

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

PARASHAS LECHLECHA

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

"Veheyey Brachah" – In Eretz Yisrael

“אל הארץ אשר אראך... והיה ברכה” (יב א-ב)

The *sheva brachos* recited for a *chassan* and *kallah* conclude with a special *brachah* about the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. **Harav Aryeh Tzvi Frommer**, Av Bais Din of Kozhiglov, gave a reason for this, based on this *passuk*:

The reason we bless the *chassan* and *kallah* so much during the beginning of their marriage is in order to annul the curse that Adam Harishon and his descendents were cursed with. Am Yisrael received the power to bless from the *brachah* that Avraham Avinu was blessed with in this *parashah*: “*Veheyey brachah*” and as *Rashi* explains “the *brachos* are given into your hands.”

But from *Rashi's* words (*passuk aleph*) it appears that the existence of this *brachah* is conditional on Avraham Avinu living in Eretz Yisrael, and in order that even residents of abroad should be able to merit this power of *brachah*, it was established to conclude the *brachos* with a *tefillah* for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim, in order that from the power of our longing for Yerushalayim, it should be considered as though they live in Eretz Yisrael and are included in this *brachah*.

Shu"t Eretz Tzvi, Vol. II, p. 369

Sichah Refers to Tefillah

“וישמע אברהם כי נשבה אחיו וירק את חניכיו ילידי ביתו עשר ושלש מאות וירדף עד דן” (יד יד)

The **Trisker Maggid** said: The war of Avraham Avinu with the kings was certainly not a natural war, because it is inconceivable that such a small number of people should go out to fight these four mighty kings. Rather, we have to say that, like *tzaddikim* throughout the generations, Avraham Avinu employed the power of *tefillah* and asked for their downfall. The Torah alludes to this by counting the number of people who went out to war, 318 – which is “*siach*” – and *Chazal* have taught us (*Brachos* 26b) that “*ein sichah elah tefillah*”, the language of *sichah* is prayer.

Magen Avraham

Tefillah Comes Before Drushah

“הרמתי ידי אל ה'” (יד כב)

There are two times that the Torah uses the word “*harimosi*”: Here, and further on, (39:15): “*Harimosi koli v'ekra*.”

By way of *drush*, the Rebbe Harav Yissachar Dov of Belz said: We learn from here that one who asks to speak before the *tzibbur* to arouse them to do *mitzvos* must first pray that his words should be accepted by his listeners. “*Harimosi yadi el Hashem*” – is raising one's hands in prayer to Hashem, and only then “*Harimosi koli v'ekra*” – will I raise my voice in *tefillah* before the *tzibbur*.

Mahari" d

“And He Should Teach His Young Children to Answer Amen”

“ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך” (טו ה)

From this *passuk* we can learn about an allusion to the renowned ruling of the Rema (*Orach Chaim* 124 7): “And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as the child answers amen, he has a share in the World to Come.” Thus, we can explain this *passuk*: “*lo ko yihiyeh*” is numerically equivalent to amen; the *passuk* then says “*zarecha*” – to teach you that it behooves a father to teach his children to answer amen properly.

Zecher Olam, p. 44

Faith in Hashem Is a Condition for Tefillah With Kavanah

“הרמתי ידי אל ה' ... ואם אקה מכל אשר לך” (יד כב-כג)

In 5629, when the Rebbe **Harav Yechezkel Shraga** of Shineva traveled to visit Eretz Yisrael, the ship docked for a time in Istanbul. When the Rebbe debarked from the ship in order to rest a bit from the tiring voyage, he met in the port a wealthy Jew and began to converse with him. The man was very impressed by the Rebbe's demeanor, and he handed him a bank note for a very large sum to cover the expenses of the trip. When the Rebbe returned to the ship, and wanted to daven, he saw that, by contrast to the usual, he

was unable to concentrate. A quick introspection led him to conclude that this disturbance was caused because he had accepted the bank note, which marred his faith in Hashem.

