

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Tefillos of a Tzaddik Protect Klal Yisrael

“וידבר ה' אל משה אחרי מות שני בני אהרן בקרבנתם לפני ה' וימתו” (טז א)

“The sons of Aharon died on 1 Nissan; why then is their death mentioned on Yom Kippur? To teach us that just like Yom Kippur atones for Klal Yisrael, the death of *tzaddikim* atones for Klal Yisrael.” (*Yerushalmi Yoma* 1 1)

Harav Chizkiyahu Feivel Plaut, the Rav of Shuran, explains:

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 37a) relates that after the passing of Rabi Zeira, the Biryonim that lived in his neighborhood complained: ‘Until now we sinned and Rabi Zeira would ask for mercy for us in his prayers that we should not be punished. But now, if we continue to sin, who will ask for mercy for us?!’ As the result of this realization, they repented completely.

Thus we can interpret the intention of the *Yerushalmi*: “Just like Yom Kippur atones” – through *teshuvah* and *Viduy*, “so does the death of *tzaddikim* atone for Klal Yisrael” – because through their understanding that from now on there won’t be anyone to plead for mercy on their behalf, they do *teshuvah* and their sins are forgiven.

Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim, Vol. II, p. 87

Answering ‘Amen’ At the Entrance to Har HaBayis

“בזאת יבא אהרן אל הקדש” (טז ג)

Harav Shlomo Ibn Verga, one of the expellees from Spain, brings in his *sefer Shevet Yehudah*, an early description from Virshorish of Rome regarding the ceremony of leading the Kohein Gadol from his home to the Bais Hamikdash ahead of the service of Yom Kippur. He writes: “And when they reached the opening of Har HaBayis, they would pray there for the existence of the kings of the House of David, and then for the Kohanim and the Mikdash, and the sound of the multitudes answering amen was so strong that the flying birds would fall to the ground.”

The *Minchas Elazar* of Munkacz explained that this testimony does not contradict the

Gemara (*Brachos* 63a) that says that in the Mikdash they would not answer ‘amen’ but rather “*Baruch Shem kevod Malchuso l’olam va’ed*,” because it did not say that the Kohein Gadol and the nation stood in the Mikdash, but rather at the entrance to Har HaBayis. Those standing there were permitted to answer ‘amen’ even if the *brachah* was recited inside the Mikdash and they could hear it there. How much more so is that the case in this description, when even the *brachah* was made outside the Mikdash.

Shevet Yehudah (Levine-Epstein edition), p. 150; *Divrei Torah*, Fifth Edition, p. 58

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

The Purpose of the Trees and the Foods

“וכי תבאו אל הארץ ונטעתם כל עץ מאכל” (יט כג)

The word “*ma’achal*” and the word “*ilan*” are numerically equivalent to amen to teach us that one who is careful about answering amen merits that a “fruit tree” will grow on his lot – his *parnassah* will be in abundance. We can further learn from here that the main purpose of creating fruits and foods in our world is so that through them we can say many *brachos* and have many opportunities to answer amen.

Birchas Avraham 21

‘To Cover the Blood With Dirt’

“וישפך את דמו וכסהו בעפר” (זי ג)

“Before he covers the blood, a person must make the *brachah*: ‘*Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al kisui dam b’afar*.’” (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 28 2).

By contrast to the rest of the *Birchos Hamitzvos*, when one does not mention the way the mitzvah is done in the *brachah*, in this *brachah* we specify, “to cover the blood – with dirt.”

Why is this? The *Taz* (*ibid*) explains:

The *Gemara* (*Chulin* 83b) explains from the

passuk “And he covers it with dirt” - inside the dirt, as one needs to cover the blood with dirt from on top and on bottom, meaning that the animal should be slaughtered on a layer of dirt, and then he should add to it and cover it with an additional layer of dirt from above. According to this we can understand why the *nusach* of the *brachah* emphasizes the word “*afar*”, dirt; it is so that we should have in mind when making the *brachah* the dirt that was prepared prior to the slaughter, which is also included in the mitzvah.

