

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

The Parameters of the Mitzvah of Milah

וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו" (יב ג)

In *Maseches Kiddushin* (29a), *Chazal* explain from the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 21:4): "And Avraham circumcised Yitzchak as Elokim commanded **him**," because the obligation of circumcising the child is imposed upon the father and not the mother.

The *Tosafos* there (beginning with the words 'oso') asks: Why is it necessary to derive from the *passuk* that a woman is exempt from circumcising her son? Isn't *milah* a "mitvas aseil shehazman gerama", a positive commandment that is time related, of which women are exempt? As we know, the obligation for this mitzvah only begins on the eighth day, and it is effective only during the day and not at night, hence it is bound by time. The *Tosafos Ry"d* (ibid) explains: The mitzvah of *milah* does not obligate the father to circumcise his son himself, rather to be busy with the needs of the *milah* and to make sure that he is circumcised, and as such, it is not considered a mitzvah that is time dependent, because the obligation to be busy with the mitzvah begins from the time the child is born and is not limited to the daytime hours.

According to this, **Harav Dov Berish Hafteka**, a *rosh yeshivah* of Imrei Emes, (in his comments on the *Tosafos Ry"d* there, comment 415) explained the words of the *piyut* of *Yam Leyabashah*: "**Umibeten leShimcha heimah ninolim**." What is the "mibeten"? Isn't the obligation of *milah* effective only from the eighth day? But because the principle of the mitzvah is being busy with the needs of the son's *bris milah*, and this involvement begins already on the day he is born, therefore, it is considered "mibeten - leShimcha heimah ninolim", from the stomach, i.e. from the birth, they are circumcised for Hashem's Name.

Some expounded even further to explain the words of the *Haggadah* according to this concept: "Who knows eight...Eight days of the *milah*" - because the father's

involvement in his son's *bris milah* is done throughout the first eight days of his life, therefore, they are all included as the "eight days of *milah*." (*Haggadah Shel pesach Atah Becharianu* p. 421)

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen
in the Parashah

Amen Saves from Negaim

זאת תהיה תורת המצרע" (יד ב)

Those who delve into the sources explain that being careful about answering amen saves a person from *negaim* and ailments, because the "*Shir shel Pegaim*" in which it is said "*Lo se'uneh eilechah ra'ah venega lo yikrav be'ohalecha*", is the 91st *perek* of *Tehillim*, and 91 is numerically equivalent to amen.

Similarly we can allude to this in our *parashah* as well: The *parashah* of *negaim* numbers 90 *pesukim* (which, with the *kollel*, are numerically equivalent to amen) to hint to us that one who is careful about reciting ninety amens a day, as the early sages established, is spared from *negaim*.

Niflaos MiTorasecha; Shaarei Tzedek

"Keshem Shenichnas Labris Kein Yikaness LeTorah"

"ימול בשר ערלתו" (יב ג)

Rabbeinu Chaim Vital writes: "*Yimol*" is an acronym for "*Hashem Mishan umivtach latzaddikim*" to teach us that every circumcised Jew is called a *tzaddik*.

Harav Yochanan Segal Vosner, shlita, Rav of the Skverer community in Montreal, added: This allusion teaches us that the mitzvah of *milah* is a "*mishan umivtach*", a support and a refuge" that helps us reach the level of "*tzaddik*". But woe to the person

who suffices with that...Is it not for this that we bless the baby at the *bris*: "Just like he entered the covenant, so should he enter Torah...good deeds" - that he should not suffice with his entry into the covenant, but rather should utilize the "support" that this mitzvah gives him in order to rise higher in Torah and good deeds.

Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar Ha'amidah 20; *Chayei Halevi*, Vol. II, 55, 14

The Tefillah of the Sage Must Include Rebuke

נרפא הנתק טהור הוא וטהרו הכהן" (גי לז)

In his commentary on this *passuk*, *Rashi* cites the explanation of *Chazal* (*Safra* 5 16): "*Tahor hu vetiharo haKohein*" - but a *tamei* that the Kohein has been *metaher* is not *tahor*."

