

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

The Land Rests "L'Shem Hashem"

“ושבתה הארץ שבת לה” (כה ב)
“Shabbos l’Hashem – l’Shem Hashem, as it was said regarding the Shabbos of creation.” (Rashi)

Rashi’s words need to be explained, and Harav Nosson Gestetner explains them as follows:

The Avudraham (Shacharis of Shabbos) explained the nusach of the tefillah: “Veyom Hashvi’i meshabeach v’omer mizmor shir leyom haShabbos” – “Shabbos Bereishis” itself offered praise and said: ‘Mizmor shir leyom haShabbos.’ And David Hamelech in his ruach haKodesh included this praise in Tehillim.

Therefore, it can be said that Rashi alluded in his commentary as follows: Don’t wonder how it is possible that an inanimate object – “ha’aretz,” the land—knows how to rest ‘l’Shem Hashem’, for the sake of Hashem, because we have already found in “Shabbos Bereishis”, that the ‘kedushas Shabbos’, the holiness of Shabbos, knows how to praise its Creator, and therefore, the “holiness of the land, kedushas ha’aretz” also has the knowledge to be able to rest solely for the sake of Hashem, l’Shem Hashem.

Lehoros Nosson

Tefillah of Many – Is a Consolation

“ביום הכפרים תעבירו שופר בכל ארצכם...וקראתם דרוך בארץ לכל יושביה” (כה ט-י)

The Sefer Hachinuch (331) explains the reason we blow the shofar at the onset of the Yovel year: After years of becoming accustomed to being served by his servant, it is very hard for the master to release him during Yovel. The shofar blast that resounds throughout the country and reminds everyone to release their slaves reminds that master that it is not his personal ‘trouble’ but rather one that is shared by the masses, and as the wise man has said, ‘Tza’ar rabbim—a public distress – nechamah, is a consolation.”

As a source for this phrase, Harav Shammai Ginsburg cites the Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 2 22): “Any tzarah that befalls an individual, then it is a trouble, a tzarah, but any tzarah that does not apply to only an individual is not a trouble.” The Peirush Maharz”u there explains that because many are distraught together, and daven for salvation, they are guaranteed that their tefillah will be accepted as a “tefillas rabbim” and through that they will see salvation from their troubles.

Imrei Shammai

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

An “Otzar” of Amen

“ונתנה הארץ פריה” (כה יט)

The acronym of the words “venasnah ha’aretz piryah” is numerically equivalent to amen, and the word amen in its full writing (alef, mem, nun) is numerically equivalent to “otzar”, a treasure. Thus we learn that one who is careful to answer amen merits to have brachah bestowed upon his home and he will succeed in paranssah and with his assets, as the Shelah writes (Maseches Tamid 80) one who is careful to answer amen “opens the Upper Source – the Source of Mayim Chaim.”

Ahavas Yisrael; Os Left p. 178

“Usemaher Usachish Lig’aleinu” – Please Hasten to Redeem Us

“וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו” (כה לה)

“Don’t allow him to go down and fall and it will be hard to stand him up, rather strengthen him from the time that his hand spreads out.” (Rashi)

Harav Dovid Shlomo Eibeshitz, author of Levushei Serad, explains the Gemara

(Bava Basra 10a) based on Rashi’s words: “Tzedakah is great because it draws the Geulah closer.” Just like we pre-empt and help the poor man before he collapses, so, too, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will redeem us before we collapse beneath the burden of the exile. Therefore, we ask on Succos, “HaRachaman Hu yakim lanu es succas Dovid hanofaless” –while it is still “falling” but has not yet collapsed.

Arvei Nachal

Subjugated in Gratitude

“עד שנת היכל יעבד עמך;...אל אחזת אבתיו ישוב” (כה מ-מא)

“V’el achuzas avosav – to the dignity of his forbears.” (Rashi)

In the Haggadah Shel Pesach we declare: “And if HaKadosh Baruch Hu would not have taken our fathers out of Egypt then we, and our children and our children’s children would still be enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt.” Rav Elazar Ashkenazi asks: Why are we so sure that the Egyptians would not have released us of their own free will after some time? And he explained: The intension of the Baal Haggadah is to say that if Hashem would not have taken us out, then even if the Egyptians would have freed us willingly, and not reluctantly, we would have forever been “subjugated to Egypt” – and would have to express our gratitude to them for letting us out, and we never would have gained absolute freedom.

Based on this, Harav Yosef Shaul Nathanson, the Rav of Lemberg, explained the words of Rashi:

Because the release of the slave in Yovel is done against the will of the master, he will in any case return to the “dignity of his forbears” because he will also be released from the bondage of being in an eternal state of gratitude to his master.

