

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



PARASHAS VAYECHI

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Sick Person Just Has to Think About Repentance

“וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה” (מז, לא)

“From here they said (*Shabbos* 12b) that the Shechinah is above the head of a sick person.” (*Rashi*)

Why does the Shechinah rest above a sick person’s head?

Rabbeinu Yonasan Eibeshitz explains: A healthy person can do absolute *teshuvah* by bettering his actions and pledging not to sin in the future. But a sick person who is bedridden cannot do *teshuvah* with his actions. Therefore, the Shechinah rests above his bed, and the minute he even thinks about doing *teshuvah*, his repentance is immediately accepted by the Shechinah above his bed.

Tiferes Yehonasan

Baruch Sheptarani on Ephraim and Menashe

“וירא ישראל את בני יוסף ויאמר מי אלה” (מז, ח)

“And he said who are these – where did these two emerge from that they are not worthy of a *brachah*?” (*Rashi*)

Harav Benzion Halberstam of Bobov, Hy”d, explained according to the *Midrash (Bereishis Rabba*, 63 10, and see *Magen Avraham Orach Chaim* 225 5) that on the day that a son turns thirteen years of age, the father needs to recite the *brachah* of “*Baruch Sheptarani mei’onsho shel zeh*.” That is because until the son reaches the age where he is obligated to do *mitzvos*, his father is punished for his sins, and from now on, the father is exempt from punishment for his son’s sins.

According to this, we can explain that when Yaakov saw the piety of his grandsons, the sons of Yosef, he wondered, ‘Where did these two emerge from’, that because they had not sinned they were not worthy of the *brachah* of ‘*Baruch Sheptarani*,’ because their father did not need to be punished for them.

Kedushas Tzion

Yehei Shemi Rabba in the Bais HaMikdash

“האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים” (מט, א)

In *Maseches Pesachim* (56a), *Chazal* describe the emotional moments that preceded Yaakov Avinu’s passing from this world:

“Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons the end of days, and the Shechinah left him. He said, ‘Perhaps there is a flaw in my bed [offspring]’

like Avraham, from whom Yishmael emerged, and my father Yitzchak, from whom Eisav emerged?’ His sons told him: ‘*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*.’ They said: ‘Just like there is only One in your heart, there is only One in our heart.’ At that moment, Yaakov Avinu said, ‘*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso l’olam va’ed*.’” This sequence of events is also cited in the *Targum Yerushalmi (Devarim* 6:4) where the words ‘*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso l’olam va’ed*’ are translated to the praise we say several times each

The Geulah in the Merit of Amen

“ואלקים פקד יפקד אתכם והעלה אתכם מן הארץ” (ג, כד)

The acronym of “*pakod yifkod eschem*” is numerically equivalent to amen. From here we allude to the words of *Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni Shemos* 240): “Our fathers in Egypt were only redeemed in the merit of the *amanah* that they believed in, as it says (*Tehillim* 31:24): ‘*Emunim notzer Hashem*.’”

Vayaaminu B’Hashem, p. 38

Sefer Bereishis and the Secret of Amen

Chumash Bereishis has 91 *parshiyos (stumos and pesuchos)*, which is numerically equivalent to amen. This alludes to the connection between this *Chumash*, which contains the root of the faith, the *emunah*, of Am Yisrael to the end of days hidden in its *parshiyos*, and the *mitzvah* of replying amen, whose essence is *emunah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is “*Kel Melech Ne’eman*.”

Shevet MiYehudah

day ‘*Yehei Shemei Rabba mevarach l’olam*.’”

Thus the Mashgiach of Slabodka, **Harav Moshe Tikochinski**, explains the Gemara in *Brachos* (3a): “When Yisrael enter the shuls and *batei medrash* and reply ‘*Yehei Shemei Hagadol Mevorach*,” HaKadosh Baruch Hu shakes His Head, and says, ‘Fortunate is the king Who is praised so much in His home.’” *Rashi* there explains: ‘It was fortunate when this praise was offered in the Bais HaMikdash.’”

There is an obvious question: Where do we find that they replied ‘*Yehei Shemei Rabba*’ in the Bais HaMikdash?”

