

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## PARASHAS VAYIKRA

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### One Who Refrains from Davening with a Tzibbur is Punished Measure for Measure

“אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה” (שם)

In his *sefer Derech Moshe* (Day 9) the early *mochiach* Rabbi Moshe Kahana of Gibitisch relates:

I once came to a town and stayed at the home of the *parnas* of the city, who was also a *shochet*. When I rose in the morning and wanted to go out to daven with the *minyán* in shul, I saw him busy slaughtering an animal. When he finished, I asked him to join me to go daven in shul, but he demurred, saying that he had to first hurry to check the animal so that its meat could be used of that night's meal. He would then daven at home.

I told him: Know that if you check the animal at the time when the *tzibbur* is davening, you will find it *treif* and we will not be able to eat from it this evening. But the man refused to believe me and remained at home. When I returned from shul, he told me regretfully, that indeed, the animal was *treif*, as I had said. He asked how I knew this, and I explained:

*Tefillah* was established in place of *korbanos*, and just like when one sacrifices a *korban* outside the Bais HaMikdash, his *korban* is *passul* like a *treif* animal, so, too, when one intentionally refrains from going to daven in shul, his *tefillah* is considered *treif*, so to speak. He is punished measure for measure. Just like he caused his *tefillah* to be *treif*, his animals become *treif*. An allusion to this can be inferred from the *passuk*: “*Adam ki yakriv mikem*,” - *mikem*, from you, is an acronym for *middah kenegged middah*, measure for measure.

#### Washing Hands as a Minchas Ani

“ונפש כי יקריב קרבן מנחה” (ב, א)

Harav Shlom Kluger explained: In *Maseches Menachos* (91a), *Chazal* say that at a time when there is no Bais HaMikdash, a person's table atones for him in place of the *korbanos*.

As the Torah established the *Korban Minchah* for the poor who cannot afford to purchase an animal, in our time, as well, it was necessary to establish a *korban* for one who is “weak in knowledge,” meaning he is not wise enough to have in mind that his eating should ascend as a *korban* of atonement. Therefore, *Chazal* established the

*mitzvah* of *netilas yadayim*, washing ones hands, which can atone for the “*ani bedaa*s, the poor man in wisdom” as a *Minchah*. An allusion to this can be found in the words of the *brachah*: “*al netilas yadayim* is an acronym for “*ani*”, a poor man.

*Chochmas Shlomo, Orach Chaim 158 1*

#### A Truly Perfect Korban

“דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אלהם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה” (ב, ב)

The *Sifsei Kohein al HaTorah* says: “*Mikem*” is numerically equivalent to 100, to teach us that anyone who says one hundred *brachos* each day is considered to have sacrificed a *korban*.

Furthermore, we can add: Because replying amen is part of the *brachah*, and it makes the *brachah* more important (*Rema Orach Chaim 167 2, Mishnah Berurah, ibid 20*), therefore we have to make sure that the *korban* of the *brachos* should be perfected by replying amen after it. The *passuk* alludes to this with an acronym as well: “*El Bnei Yisrael v'amarta aleiheim adam ki yakriv mikem*” is numerically equivalent to amen.

*Sefer Hagematrios 101*

#### Hashomer Shabbos...Keminchah al Machavas

“ואם מנחה על המזבח קרבנך” (ה, ה)

In the *piyut* of *Baruch Kel Elyon* that we recite on Shabbos morning, we say: “*Hashomer Shabbos haben im habas, laKel yeratzu keminchah al machavas*.” The question is asked: why did the poet choose the words “*minchah al machavas*”; is it only because it rhymes best with the line before it, “*haben im habas*”?

The *Mashgiach*, Harav Eliyahu Lopian, explains:

The *Minchas Machavas* was made of a hard, dry dough (*Rashi*, here), and therefore we ask: Just like the *Minchas Machavas* is willing accepted Above, like the other *menachos*, so, too, when one keeps Shabbos, even if he does it in a “dry” way, without much emotion or thought, Hashem should accept his Shabbos observance like a *Minchah al Machavas*.