Maasei Hashem – Maasei Mitzrayim Peirush HaHaggadah; Divrei Shaul

On the holy day of Lag BaOmer is the yahrtzeit of the posek of the generations, Harav Moshe Isserlis—the Rema, zy”a, who instructed in his annotations of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 124 7):

“And he should teach his young children to answer amen because as soon as a baby answers amen he has a share in the World to Come.”

Amen from generation to generation.

Inculcating Amen In Young Children



Krias Shema – Parashas Vehayah Im Shamo (7)

“Vayishman Yeshurun
Vayivat” – And They
Became Fat and They Kicked

Eikev)

“Histalek Min Hasafek”

“Because you will be eating and satiated – make sure you do not kick, because a person only rebels when he is satisfied.” (Rashi Devarim 11:16, according to Sifri Eikev 43)

Right after the Torah describes the great reward in store for those who observe Torah: “*Vasafata deganecha vesiroshecha veyitzharecha*”, it adds a caution that perhaps because of the great abundance, our hearts will expand and grow arrogant – “*Hishamru lachem pen yifteh levavchem...*”

The Gra explains (Imrei Noam Brachos 35b) the reason why in the parashah of *V'Ahavata* we were not warned “*Hishamru lachem*” as we are in the parashah of *Vehayah*. The reason is because *V'ahavata* discusses [serving Hashem] out of love, and refers to those who are ready to give up their money out of love for Hashem, as it says, “*Uvechol me'odecha*.” But in the parashah of *Vehayah* it does not say “*uvechol me'odecha*”, because the parashah discusses those who “act out of fear” – in order to receive reward. Therefore, after receiving reward, and reaching the objective of what they want: “*v'achalta vesavata*” then one must be concerned that “*pen yifteh levavchem*” and therefore it is necessary for the *passuk* to offer a word of caution on this matter.

Be Aware of Temptations
to the Heart

The Alter of Kelm adds:

It is not for naught that the Torah says “*Pen yifteh levavchem*”, because the *yetzer* of a person is “bad from his youth” (*Bereishis* 8:27), and it constantly tempts the person in very cunning ways, through desires and allures whose source is the heart, to deviate from the path of Hashem. We find this with Avraham and Lot: The Torah explains that Lot cleaved to Avraham and his ways, but the description of his history shows that he had a deep desire for money. We see that Avraham Avinu worked to distance this desire and was very careful even with money that he obtained honestly [as we find that he said to the king of Sodom: (*Bereishis* 14:23): “Neither a thread nor a shoelace, I will not take anything of yours.”] He succeeded in maintaining his high spiritual level. But Lot, who was dragged down by his lust for money, (see *Bereishis* 13, 10-11), deteriorated steadily. (*Chochmah Umussar*, Vol. 1, 178)

Harav Yosef Engel added an explanation according to the *Sefer Hachinuch* (Mitzvah 430) that the *brachah* recited before one has an *aliyah* on the Torah is *d'Oraisa*, while with food, the opposite is the case. *Birchas Hamazon*, recited after eating is *d'Oraisa*, while the *brachah* recited before eating is *d'Rabbanan*. This is because Torah is the nourishment for the mind and the mind can feel the good even before it receives it, while food is nourishment for the physical body, and the body cannot derive benefit from it until after the food is physically consumed.

However, that is the way it is normally. But when a person wallows in desires, then the mind also becomes a slave to the body, and therefore the *passuk* warns: “*Hishamru, pen yifteh levavchem* – the desires of your soul will expand their control beyond the boundaries of what is needed, “*vesartem*, and you will stray and serve other gods and you will bow down to them.” Thus, even the mind will subjugate itself to the body and will serve the *yetzer*, which is the essence of a “foreign god” in the body of a person. (*Shabbos* 105b) That might *chalilah* lead to the fulfillment of the words: “*V'avadetem meheirah*, you will be quickly lost.” (*Rabbeinu Yosef Engel* al *HaTorah*,

It is brought down in the name of the Baal Shem Tov that the word *Amalek* is numerically equivalent to “*safek*”, doubt, (240) but on the other hand, *l'havdil*, regarding HaKadosh Baruch Hu it says: “*Havadai* [certain] *Shemo ken tehilaso*.” That is alluded to here: “*Hishamru lachem*” from the “*pen*” a word that denotes doubt because doubts might *chalilah* bring you to capitulate to the temptations of your heart and then you will stray from the path—*yifteh levavchem vesartem*. (*Imros Tehoros Beshalach*)

