

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Tamei Meis Who Touches A Dead Body

"אמר אל הכהנים בני אהרן...לפנש לא יטמא בעמיו" (כא א)
In the piyut of Eileh Ezkerah recited on Mussaf of Yom Kippur, there is a description of the killing of the holy Tanna Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel, the Nasi: "And when his head was cut, Rabi Yishmael took it and screamed over it in a bitter voice like a shofar: How is the tongue that hastened to instruct with beautiful words now licking dirt?"

The question is asked: Wasn't Rabi Yishmael a Kohein Gadol? How did he allow himself to become impure in this way?

Harav Tzvi Pesach Frank, the Rav of Yerushalayim, answers:

When Rabi Shimon was killed, Rabi Yishmael stood with him under one roof, and as such, he became impure by being in the same tent as a dead person. Thus, no impurity was added to him when he took Rabi Shimon's head.

Shu"t Har Tzvi, Yoreh Deah 282

Long Life – To Prevent a Chillul Hashem

"ולא תחללו את שם קדשי" (כב לב)

Harav Mordechai Menachem Schwab of Monsey, related:

Throughout his life, the Chofetz Chaim would daven to merit long days and years, because he was afraid that if he were to pass away at a young age, it would be a chillul Hashem. After all, he was the one who was so careful, and who constantly warned of the severity of the sin of lashon hara, and worked to purify his ways. The passuk promises (Tehillim 34, 13-14) that "one who guards his tongue from bad" merits a long life, and if he would not merit that, then he would cause a defilement of Hashem's Name, chalilah.

Indeed, his prayer was answered. The Chofetz Chaim merited a long life and passed away at the age of nearly 95, a very old age, especially in those times.

Maamar Mordechai, Vol. III, p. 169

"Venikdashti Besoch Bnei Yisrael"

"ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל" (כב לב)
From this passuk the Gemara explains (Megillah 23b) that one should not say anything holy in the presence of less than ten people, drawing a gezeirah shavah, a parallel from the words "toch – toch", from the passuk in Parashas Korach (Bamidbar 16:21): "Hibadlu mitoch ha'eidah." As we know there is no "eidah" that is less than ten people, indicated by the way the Torah refers to the ten spies in the passuk (ibid 14:27): "Ad masai l'eidah hara'ah hazos."

the act of Korach, then the words "hibadlu mitoch ha'eidah" would not be fulfilled with you. Rather the words "Hischabru letoch ha'eidah" and suchlike would have applied. In any case, it is possible to derive the obligation to have ten people in order to say "Venikdashti" – words of holiness—from the words "toch" said regarding "Bnei Yisrael", and it was not necessary to derive it from the passuk "Betoch haba'im," which is referring to non-Jews who entered Egypt together with the sons of Yaakov in order to obtain food.

Chasam Sofer

The Reason We Say "Baruch Shem"

"ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל" (כב לב)

"All of Bais Yisrael are commanded about this great Kiddush Hashem, as it says: 'Venikdashti betoch Bnei Yisrael'." (Rambam Yesodei HaTorah 5 1)

We have to understand what is so unique about this mitzvah that the Rambam emphasized that "all of Bnei Yisrael are commanded..." about it.

Harav Moshe Leib Shachor, one of the giants of Yerushalayim, explained:

The Rambam wanted to teach us that even when the non-Jews try to destroy all of Yisrael, like in the days of Achashveirosh, they have to be moser nefesh, and not fear that if they all died then the Name of Heaven would be erased from the world, thus causing a chillul Hashem. It is not our obligation to try and intuit into Heavenly calculations.

Thus we can understand why it was established for us to say after the declaration of mesirus nefesh: "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," the passuk "Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso L'Olam Va'ed." In other words, at the time when it is incumbent upon us to be moser nefesh, we should not be afraid of violating Hashem's Name if we give up our lives while sanctifying His Name, because "Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso L'Olam Va'ed," Blessed is His Name of His Honor and Kingship for Eternity.