*Lev Eliyahu, Bereishis, p. 205*

#### Teshuvah for Individuals and the Klal

“אם הכהן המשיח יחטא לאשמת העם” (ד, ג)

The *Avodas Hagershuni*, a commentary on *Shir Hashirim* (3,4) brings a beautiful allusion in this *passuk* in the name of his father Rabi Avraham, the brother of the Vilna Gaon: In *Maseches Avodah Zarah* (4b) *Chazal* said that because of their elevated status, Bnei Yisrael really should not have transgressed with the sin of the *cheit ha'eigel*. They did so only so that future generations should learn that many who sin together can repent. David Hamelech was also not worthy of sinning with Batsheva, and did so only in order to convey to the future generations that an individual who sins can repent.

An allusion to the words of the Gemara can be found in this *passuk*: “*Im hakohein*” – Aharon Hakohein, who made the *eigel*, and “*HamashiAch*” David Hamelech, “*yechta*”, will sin, then know that it is only because of “*ashmas ha'am*” – so that the nation, individuals and the *klal*, should learn that there is a way back from sin.

#### LaKel Asher Shavas Mikol Hamaasim

“מכל אשר יעשה לאשמה בה” (ה, כו)

Harav Menachem Mendel of Riminov says: In early days, it was customary that when the *baal korei* finished *Parashas Vayikra* with the *passuk*: “*Mikol asher yaaseh l'ashmah bah*” the *tzibbur* would rise to its feet and read aloud the beginning of the well known *tefillah*: “*LaKel asher shavas mikol hamaasim beyom hashevi*” whose acronym is “*l'ashmah bah*.” [They did this in order to fulfill the ruling of the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim 138 1*) that one must conclude the reading with a good thing (*Pardes Yosef* in this *parashah*)].

The words of Rav Menachem mended are cited in the *Maor Vashemesh* (*Parashas Hachodesh*), and he added an explanation for the relation between this *tefillah* and our *parashah*: This *parashah* speaks about the laws of the *korbanos*, and just like the *korbanos* atone for Yisrael, so, too, Shabbos atones for them, as *Chazal* said (*Shabbos 118b*): “Anyone who observes Shabbos according to *halachah*, even one who serves idols like the generation of Enosh is forgiven.”

## Amen, Until the Final Breath

On 5 Nissan (5755) is the *yahrtzeit* of the *tzaddik* from Netivot, Harav Reuven Yosef Gershonowitz, *zt"l*. His brother-in-law, Harav Gershon Edelstein, *shlita*, in his *hesped*, spoke about the last few moments of his life:

“His *mesirus nefesh* for *avodas Hashem* in *tefillah*...a few minutes before his soul departed, he asked to hear *Birchos Hashachar*, and made the effort to answer amen, until the end of the *brachos*. With each *brachah*, his voice grew weaker...”

(*Nitzotzei Eish, p. 185*)

“Anyone who answers amen with all his might, the gates of Gan Eden are opened to him.” (*Shabbos 119b*)



## Birchas Yotzer Ohr (3)

## Hameromam Levado Mei'az

As we continue the *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr*, after detailing the glory of creation, we continue with the words of praise to Hashem. First we need to precede by saying that although far be it from us to express His greatness, compared to what the Heavenly armies of holy angels praise, but this is what Hashem wanted. He wishes that the primary praise of His greatness and glory should come specifically from human beings. That is what we express by saying: "HaMelech Hameromam Levado mei'az" – even before Creation, He was already "meromam" as we say: "Adon Olam asher malach, the Master of the World who reigned before any creation was created." But "Hameshubach vehamishnasei miyemos olam" – after the world was created, He is glorified and praised specifically by His creations, who praise Him in their prayers. (*Sifsei Chaim – Rinas Chaim*)

We have to learn a lesson from this, says the Bais Aharon of Karlin: Although HaKadosh Baruch Hu is elevated by Himself, He still desires that His Honor should be raised all over the world through us. A person should not say to himself with laxity: Who am I that I should be counted as part of creation? I am worth a garlic peel among the hundreds of thousands of denizens of this world and the Heavenly spheres. Because if Hashem wanted that He should be praised and glorified specifically through us, how can we desist from our task? (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Bais Aharon, Kol Yemei Chayecha*).