The Rebbe, the **Shefa Chaim** of Sanz, explained the above *passuk* based on this story: *Targum Onkelos* says that when saying “I raised my hands to Hashem” Avraham was referring to *tefillah*. He then told the king of Sodom: because I want to daven with *kavanah*, therefore, I will not take anything of yours, so that it will not mar my trust in Hashem.

Betzila Demeheimmusa, Vayeishev, 5768, p. 26

Avraham Established a Place to Daven

“ויוצא אתו החוצה ויאמר הבט נא השמימה וספר הכוכבים אם תוכל לספר אתם ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך” (טו ה)

“Leave your astrological calculations that you saw in the constellations that you are not destined to have a son.” (*Rashi*)

Harav Yaakov Halevi Kopstein, the Rav of Nementzin, wrote: Even though *Chazal* said (*Moed Katan* 28a) that “Life, children and substance...are dependent on *mazal*”, after Avraham Avinu's *mazal* changed for the better, every person can change his *mazal*, if he only believes, and internalizes, that HaKadosh Baruch Hu can help him if he just prays for it.

Thus we can understand the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 6b): “Anyone who establishes a place for his prayer – the G-d of Avraham comes to his aid.” We have to understand the great virtue of this. Why does it say of this person particularly that the G-d of Avraham comes to help him?

Thus we can say that establishing a place to daven serves as a declaration that the person davening there places his trust only in Hashem, Who can listen to his prayer in his regular place, without him having to wander from place to place. That is by contrast to Bilam, who changed the place where he prayed time after time, in the hope that he would overcome his *mazal* and would succeed in cursing (*Bamidbar* 23:13). Only when one acts like this will he merit that the One Who answered the *tefillah* of Avraham Avinu and changed his *mazal* will also change the person's *mazal* for the good.

Shu"t Bais Levi, Introduction

וְהָאֱמֹן בָּהּ וַיְחַשְׁבֶּהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה” (טו ה)

Harav Avraham Yosef, the father of Harav Chaim Kreiswirth, zt"l, wrote in his *sefer Bais Avraham*:

That is why it says “*vehe'emin*” [which contains the word amen], because when Avraham heard the *brachah* of “*Ko yihiyeh zarecha*”, he hurried to answer amen, and thus he imbued in the coming generations the obligation of answering amen after every *brachah*. This conveyance to the future generations is “*vayachshevehah lo tzeddakah*”, considered for him as a *tzeddakah*.

🌀 Amen. From generation to generation 🌀



Krias Shema- Introduction (Part 2)

Krias Shema is Like Korbanos

Chazal in the Midrash (*Devarim Rabbah* [Lieberman] *Parashas V'eschanan*) offer some beautiful explanations on the virtues of *Krias Shema*, from which we can also learn about the importance of reciting it on time, morning and evening: "Reish Lakish says: A person must be careful about reciting *Krias Shema* as it is equal to all the *korbanos*. Just like *korbanos* are customarily brought between dawn and the evening, *Krias Shema* is recited in the morning and in the evening, as it says "And when you lay down and when you arise" (*Devarim* 6:7)."

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (*V'eschanan remez*, 835) says:

"It is compared to a wise man who had a son who would serve him two meals a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. After some time, the wise man saw that his son became poor and he could no longer do as he had until then, so his father called him and said: 'My son, I know that you are not able to provide those two meals that you used to bring me. I am not asking you to do anything other than to hear me speak in the shul twice a day. That is as sweet to me as those two meals that you used to serve me.'

"That is what HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael: 'In the past, you used to sacrifice to Me twice a day, as it says, 'One lamb you should do in the morning and the second lamb you should do in the evening' (*Bamidbar* 28:4). It was known to Me that the Bais Hamikdash was destined to be destroyed, and from then on, you would not be able to bring *korbanos*, but I ask of you that instead of those *korbanos*, you should recite *Shema Yisrael* in the morning and *Shema Yisrael* in the evening, and this rises before Me like all the *korbanos*.'"

The *Yafeh Lalev* (Vol. I, 61) added to the words of Chazal in the *Midrash Shir Hashirim* (5:2): "I am asleep and my heart is awake" – Knesses Yisrael says to Hashem, Ribbono Shel Olam, I am asleep from the *korbanos*, but my heart is awake to *Krias Shema*..."

