

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## PARASHAS TOLDOS

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### Yitzchak Davened With Wealth

“ויעתר יצחק לה” (כה, כא)

The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 63, 5)* cites the words of Rabi Yochanan, who explained the term “*vaye’etar*”: “He poured out his *tefillos* with wealth” (*atir* is *ashir* in Aramaic, see *Onkelos*, ibid 14:23). One may ask, what is the purpose of so many *tefillos*—have we not learned (*Brachos 5b*): “One says more and one says less as long as he directs his heart to the Heavens”?

**Rav Eliyahu of Wiskit (Wiskitno)**, a disciple of the Kotzker Rebbe, explained in *sefer Eizor Eliyahu*: The intention of Rabi Yochanan was to say that Yitzchak Avinu offered all his *tefillos* with the sense that he was wealthy, and he lacked for nothing, so that they should not be interpreted that he had any complaints towards Hashem for not being blessed with children.

The *sefer Nachalas Yaakov Yehoshua* further explains: Yitzchak offered his *tefillos* “*lenochach ishto*, in the presence of his wife” in other words, on behalf of his wife and for her honor. As *Chazal* said (*Bava Metzia 59a*): “A person should always be careful to respect his wife because blessing only comes to a person’s home because of his wife.” Therefore, Rabi Yochanan says that Yitzchak offered his *tefillos* ‘*b’osher*,’ that he was wealthy in the merit of his *tefillos*.

#### Yitzchak and Rivka Did Not Know Where to Direct Their Prayers

“לנכח אשתו”

“*Lenochach ishto* – he stood in one corner and davened and she stood in another corner and davened.” (*Rashi*)

Why did Yitzchak and Rivka need to stand in two different corners?

The early *sefer, Mayim Chaim (Direnfurt 5450)* explains **Harav Chaim Halevi Horowitz** in the name of his grandfather Rav Pinchas, *zt”l*:

It says in *Maseches Bava Basra (25a)* that we have to be grateful to our forefathers for telling us which of the four directions one should turn to when davening—the east. Now it needs to be explained: Yitzchak and Rivka, who did not yet know in which direction to daven, chose to stand at two corners of the house, he in the southeastern corner, and she in the northwestern corner, this way they would know that they had certainly

directed their *tefillah* to the direction from which it would be accepted.

#### Tefillas Yekum Purkan

“כי עקרה היא”

“Rabi Yitzchak said: Why were our forefathers barren? Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires the *tefillos* of *tzaddikim*.” (*Yevamos 64a*)

The **Tiferes Shlomo** of Radomsk explains this:

By nature, the great burden and effort in raising children would mean that one has less time and energy for his *avodas Hashem*, and therefore, because Hashem wants the *tefillos* of *tzaddikim* and He wants them to pray calmly, without distress, He withheld children from them.

The **Tiferes Shlomo** adds: For this reason, we ask in the *tefillah* of *Yekum Purkan*, “*Zara chaya vekayama, zara di lo yifsok vedi lo yivtul mipsgamei Oraisai*” that we merit that our children be healthy and whole and no trouble should befall them and then we will not have to desist from Torah and *tefillah* to care for them.

#### Amen Brings Abundance Into the World

“ויתן לך אלקים מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ... ועבדוך עמים” (כו, כה-כט)

The acronym of “*lecha haElokim mital hashamayim umishmanei ha’aretz*” amounts to the numerical value of “amen” to teach us that in the merit of replying amen, abundance comes down upon a person and his enemies fall, as it says hence, “*Yaavducha amim*” the nations will serve you.

Kikar Zahav, Maareches Beis

#### Yitzchak’s Tefillah Subtracted Years From His Father’s Life

“ויעתר לו ה” (שם)

“*Vaye’etar lo – nispatzer venispayes venispateh lo*.” (*Rashi*)

Why did Yitzchak have to daven and plead so much?

One of the *Maggidim* explained: *Chazal* said (*Bereishis Rabba 63, 12*) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu subtracted five years from the life of Avraham Avinu, so that he should not witness his grandson

going out to an errant lifestyle.

As such we find that if the birth of Yaakov and Eisav would have been delayed by five more years, HaKadosh Baruch Hu would not have had to subtract anything from Avraham Avinu’s life, because Eisav would not have strayed in his lifetime. Now we can understand why Yitzchak had to plead so much until Hashem acceded to his request.

When this was told to Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, *zt”l*, he agreed and added that there is an allusion to this in the words of the *passuk*: “*Vaye’etar lo Hashem*” is numerically equivalent to “*chamesh shanim*”, five years.

Kerem Chemed

#### The Prayer of a Tzaddik ben Tzaddik

Hashem answered specifically the *tefillah* of Yitzchak, as it says, “*vaye’etar lo*, and He answered Him,” and not her. *Rashi* says, “him and not her, because the *tefillah* of a *tzaddik ben tzaddik* cannot be compared to the *tefillah* of a *tzaddik ben rasha*.”

