

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS VA'EIRA

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Preempt Trouble with Tefillah

"וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים מעבדים אתם" (ו, ה)

Harav Dovid Shlomo Eibeshitz, author of *Levushei Serad* explains:

When trouble befalls a person, and he cries and davens to Hashem with a broken heart to save him, he should also ask forgiveness from his Creator for not having prayed so fervently before the trouble befell him.

This concept is alluded to in this *passuk*: "Naakah Bnei Yisrael" was even though "Mitzrayim maavidim osam," – for the fact that the Egyptians made them work, as it says, they brought them to "avodah shebalev." It was only now, when they were in dire straits that they cried to Hashem, and did not awaken themselves to do so in the years of peace and tranquility that preceded the bondage of Egypt.

Arvei Nachal

Pharaoh's Heart Turned "Heavy"

"כבד לב פרעה מאן לשלח העם" (ז, יד)

"Kaved lev Pharaoh – he hardened his heart. He was angry; just like the liver gets angry, his heart became like a liver." (*Shemos Rabba* 9, 8)

The Mashgiach Harav Moshe Wolfson, *shlita*, explains this with a beautiful concept that he heard from the Divrei Yoel of Satmar as an elucidation of the *nusach* of the words of *Nishmas*: "Ki kol peh Lecha yodeh, vechol lashon lecha tishava... vechol levavos yira ucha."

One would wonder, the Satmar Rebbe asks, how can we testify wholeheartedly that "all the souls will fear You"? Do we not see, regretfully, so many of Bnei Yisrael who have not yet merited to recognize the Kingship of Hashem? He explained: A person must know that the objective of the creation of his body and limbs is only so that he should be able to serve Hashem with them. Therefore, a heart that does not fear Hashem is not considered a heart, and a mouth that does not thank Hashem is not called a mouth.

This is what the *Midrash* was referring to here: Because Pharaoh had no *yiras Hashem* in his heart, it was not worthy of being called a heart, but rather it became "kaved," named for its character, and it should be called a liver.

Emunas Itecha – Esther, p. 171

"In Trouble I Will Call to You and You Will Save Me"

"העתירו אל ה' ויסר הצפרדעים" (ח, ד)

"Every time the root word of 'atar' is used, it means an abundance of *tefillah*." (*Rashi*)

Harav Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, learns a wonderful lesson from *Rashi's* words: If the wicked and heretic Pharaoh recognized the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu the servant of Hashem could not spare him from his trouble if he would

The Purpose of the Plagues – To Firmly Establish Emunah

"יאמר ה' אל משה נטה את ירך על השמים ויהי ברד בכל ארץ מצרים" (ט, כב)

The acronym of "El Moshe neteh" is amen. From here we can learn that the true objective of the plagues in Egypt were so that through them, *emunah* should take firm root in the hearts of Am Yisrael, as it says at the conclusion of all the miracles (*Shemos* 14, 31) "And they believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant."

Niflaos Mitorasecha, entry Amen

Replying Amen Brings to Knowledge of Hashem

"למען תדע כי אין כה אלקינו" (ו, י)

"Ki ein" is numerically equivalent to "amen" to teach us that being careful about answering amen with the right concentration brings a person to knowledge and fear of Hashem.

Betzel Yehudah

not daven for it, then how much more so us. We have to know that when we encounter trouble, *chalah*, it is our obligation to daven and plead much more than we are used to until we merit Heavenly mercy.

Ta'am Vodaas

Pharaoh Feared the Tefillos of Bnei Yisrael

"ירק הרחק לא תרחיקו ללכת העתירו בעדי" (ח, כד)

Harav Shlomo Kluger explained this using a play on words: Pharaoh was afraid that when Bnei Yisrael would be in the desert, they would be aroused to daven to Hashem to redeem them from Egypt, to eternal freedom. Therefore he asked, "Do not go too far," – don't ask for far

reaching requests; on the contrary, "pray for me," that I continue to lead my kingdom in peace and tranquility for many days to come.

Imrei Shefer

Don't Pray to Halt Something Good – Even If It Is Too Much

"כצאתי את העיר אפרש את כפי אל ה'" (ט, כט)

Why specifically by this *makkah* did Moshe need to daven with his arms raised to Hashem?

It says in *Maseches Taanis* (19a, according to *Tosafos Bava Metzia* 28b beginning with Even) that when there is severe damage caused to people because of strong rains, one should not daven that the rain stops, because we have been taught: "One does not daven for too much good (to end)."

Based on this we can understand: Even though the plague of hail brought great damage to Egypt, it was still somewhat good for them, because their arid land was now saturated with rain. That is why Moshe did not want to daven with his mouth that it should stop, and instead he prayed by raising his arms Heavenward.

