

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## PARASHAS KISAVO

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### The Brachah of Borei Pri Ha'adamah on Bikkurim

“ולקחת מראשית כל פרי האדמה” (כו ב)

It needs to be explained: The *bikkurim* are brought from the fruits of the seven species, most of which grow on trees. Why then does it say “*pri ha'adamah*” and not “*pri ha'eitz*”?

The Rishon Letzion **Harav Moshe Ben Chaviv** explained: The *halachah* is that one can separate *bikkurim* even when the fruits are still considered “*boser*”, unripe, as we learn (*Bikkurim* 3 1, and see 272 there): “A person goes down to his field and sees a fig that “*bichrah*”...He ties it with a string and says “these are *bikkurim*.”” Because we make a “*Borei Pri Ha'adamah*” on unripe fruits (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 202 2), therefore the *passuk* says, “*Velakachta mereishis*” – you can separate your fruits even while they are at the beginning of their growth, when their *brachah* is “*Pri Ha'adamah*.”

Thomas Anach

#### Practice Bowing and Prostrating

“השתחוית לפני ה' אלקיך” (כו י)

The confidants of the *tzaddik* **Harav Zundel of Salant** once found him standing in his corner and bowing over and over again, the way we are commanded to bow during *Shemoneh Esrei*. They asked him why he was doing this and he explained: “Don't the soldiers who serve in the king's guard practice their salutes and their marches before they stand before the king?! If that is the case before a human king, how much more so does it apply to one standing before the King of Kings; he must certainly practice to bow the way we were commanded, so he should do it properly when he stands before the King in prayer.”

Alei Veradim Brachos 12b

#### Birchas Hamitzvos – D'Oraisa or D'Rabbanan

“לא עברתי ממצותך ולא שכחתי” (כו יג)

“And I have not forgotten” – to bless on separating *maaser*. (*Rashi*)

The commentaries ask: Isn't the *brachah* on *mitzvos d'Rabbanan*, a Rabbinical stipulation (*Brachos* 15a)? That being so, how is it possible that that Torah clearly instructs us here about

it?

The **Mahara'm Danon** explains in his compilation *Be'er Basadeh* on the commentary of *Rashi*: By nature of the *brachah* it is indeed *d'Rabbanan*, but the actual obligation to praise Hashem for the merit given to us to perform His *mitzvos* is *d'Oraisa*, as learned from this *passuk*.

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**Harav Moshe Gefen**, ז"ל, one of the *roshei yeshivah* of Knesses Yitzchak in Chadera, sought to derive from here an answer to a question relating to all *birchos hamitzvos*: Is the *brachah* that we make before doing a *mitzvah* an integral part of the *mitzvah*, or perhaps it is a *mitzvah* in and of itself?

The fact that we mention the *brachah* on the *mitzvah* of *maaser* in the *Viduy Hamaasros* proves that the *brachah* is part of the *mitzvah* of *maasros*, because if not, why does a person need to say *viduy* about it at such a time?!

Veshallal Lo Yechar

#### Amen – From “Matah” to “Maalah”

“יהיה רק למעלה ולא תהיה למטה” (כח ג)

The difference between the numerical value of “*maalah*” and “*matah*” amounts to 91, which is the same as *amen*. This is an allusion to the concept that by saying *amen* with *kavanah* and the *yichud* of the two Names of Hashem, a person rises in level from “*matah*” to “*maalah*.”

See Ben Ish Chai – Halachos, Introduction Ki Savo

#### Covering the Knife During Birchas Hamazon

“ובנית שם מזבח לה' אלקיך מזבח אבנים לא תניף עליהם ברזל” (כז ה)

There is a *halachah* that one must cover the knives on the table during *Birchas Hamazon* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 180 5). The reason for this is brought down in the *Rokeach* (332) that because during a time when there is no *Bais Hamikdash*, the table is considered like a *mizbeach* of atonement for Yisrael (*Brachos* 55a), this *passuk* prohibits the placement of metal on the table, therefore we cover the knife during *bentsching*.