The *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ofakim, **Harav Chaim Kamil, zt”l**, explained: The reason that the power of the prayer of a *tzaddik ben tzaddik* is greater than a *tzaddik ben rasha* is not only because of the *zechus avos*, the merits of his forbears, that he has. It is also because of his own path in life: one cannot compare one who chose the path of righteousness because he saw firsthand the wicked ways of his followed and came to the understanding that he had to abandon these ways and become a *tzaddik*, to one who could have rested on his laurels and relied on his father’s spiritual attributes and bask in his presence. Instead, he toiled and worked until he reached the status of his father, and he is worthy of greater honor.

Kovetz Basadeh Ubakerem p. 88

#### The Difference Between Tzedakah and Tefillah

“הקל קול יעקב והידים ידי עשו” (כו, כג)

The *tzaddik Harav Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa* the *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, would explain this *passuk*:

“*Hakol kol Yaakov*” one who is involved in *tefillah* (*kol*) needs to do it *l’Shem Shamayim*, like “*kol Yaakov*.” However, even if one gives *tzedakah* (*yadayim, hands*) *lo lishmah*, not solely for the sake of the *mitzvah*, meaning “*yedei Eisav*” the hands of Eisav, his actions are willingly accepted by Hashem.

Chassidim Mesaprim Vol. III p. 178

### A Rare Segulah for Protection from the Maharsha, zy”a

(Passed away on 5 Kislev, 5392)

“*Lu hikshavta lemitvosai, vayehi kanahar shlomecha vetzidkascha kegalei hayam...*”

(*Yeshayahu 48:18*)

“*Lemitvosai*” is derived from the word “*tzeves vechaburah*” (a group) and that means: “Had you listened, and waited to respond amen for every *brachah* that you hear from your friends, your fellows in shul, your reward would be peace flowing like a river...”

(*Maharsha, Vol. I, Brachos 6a*)

In these days, when we all need protection, let us undertake to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* in shul, and then we will merit the *brachah* of “*Vayehi kanahar shlomecha vetzidkascha kegalei hayam*.” Amen.



## Asher Yatzar – continued

## A Segulah for Healing

To complement the previous article, this section will address the uniqueness of the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* and its known *segulah* for healing and *yeshuos*.

Let us begin by noting the fact that *Asher Yatzar* is unique because it has a connection to each and every part of the person's body, as *Chazal* say (*Tanchuma Shemini* 8) by way of allusion that the words *chalulim chalulim* are numerically equivalent to 248, which is the number of organs in a person's body.

In light of the importance and uniqueness of *Asher Yatzar*, it is not surprising that *Gedolei Yisrael* have attributed great importance to reciting it from the written text, with great *kavanah* and emotion. Some have added that doing so is a *segulah* for a *refuah*.

It is told that the *Chafetz Chaim* was very careful to say the *brachah* from the written text, with his finger following each word. (*Mei'ayin Yavo Ezreinu*, p. 17)

The *Shineva Rav's* *Chassidim* would come from far and wide to bask in his presence. Upon seeing how he made the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, with tremendous *kavanah*, word for word, they would whisper to one another, "We can go home. Just watching the *tzaddik* make the *brachah* has infused us with enough holiness for an entire year." It was known in those days that one who watched the way the *Shineva Rav* made the *brachah* would feel for the first time that he understand its true meaning. Many who needed *yeshuos* and *refuos* would come from all over to hear the *tzaddik* recite *Asher Yatzar* and responded *amen* as a *segulah* for a *yeshuah*. (*Yesod Yosef – Taharas Yom Tov* 88).

When people would mention the name of a sick person who needed a *yeshuah* to *Harav Meir* of *Premishlan*, he would advise that he be strict about saying *Asher Yatzar* with intense *kavanah*, emphasizing that it was a tried and true *segulah* for a *yeshuah*. (*ibid*)

The *Mashgiach*, *Harav Yechezkel Levinstein*, *zt"l*, would often say that when this *brachah* is said with *kavanah*, it is a great *segulah* for a physical healing. (*Tefillas Chana*, p. 66).

The renowned *maggid* *Harav Shimshon Pinkus*, *zt"l*, would often speak about the greatness of this *brachah* and the obligation to recite it with *kavanah*. When someone noted to him the words of *Gedolei Yisrael* that it was a *segulah* for a *refuah*, he would reply: "*Segulah?! And when you open the faucet and water comes out would you call that a segulah?*" It is a clear and simple fact that when one recites *Asher Yatzar* the right way, he opens the faucet of *refuah* in Heaven and brings down *refuah* and *yeshuah* to this world!"

