

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## PARASHAS DEVARIM

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### Sins Transformed to Merits

“אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל” (א א)

“Because they are words of rebuke, Moshe listed here all the places where they angered Hashem, and said these words in an obscure manner and only alluded to them, out of respect for Klal Yisrael.” (Rashi)

The commentators ask: Wasn't the sin of the meraglim mentioned at length later in this parashah (passuk 22 and onwards), and the sin of the eigel is mentioned in Parashas Eikev (9:8 and onwards)? Why was there no concern for the respect of Klal Yisrael over there?

Harav Elimelech Shapiro of Grodzisk explains:

Masechtes Yoma (86b) tells us that one who does complete repentance – his sins are turned to merits. According to this we can say: Moshe's rebuke in this parashah took place before Bnei Yisrael did teshuvah out of love, therefore, Moshe referred to the sins indirectly so as not to shame them. However, the ones mentioned later on are said after they repented with love, due to this rebuke, and therefore, those sins became merits and Moshe was no longer hesitant to relate them in detail.

*Imrei Elimelech*

#### Asking Twice for Yiras Shamayim

“וְיִזְכֹּר זָהָב” (א א)

“Vedi zahav” – he rebuked them for the eigel that they made because of the abundance of gold that they had.” (Rashi)

In Birchas Hachodesh we ask: “And give us... a life that has Yiras Shamayim and fear of sin, a life of wealth and honor,” and then we repeat and ask, “a life in which we have a love of Torah and Yiras Shamayim.” Why the redundancy?

The Chofetz Chaim explains:

After our first request for Yiras Shamayim we add a request for a “life of wealth and honor,” hence we should be afraid that perhaps the wealthy and honor will undermine the Fear of Heaven that we have merited. As Rashi here explains, Bnei Yisrael sinned with the eigel because of the abundance of gold that they had. Therefore, we have to ask a second time: “A life where we should have... Yiras Shamayim,” despite the wealth we may merit.

*Chofetz Chaim Hachadash al HaTorah*

#### If He Would Have Brought Us Before Har Sinai – That Would Be Enough

“רַב לָכֵן שָׁבַת בְּהַר הַזֶּה” (א ו)

Harav Azariyah Figu, author of *Gidulei Terumah*, explains:

HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael “Rav lachem” – it was enough for you to have merited just “to sit at this mountain” – without receiving the Torah, because the holiness of the mountain is so great it would have been enough to bestow upon you holiness and cause you to elevate yourselves and become pure. Chazal say (Shabbos 146a): “Yisrael who stood at Har Sinai – their impurity stopped.” How much, then, must you rejoice that you merited also to receive the Torah, and that is what we thank for in the Haggadah Shel Pesach, where we say: “If You would have brought us before Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would have been enough.”

*Binah L'Itim Drush 49*

#### Amen Evokes Rachamim

“אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל בעבר”

הירדן במדבר” (א א)

The acronym of “eileh hadevarim asher diber Moshe el kol Yisrael b'ever haYarden bamidbar” is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the same as amen. This is to teach us that before Moshe Rabbeinu rebuked Bnei Yisrael and mentioned their sins, he first evoked the Middah of Rachamim, compassion, by mentioning the holy Yichud of the Shem Havayah and Adnus, which is the sod of replying amen, because this Yichud has a tremendous power to protect and defend Klal Yisrael.

*Shem Eliyahu*

#### I Will Bow to Your Holy Sanctuary

“ה' אלקיכם הרבה אתכם והנכם היום ככוכבי השמים לרב” (א י)

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabbah 1:11*) draws a parallel between this passuk and the passuk in *Tehillim (5:8)*: “V'ani berov chasdecha avo beisecha eshtachaveh el heichal kodshecha beyirasecha.” We need to understand the connection between the two pesukim.

The mekubal Rabi Avraham Chizkuni, a disciple of the Tosafos Yom Tov, explains:

The Mishnah (*Avos 5:5*) lists the ten miracles that were present in the Bais Hamikdash and one of them is “they stood crowded and bowed with space.” One can say that this miracle is an allusion to this Midrash: Even though “Hashem made you multiply”, still, He did not withhold from you the crowding to fulfill the words “Eshtachaveh el heichal kodshecha beyirasecha.”

