

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS SHEMOS

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Hoshana Soveless Sivlecha

“וירא בסבלותם” (ב, יא)

Why does the Torah call the work that Bnei Yisrael did “*sivolosam*,” their suffering?

Harav Dovid Kviat, Ra”m in Yeshivas Mir of America, explains:

The word “*sivolosam*” is derived from the word “*savlanusam*,” their patience, or tolerance. The Torah is emphasizing one of the virtues of Am Yisrael here, that although the Egyptians tried with all their might to make their burden even heavier so that they should lose their faith, Am Yisrael accepted the work with patience and tolerance and did not lose their hope of being redeemed.

This is what we ask on Hoshana Rabba: “*Hoshana soveless sivlecha*,” – redeem Yisrael who accept Your decrees with patience and complete faith.

Succas Dovid

A Cry Brings One Closer to Hashem

“ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבודה” (ב, כג)

Harav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, Rosh Yeshivas Torah Vodaas, derives a beautiful thought from this *passuk*: When a person encounters a trouble, and that brings him to cry and daven to Hashem to save him, that *tefillah* brings him closer to his Creator. Then, of its own accord, a cry bursts forth from his mouth, a cry whose essence is the desire for closeness to Hashem. That is what the Torah is alluding to in this *passuk*: At first “Bnei Yisrael sighed from the work and they cried” – because of the hard world, and then “their cry rose to Hashem from the work” – their cry ‘from the work’ raised their status and from then on their cries were “*el Ha’Elokim*” – out of a longing to be closer to their Creator.

Shirasa DePischa p. 452

Wearing Shoes Expresses Control

“של נעלך מעל רגליך” (ג, ה)

In his commentary on the *brachah* of “*She’asah li kol tzorki*”, the Shelah HaKadosh (in his *Siddur*) cites his *rebbe*, the Maharshal, that there are four levels in creation, each one above the other: an inanimate object, a plant, a live creature and a human (a speaking creation). By wearing shoes made from the skin of an animal, the person manifests his control over other living creatures, and hence, over the plants and inanimate

objects as well. As Dovid Hamelech praised in *Tehillim* (8:7): “*Kol shatah tachas raglav*,” therefore we thank Hashem for our shoes in the *brachah* of “*sheasah li kol tzorki*.”

Based on this Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains the reason that Moshe Rabbeinu was instructed to take off his shoes. Here, the Shechinah was present before Moshe, and he had to feel humility and submission. Therefore, he was told to take off his shoes that are a symbol of his control over the other creations.

Zera Shel Kayama

“בטרם תבוא אלהן המילדת וילדו” (א, יט)

The acronym of the last letters of the words “*Beterem tavo aleihen*” is amen, to teach us that replying amen is a great *segulah* for meriting *zera shel kayama*, children.

Mateh Aharon, p. 73

Amen Completes the Brachah

“כי אין נגרע מעבדתכם דבר” (ה, יא)

The acronym of “*ein nigra mei’avodaschem*” is amen. There is an allusion here to the words of the holy Zohar (*Eikev* 271, 1) that *brachos* can only be complete if amen is replied. That is what the *passuk* is hinting to: In the merit of your strictness in answering amen, “*ein nigra mei’avodaschem*” there is no flaw in the service of your heart, which is *tefillah*.

Birchas Avraham, p. 231

Thus, Rav Shlomo Zalman also explained the reason that we are allowed to wear non-leather shoes on Tishah B’Av and Yom Kippur, even though they are sometimes more comfortable than leather ones. The reason for the prohibition against wearing leather shoes on these days is to remove feelings of pride and control, and to make us feel submissive. Therefore, when the shoes are not leather, they do not manifest control, and are permitted.

Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah, p. 365

Before They Call, I Will Answer

“ויאמר ה' ראה ראיתי את עני עמי אשר במצרים ואת צעקות שמעתי” (ג, ז)

Harav Eliezer Ashkenazi, author of *Maasei Hashem* explains:

The *passuk* put the word “*ra’ah*,” saw, before the screaming to teach us that even before Am Yisrael cried from their pain, HaKadosh Baruch Hu saw their suffering and prepared the redemption, as it says (*Yeshayah* 65:24) “*Vehayah terem yikra’u v’Ani e’eneh*,” and it will be before they call and I will answer.”

