

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



PARASHAS EIKEV

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Amen – A Mitzvah That a Person Tramples With His Heels

"זה היא אם עקב תשמעו את המשפטים האלה" (ז יב)

"If you heed the light mitzvos that a person tramples with his heel" (Rashi)

The Midrash Pliah on this *passuk* cites the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (126:6): "Haloch yelech uvacho nosei meshech hazora bo yavo berinah nosei almosav." What is the connection between these *pesukim*?

The **Ohev Yisrael** of Apt explains: When one is disdainful of a lighter mitzvah that a person tramples with his heel, such as answering amen, which we can perform dozens of times a day with no effort, when he comes before the Heavenly Court and will see the great reward that one receives for one amen, "haloch yelech uvacho—he will go and cry" – for his foolishness in losing out on so many mitzvos that he could have easily accumulated.

By contrast, someone who "nosei meshech hazora" – by making the effort to seek out the mitzvah of answering amen, which is like a "zera", a small seed that sprouts great rewards, then "bo yavo berinah" he will come with great joy – to Gan Eden, "nosei almosav" – carrying great bushels that grew out of the "amens" that he answered in this world.

Sefer Hapanim 31

Indeed, the word "eikey" alludes to answering amen as "eikey" is an acronym for "anah [amen] kuf berafus" was lax about answering 100 times amen. It is interesting that the name "Yaakov" given to our forebear because he was "grasping the heel of Eisav" (*Bereishis* 25:26) is numerically equivalent to twice amen.

That Your Tefillah Should Not Be Uprooted Before Hashem

"ברוך תהיה מכל העמים לא יהיה לך עקר ועקרה וככבודתך" (ז יד)
"V'akarah" – that your *tefillah* should not be uprooted before Hashem. (*Bechoros* 44b)

Harav Moshe Pollak, Av Bais Din of Banhart, explained:

In *Maseches Taanis* (24b) the Gemara relates that Ifra Hormiz, the mother of Shevor Malka, advised him: "Avoid fighting with the Jews, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu fulfills all their requests."

One can say that this is an allusion to this

passuk: Why does it say "Blessed you should be among all the nations?" Because "You will not have an *akar* and *akarah* (barren)" and as the Gemara explains (*Bechoros* 44b) that your *tefilos* will be accepted willingly Above.

Vayedaber Moshe

Tefillah Before the Trouble Accomplishes Everything

"אָא יְהִי בָּךְ עֲקָר וַעֲקָרָה וּבְבָמָתָה: וְכֹל מְדוֹן מֵצְרָם הָרָעִים"
asher yidut la yishim bar (ז יט)

Harav Shlomo Bochner, Av Bais Din of Pintschov, explained the reason these two *pesukim* are near one another:

The Midrash says (*Vayikra Rabbah* 10:5) "Tefillah accomplishes half". We can say that this rule applies when a person has already been afflicted by a trouble. But one who davens before a trouble arises, for him "tefillah accomplishes everything" and it can be effective that no trouble befall him in the first place.

That is what the *pesukim* here allude to:

How is it fulfilled: "Lo yiyeh becha akar v'akarah" – as Chazal explain (*Bechoros* 44b) that your *tefillah* should not be barren, but rather "And Hashem should remove from you all ailments" – it will be accepted fully and all your ailments should be taken away? When you awaken to daven while "lo yesimam bach."

Yekahel Shlomo

"And I Will Give Rains" In the Merit of Amen

"ונתני מטר ארציכם בעתו" (יא יד)

In *Maseches Taanis* (8a) Rabi Ami stated that "rains only fall in the merit of those who are *baalei amanah*". We can learn from this an allusion to the *passuk* before us because the acronym of "nasatai metar artzechem is 'amen.'"

Parparaos LeTorah p. 23

Vitality of the Soul – With the Power of the Brachah

"כִּי לֹא עַל הַלְּחָם לְבָדוֹ יְהִי האָדָם כִּי עַל כָּל מָזָעָ פִּי 'חִיָּה'
הָאָדָם" (ז ג)

"וְדַיְהָ עַכְבָּב
גַּשְׁעוּן" (ז ב')

"If you heed the light mitzvos that a person tramples with his heel"
(Rashi)

Rav Yehudah Gispan, one of the sages of Yemen some 200 years ago, wrote:

"The wise man should hear and learn to be swift to answer amen as necessary, because it is almost one of the mitzvos that a person tramples with his heels, because due to our many sins, this Torah was forgotten from Yisrael. It is one of the smaller ones in quantity, but great in quality, and of it the *passuk* says 'Open the gates and a righteous nation will come who is shomer emunim.' Don't read it 'emunim' but rather 'amenim'. How great is his merit and how pleasant is the lot of someone who is careful about it because he brings down abundance to the entire world."