Kelavi Yakum Uk'ari Yisnasa

When Bilam came to bless Yisrael, he was impressed and praised them: "Hen am kelavi yakum uk'ari yisnasa" (*Bamidbar* 23:4), and the *Midrash* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 20 20) explained this to mean: "There is no nation in the world like them...they rise up from their sleep like lions and quickly say *Krias Shema*, and crown HaKadosh Baruch Hu as King, and they are like lions... if *mechablin* [damaging angels] try to touch one of them, the person crowns Hashem [by saying *Shema Yisrael*]...when he says Hashem Echad, the angels are eaten up before him, and then whisper after him, 'Baruch Shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed' and they flee..."

Indeed, in Chazal we find that the *segulah* of *Krias Shema* is so great that it can eradicate any enemy or trouble from Yisrael. Rashbi says in *Maseches Sotah* (42a) that the merit of reciting *Krias Shema* of *Shacharis* and *Arvis* is enough for Yisrael that in its merit they will not be given over to the hands of the other nations."

Neutralizes the Yetzer

With regard to the war of the *yetzer*, it is very powerful, as we can infer from

the words of the Gemara in *Maseches Brachos* (15b; and similarly in *Yalkut Shimoni Shir Hashirim remez* 986): "Anyone who recites *Krias Shema* and is scrupulous about its letters – the Gehinnom is cooled for him." The Gemara further states (*ibid* 5a) that reciting it is a *segulah* to overcome the *yetzer*.

The *Kaf Hachaim* (*siman* 61, *se'if katan* 56) brings a nice reason for why the Gehinnom is cooled for one who recites *Krias Shema* and is scrupulous about its letters: the nature of a person is that because of the heating of his body he hastens to finish everything as quickly as possible. This person who overcame his nature, and cooled his temperament to recite *Krias Shema* slowly – is worthy of having Gehinnom cooled for him.

The *Zohar HaKadosh* (*Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction 8 2) says wondrous things: "When a person recites *Krias Shema* in his davening, then the *yetzer* is tied before him and he has no permission to flee; fortunate is one who merits to slaughter the *yetzer* in his prayers at that hour."

The Punishment for One Who Neglects Shema

On the other hand, Chazal were very strict in punishing one who does not recite *Krias Shema*. It says in *Maseches Shabbos* (119b): "Yerushalayim was only destroyed because they annulled the *Krias Shema* of *Shacharis* and *Arvis*." *Maseches Brachos* says: "me'uvav lo yuchal liskon, what is crooked will not be able to be straightened." (*Kohel* 1:15) – means that he neglected the recital of *Krias Shema* of *Arvis* and *Krias Shema* of *Shacharis*." The holy *Zohar* (*Balak* p. 186 1) said that someone who has not recited *Krias Shema* on time is excommunicated from Above for that entire day. The Chofetz Chaim shared a parable to explain this: A person accumulated many banknotes in his home from all over the world, until he amassed a tremendous sum. One day, he heard a rumor that the notes that he had were being taken out of circulation and were not going to be worth anything. He hurried to the bank to exchange his notes, but was told that he had come too late.

He fingered the crisp notes between his fingers in great disappointment. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a person giving the bank teller a wad of faded, crinkled notes, and to his surprise, the teller accepted them and even gave the man new ones in exchange. When he angrily asked the teller why this was so, that his new, nice notes were not accepted, while the other man's ratty notes were, the teller replied: Your notes might be shiny and crisp, but their time has passed and thus they are not worth anything.

So, too, concluded the Chofetz Chaim, when one says *Krias Shema* after the time, even if he has all the right *kavanah*, his *tefillos* will not be willingly accepted, and not because they are damaged but simply...because their time has passed. (*Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah, Parashas V'Eschanan*, footnote)

A Choice Between Two Tefillos

It was 5677/1917, the end of World War One. The Bolshevik Revolution that had made waves throughout the massive Russian Empire was eroding the corrupt regime of the Russian Tsar. The Tsar had already been deposed, and was slated to be executed with his family, in great humiliation. In his place rose a regime that was even more corrupt and more cruel than he, a regime that would bitterly disappoint millions of citizens who shed their blood for it and pinned so many hopes on it.