Maasei Hashem, Maasei Mitzrayim 5

“Eheveh” – Even After the Sin

“ויאמר אלקים אל משה אהיה אשר אהיה ויאמר כה תאמר לבני ישראל אהיה שלחני אליכם” (ג, יד)

By way of *drush*, the Bais Avraham of Slonim explained: At first, Hashem said to Moshe “*Eheveh asher Eheveh*” – I will be with Yisrael now, and even if, *chalilah*, they sin, I will still be with them. But then, Moshe said to Hashem that this might lead Bnei Yisrael to sin with the intention to repent, “*echta v’ashuv*.” Therefore HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to him: “This is what you should tell Bnei Yisrael, *Eheveh* sent me to you” – I am revealing this secret just to you, but to Bnei Yisrael you should say only “*Eheveh*” – I will be with them and I will hasten to redeem them from Egypt.

Kovetz Sichos Kodesh

Why Did Moshe Flee from the Snake?

“ויהי לנחש וינס משה מפניו” (ד, ג)

A few days before his passing, the disciples of the Ari HaKadosh asked their *rebbe*: Have we not learned in *Maseches Brachos* (33a) that “Even a snake is latched onto his heel he should not stop?” How did Moshe flee from the snake while he was speaking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu?

When the Ari heard this question he said to them: “I cannot reveal to you the secret, because I have not been granted permission to do so.” But the disciples, who deeply yearned to understand this matter, pressed the Ari, until he acceded and told them. When he finished he said: “Now I must leave this world.” Indeed, just a few days later, he was summoned to the Heavenly Court.

Shefa Chaim Drashos Chumash Rashi 5742, citing writings of the Ari

We do not know the secret that the Ari HaKadosh revealed, but the Mahari”l Diskin explained this by way of *pshat*:

For as long as Moshe spoke to the Shechinah, this humble of all men felt that he was not worthy of it. Therefore, as soon as he saw the stick turning into a snake, he realized on the spot that Hashem was hinting to him to leave, and therefore, he fled right away.



The Principal Avodah of Shovavim

Harav Shimon Sofer of Krakow, zt”l, wrote:

During *Shovavim* it is worthy to strengthen oneself in replying amen on all the *brachos*, because this is how the soul of a person is rectified.

(Michtav Sofer, Shemos)

The Mashgiach, Harav Yechezkel Levinstein, added: Torah scholars and Chassidim would strengthen their spiritual *avodah* during *Shovavim*. Because the *parshiyos* of *Shovavim* discuss *emunah*, it appears that the emphasis of the *chizuk* of these days should be on matters of *emunah*, because one who strengthens his *emunah* has everything.

(Ohr Yechezkel, Vol. III, p. 246)

Amen. Answer and Believe.

Nishmas Kol Chai Tevarech (Con't.)

The Segulah of Reciting
Nishmas for a Yeshuah

Aside from the other virtues and *segulos*, *Nishmas* is known as a *segulah* for a *yeshuah* and a *refuah*, salvation and healing. An early source for this *segulah* is brought down by Rabbeinu Chaim Palagi: "We have a *kabbalah* from Rabi Yehudah Hachassid, that it is also a *segulah* that when any trouble arises, a person should accept upon himself that when Hashem will save him from that trouble, he will recite *Nishmas Kol Chai* in praise and song, in front of ten people. Many people were saved from this, and it is tried and true." (*Hagaddah Shel Pesach Chaim Larosh*)

Similarly, Reb Heshel writes in his *sefer Chanukas HaTorah* (last *kuntress*): 'Before a person leaves his home for a journey, he should put his hand on the *mezuzah* and say: 'I hereby accept upon myself that when I see a certain place, I will recite *Nishmas Kol Chai*. And when he sees that place, he should immediately recite *Nishmas Kol Chai* in its entirety.'

Some added an allusion here from the words of the *passuk* (*Shmuel II*, 22:4): "Mehullal ekra umei'oyvay ivashea," with the explanation of the *Radak*: "When I daven and call Hashem *mehullal* – that I praise Him with my praises, then I will be spared from my enemies." (*Haggadah shel Pesach Zachreinu L'Chaim*)

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, (*Orchos Yosher* p. 14) brings the following story from the *Midrash*: A person was once walking on his way and saw an innkeeper. He said to him, 'Rebbi, do you want me to come with you'... They met the Angel of Death... He said to the innkeeper: 'Your end is in my hand and the day of your death has arrived.' He said to him, 'If so, wait for me while I go praise Hashem for all that He has done for me.' He said to him, 'Because you seek to praise Him, you will receive more years.'