Indeed, holy *tzaddikim* felt special loftiness when reciting this *tefillah*. We can see this with a story told about Harav Mordechai of Nadvorna, *zy"l*, who once spent a Shabbos in Sighet, where the Yitav Lev, *zy"l*, served as Rav. The Yitav Lev stood in the doorway of the *bais medrah* to listen to the guest's fiery *tefillos*. When he heard the words "Hamelech Hameromam levado mei'az hameshubach vehamefoar vehamishnasei miyemos olam" emerging from Rav Mordechai with purity and holiness, he was amazed and said: "I have said these words many times in my life," and then added, "But now, for the first time, I understand their true meaning." (Torah supplement, Succos 5770)

## Plea for Mercy in Yotzer Ohr

Later in the *brachah*, we offer a request for compassion: "Elokei Olam berachamecha harabbim rachem aleinu." Many wonder how this request for compassion fits in during a *brachah* where we are praising Hashem for all the creations.

The Mashgiach, Harav Yeruchem Levovitz of Mir explains:

After we express our amazement at the beauty and efficacy of creation that surrounds us, and we recognize the wondrous wisdom in the way the world runs so miraculously, we immediately utter a spontaneous *tefillah*: Please Hashem, in Your great compassion, have mercy on us that we merit to have

the curtain of materialism lifted from our eyes, and that the creation should not look to us like mere trees and stones that have no substance. Rather let us merit to understand and learn *mussar* from every detail in Creation and to recognize through it the greatness of Hashem. If that happens, then the honor of His Kingship will be revealed to every living being, and we will merit to be close to Hashem with all our being. (*Daas Torah*, Vol. VI, p. 174)

## Asking for Good from a King Signifies His Greatness

Another explanation is offered in the *sefer Lechem Rav (Krias Shema Ubirchoseha 709)* based on the Gemara (*Gittin 56a*): When Rabi Yochanan told Aspasyanus that he had become king, the Emperor asked him: "If I am a king why have you not come to me until now to ask me not to destroy Yerushalayim?" Through this we can understand that as soon as we praise Hashem in the *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr*, we must add a request from the King of Kings, "In Your great compassion, have mercy on us..." because this request is an integral part of His praise.

Harav Yosef Liss, *zt"l*, related: When the Russian Czar came to visit the district where Yeshivas Mir was located, delegations of honor were sent out from all the community leaders and different religions in Mir. Yeshivas Mir also sent a representative. When he returned to the yeshiva, he told the Mashgiach, Reb Yeruchem that before he entered the reception, the Czar's people announced that aside for words of praise that would be said for the Czar, they should also add a personal request. They explained that it is an honor for the Czar to ask from him something that he has the power to grant. When Rav Yeruchem heard this he was impressed and said: Now I understand a new explanation for why the request of "Elokei Olam" is included in the praises of *Yotzer Ohr*. It is not just a request; it is part of the praise of Hashem, that we cast our lot upon Him and ask Him to provide for our needs. (Shabbos supplement, *Devarim* 5764)

Another explanation is offered by the *Lechem Rav* (ibid) according to the Gemara (*Brachos 31b*): "Chana (the mother of Shmuel) said before Hashem: Ribono shel Olam, of all the huge armies that You created in Your world, is it hard in Your eyes to give me one son? What can this be compared to? To a human king who makes a feast for his servants. One poor man came to the door and said to them: Give me one slice of bread! They did not watch him, and he pushed himself in to the king. He said, 'Master, from this entire banquet, is it hard in your eyes to give me one slice?'"

According to thus Gemara we can understand: Specifically in the midst of *Yotzer Ohr*, as we detail the greatness of Hashem and His armies, and the tremendous power through which He sustains all creations, that is the time to ask for compassion from Him, that He provide us with all that we lack.

## Hashem Is Close to All Those Who Call Him

It was early afternoon at the Kosel Plaza. The blazing sun had driven the few worshippers who were at the Kosel into the shaded areas. Outside, just two small groups of tourists remained, taking pictures against the backdrop of the ancient stones. There were also a handful of people who, for one reason or another, chose to remain outside to daven.

Sitting next to the *mechitzah* on a chair was Rabbi G., the director of a successful *cheder* in a *chareidi* cities; he was weeping copiously. He buried his head between the pages of the *Tehillim*, hoping that none of the parents of his students would happen to be there and notice his wretched appearance.

That morning, he had arrived, as usual, at the *cheder*. Had hadn't planned on going to the Kosel, or anywhere else for that matter. But something happened to make his heart overflow with emotion, and he felt an urgent need to unburden himself in the best place possible – at the Kosel.