Harav Hillel Lichtenstein of Kolomaya explained a beautiful concept based on this:

In *Maseches Bava Basra* (116a), *Chazal* said: "Anyone who has a sick person in his house should go to the sage and ask for compassion." However, we have a rule that "there are no *yissurim* without sin" (*Shabbos* 55a), and therefore, even though the *tefillah* of the sage is effective in healing the sick man, it is also incumbent upon him to urge the person to introspect into his deeds and repent so that he should not fall ill again.

This is what the *passuk* here is inferring: Even when "*nirpa hanetek*", he is healed through the power of *tefillah* of the Kohein, he is not "*tahor hu*" - he is not eternally pure, unless "*tiharo haKohein*" - the Kohein also prodded him to repent. But if he did not do so, and he remains in the category of a "*tamei shetiharo haKohein*", an impure person who the Kohein purified" then "*lo tahor*", he is not pure because his ailment will return to him as the result of his sins.

Maskil El Dal, Vol. III, Klal 4, Prat 1

Lashon Hara Closes – Amen Opens

When one speaks *lashon hara* - the Gates of Heaven are closed to his prayers. Therefore, *Onkelos* explains "*metzora*" as "*segira*" (*Zohar Metzora* 53 1; *Midrash Yehonasan Metzora*).

When one answers amen - the Gates of Heaven are opened to his *tefillas* as it says (*Yeshayah* 26:2) "Open the gates and a righteous nation that is *shomer emunim* will enter." (*Zohar HaKadosh Vayeilech* 288 2)

Birchos Hashachar: Aloud, with *kavanah*, *bechavrusa*.



Krias Shema – Parashas Vehayah Im Shamo'a (4)

Avodah of the Heart – Is Tefillah

The Gemara (Ta'anis 2a) explains the words of the *passuk* (Devarim 11:13): "Ul'ovdo bechol levavchem" – "What is the service of the heart? This is tefillah!" Countless statements and *halachos* have been based on these words of the Gemara, and most importantly the commentators honed in on two *chiddushim* that are derived from these words:

1. The act of tefillah is called "avodah."
2. This avodah is called "avodah shebalev", service of the heart, even though it is performed by mouth.

We will bring some of what the commentators say on this subject:

The Halachos of Tefillah Are Like the Halachos of the "Avodah"

The Tur (Orach Chaim 98) explains that tefillah is called avodah because it is equivalent in our day to the service of the *korbanos*. Several halachos of tefillah are derived from this comparison, and their existence is a guarantee that the tefillah should be accepted willingly. He writes:

"Therefore, one needs to be careful that it should be like a *korban* with *kavanah*, and it should not be mixed with other thoughts such as a thought that disqualifies a *korban*, and one stands silently for the avodah, and one stands with one's feet together like the Kohanim did during the avodah, and one should establish a regular place for davening like the *korbanos* had... And it is worthy that he should have proper clothes special for tefillah, like the *bigdei kehunah*. And after he does everything like the *korban*, then it rises as a pleasant aroma to the place where the *korban* rose to, and an angel turns it [the tefillah] into a crown for his Creator."

Harav Shimshon Pincus, zt"l, learns a beautiful lesson from this Tur:

When a person comes to daven he should think in his heart that he is like a Kohein doing the avodah, offering parts of the *korban* for a pleasant aroma before Hashem. The Kohanim serving in the *mikdash* had so many halachos, and omitting even one of them could hold up the service. It is also known how the Kohanim held the avodah very precious, to the point that they divided the days of the year into shifts of Kohanim, and each one would serve one week a year, and even among those on shift, they so much wanted to serve that they even reached the point of danger. That is why it was established to have a special lottery held each morning and only one whose name was drawn merited to serve.

We merit three times every day to stand before Hashem in the service of tefillah. Thus we should be overjoyed about this—on the one hand. On the other hand, how careful we must be to do carry out this service in the proper fashion. (Tiferes Shimshon 96).

Avodah Contingent on the Kavanos of the Heart

The Me'iri writes another meeting for the term "avodas halev" (Chibbur Hateshuva, Meishiv Nefesh 2 12): "The acceptance of the tefillah depends on the kavanah... and that is the reason the tefillah is called avodah shebalev... because its matter is contingent on the kavanah of the heart."