Other reasons have been cited for this *halachah*, among them the following:

1. The *Shibbolei Haleket* (135) writes that this was established because it once happened that a person was *bentsching*, and when he reached the *brachah* of *Boneh Yerushalayim*, he was so distraught over the *churban* that he took a knife and stuck it in his heart. Due to the danger to life, it was decreed to conceal the knife during *bentsching*.
2. The *Mateh Moshe* (Vol. II 304) says in the name of Ben Dinai: Yaakov Avinu was blessed “*Veyiten lecha Elokim mital hashamayim umishmanei ha'aretz verov dagan vesirosh*” (*Bereishis* 27:28). Eisav was blessed “*al charbecha tichyeh*” (*ibid* 40). Therefore, when we recite *Birchas Hamazon* about “*eret chemdah tovah urechavah*” that we received in the merit of Yaakov Avinu, it is not worthy that there should be a memory of the sword that symbolizes the *brachah* of Eisav in front of us.

3. The *Mateh Moshe* (*ibid*) further explains: When covering the knife during *Birchas Hamazon* we allude to the fact that the sword of the Angel of Death does not have power over those who are careful to recite *Birchas Hamazon* according to *halachah*. As the early sages wrote (*Rokeach* 337) the letter “*pei sofis*” is not mentioned in *bentsching* to teach us that one who says *Birchas Hamazon* according to *halachah* is not affected by “*af*”, “*shetzuf*” or “*ketzuf*”, all of which conclude with that letter.

4. Another reason is brought by the *Kaf Hachaim* (180 15): In *Birchas Hamazon* we ask for the Geulah and the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. At the same time, we have been promised (*Yeshayahu* 2:4): “*Lo yisa goy el goy cherev lo yilmedu od milchamah*.” In memory of this we cover the knife when mentioning Yerushalayim.

#### Krias Shema Needs to Be Preceded With Preparation

“הסכת ושמע ישראל” (כז ט)

By way of allusion, the **Toldos Aharon Rebbe, the Divrei Emunah** said on this *passuk*: “*Haskes*” – delve into and prepare yourself well to accept the yoke of Heaven before you perform the *mitzvah* of reciting *Shema Yisrael*.

Divrei Emunah, Likutim p. 10

### כל יום תענה בכוונה אמן

“One who answers amen with all his might, decrees of seventy years are torn up.” (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1)

The **Maharal of Prague** (yahrtzeit 18 Elul 5369) explains:

Seventy years is the expression for the period of a person's life in this world, as the *passuk* in *Tehillim* says (90:10): “*Yemei shenoseinu bahem shivim shanah*.” Even someone who is decreed to suffer pain and trouble all his life can annul these decrees if he is careful to answer amen with *kavanah*.

(Chiddushei Aggados Shabbos 119b)

*Kesivah vachasimah tovah. Amen.*



A photo of the western wall of the Altneshul - the Maharal's Bais Medrash.  
Caption: Gh" a, Ym" h, is the acronym of the words of Chazal (*Brachos* 53b) “*Gadol ha'oneh amen yoser min hamevarech*.”

## Birchas Ahavah Rabbah (9)

Torah and Geulah Are Dependent on  
One Another

"If you want to see the *Shecinah* in this world – learn Torah in Eretz Yisrael." (*Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim* 862)

At the conclusion of the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, we add a special request for the *Geulah*: "And bring us to peace from the four corners of the earth and lead us erect to our land." This addition seems out of context of the rest of the *brachah*, which focuses on Torah learning. There are a few explanations for the connection between the two:

1. In the *passuk* in *Eichah* (2:9) we lament: "Her king and her ministers among the nations have no Torah." There is no greater *bitul Torah* than when Am Yisrael is in exile and busy with all that it entails (*Chagigah* 5b), especially when some of the 613 *mitzvos* are only performed in Eretz Yisrael and others are only carried out when the *bais hamikdash* is standing. Therefore, after we ask to merit Torah, we add to merit to have the *bais hamikdash* rebuilt and we will all go to Eretz Yisrael. Then we will be able to learn and fulfill the Torah in peace and completion. (*Ishei Yisrael* [Rav Y. Brody] 53; *Shiras Dovid*)

2. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85b) learns from the *passuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 9:11): "Why was the land lost...because they abandoned My Torah." The reason for the exile of Yisrael from their land was because they were lax about the Torah and did not respect it as they should have. In the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, we express more than anything our love for Torah and our aspiration to merit it, and thus, there is no more suitable place to add a request about returning to the land that we were expelled from because of the laxity in Torah. (Harav A.S. Wasserman, cited in *Meir Derech, V'eschanan*)

3. There is another way to explain this: As long as Bnei Yisrael were in their land and the *bais hamikdash* was standing, there was a special love between HaKadosh Baruch Hu and Knesses Yisrael. But during the *churban*, this love diminished, and therefore, there is no worthier place to ask about the *Geulah* than when concluding the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, in which we expressed in lofty words that tremendous love Hashem and Am Yisrael. (*Nefesh Shimshon*)

4. There are others who explained this according to the Maharal in *Drush Al HaTorah* (Pietrkov edition p. 20 2) on the words of the Gemara (*Shabbos* 138b): "*Chas veshalom* that Torah should be forgotten from Yisrael...but you will not find clear *halachah* and clear *mishnah* in one place." The Maharal explained that because Yisrael and *Oraisa*, the Torah, are one, therefore, as long as Am Yisrael is scattered in the four corners of the earth, then the Torah is also scattered in several places, and those who learn it will have trouble finding a clear *halachah* and a clear *mishnah* in one place.

Hence we can understand the relevance of the request of "bring us in peace" to the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, which is about Torah. We cannot reach completion in Torah learning as long as Yisrael is not gathered in from where it is scattered all over the earth to our Holy Land. (*Birchas Yaavetz, Chanukah* p. 158)

Brachah and Shalom From the  
Four Corners of the Land

In some of the *nusach Sefard siddurim* it says: "*Maher vehavei aleinu brachah veshalom mei'arba kanfos ha'aretz.*" A nice explanation for this *nusach* is offered by Harav Moshe Chaim Schmerler, *zt"l*, the Rav of Zurich:

We ask that even when we are in the exile in the four corners of the earth, this exile should be for us a blessing and peace, meaning that the troubles and other travails we experience should purify our souls and prepare them to be worthy for the Redemption that we await. Thus, when the exiles are ingathered, we can look back and clearly understand that every event we experienced during the exile was for our eternal good, so that we should be ready and worthy to merit seeing Mashiach, may it be speedily in our day. (*Likutei Drushim* 77)

## And Lead Us Erect to Our Land

It seems that we should have asked: "And bring us with peace from the four corners of the world to our land." Why do we say "*vehavienu...vesolicheinu komemiyus l'artzeinu?*"

There are a few explanations for this:

1. The *sefer Chochmas Ha'emes* explains that the *Geulah* will be in two stages: first, all the exiles will be gathered in from the four corners of the earth to one place, and from there they will all come as one to Eretz Yisrael. According to this we can understand why we ask this in two parts, because first the words "Bring us from the four corners of the earth" will be fulfilled first, and only then "lead us erect to our land." (*Dover Shalom*, cited in *Siddur Otzar Hatefillas*)

2. The *Chasam Sofer* (*Shu"t, Yoreh Deah* 132) explains this according to what is known that even the deceased of outside Eretz Yisrael will be resurrected, but at first, they will roll in their graves through the ground to Eretz Yisrael and there, they will come to life again. Therefore, we do not suffice with the request of "bring us in peace from the four corners of the earth," and we also ask "and bring us erect to our land" – that we merit to be redeemed while we are still alive and we can go to Eretz Yisrael standing tall, and not after death, by rolling through the earth.

3. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 98a) explains that the redemption of Yisrael can come in two ways: if they will merit it will be the essence of "on the clouds of heaven" – with open miracles and wonders above the rule of nature. If they do not merit, it will come quietly and concealed, in the essence of "a poor man riding on his donkey."