A few years earlier, Rabbi G. had been asked by one of his friends to serve as the principal at the *cheder* that he had established in a new neighborhood. Rabbi G., a long-time *chinuch* personality, agreed. But after just one year, the friend decided for his reasons, to sell his rights to the *cheder* to the highest bidder. At first, Rabbi G. had no intentions of getting involved. He had no experience in the financial management of institutions, and the necessary sum to purchase the *cheder* was far, far more than he could possibly cobble together. But wise people with whom he consulted persuaded him that the future of the place required that he accept the proposal. He raised money by taking loans from friends and relatives, and purchased the *cheder* for the full price.

It was not a hasty decision. This was a place with a very promising future and the investment should have covered itself within a few years. But as the saying goes—dreams are one thing; reality is another. It took much longer for people to get the permits to actually move into the neighborhood, and the student body remained very small. The *cheder* was running on very heavy monthly deficits.

Now Rabbi G. had to deal with the debts that he had taken, while raising funds and taking more loans for regular maintenance. Without realizing it, he had entered a terrible maelstrom of debts and juggling money, and it took over his life.

At first, he tried to raise money abroad, but he was not very successful. Several very difficult years passed, during which the *cheder* thrived spiritually, but remained on very fragile financial footing.

Remarkably, despite the many difficulties, Rabbi G. felt the Hand of Hashem guiding him every single minute. He could not explain how, but even during the most difficult days, he was able to somehow overcome from the mess and pay the teachers' salaries and the maintenance costs, and keep the *cheder* open.

Rabbi G. refused to break, until that morning when he knocked at the door of a relative. The man was a scholar and a well respected personality, and Rabbi G. had asked him to sign on as a guarantor

for a new loan that he was about to take.

As he waited at the entrance, Rabbi G. noticed out of the corner of his eye that on the table at the entrance were several forms from a certain Gemach, from which the man of the house apparently planned to ask for a loan.

He couldn't explain why, but something about the scene in front of him caused his emotions to rise to the surface. The question he had been trying to suppress for so many years suddenly rose in his mind:

How is it possible that those Jews who are so close to Hashem are the ones who need to schlep from one Gemach to the next, and from one wealthy man's home to the next, without having a moment of peace, while those who are so distant from Torah and mitzvos are filled with all the good in the world?

At once, all the raw feelings that filled his heart in recent years, and melded into a furious fountain of bitterness and distress, felt like it would burst forth out of him. Rabbi G. hastened to the Kosel to pour his heart out in front of the holy stones.

No, this story does not end like the proverbial fairy tale: no American tourist tapped on his shoulder and handed him a check that covered all of his expenses. But the response was not long in coming. The next morning, Rabbi G. went to shul, as usual and sat down in his place and began reciting *Pesukei Dezimrah*. Next to him sat a man with a pleasant voice, who read the words with a unique emphasis. Rabbi G. couldn't help but stop from time to time to listen to him.

When the man began reciting *Ashrei*, he felt like the words were penetrating right into his soul. He listened carefully to the man reciting the words: '*Poseach es Yadecha umasbia lechol chai ratzon*.' Again, that bitterness rose in his heart: Why do I have to run around so much when all the treasures in the world are in the Hands of Hashem, the '*Tzaddik Hashem bechoil derachav vechassid bechol maasav*'?

But then the man continued to read: '*Karov Hashem lechol korav lechol asher yikere'uhu b'emes*' and the answer was suddenly so clear to him:

HaKadosh Baruch Hu supports and sustains His every creation, but specifically because '*Tzaddik Hashem bechol derachav*,' that is why the closer a person is to Him, the more Hashem is happy to receive his *tefillos* and requests.

Like that baby who has nothing of his own and is sustained solely by his mother for everything he needs, by contrast to his older brother, who goes to *cheder* with a bag full of food. So, too, with a person: The closer he is to his Creator, the more he receives his needs every single day into his open hands.

"I didn't merit a wondrous *yeshuah*," Rabbi G. later related, "but I did receive a clear answer to my questions. With that answer, I continued to manage for a few more years, until *bechasdei Hashem*, the *cheder* was able to stabilize and become more financially secure."

Heard from Rabbi G., Finance supplement, *Bo 5777*