The Segulos of Gedolei Yisrael

Those close to the Steipler Gaon, *zt"l*, said that when people would turn to him for *yeshuos*, he would regularly advise those close to the person needing the *yeshuah* to pledge to recite *Nishmas Kol Chai* and give money to *tzeddakah* as soon as he is saved from the trouble. Indeed, many who did as he instructed saw *yeshuos*. (*Orchos Rabbeinu*, Vol. I, p. 334)

Harav Shimon Shkop, *zt"l*, Rosh Yeshivas Grodno, told his disciple, Harav Yisrael Zev Gustman, *zt"l*, who asked for advice on how to evade the draft to the Polish Army, to recite *Nishmas* with *kavanah*, and when he did so, he saw an immediate salvation. (*Torah Yevashku MiPihu*, p. 275)

Better to Praise Before the
Trouble Comes

It is fitting to note here the words of the *Shelah HaKadosh* (*Torah Ohr, Beshalach* 3) that *tzaddikim* who praise their Creator before they see salvation are especially praiseworthy. "The *midas tzaddikim* is that as soon as they are guaranteed something good they say praise and sing to Hashem, immediately, even if it has not yet been fulfilled, because they are expressing their full *emunah* and belief in the words of Hashem."

Indeed, the *Kaf Hachaim* (*Orach Chaim* 664 39) cites a beautiful custom

that was practiced in the Bais Kel Yeshivas Mekubalim in the Old City of Jerusalem: "On Hoshana Rabba, after *Aleinu Leshabeach*, they open the *heichal* and recite *Nishmas Kol Chai* without Hashem's Name. Then they say, 'We accept upon ourselves *bli neder* a *kabbalah* that next year, on this day, Hoshana Rabba, after *Shacharis*, we will say...the *nusach* of *Nishmas Kol Chai*. And may it be Hashem's will that He give us life and the merit to see many more years, amen.'

Tzaddikim Who Recited It

There are many testimonies about the important role that *Nishmas* played among many great and holy *tzaddikim*, who, while reciting it, rose to tremendous spiritual heights.

It was told about Harav Shimon Sofer of Krakow, the son of the Chasam Sofer: "Anyone who did not hear his crying while he stood at night and sang *Nishmas Kol Chai* with fear and awe, with a broken heart and fiery soul, has never heard *hisorerus nefesh* in his life. A heart of stone melts to water to the sound of his cries." (*Chut Hameshulash Hachadash* p. 366)

Harav Yechezkel Abramsky, *zt"l*, said of the Chafetz Chaim, *zt"l*: I once had the opportunity to sleep next to the room of the Chafetz Chaim, *zt"l*. In the middle of the night I was amazed to hear the voice of the *tzaddik* as he began reciting *Nishmas Kol Chai*, and he translated each word to Yiddish, with great fervency and sweetness. It was his habit to list each day the *chassadim* that Hashem had done for him and to thank for them. (*Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah*, p. 140, footnote.)

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vzhnitz would often answer those who asked why he did not give *mussar* to his Chassidim: "I cannot say *mussar*, I can only say *Nishmas Kol Chai*..." He said the words [of *Nishmas*] with the trademark Vzhnitzer melody. (*Nafshos Chassidav*, p. 147.)

Indeed, one of his eminent *talmidim* related that during the dark years of the Holocaust, whenever he felt his spirits flagging, he remembered his Rebbe saying emotionally: "Hamenahag Olamo bechessed ubriosav berachamim, v'Hashem er, hinei lo yanum velo yishan." These words infused him with strength and he was able to survive the Holocaust intact, spiritually and physically. (*MiPi Sofrim Useforim, Avos* 5:5).

A Yid once asked Harav Hirsh of Rimano: Why do we need to note that *Nishmas Kol Chai* is blessing the Name of Hashem? Would it enter a person's mind that the physical body is doing so itself? Rav Hirsh's answer reflects an apt description of the lofty feelings that accompanied *Gedolei Yisrael* upon reciting *Nishmas*:

"Indeed, throughout davening the body needs the help of the soul so that we can stand before Hashem. But when reciting *Nishmas*, the soul disconnects from the body and it stands alone to glorify and elevate its Creator. (*Noam Shabbos*, the Shomer Emunim, ch. 3)

Kol Atzmosai Tomarnah

A stranger entering the town of Horodna that day may have thought it was a ghost town. Although it was midday, when the streets were normally bustling with people, it was eerily silent. A thick blanket of snow covered the ground, driving the residents to take cover in their warm homes.

The heavy footsteps of the poor man who had somehow made it into the frozen town left prints in the pristine blanket of snow. When he was finally standing in front of a Jewish house, he had almost no energy left to knock loudly at the door. The people of Horodna were used to poor people visiting their homes to ask for money, but now, in these weather conditions, nobody heard the weak knocking that was absorbed by the heavy wooden door.

An effort to knock at another door showed the poor man that he would be better off not wasting his meager energy on fruitless attempts. Instead, he would try to reach the shul in the middle of the town.