Minchas Yehudah, Naso

❖ Amen. An abundance of merits. ❖

Bread is the sustenance for the body. What is the sustenance for the soul?

The **Ari Hakadosh** said: All the creations are sustained to this day with the power of the Word of Hashem that was uttered at the time of creation. When a person from Am Yisrael makes a *brachah* on his food and mentions the Kingship of Hashem in his *brachah* [Melech Ha'olam], he arouses that Divine statement of the time of Creation, and that serves as the sustenance for his soul.

This is what this *passuk* is referring to: "Because not on the **bread** itself a person will live" - the soul is what sustains the person and it is not sustained by bread "because by the Word of Hashem a person will live" – its vitality is through the power of Divine speech that is aroused by the *brachah* that is recited before it is eaten.

Likutei Torah

"Ubeirachta" – Even After You Eat and Are Satiated

"ואכלת ושבעת וברכת" (ח ז)

The Gemara (*Brachos* 21a) learns from this *passuk* that the obligation of making a *brachah* after eating is *d'Oraisa*, while the obligation of blessing before food is only *d'Rabbanan*. Why is this?

The **tzaddik Harav Chaim Ezra Barzel** explains: The way of the world is that when there is hunger and lack, it is easy for a person to draw closer to his Creator and to recognize His greatness, more than when he is satiated. Therefore, the Torah had to clearly command the *brachah* after the food, because that is when a person is in a state of satiation, and has a harder time thanking Hashem of his own initiative.

Otzros Habrachah, p. 126

Birchos Hashachar in the Present Tense

"וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנורן לך לכ' לעשות חיל" (ח יח)

The Rosh Yeshivah of Ponovezh, **Harav Elazar Menachem Man Schach** would often say: In order for us to fulfill this remembrance, the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah established that we recite *Birchos Hashachar* each morning in the present tense: *Zokef Kefufim, Matir Assurim*, so that we should remember that even at this very moment Hashem is giving us the strength to achieve.

Ohel Moshe

Prayer of Faith

A Glance at the Seder Hatefillah

Birkas Ahavah Rabbah (5)

"Binah" Precedes "Hearing"

Further on in the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah* we detail our request to merit Torah: "And give in our hearts *binah*, wisdom, to understand and to be educated, to hear, to learn and to teach, to preserve and to do, and to fulfill all the words of Talmud Torah with love."

The order of the requests here needs clarification, and the commentators ask: Isn't it the case that in order to understand one needs to hear first? How is it that we precede "understanding" to "hearing"?

There are a few explanations for this:

1. The Alter of Slabodka explained: Even after a person understands and is educated, he still has to ask that he should have the desire to hear and accept more and more and not be "happy with his lot" when it comes to matters of spirituality. As *Chazal* explained (*Brachos* 40a) on the *passuk* (*Shemos* 15:26): "Vayomer im shamo tishma..." – if you hear with old – you'll hear with new, because in the Torah it is impossible to suffice with the old. One must constantly be renewing.' (*Kovetz Kol HaTorah*, 12, p. 68).

2. There are those who explained that what we are actually asking is this: put in our hearts the wisdom and understanding so that we can reach the level of "shomea". Let us realize that the *middah* of "a listening ear", which is included in the forty eight attributes with which one acquires Torah (*Avos* 6:5), is the key to merit to acquire Torah. As the commentators explain (*Markeves Hamishnah* ibid): "He should put his ear like an auricle, an ear piece, to hear what his *rebbi* is saying." That is the key.

3. By way of *pshat*, one can explain that "lishmoa" is not simply listening, but rather accepting, meaning that our request is that after we hear with our ears, we should understand the words and then we will "nisha" we will accept them as a fact. (*Sifsei Chaim* – *Rinas Chaim*).

