

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## PARASHAS TAZRIA-METZORA

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### Brachah of Refaeinu Corresponds to the Mitzvah of Milah

“וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו” (יב, ג)

In *Maseches Megillah* (17b) Chazal said that the *brachah* of *Refaeinu*, which is the eighth *brachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, was established by the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah* to correspond with the *mitzvah* of *milah* that takes place on the eighth day, because the *milah* needs a *refuah*, healing. But why was this *brachah* established to correspond to the *milah*; aren't there, unfortunately, more serious and dire illnesses than the *milah*?

The *Inrei Emes* offers a beautiful answer to this: Due to our many sins, there are indeed many serious illnesses. But in earlier times there was nothing in Am Yisrael that required that needed healing aside for the *milah*. As the *Gemara* says (*Bava Metziah* 87a), until the time of Yaakov Avinu, there was no weakness in the world. The *Midrash* says (*Bamidbar Rabba* 7 1) that at *Mattan Torah* all those who were sick became well. Therefore, *Refaeinu* was established to correspond to this.

Similarly, **Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** explained:

Because the sins are what cause all illness, then in *Asid Lavo*, when Hashem will excise the *yetzer hara* from this world, there will be no more ailments and *refuah* will only be required for the *mitzvah* of *milah*. That is why the *brachah* of *Refaeinu* was established specifically as the eighth *brachah*, for the *milah* on the eighth day.

*Birchas Eliyahu* p. 217; *Mizmor Lesodah*, p. 184

Furthermore, on the same subject: According to the *Gemara* cited above, **Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld** explained the meaning of the difference between the conclusion of the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* – “*Rofei Chol Basar*” – to the closing of the *brachah* of *Refaeinu* “*Rofei Cholei Amo Yisrael*”:

By contrast to the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, which was established as praise for the healing of the ailments of “*kol basar*”, the *brachah* of *Refaeinu* was established for the healing of the *milah*, which is only relevant to “*Amo Yisrael*”. Therefore, it makes sense to conclude with “*Rofei Cholei Amo Yisrael*.”

*Chochmas Chaim*, p. 353

#### To Bring Him Into the Covenant of Avraham Avinu

“וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו” (שם)

Chazal established two *brachos* for the *mitzvah* of *milah*: One is for the *mohel*, “*Al Hamilah*” and the second is for the father of the child: “*Lehachniso bevrivo shel Avraham Avinu*.”

In *Hagahos Maimoniyos* on the *Rambam* (*Milah* 3, 3) he asks: Doesn't we have a rule that when a *mitzvah* is done through a *shaliach*, he is the one who makes the *brachah* on the *mitzvah*? Why with *milah* is there a *brachah* for the *sender* – the father of the child—as well?

**Harav Mordechai Yaffe**, the *Baal Halevushim* (*Yoreh Deah* 265 1) answered this with a *chiddush*: The *brachah* of *Lehachniso* was not established only for the actual *mitzvah* of *milah*; it includes all the obligations that the father will have towards

#### The Gates of Amen Open With the Purification of the Metzora

“זאת תהיה תורת המצרע...” (ד, ב)

In the holy *Zohar* (*Yisro* 80 1, and similarly *Onkelos*, here) the word “*metzora*” is translated as “*sagira*”. By way of *remez*, we can learn from here that the sin of *lashon hara* closes the gates of abundance that are opened in the merit of answering amen, as explained in the *Zohar* in *Parashas Vayelech*. (285 2)

One can add even another allusion here: The acronym of the three partners in the sin of *lashon hara* – “*omer*,” “*neemar*” [the one who the story is about] and “*mekabel*” is “*amen*.” Furthermore: the purification of the *metzora* is done through bringing “*tzipporim* and *eizov*” whose acronym is “*tzei*”, which is numerically equivalent to “*amen*.” When he is purified the gates of ‘amen’ that were locked open before him.

*Parparaos Lechachmah*; *Magen Avraham* (Trisker Maggid)

his child from here on in: to redeem him if he is an oldest; to teach him Torah, to marry him off and suchlike. Therefore, the people reply to the

*brachah* “*Keshem shenichnas labris kein yikaness leTorah lechuppah ulemaasim tovim*.”

**Harav Akiva Eiger** added to the words of the *Levush* (*Shu”t*, *Kama* 42) according to the *Ollelos Ephraim* (*maamar* 352) that at the same time that the *orlas habasar* is removed from the baby, the *orlas haleiv*, in the heart, is also removed. Thus, his soul is prepared and his heart is opened to understand Torah learning and *mitzvos*. This is similar to what the *Levush* says, that it is worthy to make the *brachah* at that time for the rest of the spiritual things that the son will merit in the future because of the *mitzvah* of *milah*.