From afar, he saw a beautiful building with a curl of smoking spiraling out of its chimney. It wasn't far, but to the poor man, it seemed like miles away. Just the thought of the hot tea waiting for him in the shul, with a few filling cookies that kind people left there, infused him with the energy to forge onwards towards the shul.

From step to step his energy waned. He tried to rub some snow into his frozen hands, but it did little to help. The shul was very close, but as hard as he tried, his legs, which felt like tree stumps, refused to obey him. The cold, the strong winds and the trudging in the freezing snow made him lose all sensation in his legs.

As a last resort, he tried to use his hands, and thus, he managed to crawl until the street where the shul was located. Then, a short distance from his destination, he collapsed into the frozen snow in a deep faint.

The last thoughts that flashed through his mind were about his beloved family. His heart ached at the thought of the fate that awaited them. Who would raise them and support them? Who would tell them that their father had been lost in such a tragic fashion? As he was bemoaning his bitter fate, he lost consciousness.

A layer of snow had already accumulated on his faded coat. In just a few minutes, he wouldn't be noticeable anymore. Just at that moment, a Jew who had resolved with *mesirus nefesh* to ignore the weather and go to shul to daven *Minchah* passed by.

As he walked, he stumbled over a pile of rags in his path. At first he considered getting up and continuing but then, to his horror, he noticed that the pile of rags was actually a human body. He pulled back the hat from the frozen figure and saw that it was a Jewish face.

Who knew if he was dead or alive? Alarmed, the man began to scream, "Help!!!" But his voice echoed back to him in the thick snow; no one heard it. His heart fluttering in fear, he bent his ear down to the man's lips. Wonder of wonders, he saw he was breathing! The breaths were weak, but they were a definite sign of life. He stood up, dashed as fast as he could to the shul, and summoned someone who was learning there to come and help him. Together, they carried the man into the warm shul and lay him on one of the benches. Someone found a bottle of whiskey and began rubbing the liquid on the poor man's temples.

Slowly, he regained consciousness. His pale face began to take on a pinkish

hue, and the people standing around him cheered. *Baruch Hashem*, the man was recovering.

When he began to move his limbs and even managed to sit up on the bench, the *chazzan* began *Tefillas Minchah*. It was already quite late, but they had been busy saving a Jewish life.

However, within a few moments, it emerged that their joy was premature. Although the man had regained consciousness, his body temperature was dangerously low. All the blankets that they wrapped him in and the hot cups of tea that he drank did not help. His body trembled uncontrollably.

Davening came to an end, and again, the *mispallelim* surrounded the man worriedly. They did not know what to do; how could they help him? Suddenly, the elderly Rav, Harav Alexander Ziskind, author of *Yesod Veshoreh Ha'avodah*, came to the front of the crowd. He had just finished *Shemoneh Esrei* with the many *kavanos* he recited it with. He noticed the tumult and came to find out what it was all about.

One of the *mispallelim* told him that a beggar had been found in a faint outside the shul, and they were trying to do what they could to warm his frozen body, but nothing was helping.

The Rav's rapid response surprised them all: "Why are you trying all kinds of things? Let him say *Nishmas Kol Chai* with *kavanah* and he will be healed and warm up right away."

The Rav sensed the surprised look that the freezing man was directing at him and explained: "Why are you surprised? I also do this when I don't have enough money to buy wood for the fire at home, I say *Nishmas* fervently, and right away I warm up..."

When the Rav saw that his intentions were not yet clear he added: "When saying *Nishmas Kol Chai*, the soul fills and fires up the body with a burning desire to be close to Hashem, as it says "Kol atzmosai tomarna Hashem mi kamocha". Is there a limb that can remain cold after such enthusiasm?!"

The members of the shul understood, because they were used to the holy *avodah* of their rav, in *tefillah* in general and with *Nishmas* in particular. They remembered the piercing words he wrote in his *sefer* about the greatness of this *tefillah*:

"And it is certainly worthy to enthrone the soul of a person like a consuming fire to say the words with great power and to infuse joy into the person when his mouth says these words, a tremendous joy in Hashem's G-dliness, so much so until he completely separates himself from the physical world."

Regretfully, the poor man thought these ideas were very strange. He was not familiar with this lofty existence, and when someone offered him a *Siddur* and opened to *Nishmas*, he murmured the words with no feeling. Obviously, it did not help him and his body continued to tremble from cold.

The rav stood on the side, gazing with compassionate eyes, and when he saw that his idea had not made an impression on the sick man, he said, "Well, if *Nishmas* did not help him then I have no other ideas. Call the doctor. Maybe he will find a cure for his ailment."

Haggadah Shel Pesach Kerem Hatzvi