

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Tefillah Is Not an Alternative to Effort

אם בחקתי תלכו" (כו ג)

"That you should toil in Torah." (*Rashi*)

When the **Avnei Nezer** of Sochatchov was a young man, his father-in-law, the Kotzker Rebbe, once remarked to his father, Rav Zev Nachum of Biala: "Your son the *illuy* merited tremendous power in *avodas hatefillah*; I am afraid this might affect the power of his mind..."

The father was puzzled by these words, until in time, the Avnei Nezer himself explained them:

I had a valuable watch, and I used it to manage my time between davening and learning. Once, the watch broke and stopped moving, and because I didn't have the money to fix it, I cried to Hashem to help me. Immediately, my *tefillah* was answered and the clock began to tick again.

When I saw that my *tefillah* was wanted before Hashem, I began to act this way with regard to my learning as well; whenever I had trouble with learning the *sugya*, he began to cry to Hashem, and then things became as clear as they had been when they were given at Sinai. When my holy father-in-law saw this, he was afraid that this might weaken my toil in Torah, because he thought that Torah knowledge is not the main thing, but rather the toil and the learning to attain the knowledge. So he expressed his concerns to my father.

Sippurei Tzaddikim

"And We Will Inherit Good... for the Days of Mashiach"

אם בחקתי תלכו...ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם" (כו ג-ד)

The **Ramban** writes (later, *passuk* 12) that the wondrous *brachos* promised in this *parashah* to those who follow the laws of the Torah will only be fulfilled for us in the End of Days. According to his words, **Harav Chaim the son of Harav Yitzchak Zev Halevi of Brisk** explained the words of the *tefillah* of "Uva Letzion." "May it be Your will...that

we keep Your *chukim* in this world...and then we will inherit good and blessing for the years of the days of Mashiach and for the life of *Olam Haba*." Why specifically for the days of Mashiach? Because as the Rambam says, the *brachos* promised for "in *bechukosai teleichu*" we will merit to get only in the days of Mashiach.

Shai LeTorah, Vol. III, p. 96

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

The Segulah of 100 Brachos and Amen

"ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם" (כו ד)

As is well known, *Chazal* say that being careful about one hundred *brachos* and answering amen after them is a *segulah* that can bring upon a person an abundance of good in all that he needs. One can say that the *brachah* of "*Venasati geshamim b'itam*," and I will give rains in the right time" is the source of the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (145:16): "*Einei chol Eilecha yesaberu v'Atah nosen lahem es achlam b'ito*," which alludes to the one hundred *brachos* and amen, as follows:

The acronym of "*einei chol eilecha*" is numerically equivalent to "amen" and the acronym of the rest of the *passuk*: "*Yesaberu v'Atah nosen lahem es ocham b'ito*" combines to amount to "meah", one hundred.

Bris Eisanim, p. 104

"And I Will Give Peace" Even in a Time of "Sova", Plenty

"ואכלתם לחמכם לשבע...ונתתי שלום בארץ" (כו ה-ו)

"Perhaps you will say behold there is food and there is drink; but if there is no peace, there is nothing. Hence the *passuk* says after that, "I will grant peace in the land." (*Rashi*)

It says in *Maseches Brachos* (20b) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is *nosei panim* to Yisrael as it says: "*Yisa Hashem Panav*

eilecha veyasem lecha shalom" (*Bamidbar* 6:26), in the merit that they also are *nosei panim* to Him. He didn't command us to recite *Birchas Hamazon* unless we eat to satiation, as it says (*Devarim* 8:10): "*V'achalta vesavata ubeirachta*", but they are strict to *bentsch* even after eating that is not to satiation—even if they just eat a *kezayis* or *kebeitzah*.

Harav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz, the **Baal Hafla'ah** cites the words of *Rashi*, based on this:

Due to the fact that after the *brachah* of "*V'achaltem lachmechem lasova*", which means the person "eats a bit and it is blessed in his insides" (*Rashi*) is fulfilled, we feel satiated and then are obligated in *Birchas Hamazon d'Orasia* even after eating a bit that doesn't amount to a *kezayis*. Thus, we will lack the merit for which we merit the *brachah* of "*Veyasem lecha shalom*." Therefore the Torah had to promise us that then, too, the words "*Venasati shalom ba'aretz*" would be fulfilled.