Knowing the explanation of the *Targum Yerushalmi*, we can now understand this: *Chazal* say (*Taanis*

16b) that in the Mikdash they would not reply amen after one who made a *brachah*, but rather ‘*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso l’olam va’ed*,’ which means, as stated, ‘*Yehei Shemei Rabba*...’

B’Ikvos Moshe

The Kohein Recited the Words of the Targum

“לא יסור שבט מיהודה” (מט, י)

Maseches Taanis brings the *nusach* of the *tefillah* that the Kohein Gadol would say on Yom Kippur in the Kodesh HaKodashim, which concludes with the words of the *Targum* on this *passuk*: “*Lo ya’adi avid sholtan mid’Beis Yehudah*.”

Why didn’t the Kohein say the words of the *passuk* itself, “*Lo yassur shevet miYehudah*?”

The **Yismach Moshe of Alexander** offers an answer: When the Kohein Gadol entered the Kodesh HaKodashim he could not hold a *sefer* in his hand, because his hands were filled with the *machtah* and the *ketores*. Therefore, he did not say the words of the *passuk* itself, because *Chazal* said (*Gittin* 60b): “Things that are written one is not permitted to say them by heart.” Instead, he said the words of the *Targum*.

Oros Rabboseinu Me’Alexander, p 104

This Is How We Thank Hashem for a Miracle

“ויראו אחי יוסף כי מת אביהם ויאמרו לו ישטמנו יוסף” (ג, טו)

The *Midrash (Tanchuma Vayechi* 17) explains that Yosef’s brothers’ fears stemmed from the fact that when they returned from burying their father, and passed near the pit where they had thrown Yosef so many years earlier, Yosef stopped to make the *brachah*: “*Baruch She’asah li ness bamakom hazeh*.” From here, the brothers concluded that the incident was still alive in his heart.

Harav Chaim Shmuelevitz, Rosh Yeshivas Mir, asked: Why did the brothers conclude from this fact that Yosef was still angry at his brothers? Wasn’t he obligated by *halachah* to make the *brachah*?

He explained: The brothers knew how pious Yosef was, and were aware that before he went to make the *brachah* on the miracle, he probably had stood and replayed in his mind the trouble that he went through in those long ago days. He continued to do this until he could actually feel as though he was experiencing the pain right at that moment, so that he could offer praise from the depths of his heart. Therefore, their fears were justified that perhaps the feelings of animosity towards them would arise again.

Mizmor Lesodah p. 187

The Custom of Holy Tzaddikim

It was told that Harav Aryeh Leibish Lipschitz, author of *Aryeh Debei Ila’i* (passed away on 17 Teves, 5606/1846) did the following:

“Every day seven children came to his room and said *Birchos Hashachar* before him, and he replied amen after them.”

Ari Shebachaburah, Pesakim Uminhagim, Tefillah



Nishmas Kol Chai Tevarech

The Source of Nishmas

In the next few articles, we will discuss the lofty *tefillah* we recite on Shabbos, Yom Tov and any other time one wishes: “*Nishmas Kol Chai*.” *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* have written prolifically about the holiness and special virtues of this *tefillah*, and we will cite an encapsulation of what they say.

The song of *Nishmas* has very holy origins. In the Gemara (*Pesachim* 118a), Rabi Yochanan explains that this was the meaning of *Birchas Hashir* that is recited on Pesach at night, as the *Mishnah* says (ibid 117b). It is called *Birchas Hashir* because it is said on Shabbos after *Pesukei Dezimrah* (*Tosafos* ibid). Likewise, the *Zohar* (*Terumah* 138 1) expounds on its secrets.

The *Rishonim* (“*Mordechai*” there, and others) explain that the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah composed this song, and in the explanation on the *Siddur* of the Rokeach, he explains that it was composed before *Birchos Hashachar*. That is why some of the praises that we say in *Birchos Hashachar* are included there, such as “*Hashem lo yanum velo yishan*,” which corresponds to the *brachah* of *Elokai Neshamah*; “*Hame’orer yesheinim vehameikit nirdamim* etc” correspond to the other *Birchos Hashachar*. At the time, they recited *Nishmas* each day, instead of *Birchos Hashachar*.

The Virtues of Nishmas

We can learn about the lofty holiness of this *tefillah* from the enthusiastic words of the Rokeach in his *Siddur*: “Every person who is infused with the breath of life should concentrate on *Nishmas* with all his might, because it is the praise of *Shir Hashirim*, and praiseworthy is the one who concentrates on each and every word, reciting it aloud and pleasantly.”