He added, "It is clear to anyone with common sense that if we would recite this *brachah* properly there wouldn't be sick people at all. But because we are not careful to thank Hashem with the right solemnity and *kavanah*, we have illness around us." (*Tiferes Shimshon, Bereishis, Beshalach*)

## Miraculous Rescue on the Train

There is a well known story that happened to the *mashgiach*, *Harav Eliyahu Lopian*. He was once traveling on the train and had to make the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*. He asked the passengers on the train car, among them those who were not Torah observant, to reply *amen* after his *brachah*, explaining to them the great power of this *brachah* for salvation and for being spared from trouble.

Out of respect, many of the passengers complied, listening solemnly to the *brachah*,

which he recited with utmost *kavanah*, and emotionally replying *amen*, in unison.

A big surprise awaited them just a few moments later when the train braked suddenly and halted just a few inches away from a powerful mine that Arab terrorists had hidden in the tracks. Their plan was to exact dozens, if not hundreds, of casualties from the train's passengers. The mine was hidden in a way that it could not be detected, and it was a genuine miracle that the driver had been able to detect it from afar and to stop the train just in time. Thus the passengers were spared a terrible calamity in the merit of *Asher Yatzar*. (*Lev Eliyahu – Chochmah Umussar*, introduction).

## The Best Brachah

A wonderful story about the *Chazon Ish* is brought in the *sefer Maaseh Ish* (Vol. II, p. 156, 225): The *Chazon Ish* was especially scrupulous about the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, reciting it with great concentration, slowly and with *kavanah*. He even donned his outer garment and *gartel* in order to say the *brachah*. One morning, while the *Chazon Ish* was in the midst of reciting *Asher Yatzar*, facing the wall and uttering the words, a young man dashed into the room and began screaming that his young daughter had fallen deathly ill. It was during the period of a polio outbreak, and all parents lived in terror of the dreaded disease. When this young man's daughter suddenly got high fever and other symptoms that seemed to point almost undoubtedly to the disease, he hurried to the *Chazon Ish* to ask for a *brachah*. It appeared that, in his deep concentration, the *Chazon Ish* did not notice what was going on around him, but towards the end of the *brachah*, those present were surprised to see him turn his gaze to the young man and conclude with emphasis: "*Baruch Atah... Rofeh kol basar umafti laasos*." The man quickly replied *amen*, loudly and fervently, and before he could say another word, the *Chazon Ish* said, "You've heard the *brachah* already..." The man returned home happily. It was no wonder that by the time he arrived he was told that his daughter was recovering, *baruch Hashem*.

## Asher Yatzar Through the Phone

While *Harav Itzikel* of *Pshevorsk* was once in a resort town, he suddenly received news that his granddaughter had become very ill and needed Heavenly mercy. *Reb Itzikel*, famed throughout the world for his miracle works, calmed those around him that the *yeshuah* was at hand.

A few moments later, he asked his attendant to dial the hospital. When a family member picked up the phone in the room, *Reb Itzikel* asked that the phone be placed near his granddaughter's ear, and he began to recite *Asher Yatzar* with great *kavanah*. On the other end of the line, he heard a weak "amen."

Over the next few days, *Reb Itzikel* did this whenever he recited the *brachah*, giving the patient the merit of answering *amen*, until the child recovered completely. The family was not surprised when she defied all predictions by the doctors and was discharged a few days later, completely healthy. (*Nifla'im Maasecha*, Vol. II, p. 427)

Fellow *Yidden!*

We all need *yeshuos*, and every day we hear of more people who, tragically, fall ill. Let us undertake to be more careful about this *brachah*, to thank our Creator, and to recite it from the text, with *kavanah*, and may it be His Will that we merit to have all the harsh decrees annulled and may we return to *Yerushalayim*, healthy in both body and soul, speedily in our times.

## A Sudden Storm That Realized a Dream

This story was told by the *Shefa Chaim* of *Sanz*, *zy"ta*, during one of his *sichos* about the power of sincere *tefillah* from the depths of the heart to effect *yeshuos* in all areas.

The Jewish community in *Krakow* was established some 900 years ago, and from that point on it was one of the most prominent Jewish communities in Europe. It was home to numerous *gedolei Yisrael*, among them the *Rem"ta*.

There were two large cemeteries in *Krakow*, the old cemetery, where many of the *gedolim* who lived in *Krakow* during its first few hundred years as a Jewish community were buried. Then there was the new cemetery, which was the final resting place of many great people, but because it was established later, it was considered to be less holy than the older cemetery.

When the old cemetery became overcrowded, the *chevrah kaddisha* stopped burying people there. Nevertheless, there were a few plots still left, and it was the heart's desire of every one of *Krakow's* eminent residents to merit to be buried alongside the *kedoshim* there, although few actually merited to have this happen.