From the *Hafla'ah* it seems that by contrast to the other *mitzvos* whose measure is a *kezayis*, with *Birchas Hamazon*, the *ikar hadin* is to make the *brachah* even when eating less than that amount—if he is satiated by that amount. In any case, says the **Chasam Sofer**, a *talmid* of the *Hafla'ah*, in order to resolve the potential question of *brachah levatalah*, a blessing in vain, one has to take care not to eat bread in a measure that is less than a *kezayis*.

Harav Raphael Balsam of Hanover cites an allusion to the **Chasam Sofer's** words from the words of this *passuk*: "*V'achaltem lachmechem lasova*" – because you will be satisfied with even less than a *kezayis*, you have to continue eating your bread "*lasova*", until you are satisfied, and until you complete the measure that is called "*achilah*", eating, which is a "*kezayis*." This is in order to avoid all questions of a *brachah levatalah*.

Panim Yafos; Shu"t Chasam Sofer Orach Chaim 49; Nachalei Afarsemon

Amen Protects the Brachah

On Friday 26 Iyar (5507) is the *yahrtzeit* of the Ramcha"l, zy" a. In his *sefarim*, he expounds on the meaning of Amen, according to "Sod", and he wrote on the words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 53b) "One who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*":

Sometimes, external elements attach themselves to the great holiness of the *brachah*, and ruin the good influence that stems from reciting it. Answering amen protects the *brachah* and all its influences, and therefore, the one who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*.

Otzros HaRamchal, Devarim 32:3

Bivrachah Sheleimah Venomar Amen



Krias Shema – Second Parashah (8)

“Vecharah Af” – From the
Middah of Compassion

Why does the *passuk* here use the words “*Vecharah af Hashem*” with the Shem Havayah, which denotes *Rachamim*, mercy. Isn’t *charon* of the result of *Middas Hadin*, the *middah* of judgment?

The Mashgiach Harav Elyahuh Lopian explained:

It is clear and simple that the anger and the punishment do not come upon Am Yisrael as revenge, *chalilah*, but rather as it says (*Devarim* 8:5): “Because like a person afflicts his son, so, too, Hashem Elokechah afflicts you.” When a son sins against his father, if his father sees that there is hope that he will change his path, then he afflicts him out of compassion for him so that he should return to the right path. But when he realizes that there is no hope – what point is there in causing his son to suffer?! So, too, with Yisrael, as long as there is hope that they will improve their ways, then out of compassion, Hashem fulfills: “*Vecharah af...v'atzar es hashamayim*,” so that they should repent. But if they are in such a low spiritual state, then He does not afflict them, and *chalilah*, they might be sent to Gehinnom.

The Mashgiach spoke these words before a group of yeshivah students from America, who wanted to return to their native country in order to attend college, as was customary in those years.

The Mashgiach, who was very apprehensive about the likely spiritual decline as a result, wanted to make it clear to them what a severe step they were about to take. He continued with great emotion:

“You are probably envious of your friends from the past, who look happy and satisfied and are excelling at their studies in college. But you should know that their happiness – is really sadness, because it is the result of the fact that they have deteriorated so far that they have lost hope. But you have tasted the sweetness of Torah, and if you leave it, *chalilah*, to go to lower places, don’t be surprised if Hashem, in His great compassion, sends you suffering in order to bring you back to the right path.” (*Lev Elyahuh Bereishis* p. 65)

Even When Angry –
HaKadosh Baruch Hu
Dwells Within Us

Harav Mendel Brachfeld, zt”l, related:

At the end of World War Two, I was imprisoned with thousands of other Yidden under the brutal arm of the Germans, *ym”s*, in one of the death camps, under terrible conditions. Each day was worse than the one before, *R”l*.

One morning, I met a fellow inmate, a Bobover *chassid* from Krakow named Reb Yaakov Einhorn, *Hy”d*, who related excitedly that he had merited to see the Kedushas Tzion of Bobov, *Hy”d*, in a dream, surrounded by other holy people, *chassidim*

and eminent personalities, *Hy”d*, whose faces were all aglow with an ethereal halo.

In his dream, Reb Yaakov expressed his pain to his Rebbe about the dire situation that he was in, along with tens of thousands of others, who were being slaughtered every day by the thousands. Even those who remained alive were being crushed by the tortures and constant decrees.

The Rebbe’s answer was swift:

“My child, think of the words of the *passuk* “*Vecharah af Hashem – bachem*” and the extent of the *middas harachamim* concealed in it: Even when anger reigns in the world, even in the most difficult times, HaKadosh Baruch Hu dwells among us, in the essence of “*Imo Anochi betzarah*—I am with him in his pain.”