The sefer "Yosher Divrei Emes" (41) brings in the name of the *siddur Shaarei Shamayim*: "The tefillah is called avodah because it is a great avodah, it is hard work, to capture the mind that is busy with the affairs of the world, and to bring

it to be submitted to kavanah in tefillah as is proper, and one surely needs great strength for this."

Thus Harav Chaim of Volozhin (Nefesh Hachaim 2 1) explains the reason that the Torah used the words here "Bechol levavchem" meaning to say: that your heart should be filled with the kavanah of tefillah, because if a person thinks another thought while davening, then he is not davening with all his heart, and part is taken up with those other thoughts.

Repenting Before Davening

Indeed, one should know that it is very hard to daven with kavanah, and a person is well aware how it happens that as soon as he starts davening, all sorts of idle thoughts pop up in his mind... And it is a wonder, because doesn't every Jew desire to daven with kavanah? How is it possible that specifically when he wants to connect to his Creator, waves of foreign thoughts rise up to confuse him?

The holy sefarim explain that those foreign thoughts stem from the sins that a person has done, through which destructive angels and klipos were created, and they prevent a person from bonding with his Creator. Therefore, they wrote wonderful advice for this: to do teshuvah before davening, and thus we will reduce the power of the klipos. The Navi alludes to this, saying (Eichah 3: 40-41; 44): "We will introspect in our ways and investigate and we will return to Hashem," and then "We will raise our hearts 'el Kapayim el Kel BaShamayim'" because if not, "sakosah be'anah lach mei'avor tefillah – the klipos create a cloud that blocks the tefillos from rising on high." That is why the Mishnah says (Brachos 30 2) about early chassidim who would spend one hour prior to tefillah in dveikus and then they would daven, so that they would enter the tefillah out of closeness to Hashem and no foreign thoughts would get mixed into their tefillah.

Indeed, this is our comfort, that the foreign thoughts that come to us during davening prove how much our tefillos are important to Hashem. It is not for naught that Chazal established many requests to be recited before davening—it is so that saying them will help us cleave to our Creator before davening, and through that, our tefillos will receive a soul and become alive, and that will help them rise On High and effect yeshuos for us. (Teshuvos Vehanhagos, Vol. IV, 27)

Amen Without Kavanah Is Like a Body Without a Soul

This is the place to cite the words of the early sages regarding answering amen: It is known that answering amen is the key to having tefillos accepted, and amen is a tangible illustration of the importance of kavanah in tefillah, because the word amen itself does not have any meaning and it depends on the intention in the person's heart. The poskim expound that on each brachah, one must have in mind the amen in accordance with the subject. As the Me'iri says (Nazir 66b) that that is why Chazal said (ibid) "One who answers amen is greater than the one making the brachah" because usually the one who answers amen has more concentration his response than the one who made the brachah had when he recited it.

The Tefillah That Made the Thief Repent

The thin, haggard figure of Harav Moshe Dabarshvili, the Rav of the Jewish community in Kutaisi, the capital of Georgia, walked through the cloudy street with small, hesitant steps. He could not believe things had reached this state. From his lofty status as a respected rav and leader of his community, since the Communist rise to power, he had fallen from grace and was now unable to even afford a slice of bread.

Yesterday, things had reached a breaking point. Rav Moshe's young daughter had fallen ill due to malnutrition and her life was in danger. Her weakened body was struggling to fight off the disease, and Rav Moshe desperately needed money to be able to buy food and medication to improve her condition.

Rav Moshe had long sold anything of value that he owned, and most of his wife's jewelry had been sold to buy bread for their children. All that was left were two valuable wedding rings, which they had been valiantly holding on to.

From the start, he had not wanted to sell them no matter what, even though they were worth a nice sum. But now, with his daughter's life hanging in the balance, he had no choice. After speaking it over with his wife, they decided with heavy hearts to sell the precious rings.

With trembling hands and shaky knees, Rav Moshe walked through the streets of Kutaisi en route to the goldsmith, the little satchel holding the rings clutched tightly in his hand. He knew that the lives of his family depended on this so he guarded them carefully; he wondered how much he could get for them. When Rav Moshe arrived at the goldsmith's store, he lowered his eyes and opened the bag. He stuck his hand inside and recoiled: the rings were not there. Stunned, he turned the bag inside out and shook it, but there was a small hole in the bottom, and it was clear that the rings had been taken from him in a cruel and underhanded way.