Pardes Yosef

Pharaoh Continued to Deny in His Heart

"כצאתי את העיר אפרש את כפי אל ה'...ואתה ועבדיך ידעתי כי טרם תיראון מפני ה' אלקים" (ט, כט-ל)

Rashi explains that Moshe had to leave the city because it was full of idols and therefore, his *tefillah* would not have been properly accepted there. But the question arises: Did he not pray until now? How then, were his *tefillas* accepted in the earlier plagues even though he did not leave the city?

Harav Shlomo Kluger explains: Indeed, even before the plague of hail, Moshe needed to leave the city whenever he wanted to daven. But now, Pharaoh claimed that he no longer needed to leave because there is a clear *halachah* that *avodah zarah*, idols, that are negated by a non-Jew – are annulled (*Avodah Zarah* 52b). Because right after being plagued by the hail, Pharaoh stood and accepted the Kingship of Hashem with his declaration, "I have sinned this time, Hashem is the Righteous One and I and my nation are evil" (*ibid* 27), then he annulled the idols of Egypt and turned the city into a place where it was suitable to daven.

However, Moshe Rabbeinu rejected his claims and said: "I knew that you are not yet fearful of Hashem" – because deep down in your hearts, you still believe in the power of the idols, and your declarations are only lip service. Therefore, your gods were not annulled, and this time, as well, I will have to leave the city to daven."

Imrei Shefer

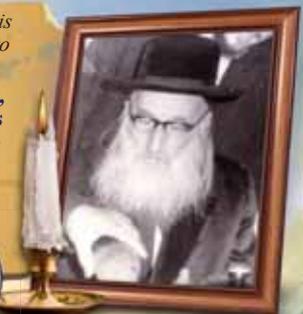
Rise arly to the Bais Medrash to Reply Amen

Shabbos Kodesh Rosh Chodesh Shevat is the yahrtzeit of Harav Moshe Yechiel Epstein, zt"l, of Ozherov. In his sefarim, he writes extensively in praise of the mitzvah of amen, as well as in praise of those who rise early to go to the Bais Medrash to reply amen, as he says in Beer Moshe (Nach, Shoftim ch. 5):

The main virtue of replying amen is when one brings himself to the obligation of replying amen, and is promised in the *passuk* (*Yeshaya* 26:2) 'The gates of Gan Eden are opened for him.' This is especially for one who is *shomer emunim*, waits and watches for a time when he becomes obligated to answer amen (*Shabbos* 119b, *Rashi*, there). Hence, the *Tana Devei Elyahu* says (*Rabbah* ch. 10) on the *passuk* (*Shoftim* 5:2): "Bifroa pera'os beYisrael behisnadev am barachu Hashem." Hashem avenges for Am Yisrael from the nations of the world in the merit of those who volunteer to rise early to the Bais Medrash to reply amen, and thus bring about salvation for Am Yisrael.

Beer Moshe on Nach, Shoftim ch. 5

Bnei Emunim. I also recite Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa.



Nishmas Kol Chai Tevarech (3)

Ein Lanu Melech Ozer
Vesomech Ela Atah

The Alter of Noyardok would say: If a person would put all his trust in Hashem, with the complete faith that without Him there is no one who can save him, he would certainly see salvation. But many are lax about this because they consider "bitachon", trust in Hashem, to mean "hishtadlus", making an effort, and therefore, their salvation is delayed.

This can be compared to a poor man who heard that in the Germany lived a wealthy philanthropist named Rothschild. He decided to travel to him to ask for help. A few months later, the man returned from his exhausting journey, his face glowing with joy. His cart was loaded down with expensive merchandise, and he had a large sum of money from the wealthy man. His friend, who was as poor as he was, saw this, and decided to try his own luck. But by contrast to his friend, he decided to use the long journey to stop off in all the villages on the way to collect money there as well. When the man arrived at Rothschild's palace and asked for help, he was surprised to receive a small donation from the wealthy man. "Why am I different than my friend?" the poor man grumbled bitterly.

The *gvir's* response stunned him: "There's a tremendous difference between you. Your friend made the effort and walked this whole journey only to reach me. When he got here, he was drained, and on the verge of collapse. When he asked for help, I felt that there was no one else who could save him except for me. But you have collected money throughout the journey, and you got to me as well. From here, you will continue to collect money in other places as well...so I will give you a small donation like everyone else did..."

