותר מן המברך".

יהוה יקר!

בבואך לברך 'אשר יצר' הקפד תמיד שמישהו יענה אחריך אמן, כך תזכה ותזכה עמך אחרים, ותמשוך עליך ישועה, רפואה והצלחה לאורך ימים ושנים. אמן.

בני אמונים. אמן ענית לישועות זכית.



The Great Segulos of the Brachah of Asher Yatzar

Several times each day we merit to recite the brachah of Asher Yatzar, thanking Hashem the miracle that our body's systems are functioning normally. The body is comprised of nekavim nekavim, many different openings, and if even one of them opens too much or gets clogged, we cannot exist and stand before Hashem... It is only because of Hashem's great compassion for us that we can live and stand before Him.

We have therefore decided to pause the series of biur tefillah to offer some insights into the importance of the brachah of Asher Yatzar, its segulah for a refuah and yeshuah. May these words be a merit to heal all the sick people in Klal Yisrael.

The Great Miracle that Occurs Inside Us

When we use the word "ness", miracle, it is generally to marvel at "supernatural" occurrences that take place around us from time to time. But if we take a minute to stop our busy lives and delve into the wondrous processes that take place in our bodies each and every moment, we will realize that the biggest miracle is taking place inside us, not on rare occasions, but at every single moment of our existence. Our bodies are extremely complex networks, and if even one step of the many processes were to go wrong, it could cause untold harm, chaililah.

This applies specifically to the digestive system. A person eats all kinds of food, chews and swallows it, and from there, an 'automatic' system takes over, separating the components of the food into nutrients and waste products, filtering the liquids and converting the different materials into particles that nourish the blood, the bones and the muscles. At the end it filters and processes the waste to prepare it to leave the body. How much chessed we need in order for the vital nutrients to be absorbed in our bodies and not egested, and on the contrary, that not a single particle of waste should infect the body's other systems.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu, in His great compassion, 'mafi laasos' with His wisdom, and watches over each and every person so that chaililah, nothing should happen to his bodily systems.

The Mashgiach Harav Yechezkel Levinstein would often marvel to his listeners: "Pay attention to the fact that every machine, even the simplest one, breaks down from time to time, while the body's systems function for decades on end, 24 hours a day, nonstop, without anything happening to it... What, if not this, was Ivov referring to when he said (19:26): "Umibesari echezeh Eloka, and from my flesh I will witness Hashem" – this miracle is no less than the miracle of Yetzias Mitzrayim!" (Tefillas Chana p. 66)

In the Shu"t Min Hashamayim (34) Reb Yaakov of Marvish, of the Baalei Hatosafos, asks: Does a person need to recite Asher Yatzar each time he needs to carry out his bodily needs, or is it enough to make the brachah once in the morning? He received an answer from Above: "You know that four people need to thank Hashem (in Birchas Hagomel, see Brachos 54b), and a cholel, a sick person is one of them. There is no greater sick person than this, as it says (Yeshayahu 51:14): "Miher tzoeh lehipasach velo yamush."

Harav Yitzchak Silberstein adds: Ever person can learn from this response that the brachah of Asher Yatzar needs to be recited with deep yearning from the soul, with no less kavanah than Hagomel. (Introduction to sefer Birchas Eisan)

Thanking for the Chasdei Hashem

In order for us to be able to delve into the matter and thank Hashem properly for His chessed, Chazal established (Brachos 60b) that we recite the brachah of Asher Yatzar each time we cleanse our bodies, as it is at this time that we see fully the tremendous miracle involved in the proper function of the body, and that is the best time to thank Hashem for it.

The Mashgiach, Harav Yeruchem Halevi Levovitz of the Mir, would compare this to a person who needed to undergo serious surgery on his intestines. Is it not self understood that as soon as the surgery is over he will hasten to send a telegram to his worried acquaintances informing them that the surgery was a success? Similarly, a person would technically need to send several such "telegrams" each and every day, and all we are asked to do is thank Hashem with the right kavanah. (Tefillas Chana, ibid)

A Brachah on the Essence of Life

Harav Shimshon David Pincus said: If we look at the nusach of the brachah we will see that it does not conclude with a brachah on the future, like the brachos of Shemoneh Esrei and others, but rather with a declaration: "it is known before Your Throne that if one of them opens or one of them closes it is impossible to exist and stand before you!"