#### The Virtue of One Who Repents By Himself

“וראה הכהן והגה נרפא נגע הצרעת מן הצרוע” (יד, ג)

**Harav Ephraim of Luntschitz**, in his *sefer Ollelos Ephraim* explains 9Vol. II, *Maamar* 236):

The highest level of *teshuvah* is when a person regrets his actions on his own, before he receives rebuke or suffers *yissurim*. That is what the *pasuk* alludes to here: “and the *Kohein* looks and sees that the *tzaraas* has healed.” How? “*Min hatzarua*,” from the person who is afflicted, who did so by himself, without being rebuked by others.

#### The Rectification for Those Who Speak Lashon Hara

“ולקח למטהר...ועץ ארז ושני תולעת ואזב” (ד, ד)

In *Maseches Erchin* (15b), the *Gemara* brings the rectification for those who speak *lashon hara*: “If he is a Torah scholar, he should learn Torah...and if he is an *am ha'aretz*-- he should become more humble.”

According to this, the *Pardes Yosef* (*ibid* 13:1) explains the *nusach* of *Elokai Netzor*, which we say at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei*. We ask: “*Elokai, netzor leshoni meira*, stop my tongue from bad,” and in order to do this, we ask for ourselves: “*Venafshi k'afar*, and my soul should be like dirt to all” -- for the *am ha'aretz*, while “*pesach libi besorasecha*, open my heart to your Torah” -- for the Torah scholar.

## A Word of Caution to Baalei Tefillah

On Thursday, Rosh Chodesh Iyar, is the *yahrtzeit* of the Gaon and Mekubal *Harav Yosef, Av Bais Din* of Dubno. In his *sefer, Yesod Yosef*, he expounds upon the virtues of replying amen, and he writes:

“An awakening and a warning: for those who pass before the *amud*...every word should emerge articulately and clearly – especially at the end of the *brachos*, so those who are listening can answer amen, because the reward for answering amen is great.” (Chapter 48)

“Because everyone who answers amen with *kavanah* and runs to the shul so as not to miss answering amen merits 370 worlds.” (Chapter 82)



## Sefiras HaOmer (2)

## Preparing to Count

The mitzvah of *Sefiras HaOmer* is unique in the special *tefillah* that accompany it, beginning with the long *L'Shem Yichud* before it, established by the Mekubalim (*Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar Hazemirov* Ch. 5, and see *Kaf Hachaim* 489 7) which was widely accepted in many *kehillos* (See *Noheg Katzon Yosef*) and concludes with the *tefillah* and *bakshos* recited afterwards.

## Shehecheyanu on Sefiras HaOmer

Many wonder about that fact that we do not make a *brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* on *Sefiras HaOmer*, by contrast to the rest of the *mitzvos* that come from time to time on which we make a *brachah* of "*Shehecheyanu*" when doing them for the first time.

There are various answers to this questions from the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. We will cite several of them:

1. Some *Rishonim* believe that indeed, it would have been right to make the *brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* (*Birchas Hazman*) on the *Omer*. However, because the "*zman*" of *Sefirah* is dependent on the *Yom Tov* that precedes it or follows it, as it says (*Vayikra* 23:15): "*Usefartem lachem mimacharas HaShabbos...ad mimacharas haShabbos*," therefore we fulfill our obligation of *Shehecheyanu* when it is recited during Kiddush of the first night of *Yom Tov*. (Of Shavuos – *Levush* 489 1, or of *Yom Tov Sheini* of Pesach in *chutz l'aretz*, see *Chaim Larosh* on *Haggadah Shel Pesach, Nirtzah*, end of 11). Therefore, it is proper to have in mind during that time *Sefiras HaOmer* as well. (*Shibalei Haleket* 234; *Meirei Pesachim* 7 2; *Sefer HaEshkol Pesach* 159 and more.)

2. The Baal Hamaor (end of *Pesachim*) answers: The *brachah* of *Shehecheyanu* was established only for *mitzvos* that have some type of pleasure. But *Sefiras HaOmer* involves no pleasure; on the contrary, it causes us great anguish over the *Churban Bais HaMikdash*, because in our time, we cannot sacrifice the *Korban Omer* as it was in the times of the Bais HaMikdash, when they started counting the *Omer* as soon as the sacrifice was brought. (We mention this in the *HaRachaman* after the *sefirah* counting.)

