

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



PARASHAS BAMYDBAR

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

The Secret of Why Yehudah and Dan Were the Largest Tribes

"פְּקִדֵּים לָמֶתֶה יְהוּדָה אַרְבָּעָה וְשָׁבָעִים אֶלָּף וְשָׁמֶן מֵאוֹת" (א)

Upon perusalem we see that the *shevatim* of Yehudah and Dan were the largest of all. **Harav A. Y. Shain, shlita, R'm in Yeshivas Tiferes Yerushalayim of Staten Island,** offers a beautiful explanation for this:

We know that Yehudah's two sons form his first wife – Er and Onan – passed away in his lifetime, and he was left with only one son, Sheilah. Dan only had one son in the first place, Chushim (who was deaf). Hence, they davened and poured their hearts out to Hashem to merit offspring. These *tefilos* were effective, and ultimately, these two tribes ended up being the largest.

Birchash Ish

The Tefillah of the Tzaddik Requires Perfect Unity

"וַיֹּהֵי כִּל פָּקוּד בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבִתְּאַבְתָּם" (א מה)

"Because one who comes before the father of the prophets (Moshe) and his brother, the holy man of Hashem (Aharon), and presents himself with his name, this will be a merit and life for him... Because they will cast a good eye on him and will plead for him for mercy... I saw in *Bamidbar Rabba*...: 'Everyone would pass before you in fear and awe and you count them.'" (*Ramban*)

Based on this *Ramban*, the *mashgiach*, **Harav Eliyahu Elazar Dessler**, proved that the *tefilos* and *brachos* of a tzaddik are only effective when the person they are davening for or blessing completely subordinates himself to them. The *Ramban* explains that the objective of the census was that Moshe and Aharon should ask for mercy for those who are being counted before them, and he conditions this on the words of the Midrash: "All of them would pass before you with fear and awe."

Rav Dessler explained: The reason the *tefillah* of the *tzaddik* for another person is more accepted than other *tefilos* is because the *tzaddik* is able to submit himself and unite with his *tefillah* with another person until it appears that he is davening for himself. Because such unity cannot come with the power of only one side, it is therefore necessary that the other person completely

subordinate himself to the *tzaddik*. Only then will there be perfect unity in whose power the *tefillah* will be accepted.

Sichos Uma'amarim p. 70

The Connection Between Moshe and Aharon and the Tefillah of Shemoneh Esrei

"זִדְבָּר ה' אֵל מְשָׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן לְאֹמֵר" (ב א)

The *Midrash* (*Bamidbar Rabba* 2:1) states: "In 18 places you find Moshe and Aharon equal (meaning that Hashem spoke to them both together) to correspond to the 18 *brachos*." What is the connection between *Shemoneh Esrei* and this matter?

Harav Shlomo of Bobov explained:

Moshe Rabbeinu was the essence of *yirah* (see *Brachos* 33b) and Aharon was the essence of *ahavah* (see *Avos* 1:12). Because the person who davens needs to feel awe and love as one, therefore, *Shemoneh Esrei* was arranged to correspond to the eighteen times that Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon as one.

Kovetz Kerem Shlomo, Shanah 1, Kovetz 6, p. 32

In the Presence of the Heads of Thousands of Yisrael

"אֶלְהָ קָרוֹא הַעֲדָה נְשִׁיאִ מִtuות אֲבוֹתָם רָאשִׁי אֶלְפִּי" (ש"א, טז)

"*Nesiei matos avosam*" is an acronym for amen. This is an allusion to the words of Chazal that one who answers amen, the gates of Gan Eden are open to him and he merits to be there in the presence of the *tzaddikim*, who are the "*roshei alfei Yisrael*."

Chasam Sofer, Kerem Da" l

The Main Part of Tefillah – Facing the Aaron

"מְנַגֵּד סְבִיב לְאַל מָועֵד יְחִינוּ" (ב ב)

The *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Bamidbar* 9) states: "When he went to destroy Yericho, Yehoshua said to them: you will be spending Shabbos there; don't distance yourself more than 2000 amah from the *aron* in every direction. Why? So that you should be allowed to come and daven before the *aron* on Shabbos."

Why did Yehoshua ask that they daven specifically

in front of the *aron*? What would be so bad if they would daven *b'tzibbur* in another place?