The *Tevuos Shor* (*ibid* 8) adds an explanation according to the *Divrei Yehudah* and his brother (*Bereishis* 37:26):

“*Mah betza ki naharog es achinu vekisunu es damo*” and *Rashi* explains: “And we will cover up his death.” From now, because we found in the *passuk* the words “*kisui dam*” with a different meaning, we are careful to say: “*Al kisui dam b’afar*”, in order to emphasize the essence of the mitzvah – covering the blood with dirt.

Birchas Ha’ilanos on Orlah Trees

“שלוש שנים יהיה לכם ערלים לא יאכל” (יט כג)

Rabi Akiva Eiger questioned whether one is permitted to make *Birchas Ha’ilanos* in the month of Nissan on trees that are still *orlah*, but are flowering, because the *nusach* of the *brachah* is: “And He created ...good trees for a person to enjoy.” Fruits of *orlah* are forbidden for any benefit.

The *Tehebiner Rav* tended to permit this, and his reason was that the *brachah* addresses the power of renewal that HaKadosh Baruch Hu imbued in the trees, that a person can enjoy. Furthermore, people are destined to enjoy this tree in the future after the *orlah* years are over.

As proof of his words, the Rav cited the words of the Mishnah (*Ma’asver Sheini* 5 1) that during *shemittah*, when fruits are all *hefker*, the *orlah* trees should be marked so that people will not mistakenly eat from there. If we say that we are not allowed to make a *brachah* on a tree that is *orlah*, then the rest of the years we should also be marking the *orlah* trees so that passersby should not mistakenly recite the *brachah* on this tree, as it would be a *brachah* in vain.

Hagahos Rabi Akiva Eiger, Orach Chaim 126 1; *Shu”t Dovev Meisharim, Vol. III, 5*



“V’ahavta L’reiacha Kamocha” (Bamidbar 19:18)

“One who hears someone in Yisrael making a *brachah*, even if he only hears the end of the *brachah*, is obligated to answer amen... Even when he hears a *Mi Shebeirach* being made for someone, it is right to answer amen, and through this he fulfills the mitzvah of “*V’ahavta le’reiacha kamocha*” and therefore we answer amen after *HaRachaman*.” (*Aruch Hashulchan* 215 1)

Amen. Ahavas Hashem and Ahavas Yisrael.

Kiras Shema – Second Parashah (5)

Tefillah with Mesirus Nefesh

Aside for *tefillah* being classified as “*avodas halev*,” service of the heart, as explained in the previous article that the main purpose of *tefillah* is not just uttering the words, but the *kavanah* of the heart that comes with it, it has another level of “*avodas hanefesh*,” service of the soul. Thus we find in several places that they attributed the *tefillah* to “*nefesh*”, as Chana said (*Shmuel I*, 1:15): “And I will spill out my soul before Hashem.” Likewise David Hamelech says in *Tehillim*: “*Barchi nafshi es Hashem*,” my soul will bless Hashem (103:1 and others), and “*Halleli nafshi es Hashem*,” my soul will praise Hashem (146:1).

The *Nefesh Hachaim* explains (2:15): *Tefillah* takes the place of the *korbanos*, and just like with *korbanos* – the soul of the *korban* that rises on High atones for the person, so too with *tefillah*. The steam of the speech of a person [which comes from the source of his soul, as *Onkelos* explained (*Bereishis* 2:7): “*Vayehi adam lenefesh chayah*” – “*leruach memalela*”] rises On High and causes him to cleave with body and soul to his Creator.

This service is very lofty, as through it a person elevates the soul, which is the physical force that connects between his body and his soul, and makes him cleave to his Creator. That is why it says of *tefillah*, “*Uvechol nafshechem*” because in order to achieve the level of perfection a person must banish from his body before davening any physical desire or enjoyment, and to dedicate the strength of his body and soul only towards *avodas Hashem*.

Even If He Takes Your Soul

The meaning of the commandment “*uvechol nafshecha*” said in the first *parashah* was explained by *Chazal* (*Brachos* 54a): “Even if He takes your soul.” Although *tefillah* should certainly not be included with the three sins about which it is said “he should be killed yet not transgress,” the *Nefesh Hachaim* says that *tefillah* also involves a level of *mesirus nefesh*, with the fact that the person cleaves with his soul to his Creator. We find with many *tzaddikim* that their love of Hashem in their hearts when davening was so strong, and that their souls so desired to cleave to their Creator, that reached a level of complete separation from all physicality and their soul almost left their body.