The same is true for us: if we feel with all our being that "We trust only in You...and aside for You we have no King to rescue and redeem us" then Hashem will help us with His open and broad Hand. But if we collect from here and there, and ultimately *also* turn to Hashem, we will get like everyone else. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Maaseh Rav*, p. 287)

Al Kein Eivarim
Shepilagta Banu

Many wonder about the wording of the *tefillah* of *Nishmas*. At first we says, "If our mouths...our tongues...our lips...we would not suffice to praise." Later we say, "All the organs that You granted us... will praise and bless." These two passages seem to contradict one another.

The *Maggid* of Mezeritsch explained this with a parable: There was a king who instructed one of his servants to prepare for the next day a feast in his home for the king and his senior ministers. When the servant heard the request, he was overcome with fear. His concepts were far too meager to satisfy even a

bit of the king's desires. How would he know which foods were worthy of being served at a royal feast? But the king soothed him right away, adding that he was undertaking all the preparations and expenses for the meal. The servant would only have to set it up nicely at the table.

Similarly, as long as we feel that the mouth is "ours," the tongue is "ours" etc, then "we will not suffice to praise...even one thousandths of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands...of good things that You have done with our forbears and with us." But after we declare that the "the organs that You have granted us and the spirit and the soul that You infused in us" – all our physical powers are in the Hands of Hashem and are subservient to doing His will, so we can continue to say "they are the ones that will praise and bless and glorify and elevate..." (*Haggadah Shel Pesach, Shalshes Hazahav Ruzhin*).

Until Now Your Compassion
Has Helped Us

Further on in *Nishmas* we thank Hashem and ask: "Until now Your compassion has helped us, and Your *chesed* has not left us, and don't abandon us, Hashem Elokeinu, for eternity." The Vilna Gaon offers a beautiful explanation for this in his commentary on Mishlei (25;15):

If Your help and support of our forebears stems from their good deeds and upstanding behavior, then we would need to be afraid, because we have not merited to reach their lofty level. Thus, who knows if our sins will be a detriment to us, *chalilah*? But because Your help to them would out of "Your compassion" and the fact that You did not abandon them was only because of "Your *chesed*", therefore we are sure that we, too, will merit that You answer our call: '*Val tiitshemu*, do not abandon us, Hashem Elokeinu, for eternity.'

This concept should encourage the hearts of those who are broken and dejected because they feel their spiritual level is so low that they are not worthy to merit the *chassadim* of Hashem. It is like the *chassid* who came to Rav Noach of Lechovitz and cried despondently that he feels that he has no more merits, so how can he expect any more mercy from Hashem?

The Rebbe gazed upon him compassionately and replied with a smile: "And until now were you worth anything? Since you came to this world, have you not merited to be granted gifts from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who in His great and endless mercy, can always bestow abundance upon you, even in your lowly state."

The articles on *Nishmas* are dedicated to the memory of Harav Chaim Ben Tzion Marmorstein, z"l, a pillar of *tefillah*, whose exceptional scrupulousness in reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* was the founding principle for the *Bnei Emunim* revolution, established by his son, Reb Yaakov Dov, shlita. His *avodas hatefillah* was especially manifested by his recital of *Nishmas Kol Chai*, which he said with fiery fervency, fulfilling the *passuk* "all my bones will say, Hashem Who is like You."

ד. ב. ז. נ. נ.

Revives the Dead and Deciphers the Unknown

In some *siddurim* there are added words in the praises of *Nishmas*: "*Mechayah meisim...meisiach ilnim...mefa'aneach ne'elamim*." The source for this *nusach* is cited by the Chida and Harav Yisrael Yaakov Algazi as this story, which took place in Yerushalayim some four hundred years ago. At that time, Rabbeinu Kalonymous, the father-in-law of the Maharshal, served as the leader of the *rabbanim* of Yerushalayim:

The revival of the Jewish *yishuv* in Yerushalayim was a thorn in the side of the Muslim residents of the city. They didn't even try to conceal their burning hatred, which sometimes spewed forth like boiling lava in the form of riots, murders and libels. Using these means, and others, the Muslims hoped to temper the love of Yerushalayim that the Jews had, and to drive them back to their native lands. Fortunately, their evil designs did not come to pass.

Late one night, a fight broke out between a group of Muslim youths. It quickly developed into a bloody battle that concluded with the murder of one of them, a child of one of the respected families in the city, by his friend. The hooligans quickly scattered in every direction, leaving their friend wallowing in his blood. However, the murderer himself who feared the revenge that the family would take upon him, did not leave the scene so fast.

He began to cook up a wicked scheme that would clear him of responsibility, raise his stature and at the same time, exact revenge on the Jews that he so despised.

He quickly called back his friends who had run away, and with his eyes gleaming with hatred, he presented his idea—after swearing them to secrecy, of course.