To Hear, To Learn and to Teach Others

In the request of "to teach" we ask that we merit to be a link in the eternal golden chain of Am Yisrael, as part of the process of conveying the Torah, which began with "Moshe received the Torah at Sinai and gave it over to Yehoshua..." and from there down through the generations. (Rav D. Lipschitz of Suvalk, *Tehillah LeDovid* p. 121).

However more than that we can say that the request of "to teach" is a request about the quality of our own learning, because as Rabi Chanina says (*Taanis* 7a): "I have learned a lot from my *rabbanim*, and from my friends more than my *rabbanim*, and from my students more than

from them all." This teaches us that one who merits to teach others makes great strides in his learning, and therefore, after we ask to merit "to understand and have wisdom, to hear and to learn" we add that we should merit to "teach" and through that we will rise yet another level in our Torah knowledge. (*Sichos Rav Reuven, Torah Maamar* 7).

Sanctify Hashem's Name With Our Behavior

Moreover, even a person who is not cut out for teaching Torah to others can ask that he should merit that the Torah should refine his *middos* and should guide him in the right path, so that all those who see him will learn from him to follow the path of Torah. Through this, Hashem's Name in the world will be sanctified.

Similarly, *Chazal* explain in the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 86a) on the *passuk*: "V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha" – that the Name of Shomayim should become beloved through you, that the person should read and review and serve *talmidei chachamim* and deal pleasantly with other people. Then people will say of him – praiseworthy is his father who taught him Torah, praiseworthy are his *rebbeim* who taught him Torah. Woe to the people who do not learn Torah. So and so who learns Torah – see how pleasant his ways are, how perfect his actions are, of him the *passuk* says (*Yeshaya* 49:3): "Vayomer li avdi atah Yisrael asher becha espae'r, and He said to me you are my servant, Yisrael, through which will be glorified." (Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, cited in *Chaim Sheyish Bahem - Drashos* Vol. I, p. 314; *Imrei Moshe*, Silberberg p. 254)

The Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk would explain on this *passuk* (*Parashas Davarim*) the words of the *Mishnah* in *Peah* (1:1): "Talmud Torah kenegged kulam." We have to learn the Torah "kenegged kulam" that all of Yisrael should learn with him. And that is what we are asking "to learn and to teach" – not that we should merit the crown of *Rabbanus*, but rather that there should be strength in our teaching to arouse others to learn like us, and thus, the Name of Hashem will be sanctified in the world.

One who merits to learn with this *kanvanah* is referred to by *Chazal* in the *Mishnah* (*Avos* 4:5): "One who learns in order to do, he is able to learn, to teach, to preserve and to do." Because someone whose intention in learning is to bring merit to others to serve Hashem, receives Divine assistance that he merit to fulfill all his aspirations for good.

A Story of Faith

A Weekly Story About Amen and Tefillah

Tefillah Gives Life

This moving story was related by the person it happened to, Reb Shlomo Reichenberg, zt"l, originally of Hungary. After suffering through the Holocaust in his youth, he resurrected his life in the Holy Land and became very close to the Chazon Ish, zt"l, who encouraged him to publicly relate his memories. This is one story that he shared:

I spent the Holocaust in the notorious Bergen Belsen camp. We were a small group of yeshivah students together who tried to maintain some human dignity among the thousands of prisoners who were almost dehumanized. We tried with all our might to strengthen one another, and to hope, amidst the sea of suffering, for a better future.

The hunger was too difficult to bear. Each day, hundreds of people died, and their bodies were tossed into piles. We were housed with 1200 people in barracks lined with five tiers of wooden bunks.

My brother, zt"l, and I, ybl"c, were able to find a place on the upper bunk, which was considered more "comfortable" for living. But we were not seeking this dubious comfort in our efforts to secure those spots. We knew that up there it would be easier for us to learn and daven covertly without being discovered by the Nazis and their cohorts.

With tremendous *siyata diShmaya*, I was able to smuggle my *tefillin* into the camp and to guard them carefully while I was there. I made sure not to miss a single day of donning them.

We made the effort to get up early every morning so that we should have time to daven *Shacharis*, sometimes even with a *minyan* together with those on the bunks around us, before roll call.

At exactly 6:30, after finishing davening, which infused us with some energy and life, we were told to get off our bunks and into the plaza, where the cruel and infamous "appel" was held. As part of this roll call, whose entire objective was to torture us, we had to stand for hours, sometimes in the freezing cold temperatures that plunged as low as -20 or more, and wait for an officer to deign to finally "count" us.