Harav Chaim Elazar Wachs, the Rav of Piotrkov, explains:

In the *Sefer Hamitzvos* (Aseh 5), the *Rambam*, while discussing the *mitzvah* of *tefillah*, cites the explanation of the *Midrash* (*Midrash Hagadol Re'eh*) on the *passuk*: "V'Oso taavod" (*Devarim* 6:13) – "avduhu bemikdash", serve Him in His *Mikdash*." The *Rambam* explained: "In other words, to go there to daven in it and in front of it." The words of the *Rambam* prove that this *halachah* is an integral part of the *mitzvah* of *tefillah*, and in principle of the law, it would be worthy for Am Yisrael to daven specifically in the *Mikdash*. Based on this, we can understand why Yehoshua asked Bnei Yisrael not to distance themselves from the *aron*.

Nefesh Chaya, Orach Chaim, 490 3

"I Took the Leviim" In the Merit of Leah

"זַאֲנֵי הָנָה לְקֹחַת אֶת הָלוּל מוֹתֵךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (ג יב)

Rabbeinu Ephraim explains: When Levi was born, Leah his mother said: "Hapa'am yilaveh ishi eilai" (*Bereishis* 29:34). These words contained a *tefillah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu would choose him to serve Hashem, because the word "ishi" alludes to Hashem, as it says (*Hoshea* 2:18): "V'hayah bayom hahu ne'um Hashem tikre'i ishi."

This *tefillah* was realized when the *bechorim*, the firstborns, sinned, and Shevet Levi was chosen to serve Hashem. The allusion in this *passuk* is that the acronym of "lakachti es haLeviim" is "Leah."

Bemoaning the Loss of the Korban Tamid and the Pidyon Bechorim

"לִוְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת הָלוּל לִי אָנֵי הָנָה תְּחַת כָּל בְּכָר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (ג מא)

In the *kinnah* of "Keli Tzion V'areha," recited on Tisha B'Av, we bemoan: "alai zichvi temideha upidyonei bechoreha..." However, why do we bemoan the loss of the *pidyon bechorim* if the *mitzvah* of *pidyon haben* is still practiced in our time?

Harav Yitzchak Zev of Brisk explained: Our intention is to lament the loss of the service of the Leviim, who were the *pidyon bechoreha*, as explained in this *parashah*, that the holiness of the firstborns was redeemed and transferred to the Leviim.

Toras Zev, p. 82

A person must be careful in *tefillah* and *brachos* to answer amen, which is a word derived from *emunah*. Anyone whose forbears stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah, which is called *emunah*, and he is descendant of Avraham Avinu, who is the father of *emunah*, as it says (*Bereishis* 15:6) "Veh'e'min b'Hashem" must concentrate his thoughts when he answers amen."

Kad Hakemach [Rabbeinu Bechayeij], Emunah



As we prepare for receiving our Torah – our *emunah*, let us prepare our hearts and our ears very carefully, as one man with one soul, to hear and say *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*. Thus we will merit to be included together as part of the Khal Adas Yeshurun, "Yodei Shemecha velomdei Sorasecha lishmah," with *Kabbalas HaTorah* with love and willingness. Amen.

Bnei Emunim. Believe and reply amen.

Prayer of Faith

A Glance at the Seder Hatefillah

Akdamus

Among the most poignant moments of Shavuos are those when we recite *Akdamus*. In an ancient tune, that evokes deep emotion, the chazzan launches into the well known *piyut* of Harav Meir Shatz: "Akdamus milin veshayrus shusa..." The entire *piyut* is dedicated to describing the greatness and praise of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and of Am Yisrael, His chosen nation. The *tzibbur* participates in the recital, answering *passuk* by *passuk*.

The Composer

The *piyut* of *Akdamus* was composed by the renowned poet Rabi Meir Halevi beRabi Yitzchak Shatz of Worms, one of the Rabbanim of Rashi (See *Amudei Ha'Avodah*, p. 162).

The story about the composition of the poem is also very well known:

It was a time when many priests would take on the Rabbanim of the Jewish communities in debates about their faith. One day, the new priest of Worms approached the king and demanded that the Jews present one of their sages to debate him. He even persuaded the king to announce that if the priest would prevail over the Jewish sage, the king would force all his Jewish subjects to renounce their religion.

In distress, the *rabbanim* and *parnassim* of Worms convened an urgent meeting. It was decided to send Rabi Meir Shatz to the Ten Tribes that live on the other side of the Sambatyon River, to ask them to send one of their own sages to easily win over the priest.