Avnei Shoham

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

The Most Perfect Gift

"ואיש כי יקריב זבח שלמים לה' לפלא נדר או לנדבה... יהיה לרצון" (כב כא)

"Lenedavah" is numerically equivalent to "amen" and from here we can learn that the most select donation that one can bring before Hashem is the perfect brachah with an amen. As the Zohar HaKadosh writes (Eikev 271 1): 'When these brachos that are perfected by amen rise from below to above, throughout the Heavens it is announced: this is a gift of the King sent by So and So, this is a gift that is perfect, as it is fitting.'

Kovetz Vayizra Yitzchak 15, p. 33

By contrast, in the Yerushalmi (Brachos 7 3) learns this as a gezeirah shavah from the passuk referring to the ten sons of Yaakov (Bereishis 42:5): "Vayavo'u Bnei Yisrael lishbor betoch haba'im." That is because they did not want to derive the explanation from the passuk referring to Korach's group.

According to this, the Chasam Sofer explains the passuk in this parashah:

"Velo sechallelu es Shem Kodshi" –if you would not have desecrated My Name in

Dear Yidden

When you go to the tziyun of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai on the holy day of his yahrzeit to daven and pour your heart out in Meron, remember this wondrous segulah for having tefillos accepted, cited in the Sefer Hazohar HaKadosh (Vaveilech 285 2):

"When the enemies are oppressing and harassing Yisrael, and Yisrael daven to their Creator, a voice announces in all the worlds, open the gates and a pious nation that is shomer emunim will enter. Don't read it emunim, rather amanim [those who answer amen properly.] Open the gates, just like Yisrael opened the gates of blessing by responding amen, so, too You should open for them the gates of tefillah and accept their prayers to be spared from those who harass them."

In the merit of answering amen, tefillos are accepted.

תּוֹרַתוֹ
מִגֵּן לָנוּ
ה' יֵא
מְאִירַת
עֵינֵינוּ



Kiras Shema – Second Parashah (6)

A Practice for Individuals or
for the Tzibbur?

There is a fundamental and renowned dispute brought in the Gemara (Brachos 35b):

“Chazal say: ‘V’asafta deganecha’ – what does it come to say? Because it says (Yehoshua 1:8): “Lo yamush sefer haTorah hazeh mipicha” this sefer Torah should not move from your mouth, then perhaps this should be taken literally? Says the passuk: “V’asafta deganecha” – implement with them the way of the world; that is the opinion of Rabi Yishmael. Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai says: Is it possible for a person to plow during the plowing time, to plant during the planting time, to harvest at harvest time, to thresh at threshing time and then to winnow when there is a wind, what will be with the Torah?

But [he explains the contradiction of the two pesukim as follows]: When Yisrael do the Will of Hashem – their work is done for them through others, as it says (Yeshayah 61:5): “And strangers will stand and shepherd your sheep.” And at a time when Yisrael does not do the Will of Hashem – their work needs to be done by them, as it says: “V’asafta deganecha”. Moreover, the work of others is also done by them, as it says (Devarim 28:48): “And you will work for your enemies.” Abayei says: Many did like Rabi Yishmael – and they succeeded; many did like Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai – and they did not succeed.”

Harav Chaim of Volozhin (Nefesh Hachaim 1:8) explains:

Abayei specifically used the words “Harbeh, many did like Rabi Yishmael... and many did like Rabi Shimon bar Yochai...” because as a general behavior it is certainly impossible that everyone should act like Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai, but each individual, for himself – if he can act like Rabi Shimon and be busy all his life only with Torah and avodas Hashem, then it is certainly incumbent upon him to do so, and not to stop learning Torah even for a short time.

The words of the Rambam on this subject are well known (Shemittah and Yovel 13 12):

“Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously motivates him and he understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before Hashem to serve Him and to serve to Him and to know Hashem, proceeding justly as Hashem made him, removing from his neck the yoke of the many reckonings which people seek, he is sanctified as holy of holies. Hashem will be his portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world like He provides for the Kohanim and the Leviim.”

Earlier articles have already cited the words of Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin (Tzidkas Hatzaddik 224) that every person is obligated to take upon himself in the first parashah of Krias Shema to serve Hashem with all his heart and all his assets, but in the second parashah it says that if he has to go out to earn a living, then, too, he is obligated to do so out of a love of Hashem and with cleaving to Him.