Due to the fact that so many people vied for so few plots, the *chevrah kaddisha* had no choice but to sell them for exorbitant prices, to the highest bidder, which obviously, far exceeded the price of a plot in the new cemetery.

As such, it was no surprise that when *Rechel* expressed a wish to her neighbors and friends to be buried in the old cemetery, everyone just nodded at her with pity.

*Rechel* was known among the residents of *Krakow* as "*Rechel the Baalas Chesed*," and not for naught. She was definitely worthy of this title, because already as a young girl she would dedicate all her free time to doing *chesed*. Despite being widowed at a young age, and raising her four children alone, in poverty and constant lack, she always had room in her heart for those lonely, long suffering women who came to her home to find a balm for their misery.

Each *Erev Shabbos* she would go from one wealthy home to another, and the residents would generously donate *Shabbos* food so she could distribute it to the needy of *Krakow*.

*Rechel* earned the admiration of the city's residents, which made them raise an eyebrow even higher when they heard her strange request: when her time came, she wanted to be buried in the old cemetery.

So great was her desire that even as a *baalas simchah*, at the weddings of her grandchildren, when her acquaintances came to wish her *mazel tov*, she asked that they bless her that she merit to be buried in the old cemetery. Despite the initial shock that this request was met with, the well wishers complied, and she replied *amen* aloud and fervently after each such *brachah*.

It quickly became the talk of the town in *Krakow*: why did *Rechel the Baalas Chesed* suddenly start talking about being buried in the old cemetery? Was she losing her mind? But as time passed, everyone got used the fact, and before she even asked, they would wish her warmly. "May you merit to be buried in the old cemetery." Of course, she always replied *amen*.

When her close family was asked why she wanted this, they had no answers, but they did say that in addition to the *perakim* of *Tehillim* she had been reciting daily for decades, she now added a few more chapters as a special prayer for this request, to be buried in the old cemetery.

For the children of *Krakow*, it became

a source of entertainment. Whenever *Rechel* walked in the streets, they would run after her and cry: "*Mumme, ihr zohlt ligen in dem alten Bais Hachaim!*" You should rest in the old cemetery!" Not only was *Rechel* not offended by this, she smiled at each child and replied warmly, "*Amen, kein yehi ratzon*, may it be that I indeed merit that!"

Years passed and the old woman davened for this wish to come true every single day. Then the day came. One fine morning, *Rechel* told her family that she did not feel well, and a few hours later, returned her pure soul to its Maker.

The streets of *Krakow* hummed as people streamed to the funeral of *Rechel the Baalas Chesed*. She was worthy of this honor because of her good deeds, but it was impossible to deny that many of the people came out of curiosity to see what would happen. Rumor had it that over the years, *Rechel* and her family had frequently asked the *chevrah kaddisha* to fulfill her request and promise her a plot where she wanted, but they demanded a huge sum and refused to compromise even the slightest.

Now, too, the *chevrah kaddisha* absolutely refused, and prepared to begin the *levayah*, as usual, to the new cemetery. The family had already come to terms with the fact that their mother's request would not be answered, and only *Hashem* knew why these things happened. The *hespedim* began with the eulogy of the town's *rav*, who mentioned *Rechel's* many great acts of *chesed*. But after just a few sentences, the skies turned black and cloudy, a brisk wind began to blow and rain began pouring down. The many people in attendance scattered to the nearby homes to take cover from the rain, and the *mitvah* was taken into the nearest stul with the hope that the rain would stop soon and the *levayah* could proceed.

A few minutes passed and the storm settled. The sun peeked through the clouds and it was clear that the funeral procession could go on. The *maspidim* spoke briefly and the people carrying the bier began heading down the muddy streets toward the new cemetery.

But as they got closer to the cemetery they realized the extent of the storm. From the top of the hill they could see the tops of the headstones peeking out over the water that had flooded the entire new cemetery.

The funeral halted at once. The pallbearers waited for the *chevrah kaddisha*, who, after a short consultation, motioned for them to turn back. It was clear that it was impossible to bury *Rechel* in the new cemetery in its current state. They had no choice but to bury her in one of the few plots left in the old cemetery.

"This story was a 'chiddush' for me," the *Shefa Chaim* concluded the story. "How every Jew can work on his behalf before Hashem to get whatever his heart desires, even things not relating directly to *avodas Hashem*. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* hears '*tefillas kol peh*, the prayers of every mouth,' in its simplest meaning, unless one is asking for forbidden things.

Therefore, when a father and mother plead to Hashem when lighting candles, or during *Shemoneh Esrei*, or at any other time, that He help them raise their children to be Torah scholars, they will surely merit to receive help from Hashem, who will fulfill their wishes for good."

*Shefa Chaim, Drashos Chumash Rashi, Parashas Vayetzit*