Rabi Meir set out on a long journey full of obstacles and challenges, until he was standing on the banks of the turbulent Sambatyon. He had to wait until Shabbos began, because that was the only time the river rested from its fury and it was possible to pass. Rabi Meir came ashore in the land of the Ten Tribes, and when he met their Rav, he immediately agreed to his guest's request. He instructed one of their leading sages to go to Worms in order to answer the priest. Because the river was wider than the *Techum Shabbos*, Rabi Meir was not allowed to cross it. On the way there, his trip had been *pikuach nefesh*, which was not the case on his return. Therefore, he needed to remain with the Ten Tribes until the end of his life. But before the emissary to Worms departed, Rabi Meir wrote the song of *Akdamus*, and gave it to the sage to deliver to the heads of the Worms community, from where it was to be disseminated to all the Jewish cities.

The emissary set out, and quickly reached Worms in the allotted time. There, he conducted a rapid discourse with the priest until the latter was humiliated in public as his arguments proved to be groundless. The Jews rejoiced in their salvation. The poem of *Akdamus* was conveyed to its destination and within a short time, it was publicized in the Jewish communities. To this day, it is a widespread custom to sing it on Shavuos. (See *Bais Aharon V'Yisrael*, 173, where he cites an earlier source for this story.)

Essence of the Song

The song of *Akdamus* is comprised of 90 verses, with the first 44 arranged in the order of the *aleph bais*, twice. The

acronym of the rest of the verses form the words: "Meir Be'Rabi Yitzchak, yigdal beTorah ubemaasim tovim, amen vechazak v'ematz."

The verses all conclude with the syllable "sa", as an allusion to the Torah, which has no end, thus, when a person thinks he reaches its end, - the *tav*, he immediately begins again from the start—*aleph*. (*Lev Simchah, Shavuos* 5744)

Reason it Is Written in Aramaic

The reason *Akdamus* is written in Aramaic is because the song may foment hatred by the nations of the world against Am Yisrael. They may see it as an offense to their faiths, because the attempts of the nations to make Am Yisrael forfeit their religion are described, along with Am Yisrael's firm refusals. Indeed, it's interesting to note that in Worms, the city where the author came from, they did not have the custom to say it, in order not to arouse the wrath of the non-Jews who were defeated by the story that was the catalyst for the song. (*Minchas Aharon, Chag Hashavuous*, ch. 11).

Content of the Piyut

Akdamus is divided into three parts:

The first part begins with asking permission from the congregation to begin praising Hashem. Then it speaks about the strengths of the Creator that no mortal can even describe. Even if all the skies were reams of parchment and all the trees of the forest were quills, and all the waters of the sea were ink, and all the creations were scribes, they would not be able to describe even the tiniest iota of the Creator's greatness. The Heavenly armies, the angels and other heavenly beings all are gripped with fear and trembling when they come to praise their Creator, and they only do this on very rare occasions.

How precious, therefore, are Bnei Yisrael, that Hashem wants only them, and He chose them to be His nation. He sets aside His entire Heavenly army and reaps enjoyment only from Bnei Yisrael, as they sanctify His Name twice a day, learn His Torah and daven to Him. Therefore, it is worthy that we should speak of their praise and greatness.

In the second part, the poet describes the efforts of the nations of the world to get Am Yisrael to forfeit their religion through all types of temptations, but Bnei Yisrael reject these efforts outright. No pleasure in the world can compare to the pleasure waiting for them in the World To Come, when the *tzaddikim* will bask in the Light of the Shechinah, and will dine on the skin of the *livyasan*.

The third part of the poem appeals to the *mispallelim* to take *mussar* from the words, and to strengthen their *emunah* and observance of *mitzvos*. Thus they will merit to sit in the presence of *tzaddikim* in Olam Haba. Fortunate are we that we merited that Hashem chose us from all the other nations, and in His love, gave us the holy Torah.

A Story of Faith

A Weekly Story About Amen and Tefillah

Roundtrip Express

The passengers on the train making the long journey from Yerushalayim to Alexandria, Egypt, were very surprised to see the noble rav remaining alone in the remote train station. Had the train waited another bit, they would have been even more surprised to see the rav crossing the tracks to wait for the train going in the opposite direction—back towards Yerushalayim.

Why did the Rav return to Yerushalayim before he reached his destination? Who had the Rav suddenly met and what had he asked before he left? All this, and more, in the following story.

The holy *gaon* and *mekubal*, Harav Yaakov Chaim Sofer, zy'a, later known as the Kaf Hachaim for his eponymous work, was born in 5630 in Baghdad. During that glorious time, the city thrived as a center for hundreds of Torah scholars and scribes. It was home to many lofty *tzaddikim* who learned and taught Torah.

Rav Yaakov Chaim grew up in this rarefied atmosphere, raised in the home of his father, Rav Yitzchak Baruch. In time, he learned under Rav Abdallah Somech, Rosh Yeshivat Beit Zelicha, and after that, he became a *talmid* of Rabbeinu Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai, zy'a.