The Shelah Hakadosh wrote similar words, and also added: “The praise of *Nishmas* is very great, it speaks of the virtue of the soul, the spirit and the soul that illuminate inside us...and although we don’t have the power to praise and glorify even one tiny part out of hundreds of tens of thousands...for all this, our bones will say...Because the body is the case for the soul, and is sanctified by its holiness, therefore we need to sanctify all our limbs...That is the general concept of the praise in *Nishmas*.” (*Siddur Hashelach*)

Lofty words in praise of this song were written by the Baal Yesod Veshoreh Ha’avodah (*Shaar* 8, *Shaar Ha’elyon* chapter 8):

“This praise is very great, a person should peruse the holy *Zohar* (*Terumah* 138 1) where he lists all the words of this song of praise, and

calls them all by name corresponding to the number of Holy Names of the upper worlds. Here, your eyes see how the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah focused with this praise on the lofty virtues in the holy upper worlds...”

“It is certainly worthy to enthrone the soul of a person like a consuming fire, to speak the words with great strength and to infuse a person with joy when he recites these words, a tremendous joy in His G-d, may His Name be Blessed, so much so until it will overrun the physicality.”

Why Do We Recite Nishmas on Shabbos?

As cited above in the name of the *Tosafos* in *Maseches Pesachim* (118a, Rabi Yochanan) already in the time of the *Mishnah*, the *tefillah* of *Nishmas* was recited on Shabbos. But from the words of Rabbeinu Yona (*Brachos* 34b) it appears that the source of this custom was established by the *Gaonim*. We found a few explanations for this.

1. In *Teshuvos Hagoanim Hachadashos* (36), it says that *Nishmas* is similar to *Birchas Hallel*, and it is recited as praise for the tremendous gift Hashem gave us, the gift of Shabbos. (See *Shabbos* 10b)

2. The *Shittah Mekubetzes* (*Brachos* 34b) writes that these are praises we add in honor of Shabbos. The *Sefer Hatamid* (by the rav of the Me’iri, Harav Toledano, p. 29) explains that this passage is said on Shabbos because it has a *neshamah yeseirah*, and most of the praises in *Tefillas Nishmas* refer to the *neshamah*, the soul. Furthermore, “it is worthy to add and subtract on this day from the *tefillas* and *brachos* so that they should be different from other days, and a person should notice that it is a different time, just like he becomes aware by the change in clothing and food.”

The *Siddur Hashelach* writes: “The time to say it is Shabbos, because that is when there is a *neshamah yeseirah*.” The *sefer Chessed L’Avraham* (*Maayan* 2 *Nahar* 49) adds that when the *chazzan* says *Nishmas Kol Chai* at *Shacharis* of Shabbos, that is when the *neshamah yeseirah* enters the person.

3. Rabbeinu Chaim Vital (*Shaar Hakavanos* 1) writes that we recite it on Shabbos in place of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* that we have all week. He added that one who recites *Krias Shema* on Shabbos without reciting *Nishmas* is like one who recites *Shema* without *tefillin*.

The Envelope that Waited Ten Years

The Envelope that Waited Ten Years

“Mr. Gershon Davidowitz, I regret to tell you that because of the devaluation of the shekel you will have to add NIS 80,000 to the total.” Reb Gershon, a machine engineer in a small factory, was not a wealthy man. For many years, he had saved up money until he was able to realize the dream of his life: to purchase a large apartment in the center of Jerusalem. But now, with this new amount, he felt his dream slipping away again.

He woefully trudged back through the familiar streets of the Geulah neighborhood, to the Zichron Moshe shul, where he wanted to daven *Minchah* and *Maariv*. As he walked, thoughts began to flash through his mind...

He remembered the first moments of his arrival in Eretz Yisrael, years ago, with a wife and two little kids, without knowing what the future held for them. After spending a few days in an absorption center, it was clear that this was no place for him...Even though his Jewish knowledge was meager, he knew that the way his neighbors were behaving did not go hand in hand with a Jewish lifestyle, and the latter was the reason he had come to Eretz Yisrael in the first place...

With great effort, Gershon was able to find a small, one room apartment, near one of the frum neighborhoods in Jerusalem, where he hoped to rebuild his life.