Similarly, *tzaddikim* explained the words of *Rashi* (*Shemos* 1:12) that the Egyptians said of Yisrael: “*Pen yirbeh*”, perhaps they will multiply, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu promised, “*Kein yirbeh*,” they will multiply. The Egyptians wanted to multiply the doubts, “*pen*”, in *emunas Yisrael*, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu multiplied that *emunah* and the admissions (*kein*) in their hearts, with miracles and wonders that He performed in Egypt. (*She'eris Menachem* Vol. 1 page 5)

Importance of Guarding
One's Thoughts

It is frightening to realize to what extent a person must guard himself against the slightest deviation from the path of Torah, as the *passuk* teaches us that the root of “*Vesartem v'avadetem elohim acherim*” begins with a forbidden thought that comes into one's heart. (See *Sefer Hamitzvos L'Harambam*, *Lo Saaseh* 10, *Sefer Hachinuch* 213)

Rashi similarly explains the words of the *passuk* here: “*Vesartem*”, you will deviate from the Torah and thus “*v'avadetem elohim acherim*” you will serve other gods, because when a person deviates from the Torah, he then gets closer and cleaves to *avodah zarah*. This is what David says (*Shmuel* I, 26:19): “*Ki gershuni hayom me'histapeiach benachalash Hashem leimor lech avod elohim acherim*.” Who told this to him? But because I am banished from being busy with Torah, then I am closer to serving other gods.” As the *Ramban* famously says (*Issurei Biah* 22 21) that the thought of *aveirah* is only found in the heart that is empty of Torah.

The *Ramban* in his *iggeres* gives some good advice for how a person should guard himself against this: “In all your words and actions and thoughts and at all times think in your heart as though you are standing before HaKadosh Baruch Hu and His Shechinah is upon you because His Honor fills the world.”

HaRav Tzvi Pesach Frank, the Av Bais Din of Yerushalayim, explains the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (127:4): “Like arrows in the hand of the strongman, so are the youth” – just like with an arrow, a slight deviation from the path causes a tremendous difference in where it falls, so, too, with a person—a slight deviation from the path at the beginning of his life might cause a tremendous deviation later on. (*Shevivei Ohr*, p. 153)

The Chasam Sofer asks regarding the wording of the *passuk* (*Devarim* 11:28): “*Vesartem min haderech...* to follow after other gods that you did not know.” What does it mean, “*asher lo yedatem*”? He explains, according to the above, that certainly a slight temptation of the heart does not cause him to serve *avodah zarah*, literally. But the Torah means to warn us that any change, even giving up a small custom, and following a new path “that you did not know” might bring a person down to the depths, *chalilah*. (*Otzros Hasofer*, *Kovetz* 11, p. 79)

A Holy Trip That Triggered a Turnabout

The story of the great spiritual rise of Harav Moshe Mordechai Chadash, *zt”l*, Rosh Yeshivas Ohr Elchanan, is remarkable and awe-inspiring; it shows how one *tefillah* can change a person's life and raise him to great heights.

Rav Chadash's sister, Rebbetzin Ezrachi, wife of the Rosh Yeshiva Harav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi, *shlita*, relates:

When he was a child, my brother was suddenly overcome with terrible stomach pains in the middle of the night. He writhed and cried in pain, and his pale face made it clear that the situation was serious. But as was common in those times, my worried parents could not easily get a doctor, and when they finally did get a hold of one, it turned out that their diagnosis had been correct: the boy's appendix had burst and he was in great danger. The doctor instructed them to quickly take him to the hospital for an emergency operation that would save his life.

During those times, every such operation involved significant risk to life. While lying on the operating table, his mother, the Rebbetzin said to him: “Moshe Mordechai, you are about to have a dangerous operation and you need many *zechuyos*. Accept upon yourself that if the operation is successful you will dedicate your life to Torah.”

The boy, who already then seemed destined for greatness, agreed right away. He accepted upon himself to dedicate his life to Torah, and with the words still on his lips, he was wheeled into the operating room.

The operation was successful, and the boy never forgot his promise. From that day on, he made every effort to dedicate every moment to Torah.

Towards the end of his life, Rav Chadash became ill. On one of the last Shabbosos of his life, he exerted himself and went down to the yeshiva's dining room. He sat down near the *bachurim* and asked to tell them a personal story, and noted that he hoped they would garner the right lesson from his words. And this is what he told them:

It was the end of the summer *zeman* in 5717/1957, while I was a *bachur*. In those years, I learned well, even very well. I could have been pleased with things as they were, but deep down I sensed that I was not utilizing my abilities like I should be. I remembered the earlier years, when I invested more energy into my learning, and I hoped to be able to do so once again. I knew that I had the ability to rise much higher than where I was and my lack of success distressed me.