“At the Time When They Do
Not Do the Will of Hashem”

Many have wondered: How is it possible to state the passuk of “V’asafta deganecha” as referring to a time “when

they do not do the Will of Hashem” when the passuk testifies here that it is a time when they listen to the mitzvos of Hashem, and love Him “with all your hearts and all your souls”?

The Tosafos (Brachos, ibid beginning with the words kan bizman) explains: “Of course it refers to a time when they do Hashem’s Will, but not in a way that they are tzaddikim gemurim.” The sefer Bais Yitzchak (Parashas Bechukosai) explains the meaning of this: the difference between “doing His Will” and “not doing His Will as much” is that they both serve Hashem and learn His Torah in the same measure, but the difference between them is evident when at the height of their avodas hakodesh, they are presented with a one time chance to earn money or similar matters. One will wait until he finishes learning and davening before addressing the other issue, while the other will stop learning and shorten his davening in order to be busy with that matter, and will then return to learning.

We find then, that they both serve Hashem in the same measure and for the same amount of time, but one is considered an “oseh retzono” and the other is considered to “not do the will of Hashem as much...”

The Maharsh”a (Vol. I, Brachos, ibid) writes that we have to differentiate between the first parashah, where it says “Ubechol me’odecha”, meaning that the parashah that speaks about a person who is ready to give up all his money for HaKadosh Baruch Hu, then such a person is worthy of being treated in the same measure, and that the words “And strangers will stand and shepherd your sheep” should be fulfilled with him. By contrast, the second parashah speaks about a person who serves Hashem, but is not ready to give up all his money for that, and measure for measure, he will have to work for his parnassah, as it says “V’asafta deganecha.”

V’Asafta Deganecha in the
Singular Form

Why does it say here “V’asafta deganecha” in the singular form, which is different to the rest of the passage that is written in plural?

1. The Kli Yakar (Devarim 11:13) explains that the passuk means to say that by contrast to Avodas Hashem, which is said in the plural form, because it is preferable that it be done by many together, when it comes to matters of the world, it is better that each person toil on his own, as it says at the end of the passage: “Beshivtecha...ubelechetecha...ubeshochbecha uvekumecha” in the singular form. These are things relating to the personal conduct of each person.

2. The Alshich (ibid) explains: The Torah writes “V’asafta deganecha” in singular to teach us that even when the many fulfill the mitzvos of Hashem, their reward will not be uniform. Rather, each person will merit reward according to the how much he invests, internally, in the performance of the mitzvos.

3. Harav Zalman Sorotzkin of Lutzk writes: A person might think that because the tzibbur is already observing the mitzvos, then their crops will surely be blessed, and even if I don’t keep the mitzvos, I will merit the brachah in the merit of those who do keep the Torah. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes that each individual should collect his crops and the amount will be in accordance with his deeds. (Oznayim LaTorah, ibid)

Silence Saves from Death

Harav Blum, the rav of the Khal Kedoshim shul in a community in America, looked again at the person who he was speaking to. He was having trouble identifying the man, who he normally knew to be a happy and vivacious person.

Reb Moshe, one of the respected members of his community, looked like someone whose world had caved in on him. It was most uncharacteristic for a person who just two weeks ago, had celebrated the engagement of his oldest daughter to a chassan who was a talmid chacham and a prized student in one of the leading yeshivos.

What had brought him to speak with the rav so urgently, before Shacharis? The rav wondered. Who knew? Perhaps the wheel of fortune had turned and he was having trouble meeting the commitments he had undertaken, Rabbi Blum thought as he looked quietly at Reb Moshe’s face.

When Reb Moshe opened his mouth, he suddenly burst into tears: “Rabbi the worst of all has happened. Late last night, the results came in. The doctors have discovered three spots on the liver...”

Moshe realized that he was not being coherent and immediately explained: “A week ago, my daughter the kallah was not feeling well. The doctors sent us for a series of tests, and last night we got the results...She is sick, Rabbi! The doctors don’t give her much of a chance, and even refuse to start treatment...”