Even though in his native Soviet Union he had served in a senior position, when Gershon was offered to work as a caregiver for senior citizens, he did not refuse. Fortunately, right at the beginning of this new job, he was assigned to work with an older man named Reb Zalman Hershberg, who was suffering from advanced Alzheimer’s. His condition had deteriorated so much that it was hard to believe that in his prime, he had been a wealthy businessman.

Reb Zalman’s children were very happy when Gershon became their father’s caregiver. In addition to his physical strength, they were impressed by his honesty, which was very important to them, because their father’s home was full of valuable items.

Reb Zalman was not quite as pleased. He was a Holocaust survivor, and he saw Gershon as a figure that threatened to undermine the tranquility he had built in life, and to return him to times he’d prefer to forget. From time to time, he would express his concerns aloud, which created some very awkward situations for Gershon, to be sure.

But there were also pleasurable moments for Gershon. During those rare moments when Reb Zalman’s mind was lucid, Gershon would lead him to the bench in the local park, and they would have deep discussions on weighty subjects. Gershon basked in these moments; his soul longed for spirituality, and these conversations were like watering a tiny shoot, which ultimately began to grow and thrive.

Now, when Gershon saw the shul building from afar, he remembered the turnout in his life. His thoughts carried him years back to the first time in his life that he stepped into a shul, accompanying Reb Zalman. Even though many years had passed since then, Reb Gershon still felt a chill go down his spine when he remembered the utter embarrassment he’d felt when he realized how different he was from the other *mispallelim*.

At those moments, he simply wanted the earth to swallow him up. But then an older

man with kind eyes came over to him and asked, “Why are you not davening?” The friendly tone in which the question was asked touched Gershon’s heart and made him feel like he belonged. Suddenly, he didn’t just feel like the outsider, the caregiver, but rather as part of the eternal nation.

His eyes were lowered when he answered the man: “I don’t know how to daven!”

“No problem, we’ll teach you,” the friendly man replied, his smiling eyes growing serious. That is how Gershon’s journey to Yiddishkeit began. It was a slow, yet determined, journey during which he uncovered beautiful diamonds in his heart that had been hiding beneath a thick layer of distortion. His endless thirst for spirituality led him to devote more and more of his time to learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*.

Even when Reb Zalman passed away and Gershon found a new job as a machine engineer in a newly opened factory, he continued to feel like part of the family of *mispallelim* in the shul.

Due to the fact that he had first taken his steps towards Yiddishkeit in the shul, it was natural that *tefillah* was something extremely close to his heart. Whenever he needed a *yeshuah*, even in the smallest matter, he would bury his head between the pages of the *Siddur* and ask, with his plain words, that his Creator send him the help he needed. Before his request, however, he would first offer heartfelt thanks to Hashem for all the good he had merited to date.

Now, too, before making any *hishtadlus*, Gershon lingered for a few long moments after davening. He offered a prayer from the depths of his heart: “Father in Heaven, I want very much to purchase this apartment, that will be a comfortable, suitable place to raise my children. Please, if it is Your will, help me succeed.”

When he finished davening, Gershon felt a sense of utter calm spread through his body. He returned home in peace, confident that his *tefillah* would not be rejected.

In the small kitchen, supper was waiting for him. The children were in their pajamas, waiting patiently for their father to finish his meal and put them to sleep.

But even before he washed his hand, there was a knock at the door. One of the children came into the kitchen, “Abba, there’s someone at the door for you!”

At the door was a courier with a brown envelope. “Sign here and here and here...” he said, and dashed back down the stairs, leaving Gershon holding the brown envelope.

Only then did Gershon look at the sender. “Hershberg family,” it said in black letters on the back.

Gershon’s hands trembled when he opened the envelope. A small slip of paper fell out, attached to a bank check for the sum of ... eighty thousand shekel.

The black letters shook in front of his eyes as he read the note:

“Dear Gershon, The lawyer finally finished executing our father’s will. The will stated that he wanted to give you eighty thousand shekel as a token of appreciation for your dedicated work. We hope you enjoy the money in good health. In appreciation and gratitude, the Hershberg family.”

The money had waited ten years for a fervent *tefillah* to realize its potential, and when that *tefillah* arrived, the delay was lifted and the money arrived at its destination.

(Heard from the person this story happened to.)