The goldsmith, who was looking at Rav Moshe with puzzlement, hadn't even managed to say a word before Rav Moshe turned around and left the store in distress and shame. On the nearby street there was a small, quiet park, where he sat down on a bench, took a small Sefer Tehillim out of his pocket and began to recite chapter after chapter, his eyes flowing with tears.

He was still immersed in prayer when out of the corner of his eye he noticed an older man who sat down on the bench next to him. The man inched closer, as if he wanted to speak to Rav Moshe, but the Rav's mind was not clear for conversation and the man stood up, disappointed, and left.

A few minutes later, Rav Moshe stood up, intending to return home, his mind wondering where his yeshuah would come from. Suddenly, he had an idea: perhaps the rings had not even been in the satchel at all...

It was a faint hope that wasn't really viable, but Rav Moshe grasped onto it in his desperation. He stuck his hand into the pocket of his suit, and the unbelievable happened: the rings were resting there safely, as though they had always been there. Rav Moshe did not have the time to stop and think how this had happened; he hastily retraced his steps to the goldsmith's store. This time, he took no risks; he clutched the rings tightly in his closed fist, this way they surely wouldn't get lost....

But a surprise waited for him on the corner; a young man with a sly look on his face was lying in wait, and with one quick move, he grabbed the rings out of Rav Moshe's hand. Rav Moshe was about

to scream, but instead of running away, the man stood facing him and waved the precious rings in his face tauntingly.

"Give me my rings back!" Rav Moshe cried hoarsely, but the man snickered and said: "The rings were yours, but now they are mine!"

"You should know," the man added, "that this is the second time that I am taking them from you... In the morning when I stole them out of your hands, I was dressed up like an old man, but after I saw you praying so fervently on the bench in the park, I realized that I was dealing with a holy person and I hurried to return them to your pocket... Yes, I was the old man from the bench in the park... Now I look like my real self – a young, scheming man, heh heh..." He chuckled at his own wit.

Suddenly, his face grew serious and he continued: "The rings are mine, but I decided to give them to you as a gift."

"As a gift?" Rav Moshe was dumbstruck. "But they are mine."

"They were yours in the past," the man insisted. "Now they are mine, but they will once again become yours on one condition..."

Rav Moshe noticed tears glistening in the thief's eyes as he continued:

"My parents both passed away some time ago; I caused them untold grief in my life. Now I want to do something in their memory: I will give you back the rings as long as you commit to saying Kaddish for one year in their memory."

Rav Moshe agreed immediately and the rings were passed over to him. But the thief was not finished yet. Before he parted from Rav Moshe, he took a packet of bills out of his pocket and asked: "With this money, please buy maffir the whole year in their memory." This time, Rav Moshe refused to take the money: "I will not be able to buy mitzvos with money that was acquired by sin," he said.

"So what should I do?" the thief asked desperately.

"Go and work, earn some money honestly and then you can use that money in your parents' merit," Rav Moshe replied.

The thief parted from Rav Moshe with tears in his eyes, and the Rav hurried to the goldsmith. The man, who knew him for a long time, did not want to buy the rings from Rav Moshe. Instead, he gave him a long term loan that would be enough to support his household for a long time. Some time later, a young man knocked on Rav Moshe's door. The Rav did not recognize the former thief, but the man immediately introduced himself: "I am the man who stole the rings from you, remember?" Rav Moshe did remember and the man continued: "After what you said, I looked for work, and found some. It was very hard for me to abandon my ways, but with time, I got used to working honestly. Here is the money; it is kosher," he said handing over a bundle of money to Rav Moshe.

But this time, as well, Rav Moshe didn't want to take the money. "It is more fitting for a son to say Kaddish for his father; you do it for them."

"But I don't know how to read," the man sobbed, and Rav Moshe placed a soothing hand on his shoulder: "Don't worry, I'll teach you how."

After that the former thief quickly grew stronger in his observance, until in time, he became a total baal teshuvah. And it was all due to the power of that emotional tefillah that Rav Moshe offered from the depths of his heart, sitting on a park bench.

Ha'os Vehamofes p. 133