3. Harav Pinchas of Koritz explained this according to the Arizal: Just like with *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, in order to take them out of Egypt, Hashem bestowed upon them from His splendor, so, too, on the eve of Pesach, by performing the lofty *mitzvos* of that night, we merit all the lights that will illuminate the days of *Sefirah*. But right after *Yom Tov*, they disappear, and throughout the *Sefirah*, we make the effort to restore them until Shavuos, one level after another. Therefore, there is nothing new here for us to make a *brachah* on. (*Tosefta l'Medrash Pinchas* 184 and in more detail in *Bnei Yissaschar, Maamarei Nissan* 12)

## Yehi Ratzon Sheyibaneh Bais HaMikdash

We conclude *Sefiras HaOmer* with

a *tefillah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu should restore the service of the Bais HaMikdash to its place speedily in our day. The source of this *tefillah* is in the words of the *Avudraham (Tefillos HaPesach)*: "And after one counts the *Omer*, he asks Hashem and says *HaRachaman yachzir lanu avodas Bais HaMikdash limkomah binheirah beyameinu*."

The *Shelah* explained the reason for this *minhag (Pesachim, Ner Mitzvah* 63): "Because the Bais HaMikdash is not standing, that is why we say: '*Yehi ratzon sheyibaneh Bais HaMikdash*' and then it will be from the Torah and we will fulfill its *mitzvos*." But the *Shelah* already asked, are there not other *mitzvos* whose observance in our time is *derabbanan*? Why specifically after counting *sefirah* do we ask for the Bais HaMikdash to be rebuilt?

It can be said that by contrast to other *mitzvos*, which although in our time are *derabbanan*, we perform them exactly the same way they were performed in the time of the Bais HaMikdash. The *mitzvah* of *Sefiras HaOmer* is completely different because we do not have the *Korban Omer* and *Shtei Halechem*. Therefore, out of a yearning to perform it the right way, we conclude with the *Yehi Ratzon*. (See *Shelah* there, according to the Brisker Rav, *Haggadah Shel Pesach Mibeis Levi*, the laws of *Sefiras HaOmer*, and in the *Tosafos* on *Megillah* 20b, beginning with *kol*).

The *Mishnah Berurah* (489 10) adds that even those who think that in our time it is also a *mitzvah* from the Torah, it is certainly impossible to compare its value to when it is done the way it says in the Torah, i.e. following the sacrifice of the *Omer*. (See *Shaar Hatzion* there.)

## Lamnatzeiach Beneginos, After Sefiras HaOmer

In many communities it is customary to recite the *mizmor* of *Lamnatzeiach Bineginos* (*Tehillim* 67) after *sefirah*. This chapter has 49 words, corresponding to the 49 days of the *Omer*, and seven *pesukim* corresponding to the seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuos. (*Baal Ha'Akeidah, Emor* 67, *perek* 4)

The *Mekubalim* added that in the fifth *passuk*, "*Yismechu veyeranenu le'umim*," there are 49 letters, corresponding to the 49 days. Therefore, they wrote, one should have in mind each day of *sefirah*, in addition to the word in the *perek* that corresponds to that day, also the letter from this *passuk* in the order of the days. (*Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar* 22, *perek* 3-5; *Shalemi Tzibbur*, p. 298 in the name "*Naggid Umitzvah*")

Rabi Chaim Palagi cites a special *segulah* (*Moed Lechol Chai* 5 21) in the name of the *Shalmei Chagigah*: "Every day of the *Omer*, one should say at the time of *Birchas Kohanim* (in *Birchos Hashachar* – see *Moadei Yaakov* – *Zichron Moshe* 10) the *mizmor* of *Lamnatzeiach Bineginos* in the form of the menorah. It is a wonderful *segulah* that he should succeed in all his endeavors and is not harmed that entire day."

## A Yeshuah from a Random Ride

Standing in an out of the way bust stop late on a cold night, waiting for a bus that doesn't show up is not a pleasant experience to recall. But sometimes, such a wait can become unforgettable, especially when it is the catalyst for a surprising story of Hashgachah, like in the following story.

When the small car stopped in front of the darkened bus stop, Rabbi S., a *maggid shiur* in a well known *yeshiva* in Jerusalem, felt a deep sense of relief. After half an hour of fruitless waiting, he was happy to see a heimish person urging him with a smile to get into his car.

"Where are you headed?" Rabbi S. asked. The driver replied with a question of his own: "Where does the Rav need to go?" Rabbi S. noted his destination and the driver said immediately, "I'll take you there."