*Shtei Yados Parashas Naso*

#### Moshe Established the Recital of 100 Brachos

“ה' אלקי אבותכם יסף עליכם ככם אלף פעמים ויברך אתכם” (א יא)

In the words of the passuk (*Devarim 33:1*) “Vezos habrachah asher beirach Moshe Ish HaElokim” – the acronym is numerically equivalent to 100. The early sages explained that the practice of reciting 100 brachos was established by Moshe Rabbeinu and was then forgotten over the generations. Dovid Hamelech reestablished it (*Bamidbar Rabbah 18:21*). That is what Moshe promised Bnei Yisrael in this parashah: “Hashem the G-d of Your fathers will add to you a thousand times” – if you recite 100 brachos each day, you will merit in exchange 1000 gold coins, because the value of each brachah is ten gold coins. (*Chulin 87a*)

*Kad Hakemach, entry Brachah; Baal Haturim, Devarim 33:1*

Further underscoring these words is that the acronym of “Yosef Hashem Aleichem” is numerically equivalent to 100. Furthermore, one can add that in all of Tanach we find only one more passuk where it says “Vivarech” with this punctuation, and that is “Tehillas Hashem yedaber pi vivarech kol basar Shem Kodsho l'olam va'ed” (*Tehillim 145:21*), and according to the early sages the connection between these pesukim is understood. They are both relevant to the subject of brachos.

*Nachalas Yaakov Yehoshua*

This is the place to cite the words of the Shach (*Choshen Mishpat 382 3*) that only a brachah that is replied to with amen is worth ten gold coins. An allusion to this can also be inferred from this passuk: “Aleichem kachem eleph” - the acronym is numerically equivalent to 91, which is amen.

Chazal say on the passuk: “Zanach Hashem mizbecho, ni'er mikdasho, Hashem abandoned His mizbeach, and shook off His sanctuary” (*Eichah 2:7*): The acronym of “Hashem Mizbecho Ni'er” is amen, and the word “zanach” is comprised of the same letters as the word “chazzan.” Form here we see that the sin of Yisrael in that generation was that they did not respond amen after the brachos of the chazzan.

*Tosefos Hashalem Eichah 2:7*

“זְכֹרָה זְמַן אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וְנִשְׁמַע הַשִּׁיבּוֹ, וְעֲתָה עֲנוּת אָמֵן לֹא אָבוּ”  
(From the Kinot of Tisha B'Av)



בוֹנֵה בְּרַחֲמָיו יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. אָמֵן.



In these difficult days, it is fitting that we should redouble our efforts to answer amen, especially after *Birchos Hashachar* – which symbolize sincere and deep gratitude for all the good that we merit from Hashem. May it be His will that this merit advocate for us so that we should be redeemed with the true Geulah speedily in our day.

**Birchas Ahavah Rabbah (3)**

**Statutes of Torah –  
Statutes of Life**

There is a well known story with the holy Baal Shem Tov: Once, he was asked something with regards to business. He opened the Sefer Hazohar that was on his desk, perused it, and replied.

They asked him where the solution to the question was in the Zohar, and the Baal Shem Tov replied: Didn't Chazal tell us (Chagigah 12a) that the light that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created at Creation illuminates from the beginning of the world until the end so that every man could see? Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu saw that the world was not worthy of using it, He concealed this light for tzaddikim for the End of Days. Where? In the Torah. When a person learns Torah lishmah, he illuminates a path for himself to have insight and see from one end of the world to the next, just like it was at Creation, before this light was hidden. (Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Bereishis 1:4; Keser Shem Tov 339)

The Chofetz Chaim would often say in the name of Harav Yitzchak of Volozhin: There is no question in the world whose answer cannot be found in our holy Torah, not only relating to spiritual matters. Even a merchant who seeks advice in his business should know that the answers he seeks are in the Torah. He just needs illuminating eyes to see where it is written. (Peh Kadosh, p. 355)

His talmid, Harav Elchanan Wasserman, Hy"d, would often add that it is not for naught that the Torah is called "tushiah" (Maseches Kallah Rabasi 5 2), because it is the only answer to every person in Am Yisrael to every question. On every subject that a person deliberates over, he should know that without the advice of Torah, he will not be able to reach a suitable and truthful conclusion. (From his son's introduction to Kovetz Maamarim.)