Among the most famous of those *tzaddikim* was the holy Divrei Chaim of Sanz, who would serve his Creator with his *tefillah* with literal *mesirus nefesh*. Indeed, on his headstone, it says: “His *avodah* and his *tefillah* was with *mesirus nefesh* to Hashem, and his soul cleaves to his Creator literally like one of the Heavenly Seraphim.” When he was once asked by someone close to him about something that he planned to

do after davening, the Rebbe was taken aback and said: “I don’t know how one can plan like that; the *tefillah* is still ahead of us, and who knows if our soul will remain in our bodies after it...”

I Hereby Am Moser Nefesh

This is the place to note what the early sages wrote (*Sefer Hagan* for day 11): “Every person in Yisrael who hears a *brachah* from a Yisrael is obligated to answer amen, even if he hears it from a woman or a child...and he notes: “**Amen**” is an acronym for “**ani moser nafshi**” – that every person in Yisrael is obligated to be *moser nefesh* to answer amen, and every person is obligated to say the *brachos* aloud so that those in the house or standing around him should hear it and be able to answer amen. The word amen is testimony that the *brachah* is true, and if he says it in whisper, then it is like someone who evades testifying over something.”

There is an awesome story cited in the holy *Zohar* (*Terumah* 166 1) about a person who married his daughter off to an unknown boy, after he saw him being *moser nefesh* and jumping off a roof in order to answer amen after *Kaddish*, but in the end the boy turned out to be a vessel empty of Torah. As such, the *kallah* and her father were very distraught, and when Rabi Yosi happened on their home and saw their distress, he looked into the boy’s eyes and said: “I am sure that the light of Torah will emerge from him forever.” Indeed, as the time passed it turned out that the boy had been hiding himself, and indeed, he was replete with Torah and *chochmah* and in time he became a *gadol b’Yisrael*.

Harav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, *shlitah*, president of Bnei Emunim, added that *mesirus nefesh* for answering amen is needed each and every day, especially for those who seek to practice the custom of the *gedolim* of the generations to say *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*. Sometimes this involves some embarrassment, but when the person recognizes the virtue of the *segulah* of answering amen, then he will certainly not hesitate to be “*moser nefesh*” for this important mitzvah.

He cited a beautiful allusion to this from the words of the *passuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 4 8): “*Tashuri meirosh amanah meirosh shenir vechermon mimonos arayos meiharerei namarim*”: The acronym of the words “*arayos meiharerei namarim*” is “amen.” Sometimes a person is embarrassed to make a *brachah* out loud or answer amen aloud, but we have to know that specifically then it is our obligation to be strong as a lion and daring as a leopard – to do the will of our Father in Heaven.

Why Did the Polish Nobleman Visit the Rebbe’s Tziyun?

The Rebbe Harav Menachem Mendel of Riminov was known for his outstanding piety and absolute submission to his Creator. Among his other virtues, he was known for the power of his *tefillah*. The story of how he became close to his holy Rebbe, Harav Elimelech of Lizhensk, also began with an emotional *tefillah* that he offered, after having difficulty learning. At the time, he pleaded before Hashem to illuminate his eyes in learning, until he fell asleep in his prayer and in his dream, Harav Elimelech was pointed out to him as the one who could help him find an answer to all his questions. From that day on, Rav Mendel cleaved to Rav Elimelech and did not leave his court until the day of his passing.

He once made awe-inspiring remarks about the power of *tefillah* of his Rebbe, when he said: “Behind the ear there is a certain vein that before a person’s passing, trembles and jumps out of place. I can faithfully testify that with Rav Elimelech, this vein would jump each day, three times a day, when he would daven *Shemoneh Esrei*...”

The people in Rav Menachem Mendel’s generation would call him the “pillar of *tefillah*”, because in his *drashos* he would go to great lengths to restore the glory and holiness of *tefillah* to what it used to be. He would also fulfill his own words, and the power of his own *tefillah* became renowned to all, Jews and non-Jews alike, and they streamed to him to ask that he plead for mercy and salvation on their behalf.

Many years after his passing, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, the masses who visited his gravesite were surprised to see an elegant carriage speeding into the cemetery. It pulled to a stop, and the famous Polish nobleman Mr. Drobosky descended from the carriage.