"Let's carry the dead body to the Jewish neighborhood, drop it in the courtyard of the synagogue, and we'll report to the Turkish police that he is missing. When the body will be found, the Jews will immediately be suspected, and then we'll be able to get rid of them forever."

Without an ounce of conscience, the youths hurriedly carried their friend's body to the Jewish neighborhood, where they deposited it in the shul courtyard and fled—straight to the Turkish police station. With crocodile tears in their eyes, the boys described for the officer on duty how they had gone for a hike in the Kidron valley, and that their lost friend had been lagging behind. Suddenly, they heard a loud cry and when they turned around, they saw two figures grabbing their friend by his arms and legs, and running towards the Jewish neighborhood.

They tried to pursue the abductors, but they were unable to catch up to him, and now they had come to the police to please help them find their friend. After all, who knows what had happened to him and if they would find him in time to save him?

The low level clerk hadn't had such excitement on his shift for a long time. Taking full advantage of the opportunity, he quickly sent a brigade of officers to the Jewish neighborhood, ordering them to go from house to house and leave no stone unturned until the boy was found and his abductors arrested.

It took just a short time until the boy was found in the courtyard of the shul.

Puffed up with self-importance, the commander hurried to the home of the Turkish pasha, a man who was not known for his sympathy towards Jews. He quickly drew his own conclusions, and before dawn, police were sent to arrest the leaders of the community.

Early in the morning, the news of the libel began to spread in the Jewish community like a fire in a field of weeds. They were terrified, and had good reason: The pasha soon issued a declaration that if within 48 hours the murderers would not be turned in, every last Jew would be expelled from

Yerushalayim, and would never be allowed to return.

A delegation of *askanim* was dispatched to the pasha's palace to try and assuage his fury, but they were met with a brick wall. The pasha's harsh words sealed the fate of any persuasive efforts: "If you turn in the murderers, your lives will return to routine. But if you don't, not a single one of you will remain in the city!"

Disappointed, the Jews went from the pasha's house to their rav, Rabbeinu Kalonymous, who was closeted in his room learning, unaware of the tumult outside. When the rav heard the story, his face grew serious. He closed his sefer, donned his hat and hurried out of the house. As the rav walked briskly down the ancient stone streets, his attendants managed to catch up with him. The rav's frenetic pace was mysterious to them, because they had no idea where he was headed.

They were very surprised when a few moments later, they found themselves at the pasha's palace. Fearlessly, the rav knocked at the door, which was opened by a burly guard. The guard asked what he wanted, and the rav replied that he had something for the pasha and wished to see him. Out of respect for the rav, the Pasha invited him inside.

The pasha, still furious, awaited the rav. "What do you want, Jew?" he spat.

"I want to ask the pasha to order the Jews released and the decree annulled immediately. This is a blood libel and it is not dignified for the pasha to incriminate innocent people based on a false testimony," the rav replied firmly.

For a moment, the pasha fell silent. He hadn't expected this response, but Rav Kalonymous did not leave him much time to think. "You have to establish a special court to judge this case without any subjectivity. I am sure that the innocence of my Jewish brethren will quickly come to light," the rav concluded.

"How will you prove that?" the pasha asked.

"Leave me to worry about that. First instruct the court to convene."

Three judges on the Muslim court quickly convened at the pasha's home. But the rav did not suffice with that. "I want you to bring the body of the dead man here, along with his friends who filed the complaint, and his family," he said confidently.

The pasha acceded to this request as well. The dead body was brought before the court, followed by the youths and the family of the dead boy. The rav asked those in the room to wait a bit, and then went into a corner and began to recite his special *Yichudim*. After a few moments, the rav emerged from his state of deep thought. He took out a pen, wrote a holy Name on a piece of parchment, placed it on the dead body's forehead and ordered: "Rise up from your sleep and tell everyone: who killed you?"

To everyone's utter shock, the boy sat up on the bed, pointed to one of the youths and briefly described how he had been killed. Then he collapsed again, dead.

In a flash, the murderer was handcuffed and hauled to the dungeons, where he admitted to the murder and was sentenced to death.

From that day on, the *chachamim* of Yerushalayim established that additional words would be added to the *tefillah* of *Nishmas*: "*Mechayah meisim, verofei cholim...hamesiach ilnim, vehamefa'aneach ne'elamim*—deciphering the unknown," in memory of that miracle where HaKadosh Baruch Hu infused the dead boy with life and the power of speech, thus solving the mystery of the murder.

Haggadah Shel Pesach Simchas Haregel; Shalemi Chagigah (Saloniki edition, p. 204)