Therefore, we ask at the beginning about the actual *Geulah*: "Bring us in peace from the four corners of the land," but immediately we add a request that this should not be concealed but rather "*komemiyus l'artzeinu*" – openly, with dignity and standing straight and tall. (*Sifsei Chaim – Rinas Chaim*)

## Two Kisses from Heaven

*This story of chizuk was heard by the renowned maggid and educator, Harav Menachem Stein, shlita, from the person it happened to, a young man. In the midst of a fiery drashah about the supernatural power that is concealed in tefillah that is offered from the depths of the heart, when all else has failed, he could not hold himself back from sharing this unbelievable story with the listeners.*

It was Thursday afternoon. As every week, when he returned from his busy day at work, Reb Moshe, an experienced *melamed* in one of the well known *chadarim*, wanted to take a number of bills out of his wallet and put them on a high shelf in the kitchen. He feverishly searched his wallet, checking his pockets as well, but nothing: aside for a few small coins the wallet didn't contain a single currency bill.

Reb Moshe didn't understand how this could have happened. Being organized was one of his more dominant traits. Since his wedding, he had maintained a detailed and organized expense notebook. Each month, he would place the sums of money he needed for regular expenses in envelopes, and also set aside money for unexpected expenses that could crop up.

This month, as well, he had done so, and therefore he was surprised to discover an empty wallet. It took him a minute to remember the reason for it: Yes, even the most organized person can encounter unexpected expenses. It was ordained from Above that Reb Moshe accumulated several such expenses in one week.

An urgent dental treatment for one of the children, shoes that suddenly tore, a broken down washing machine—all these, and more, liquidated the money in his pocket and now the wallet was gaping at him empty.

Reb Moshe recovered quickly. He needed to arrange some money for his wife, who was getting ready to go to the grocery near their home to purchase things they needed for Shabbos. He tried to call a few friends who had small loan *gemachim* for exactly this purpose. But the ones who picked up the phone had to turn him down. Their coffers were empty today and none of them was able to lend him the sum he needed.

Distraught, he tried to call two friends who he thought would be able to lend him the sum he needed, but there was no salvation forthcoming from them either. The end of the month was a tight time for everyone, and they also had some exceptional expenses this month that had drained them of cash.

Now Reb Moshe lost hope for any natural source of salvation in order for him to obtain what he needed

for Shabbos. There was just one thing he could do: to appeal to the One on High to Whom all money belongs and Who has the ability to sustain all His creations, even in the most dire of straits.

Reb Moshe went into his room and locked the door behind him. There, he began to speak with his Father in Heaven, like a repentant son: "Ribbono shel Olam, merciful and compassionate Father, I know that there is no force in the world besides You; You are the only One who controls *parnassah*, and it is only in Your Hand to decide if I will receive what I need for Shabbos or not. Please, help me and support me at this time."

For about half an hour, Reb Moshe "conversed" with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the words pouring forth from the depths of his soul.

After half an hour, Reb Moshe emerged from the room with red eyes and a pounding heart. The children knew nothing about why their father had closeted himself into his room in the middle of the day; they were waiting for him when he came out, their eyes shining with excitement. "Abba! You don't know what happened!" the youngest exclaimed. "A few minutes ago, Yoni, the worker from the grocery, knocked at the door, pushing two big carts loaded down with anything we could need for a whole Shabbos: chicken, meat, fish, canned goods, cake, candy, vegetables fruit, challo, drinks and everything was packed so nicely!"

Two weeks earlier, Reb Moshe recalled, there was a raffle in the grocery among all those who made a purchase of more than NIS 100. The grand prize was all of one's Shabbos needs for two weeks from the store.

This was the first time the family had ever won a raffle of any kind... Reb Moshe had not yet calmed down from the surprise when there was a knock at the door. This time, the surprise was beyond comprehensible: it was the neighbors from the top floor, a very organized family that always prepared their Shabbos on Thursday. They had just finished cooking when they received a call that there was a family *simchah* and they were being invited out of town for Shabbos.

"Take the food, it's a shame it should get spoiled or thrown out," they pleaded. Reb Moshe and his family didn't think for a moment to refuse this surprise...

Indeed, that is the power of *tefillah* that comes from the depths of the heart when all else fails. Reb Moshe had knocked on the Doors of Shamayim with full faith in the power of *tefillah*, and from Above, he was sent emissaries to knock on his door. His request was answered rapidly and twofold.

Emunah Sheleimah, Ekev