Mr. Drobosky, a well known author and Polish hero, was already more than eighty years old at the time, and the crowd followed him closely as he walked with measured steps towards the holy *tziyun*, accompanied by his family and a group of admirers. He stopped near the *tziyun*, took a note out of his pocket and placed it on the headstone. Then he whispered a silent prayer for several moments.

When he finished, he turned to go back to his carriage, but the *rosh hakahal*, Reb Leibish, could not contain his curiosity. He turned to the older man and asked why he had made the effort to visit the gravesite of the Jewish rabbi.

Upon hearing the question, the nobleman smiled and began to relate:

I was eight years old, a beloved only child to my parents, when I suddenly became critically ill and was literally at death’s door. My mother, may she rest in peace, was so anguished and she spared no effort to finding a cure for my illness. The best doctors from all over Poland were summoned to my bedside and examined me at length, but they didn’t hold out much hope. My condition grew worse and my life hung in the balance.

My mother wasn’t left with much choice. She left her house and began to walk bitterly in despair; perhaps a passerby would be able to find a cure for my ailment.

Her cries reached the ears of one of our neighbors, the daughter of one of the wealthiest men in Poland, and she hurried over to my mother with a new idea:

“In the village of Frishtik (the first place where Rav Mendel lived) there is a holy great Rabbi known to be a miracle worker; perhaps he can help save your son’s life...”

My dear mother didn’t wait for a minute; she immediately ordered the wagon

driver to hitch the horses to the carriage and set out for Frishtik. It was a long drive, about eight hours, and the fact that it was a stormy winter night did not make the journey easier. But at five o’clock on Thursday morning, my mother stood at the door to Rav Menachem Mendel’s home.

Despite the early hour, the Rebbe’s home was already awake and active. Each week, the servants in the Rebbe’s home baked *challos* for the needy of the city. The elegant carriage that stopped at the entrance to the courtyard immediately drew the attention of all the servants, and one of them went to find out what my mother wanted.

My mother replied that she wanted to see the Rebbe. The servant quickly conveyed the request to the Rebbe, who replied that he would only be able to see her at nine, after *Shacharis*.

My mother waited impatiently, and when she finally entered the Rebbe’s room she burst into wracking sobs. The Rebbe, who spoke fluent Polish, soothed her and asked to hear what was on her mind. After my mother described my condition, he spread his hands, as if not understanding and said: “So why did you come to me? Am I a magician that I can heal a child when the most senior doctors have already given up on his life?”

But my mother did not desist and said: “I came to you because I know that you are the closest person to G-d in your lifestyle and your behavior, and I am sure that as such, He will hear your prayers more than He will listen to anyone else...”

Upon hearing her innocent response, the Rebbe’s face grew serious. He moved off to a corner and began to daven in his characteristic fiery way, until his entire body was covered in sweat. My mother stood on the side and emotionally watched the scene.

The Rebbe’s *tefillah* continued for three hours and when he was finished—as the clock struck 12—the Rebbe turned to my mother and said, “At this exact hour, the child has improved. His condition will continue to improve in the coming days. When he recovers completely, bring him to me so I can bless him.”

My mother hurried to return home, and was not surprised to hear that the Rebbe’s holy words had been fulfilled to the letter; at exactly 12 o’clock, the doctors told her, the color began to return to my face and I opened my mouth and asked for a drink of water.

As the hours and the days passed, my condition improved, until I was completely healed. Some time later, my mother fulfilled her promise and took me to the Rebbe, who blessed me with a long life and asked that I should always treat Jews generously and kindly.

Since then, to this day, the nobleman concluded, I try to help the Jews of Poland as best I can, and I even make sure to visit the Rebbe’s gravesite from time to time and offer a prayer there.”

Renowned Chassidic scholar Rav Aharon Marcus relates that he came into possession of the note that the nobleman Drobosky placed on the Riminover Rebbe’s kever, and it said: “Pray, oh souls of Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov for the soul of the deceased Mendel Torim. And you, Mendel if you are already standing before the Heavenly Throne, pray for the oppressed nations of Israel and Poland. Pray for me, my children and my grandchildren. Mitzislav the son of Victoria.”

Hachassidus p. 117