Distraught, I went to a corner of the *bais medrash* and burst into tears. I accepted upon myself wholeheartedly to make every effort to advance more in *avodas Hashem* and dived from the depths of my heart that I would be able to do so.

A few days later, during *bein hazmanim*, I found myself on an old, rickety bus making the long and exhausting trip to the *tziyun* of Rabi Shimon in Meron. When I arrived, I immediately prostrated myself on the *tziyun* and began to tearfully recite *Sefer Tehillim*. I finished the whole *sefer*, but did not yet feel relief.

I looked for a quiet place where I could pour my heart out, and turned towards the *tziyunim* of the holy Amoraim, Abayei and Rava. The place was empty and I was able to let my emotions flow freely. I burst into wracking sobs, and my entire body was enveloped in prayer and pleading.

I repeated the words over and over: “*Ribono shel Olam*, please, I want to be a *talmid chacham*. Help me to succeed.”

After some time, I finally felt some relief in my heart. I sensed that my *tefillah* had been heard and I set out on my return.

My *tefillas* had been accepted. That *Elul zeman* began on the right foot. My heart pounded with the desire to learn Torah. I accepted upon myself to finish the *masechta* being studied *b'iyun* until the end of the

zeman and I made every effort to meet my commitment.

I was also happy to see that the revered rosh yeshiva, Harav Aharon Cohen, *zt”l*, noticed my *sheigim* and a few days after the *zeman* began he approached me, with the satisfaction on his face apparent. “I noticed that you are learning with great *hasmadah*,” he said.

This was a rare gesture from the rosh yeshiva, and I told him about the emotional *tefillah* I had davened during *bein hazmanim*, at the *tziyun* of Abayei and Rava, and about the *kabbalah* that I had undertaken at the beginning of the *zeman*. Rav Aharon was happy to hear this, and he encouraged me warmly to continue on this path, and even gave me some good advice regarding my learning.

About two weeks later, one of my good friends got married. He was one of the older *bachurim* in the yeshiva, and despite the age gap between us, we were quite close. I had to attend his wedding, but I was afraid that this would violate my *kabbalah*. I didn't know what to do. At the time, weddings were held in the afternoon, followed by the dinner in the evening.

On the day of the wedding, I was busy trying to take apart a hard question that came to mind while I was delving into the *sugya* we were studying. I perused the words of the *Gemara* over and over, and the commentaries of the Rishonim and Acharonim but I could not find a satisfactory answer.

Suddenly, during the midday hours, while I was learning, the question disappeared and the whole *sugya* became clear to me. At the same time, I felt this warmth and sweetness pervading all my limbs. I felt a strong draw to continue learning and learning without stopping, and when I looked at the clock and realized I had missed the *chuppah*, I decided to continue learning for a few more hours, and then to go to the wedding in the evening. The hours ticked by, and deep in my conscience I remembered the wedding, but every time the memory rose in my mind, I pushed off the end time for my learning just a bit more, thinking that right away I would finish and go to the wedding.

In the end I capitulated...I closed the *Gemara* and prepared to go, but before I was able to leave the *bais medrash*, I saw my friends returning from the wedding, tired and satiated...

I had missed the wedding, but I didn't feel even a twinge of regret. On the contrary, the feeling of warmth and pleasure in my heart only grew stronger. I knew that the *simchah* was complete without me as well and that my friend the *chassan* would surely understand me and forgive me for my absence.

To this day, Rav Moshe concluded his story. I remember in my heart that feeling that I felt that evening. And since then, I have not stopped learning. The *siyata diShmaya* that began to accompany me from the power of that *tefillah* continued and continues to accompany me to this day, every day of my life.

The *talmidim*, who were thirstily drinking in their *rebbe's* every word, were stunned into silence by this story. Until that day, they were sure that the rosh yeshiva, descended from a prestigious lineage in the yeshiva world, was born with a “silver spoon” of Torah in his mouth, and only now did they hear about the path that he had to traverse until he reached where he got to, as a *marbitz Torah* to legions of Torah scholars and one of the eminent Roshei Yeshiva of his generation.

The Rosh Yeshiva then returned to his home, leaving his awed students to process the strong message that would surely accompany them for the rest of their lives: There is nothing that stands in the way of *tefillah*! The combination of a strong desire and emotional *tefillah* from the depths of the heart can elevate any *bachur* from any situation and transform his life completely.

Otzrosheim Amalei, Beshalach