This is similar to a child who asks his father to buy him a luxury item, like a bike to ride or a game with which to fill his time. His father can reject those requests for whatever reason he may have. But if the child needs a life saving drug, and he screams to his father, 'Father, if you don't help me get the medicine – I will die!' then how can his father ignore his request?!

The same is true here: In every other brachah, like Chonen Hadaas, we cannot say, "Ribbono shel Olam, grant me wisdom for if not I will die!" But with this brachah, after we thank Hashem in detail for the miracle of life, we do not need to ask for it anymore. It is enough to say, "it is clear to You that if one opens... we cannot exist and stand before You," in order to arouse Heavenly Mercy to continue to grant us the gift of life. (Birchas Eisan, p. 47)

Before Your Throne

Harav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, president of Bnei Emunim, highlights a point here: If we peruse the nusach of the brachah we will find a term that we do not use in any other brachah or tefillah: "Galuy veyadua lifnei kisei kevodecha..." We need to wonder: already during the first moments of the day, in the middle of Birchos Hashachar, we testify to the unique connection between us and HaKadosh Baruch Hu, a connection that is manifested through each and every one of our organs that Hashem watches from Above, sitting on His "kisei kevodecha", at any given moment. (See Hagahas Harema Orach Chaim 6 1).

Hence we find that Birchas Hashachar, where we thank Hashem for the good He has given us each day, is the foundation of the strong ties between us and Hashem, which reaches up to His Throne. As such, these brachos must be recited in the most perfect manner, with the full awareness that it is impossible to exist, for even one minute, without needing chasdei Hashem. And this awareness can be strengthened by being strict about answering amen after the brachos, because amen is an unparalleled declaration of emunah.

Tefillin Brought Back from the Trash

It was the summer of 5748/1984. Kennedy Airport in New York. Reb Yekusiel looked around in confusion. It was his first time out of Eretz Yisrael, and he had come on a mission for a mitzvah. However, not knowing a word of English, he now stood in the middle of the bustling airport at a loss. Someone was supposed to have been waiting for him at the airport, of that he was sure. But the minutes ticked away and the man did not arrive. He considered taking a taxi to the place where he was staying, but without knowing English he could not manage on his own. As he looked around, a husky non-Jew appeared; Reb Yekusiel assumed he was a taxi driver. When he noticed Reb Yekusiel he made a beeline for him and began to shower him with questions in English. Reb Yekusiel tried to explain with hand motions that he did not understand, but the non-Jew continued until suddenly, he lost his patience and disappeared as suddenly as he had come...

Having no choice, Reb Yekusiel decided to exit the terminal. Outside it would be easier to find a taxi, he thought to himself. But when he bent over to his cases, he let out a cry of horror: his hand luggage has disappeared! He tried to look around where he had been standing, but after a few moments, he gave up. Now he realized what that strange "taxi driver" had wanted... Yes, in a moment of distraction he had fallen victim to a wily thief. A tear rolled down his face when he realized what he had lost: his precious tefillin were in that bag—two sets of them—Kashi and Rabbeinu Tam. They had been written by one of the elders of the generations, a pious, G-d fearing sofer. How much effort he had made to obtain those tefillin, and now...? How would he be able to replace them?!

He felt very alone in the sea of humanity around him; he had no idea what he was supposed to do now. He began to murmur a quiet tefillah and suddenly, Heaven sent him an angel of rescue:

A dignified chareidi Yid noticed the confused young man and came over to ask what he was so concerned about. When he heard what had happened, he explained to Reb Yekusiel that such types of thieves were very common in New York. He advised him to file a complaint—and went a step further. He kindly took the man over to his car, which was parked nearby, and put his suitcase in the trunk. From there they went back into the terminal and made the tedious rounds of the various offices to file the complaint. Wherever they went, the clerks nodded their heads, and noted that there was little hope of recovering the loss. These were very experienced thieves.

Reb Yekusiel felt uncomfortable that his benefactor was wasting so much time with him. He was sure that he was missing valuable work time, but the man firmly insisted that they had to make their best effort to recover the loss.