Rabbi Blum looked at him in silent commiseration. He had a good relationship with Reb Moshe, and it was hard for him to absorb this news. In his heart, he offered a silent tefillah that Hashem should put the right words into his mouth, and after a few minutes of thought, he said: “Reb Moshe, my friend, first let me wish you that very soon you should find out that the doctor’s predictions will not be realized and your daughter should walk to the chuppah on time and in good health.”

Reb Moshe fervently replied “amen” and the Rav continued:

“I will tell you a personal story that happened a few years ago, before I became the Rav in this community:

At the time I davened in the central shul in the city where I lived. One Shabbos, in the middle of Shacharis, I suddenly collapsed and lost consciousness.

What happened afterwards was told to me by my fellow mispallelim:

At that moment, the shul was thrown into turmoil. One person ran to call an ambulance while another, a paramedic, began to perform CPR, but to no avail. A few minutes later, a mobile intensive care unit team joined the efforts. They began to administer electric shocks, but those, too, were ineffective. So for forty minutes, they tried to resuscitate me over and over again, but my body refused to return to life.

A large crowd of mispallelim gathered around and began to recite Tehillim as they worriedly watched the medical teams doing what they could. Suddenly, one of them decided to take action.

He pounded on the bimah and a surprised silence fell over the shul: “Rabbosai!” he cried. “One of the prominent mispallelim of our shul is lying here, his life hanging in the balance. Can we remain silent?!”

The congregation gazed at him in shock and he continued:

“Let us decide, right now, to accept upon ourselves a good kabbalah and in that merit may he have a recovery. We will all pledge that from now on we will

not speak a single word in shul during davening and Krias HaTorah!”

The mispallelim didn’t hesitate and they all enthusiastically accepted the kabbalah. But it seemed to have come too late. The emergency teams began to fold up their equipment, their expressions conveying the worst.

That mispallel did not give up; he was confident in the power of the tzibbur, and asked that the team try again—and the miracle happened: one electric shock returned me to life; my heart began to beat again, weak and irregular, but beating...

I was placed on a stretcher and taken to the ambulance, which sped to the hospital. That person who had made the announcement accompanied me. On the way, my heart stopped again, but the merit of the tzibbur protected me and the doctors were able to restore it.

In the hospital, the doctors began preparing me for emergency surgery, but in the meantime I lost my heartbeat yet again, and once again they had to resuscitate me. But my heartbeat did not return. The doctors were ready to give up and cover me with a white sheet, but that mispallel pleaded with them to try one more time. At the same time, he was davening to Hashem that the merit of silence during davening should advocate for me. This time, as well, the kabbalah was effective. My heartbeat returned.

After a long and complex surgery, I began to recover. Two weeks later I was dancing at a simchah of one of my children, my mouth filled with praise and gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for bringing me back from death to life.”

“My advice to you,” the Rav continued to Reb Moshe, “is to try this kabbalah as well. I am sure it will not disappoint you.”

Reb Moshe agreed to try. He left the rav with a determined expression, and indeed, after Shacharis, he asked for permission to speak.

He briefly described his daughter’s serious condition, and noted that the doctors were not holding out much hope. He tearfully pleaded to the audience:

“Please, my daughter’s life depends on it. Let us undertake that from now on we come to shul only to daven and not for any other purpose. We must know before Who we are standing, before the King of Kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and we have to behave before Him no less than we would, I havdil in front of a flesh and blood king. No speaking, no telephones...just davening!”

Many eyes were moist with tears when they heard the plea of the broken father, and their agreement was unanimous. They all pledged that from now on they would not talk in shul during davening.

The father hurried straight from the shul to the hospital, where he asked that the tests be taken again. A week later, the results arrived.

The doctor sitting in front of them was speechless. Yes, it was the same doctor who a week earlier had objected to starting treatment, claiming it was a waste of time...Now he looked from Reb Moshe to the page of results in front of him, and he cried in surprise:

“I don’t understand what is going on here! The girl is healthy! No treatment is necessary! You can go home!”

Overjoyed, Reb Moshe understood: it was the silence that had changed everything. Indeed, Life and death is at the hand of the tongue.