Even when the resident *rasha* would finally get to the end, he would make sure to "err" in his counting the first and second time, and only after a few of us fell to the ground from cold and weakness did he finally suspend his useless counting and send us to the day's work.

This is how our daily routine went. Each day we tried to daven with a *minyan*, and from time to time others joined us, sometimes for davening, other times to put on the *tefillin*.

On the bunk opposite me was a middle-aged Jew, also from Hungary, who appeared intellectual and educated, but apparently, he knew nothing about his Jewish heritage. You could say his Jewish identity began and ended with the fact that his ID card bore the shameful identification mark: Jew.

Lacking any *emunah*, this man had a very hard time coping with the difficult life in the camp. For most of the day, he was very withdrawn and didn't exchange a word with anyone else.

One morning, when I arose early, as I usually did, and sat in my place to put on *tefillin* and daven, the older man suddenly awoke, looked at me and began screaming and cursing me. In the morning stillness, his words resonated very far.

I was very surprised at his behavior. I gently tried to probe why he was so angry but he just continued shouting at me, and even screamed: "Aren't you ashamed to pretend you are innocent? I need to tell you what you did? You know very well how you behaved!"

The man continued his tirade as I gaped at him in shock, not understanding what he wanted from my life. A few people from the crowd that had gathered tried to calm him down, but this must fired him up even more. His screaming continued, and grew louder, but no one could calm him down.

Meanwhile, it came time for the *appel*. We all hurried off our bunks and to the plaza. While waiting, I turned to an acquaintance, a scholarly

Jew who had served as the rav of my town in Hungary, and asked him to try to speak to the man; perhaps he would be able to reach his soul.

When an opportune moment arose, the rav turned to the man and said to him: "I know the *bachur* from when I was a rav in Hungary. He is an honest good person who never did anything bad to anyone. So why are you so angry at him?"

The man heard this and fell silent for a few minutes, which seemed like an eternity to me. Suddenly he got up from his place and began shouting once again, unburdening everything that was on his heart:

"How is it possible that I am fading from day to day, and am suffering so terribly under such humiliating circumstances that we are forced to live with here, while this young man goes out to the *appel* every morning with a smile on his face and returns from a long day's work with that same smile? I am sure without a doubt that he has hidden ties with the camp leadership, which is giving him everything he needs. So why is he keeping it all to himself? Doesn't he see how needy I am? Why can't he be compassionate and share a little?"

Silence fell all around; I remained sitting alone in front of this poor man. It was clear that his tirade had somewhat relieved him, but he was still very distraught.

I waited for him to calm down a bit, and when our gazes met, I raised the edge of the rag that some called a blanket, and beneath it I revealed a red, velour embroidered bag, crafted by my mother, *Hy"d*.

"If you want to know the source of my happiness," I said to him, "this is it!"

"This bag and its contents are what give me the power to get up each morning. The *tefillah* that I merit to offer each morning wrapped in these *tefillin* is what gives me life, happiness and puts me in a good mood for the whole day. It also protects me from everything bad."

"That is the secret of my life!" I told the man, with tears in my eyes. "The *tefillah* that I am *moser nefesh* for each day since coming to the camp is what sustains me and keeps me alive despite all the difficulties and challenges that I have to endure each day."

Only after I finished speaking did I realize that dozens of my bunkmates were staring at me, trying to absorb what they had just heard from a young Jewish boy who was baring his deepest emotions.

Over the next few days I tried to connect with the man, but he refused to even answer my "good morning."

I was not surprised when, a few days later, the man called me to his bunk, and with tears in his eyes, began to share his life story:

"I lived in Budapest, and until the war I served in a very high position and did very well. I married at an old age, and sometime after our marriage the war broke out and my wife died of a broken heart. I never had children, and it's very hard for me to believe that I will ever emerge from this inferno."

"I have an apartment building in Budapest, and I want to appoint you as my heir. I will be very happy if my possessions are passed down to the best hands."

He then took out a pen and paper and wrote the address of the house, drafted a will and signed it.

After the war, I went to the building but found that it had been nationalized by the government.

I lost the "inheritance" but I will never forget the message that I internalized during that time, for the rest of my life – *tefillah* is what gives life to a person!

Maaseh Ish, Vol. III, p. 185