In Sivan of 5664, after hearing about the yeshivah of *mekubalim* Beit Kel in Yerushalayim, Rav Yaakov Chaim gathered his belongings and his young family and traveled to the Holy City. There, he sought to delve more into both *Toras Hanigleh* and *Toras Hanistar*.

He would closet himself into a tiny chamber in the attic near the yeshivah for about 20 hours a day, refraining from all the pleasures of this world. He spent his time carefully divided between davening, learning *Nigleh* and *Nistar*, and writing *chiddushai Torah* that illuminated the world. They ultimately became his *sefarim*, *Kaf Hachaim*.

A significant part of his day was dedicated to davening and *brachos*, which he always recited from the *Siddur*, with all the *kavanos* of the *mekubalim*.

As stated, Rav Yaakov Chaim's fame stemmed from his work, the *Kaf Hachaim*, which later became a vital work in the world of Torah and *halachah*. Its ten volumes are a compilation of halachic rulings from the Rishonim and Acharonim in the order of the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* and part of *Yoreh Deah*, with the addition of certain habits that are proper to do according to *Toras HaSod*.

Some time after coming to Yerushalayim, he was set to finish the first volume of the *sefarim*, after years of toil, and he wanted to publish it. But there was one major obstacle: The Rav lived in dire poverty and could not come up with the necessary sum to print even the first volume.

Due to the rampant poverty in Yerushalayim at the time, Rav Yaakov Chaim was not able to raise the money he needed among the local residents.

Those close to him advised him to travel abroad, but he refused to leave Yerushalayim for even one day. For a long time, he tried to remain firm in his refusal, but when he saw that the printing was being delayed more and more, he had no choice but to change his mind and leave the city.

He had a long way ahead of him: first he had to travel by train to Alexandria, from where he would continue to one of

the countries where there was a Jewish community, in the hope that within a short time he could raise the necessary sum. The wagon driver who was supposed to come and pick him early in the morning to take him to the train station was waiting impatiently, but Rav Yaakov Chaim was delayed in his room. There, near the wall, he davened fervently and tearfully, as was his habit. When those close to him wondered at the urgency of the *tefillah*, he explained: I davened to Hashem to help me spend as little time as possible out of my beloved Yerushalayim.

The train set out on its long journey. The Rav sat near the window, deep in his learning, with his small bag at his feet. While his fellow passengers gazed at the desert scenery, the Rav's eyes never left his *sefer*.

A few hours after they set out, a long whistle informed the tired passengers that the train would be stopping for a short time at one of the remote desert towns en route to Alexandria. The passengers hurried off the train to stretch their muscles and buy some food and drink for the rest of the journey. The Rav also got off and sat down on a bench in the station, continuing to learn.

A hand that came to rest on his shoulder suddenly made the Rav raise his eyes from the *sefer*. It was the renowned *gvir* Reb Yosef Semuchah. He had just emerged from the first class car and was surprised to see the Yerushalmi sage in such an unexpected place.

"What is the Rav doing here?" the *gvir* asked. "What urgent reason has caused a scholar such as the Rav to travel to a faraway land?" the wealthy many wondered aloud.

"I had to travel abroad to solicit help from wealthy people to publish my *sefer*," the Rav answered modestly.

Without another word, the *gvir* took out a heavy purse from his pocket and handed it to the Rav. "The 200 Egyptian lisras that are here will surely cover the printing expenses," he remarked. Then he urged the Rav to return to the train, that was about to continue on its journey.

The Rav stood up, took the wealthy man's hand and thanked him warmly as he emotionally blessed him. Then he escorted the wealthy man to the door of the train and bid him farewell.

A sharp whistle pierced the air. In front of the *gvir*'s surprised eyes, the Rav remained in the desolate station, letting the train continue without him.

Because his mission had been completed, the Rav saw no reason to continue on the journey. He quickly crossed the tracks to wait for the train that was supposed to stop on the other side in the next few hours.

The Rav's *tefillah* had been answered. His journey lasted less than ten hours, and by early evening, he was already back in his beloved city.

The two hundred lisras were plenty to cover the expenses of printing the first volume of *Kaf Hachaim*. From that day until the end of his life, the Rav never left the *Bais Medrash*. He continued learning and publishing his *sefarim* one after the other, as was his aspiration, and to the benefit all of Klal Yisrael.

Abirei Bavel, p. 219, *Encyclopedia Arzei Halevanon*, Vol. 10, p. 1133