For this reason, we call the mitzvos of the Torah in the brachah of Ahavah Rabbah "chukei chaim", statutes of life. In Maariv we say "Ki heim chayeinu", for they are our life. Indeed, the Torah is the essence of our lives. From here we can say that if we understand that the Torah is the statute of our life, then certainly we will understand that it is inconceivable to forfeit even one halachah, because one who forgoes any halachah in the Torah, it is like he is giving up part of his life. It is as though he is missing, chalilah, a hand or foot. (Harav M.S. Shapiro, Zahav Mishva – Maamarim p. 77)

**To Merit Torah as a Gift**

In our tefillos we asked: "Kein techaneinu uselamdeinu." In other words, we are asking to merit the Torah as a free gift (Eitz Yosef). Chazal say in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 1 7) on the passuk (Bamidbar 1:1): "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert" – why in the Sinai? From here Chazal learn that the Torah was given in three things: fire, water and the desert. Why with these three things? Just like these are free to all denizens of the worlds, so, too, divrei Torah are free."

It is true that the Torah is more precious and important than thousands of gold and silver coins, but on the other hand, it was given to us for free, and that is because its value cannot be quantified – not with money and not with good deeds. We can see this also with Moshe Rabbeinu; despite there not

being anyone greater than him in good deeds (Brachos 32b), still, Chazal said (Shemos Rabbah 41 6) that throughout the forty days that he spent on Har Sinai, he would learn Torah and immediately forget it, until he merited to have it given from the Hand of Hashem as a gift. This comes to teach us that there has never been a person who has merited Torah through the power of his actions. Because we have no possibility to pay for the Torah what it is worth, therefore, in order to receive it from Hashem, it must stem only from His great love for us. Therefore, we precede the brachah of Ahavah Rabbah with the description of the special love and compassion that HaKadosh Baruch Has towards us.

Based on this we can then understand how we dare ask Hashem that to teach us Torah like He taught our holy forebears, even though we are thousands of levels removed from their lofty stature. Even the Avos did not merit the Torah through the power of their good deeds, but rather as a gift, and if so, we can also ask to receive what they did. (Yismach Yisrael Chanukah, 3<sup>rd</sup> night, 5670, Maamar 2)

**Success in Torah Learning –  
Only from Above**

Maseches Niddah (69b) cites a number of questions that the people of Alexandria asked Rabi Yehoshua ben Chananya. Among them were "What should a person do to become wise?" And he replied: He should sit [and learn] a lot and minimize time with merchandise. They said "many have done this and it was not effective!" Rather: They should ask for compassion from He to Whom wisdom belongs, as it says (Mishlei 2:6): "Ki Hashem yiten chochmah, miPiv daas usevunah."

In this brachah we ask Hashem: "Kein sechaneinu uselamdeinu," thus You should grant us and teach us. Indeed, from perusing the life stories of our sages, the giants of the generations, we can see that whenever they had trouble in their learning they would turn to Hashem with a plea that He help them decipher the secrets of the Torah. After davening for this from the depths of their heart, they merited help from Above.

It is told that when Harav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zt"l, would have trouble understanding a sugya, he would go to the next room to daven with tears that he merit understanding. Indeed, his tefillah always bore fruit.

It once happened that he had trouble with a Yerushalmi, and after some time, he found that the Gr"a had emended the Yerushalmi in a way that the words could be clearly understood. But Rav Isser Zalman refused to give up and said to those around him: "Indeed, that is the opinion of the Gra, but most of the Rishonim agree with this version in front of us. How can I reconcile their words?" It came time for Minchah and Rav Isser Zalman went into the next room to daven. He returned a short time later, his face wet from tears. When he came back and perused the Yerushalmi, he immediately thought of how to reconcile the two versions, and his face shone with the joy of Torah. (Bederech Eitz Hachaim, Vol. II, p. 476.)

**In the Depths I Discovered You, Hashem**

Against the backdrop of endless water, desert land and sky, the three young men were little more than specks in the scenery.

They had just arrived here the night before and pitched a small tent on the rocky beach opposite the city of Sharm El Sheikh. The tent was packed with everything they would need for their planned two day stay. Now, after a short rest, they set out on their first excursion.

The breathtaking coral reefs beneath the surface of the Sharm El Sheikh coast are what drew them to leave everything and made this long and exhausting trip. As secular youths whose lives lacked all significance, they could not find a better way to infuse some significance in their lives aside for this dangerous excursion.