Meanwhile, there was chaos throughout the tremendous empire. Bands of "Reds" – opponents of the Tsar and promoters of "progression" clashed endlessly with the Whites, the loyalists of the deposed Tsar. Both were united in their hatred for Jews and vented their fury on any Jew they encountered.

Meanwhile, as battles raged outside, in a dim *bais medrash* in the small town of Shomiatz in White Russia sat some eighty students from the Chofetz Chaim's yeshivah, learning. Due to the events of the times, they had gone into exile, together with their revered *rebbe* from Radin. In remote Shomiatz, they hoped to find some refuge and quiet from the turbulence that was raging all over. Like an island of tranquility in the midst of a stormy sea, the yeshivah was a stable bastion of Torah learning, as the students ignored what was happening outside.

Suddenly, the door was flung open with a bang, scaring the *bachurim*. They turned towards the door to see that it was blocked by a hulking figure with a threatening expression on his face. Behind him stood a group of armed men. It was one of the bands of "Whites" who had cast terror on the nearby towns. Now, they had taken over the small town of Shomiatz, and were in the midst of patrolling the town to make sure there were no more pockets of opposition that could unite and rise up against them.

The commander looked at the group of young men sitting in the dim room and rubbed his hands in undisguised glee. He had no doubt that he had caught an underground brigade of "Reds" that was trying to hide from the Tsar's loyalists, and to ultimately be able to fight them back.

"Everyone out into the courtyard!" the commander thundered as he aimed his weapon towards the frightened *bachurim*. "Your end is near, you lowly traitors, and you will know that the long hand of the glorified Tsar will chase down anyone who tries to rebel against him."

When they heard the accusations being hurled at them, the yeshivah students didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Us? Reds? The whole

purpose of our coming here was to flee from their harsh hand; how is it that we are being accused of belonging to them?!

"We are not fighters at all," they tried to explain to the commander. "This is a synagogue and we are sitting here, praying and learning Torah..." They hoped that the commander would not dare harm a place of worship and would let them off safely. The commander was not persuaded so quickly, but his gaze softened somewhat. He lowered his weapon and leaned on it in a threatening pose; at the same time he twirled the edges of his mustaches in seeming indifference. He had no idea what Torah was, and what it meant that the *bachurim* sat and learned it, but he knew very well what prayer was and what a shul was. If it was a shul, the commander decided, then there was surely a "rabbin," a rabbi there. So the *rabbin* should come before him and try to persuade him that what the boys were saying was true.

The Chofetz Chaim was quickly summoned. "I am the *rabbin*," the aged sage said with his eyes lowered to the ground. "What is it that you want?" he asked the big, burly figure in front of him.

"Your students say that they are not rebels, but rather Jews who came to pray here. Maybe tell me what exactly you chose to pray about at this time?"

"You should know that in my whole life I have never lied, and I will not lie now either!" the Chofetz Chaim began. He then took a *Siddur* and turned to *Tefillas Mussaf* of Shabbos and said: "Look here, sir. There are two prayers one next to the other. One is "Hanosen teshuah l'melachim" in which we pray each Shabbos for the success of the Tsar in all his wars and battles. The second is the prayer of "Av Harachamim" in which we plead before the Creator to avenge the blood of His Jewish servants who were murdered at the hands of their enemies despite their innocence."

The commander gaped at the holy countenance of the Chofetz Chaim, who then concluded in a soft, yet confident voice:

"Sir, you can now choose which of these prayers will be said about you. Will it be the blessing of "He Who gives salvation to the kings" or will it be the request of "avenge before our eyes the spilled blood of Your servants"? Which do you choose?"

"The first one, Rabbin, the first one!" the commander decided unhesitatingly. He immediately ordered commanded his men to leave the place and so the yeshivah students could continue to learn undisturbed.

Tzaddik Tamim, p. 130