When they had exhausted every avenue the man decided to complete the mitzvah: he asked Reb Yekusiel where he had to go and when he was told that he needed to get to Flatbush, he turned the car in that direction.

It was late when Reb Yekusiel emerged from his benefactor's car, but not before he thanked him warmly. When he asked for his name, he was surprised to hear that it was none other than the renowned benefactor, Reb Shraga Newhouse, z"l.

Reb Yekusiel then went to the nearest shul to daven Maariv. During Shemoneh Esrei he thanked Hashem for the past and tearfully pleaded for the future, that he merit a miracle to find his precious tefillin.

Over the coming few days, Reb Yekusiel threw all his efforts into his tefillah. His friend and host helped him obtain a temporary pair of tefillin. He didn't stop davening that a miracle would happen and he would get his precious tefillin back.

A few days later, Reb Yekusiel needed to get to Queens, where he had a meeting with one of the rabbanim there. The meeting was set for an early hour, so in order not to miss davening with a minyan, Reb Yekusiel left his lodgings early in the morning, intending to daven in Queens. When he arrived, he entered a local shul for Shacharis. After davening he asked one of the mispalleim if he could borrow Rabbeinu Tam tefillin for a few minutes.

The man gladly complied. As Reb Yekusiel was putting the tefillin together, the owner asked his name and where he was from. And then they parted from one another.

In the few days left until his return flight, Reb Yekusiel davened ever more fervently, shedding copious tears and hoping for Heavenly mercy.

Two days later, Reb Yekusiel was surprised when his host told him he had a phone call. The man on the other end identified himself as Chaim Neustadter and Reb Yekusiel immediately remembered the name on the tefillin bag that he had used in the shul in Queens. "Did you recently buy a cupboard at a certain carpenter's shop in the Bais Yisrael neighborhood of Yerushalayim?" Reb Chaim asked. Reb Yekusiel, who was surprised at the question, quickly answered that he had. "Take a taxi and get to Queens, your tefillin have been found," Reb Chaim said, and then hung up.

Stunned and excited, Reb Yekusiel hastily made his way to Queens, where Reb Chaim was waiting impatiently. As soon as he arrived, Reb Chaim directed Reb Yekusiel to his car and they set out. After a few minutes, the car stopped in front of a stately home. The door opened, and a friendly Yid invited them to sit down. He began his story:

"Last Sunday, I decided to spend the day off with my children in a big park near Queens. We were there until it got dark, and when we finished, we collected all our garbage to throw into a big trash receptacle on the outskirts of the park. I was about to turn away from the trash receptacle, when my eye caught something peeking through the overflowing garbage. I took a closer look and was stunned to find a red box from tefillin. When I stuck my hand out to take it, I was even more surprised to see the edges of black retzuos peeking from inside the bin.

"I suppressed my repulsion and began digging in the trash receptacle, and I discovered another red box, and then another, and after some time I was holding two whole pairs of tefillin and a velvet case, but with no identification markings.

"At home, I cleaned up the tefillin and put them away in a fitting manner. Then I noticed a receipt in the folds of the case. I still had no idea how to go about finding the owner, and decided to take them with me to shul and ask the other mispalleim what they thought.

"Before I finished speaking, Reb Chiam jumped up in excitement and told me that a few days earlier, he had met a Yid from Eretz Yisrael whose tefillin had been stolen at the airport. He added that for some reason he had asked the man what his name was and where he was staying, and that's how he was able to track you down."

As he spoke, the man handed Reb Yekusiel his tefillin. Reb Yekusiel was so overcome with emotion he could not stop crying. He hugged his tefillin close, and replayed in his mind the chain of miracles he had experienced this past week. He didn't try and understand why the thief had decided to throw his tefillin into specifically that remote trash bin at the edge of the park in Queens, or why the municipal workers hadn't emptied the bin for the entire week before they were found.

There was only one thing he wondered: What would have happened had he not gotten up early and traveled to Queens in order to daven Shacharis there? What would have happened had he not taken care to put on Rabbeinu Tam tefillin despite the discomfort of borrowing them from strangers? The tefillin would have been found, bechasedet Hashem, and spared the disgrace, but he would have gone back to Eretz Yisrael without them.

How great is the power of tefillah.

Nitzotzei Eish, p. 798