Two of them went into the water to check out the territory, while the third waited patiently on the beach. After two minutes, his friends' heads bobbed up from the water as they excitedly called for him to join them.

"We found an opening into an amazing cave" they told him with unconcealed enthusiasm, and he quickly donned the wetsuit and got into the water to join them. They had no idea what kind of danger awaited them, and their curiosity banished all caution that they may have had. They entered the water and began to dive towards the opening of the cave. A magical world was revealed before their eyes: huge schools of fish in bright colors swam between the equally breathtaking corals, creating a trail of white foam. The rays of the sun that penetrated through the water bounced off the darkened boulders with blinding prisms. And on the sea floor, they saw strange creatures that until now had existed for them only in books.

They reached the entrance of the cave and began swimming vigorously towards it. In their excitement they forgot a basic safety rule: they didn't stop at the entrance to tie a safety line through which they could find their way back.

Swimming carefully they entered the cave to find a large cavern hewn into the stone, illuminated by natural light that penetrated through holes in the ceiling. They paused for a moment to take in the magnificent scene. The water that filled the cavern was a bright turquoise, and the fish that swam around them created a regal halo.

On the walls of the cavern they noticed three additional smaller crevices, and on the spur of the moment they decided to explore the one that looked to be the largest of them. Two of the friends swam inside, but they quickly realized that it was easier said than done. The crevice was quite low and its walls were lined with craggy rocks that almost caused them injuries. If that wasn't enough, the loose soil on the floor of the cave was disturbed by the movements of their swimming and clouded the water, making visibility difficult.

They decided to turn back, but could hardly get out of there. When they finally reached the large cavern, they realized, to their horror, that their third friend had disappeared. He must have gone into the wrong crevice to look for them.

Alarmed, they tried to look in the other crevice, which was actually spacious and easy to pass through, but more crevices and niches branched off of it. They were afraid to get lost, yet their fear for their friend's fate made them take the risk of

searching crevice after crevice.

When they finally discovered their missing friend, their joy was soon overtaken by the discovery that their supply of oxygen was waning. They tried to head back to the large cavern, but quickly realized that they had gotten into a dangerous maze.

The crevices were winding and serpentine, and they couldn't see any light. The oxygen was fast being depleted, and they realized that their lives were in a very real danger. In such a place, it was possible that no one would ever find them, they realized dismally. They also began to feel tired. This adventure seemed destined to have a tragic ending.

A quick glance at the oxygen gauges showed that they had just one minute left of life. With their final bit of energy, they decided to forge ahead as quickly as possible. They followed one another between the boulders, without knowing where they were going. Despair began to gnaw at their minds, but just then, in this most difficult moment he had ever experienced, Yossi, the oldest of them, felt a scream emerge from the depths of his heart. It was a most unfamiliar sensation of tefillah that was choked in the depths of his awareness after generations of being cut off from Jewish values.

"Father in Heaven!" Yossi heard the silent cry. "Please, get us out of here safely and I promise to return to You with all my heart!"

Even though his prayer was a silent one, Yossi felt that his throat was hoarse and that his whole body was sweating with emotion. Suddenly, something inside him made him turn his neck back, 180 degrees, and he noticed a faint ray of light. He hastened to swim towards it, his friends on his heels. The oxygen had already run out when the three friends found themselves in the large cavern. They traversed it quickly and reached the sea bed.

The hardest part was yet ahead of them. They had to speedily rise twenty eight meters to the surface. It was a very difficult task taking into consideration that there was no oxygen in their lungs. Again, it was Yossi who raised his eyes Heavenward and prayed from the depths of his heart. With a wave of his hands he reminded his friends the basic safety rule: to exhale every drop of air from their lungs before rising, in order to prevent a critical injury that they could sustain when they reached the surface.

They did so, and within a few seconds, miraculously, they found themselves in open air. They took deep gulps into their lungs and smiled at each other with relief.

Yossi, by contrast to his friends, could not just move on with life. It was clear to him as the sun that their miraculous escape was the result of that emotional plea that he had offered up from the depths of his soul, in the depths of the cave. In his heart, he made a determined resolution: he would return to his creator, Who had saved him from a certain death, with all his heart.

A childhood friend who had already done teshuvah referred him to an Arachim seminar. Yossi registered and emerged a new person. He became completely Torah observant and a true ma'amin—all in the merit of that one tefillah.

*Lemaalah Min Hashemesh, 27, p. 119*