Rabbi S. tried to protest, but the driver insisted. "I don't own a private car, so now that I have the opportunity to do such a *chessed*, I will do this to the end!"

"Being that you did a real *chessed shel emes* with me, at least allow me to pay you with a story," Rabbi S. found himself telling the friendly driver. Without any advance preparation, he immediately began with an authentic Chassidic story:

"The elder Rebbe, Harav Yechiel of Alexander would travel each year to the village of Balta near Alexander in order to rest and refresh himself from the hard work of his *avodas Hashem*. His oldest son, Rav Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak, the Yismach Yisrael, would join him and attend to his every need.

"One year, when the Rebbe and his son went out to get some fresh air in the forest, the Rebbe was suddenly overcome with a harsh coughing fit. He became pale and sat down helplessly on a bench that was on the wayside. The Yismach Yisrael looked at his father with concern; the Rebbe's health had been rather poor the past few years, and even without understanding much about medical matters, it was obvious that the Rebbe's life was in danger.

"I feel like my end is near," the elder Rebbe said anxiously. But then his son stretched out his hand, and said with confidence: "Tatte, rest a bit on the bench. Don't worry; I am sure that very soon, you will feel better!" The words, said with such confidence, calmed the Rebbe. His eyes closed and he fell into a relaxed sleep.

Meanwhile, the Yismach Yisrael entered the thick forest, where, between the trees, he began to cry to Hashem for the recovery of his father. "Ribbono shel Olam, there is no one besides You who can save him! Please, have mercy on the *tzaddik*, who is *moser nefesh* to serve You and spare him..."

About half an hour passed. The Rebbe woke from his sleep, and miraculously, he felt much better. His face regained its color and he slowly began to feel stronger.

A short time later, when it appeared that the Rebbe had sufficiently recovered, he turned back towards his lodgings. On the way, the Rebbe asked his son: "How is it that you were so confident to speak with such surety? I know that you are a man of truth and I am sure you did not say those

words just for the sake of calming me down."

"I did not promise those things on my own knowledge," the Yismach Yisrael replied. "Rather, I relied on the words of the *gedolim*, namely Harav Yisrael of Ruzhin, zy" a, who explained this subject with the meaning of the *pesukim* in *Tehillim* (13):

"*Ad anah tastir es Panechah mimeni – ad anah ashis eizos benafshi*" – *hastaras panim* (concealing of the face) is possible only as long as a person is sure that he has the advice and the wisdom to handle his situation. But when he feels totally helpless, a cry bursts forth from his mouth: "*Habitah aneini Hashem Elokai, ha'irah einai pen ishan hamaves*," then he merits "*v'ani bechasedcha batachti yagel libi beyeshuasecha ashirah l'Hashem ki gamal alai*."

"When I thought these things over, I realize that we are in the same situation. We are on a desolate road, with no doctor or any *meshamesh* that can help. It was clear to me, if so, that at this time we had no other option than to turn directly to HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself to heal you, and that is what happened," the Yismach Yisrael concluded.

Rabbi S. finished his story just as the car entered the street where he lived. He hurriedly parted from the driver, thanked him and got out of the car.

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About a year passed since that incident. Rabbi S. had all but forgotten about it when, one evening, as he walked near his house, a young man who he did not recognize approached him and asked:

"Are you the one who traveled with me from this and this bus stop to your house, some time ago, and you told me a story about the Yismach Yisrael?" Rabbi S. was surprised at the direct question; it took him a few seconds to remember and answer in the affirmative.

"Listen," the man said. "That evening that I met you, my wife and I had our tenth anniversary. It was a very sad day for us, because we had not yet been blessed with children.

"We had tried everything, we went to the best doctors, but nothing worked. That evening, we met you, and you were like an angel of rescue.

"Like a *nevuah* from Heaven, you told us the most apt story for that moment, a story that concluded with the wondrous words of Harav Yisrael of Ruzhin.

"I'm sure you never thought that there was something special about it, but for us it was like a bolt of lightning that illuminated the darkness that we were mired in.

"When we returned home, we decided that we would no longer seek the help of doctors; we would not try all kinds of advice and *segulos* or wait at the doors of *askanim*... We decided to turn only to the Creator, with the full *emunah* that there is no one but Him who can help us."

"A month ago," the man concluded his unbelievable story, "my wife and I merited to welcome our beautiful son into the world, with *siyata diShamya*..."

*Tevunos, Mishpatim, 5777; The Yismach Yisrael of Alexander, p. 123*