Reb Mendel continued:

This story quickly spread among the Yirei Hashem imprisoned in the camp, and it infused them with life as the message was, Hashem has not abandoned us *chalilah* in our difficult hour. He is with us, in our pain, and His Compassion has not ceased for one moment. (*Pri Hakerem – Bobov*, Menachem Av, 5760, p. 3)

The Power of Innocence

A remarkable story took place in the days of the Baal Shem Tov, *zy”a*:

One year, there was a severe drought in Poland, and this affected thousands of Jews, whose livelihood depended on working the fields. This was in addition to the great fear of hunger that could spread. The Jews gathered in the shul and poured their hearts out in prayer, but the rains did not come.

One day, the Baal Shem Tov noticed a simple, ignorant Jew who, in the midst of *Krias Shema*, when he reached the words “*V’atzar es hashamayim velo yihyeh matar*,” began to cry bitterly.

After davening, the Baal Shem Tov turned to him and asked what the meaning behind his crying was, and the man innocently explained:

“I understood that the words of the *passuk* are “*V’atzar es hashamayim velo yihyeh matar*” – HaKadosh Baruch Hu will “arrest” and will squeeze the sky [as *Onkelos* explains (*Bereishis* 40:11): “*V’eschat – v’atzris*”] until there won’t be any rain left in them at all, because it has all come down to the earth already... and I pleaded to Hashem that He should hurry to fulfill this.”

When the Baal Shem Tov heard this he stood up and staid: I am sure that the *yeshuah* is at hand, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows what every person thinks and feels and He certainly liked and listened to the plea of this man, which was offered from the depths of his heart with a true internal *kavanah*. Indeed, the very next day, the skies darkened and rain began to come down. (*Keser Shem Tov Hashalem*, p. 48)

This inspiring story was heard from the person who it happened to, the director of a well known institution in Eretz Yisrael, and it was told to us by a relative, the renowned “*Gabbai Amen*” of *Shikun Vizhnitz*, Rabbi Alter David Roth, *shlita*, of *Bnei Brak*.

It all began with that official letter that landed one morning in the mailbox of our institution. The familiar blue logo of the Israel Tax Authority was stamped on the envelope. I opened it apprehensively, and an official paper fell out; the message informed us that the Income Tax Authority had opened an audit into the institution that I direct, which is classified as a non-profit organization for tax purposes.

Many of the non-profit directors know what such an audit entails. From time to time, veteran organizations are audited, due to an error of some kind that raises the suspicions of the tax clerks. It is a huge headache and it takes time and a lot of effort to resolve the mess.

In order to deal with this audit we had to submit to the tax authorities all the documents relating to the non-profit organization’s activities from its establishment, and each document would be closely examined by the tax clerks.

We were very afraid of the potential outcome of this examination. Although we had never done anything illegal, it was enough for one document to go get lost or be omitted to incur heavy fines in amounts that we could not possibly afford to pay.

We hired the services of a senior accountant to help us prepare for the audit. We prepared very seriously for the crucial meeting that was set up for us with the district collection clerk. The decision on our case would be decided at this meeting.

As the time for the meeting approached, the case of documents that we had to take to it grew. We prepared well but despite all our precautions, the tension was immense. Those in the know who we consulted with warned us that this was a very complex case and the risk was very high. Our fate was at the hands of hard-hearted clerks.

On the evening before the meeting I happened to be speaking to a relative, an important person who has been working for years to spread awareness about and to increase the observance of the mitzvah of *amen*. It was supposed to be a routine chat, but for some reason, my relative, who is aware of my occupation as an educator and lecturer, decided to share with me his important thoughts regarding the mitzvah of answering *amen*, so that I could share them with my students.

He spoke for about half an hour, and it was fascinating. Despite the pressure I was under, I listened closely. Truthfully, I gained a lot of *chizuk* from his words. Even though I had been involved in chinuch for many years, I was surprised to discover how much knowledge I still lacked in this very common and important mitzvah. As we spoke, I jotted down a few words about what he said, so that I could review them later on and feel that *chizuk* again.

We concluded our conversation and I went to sleep.

The next morning I awoke early and as soon as I finished davening, I headed for Ashkelon, where the tax authority office in charge of our organization was located. I came a short time after

“Amen” That Opened the Gates

it opened and discovered that there was already a long line of people waiting ahead of me.

That was when the troubles of the day began. When it was finally my turn, I discovered that I had mistakenly waited for the wrong clerk, and he sent me to a different clerk. I had to wait again, but when my turn came, I was disappointed a second time...It turned out that in order for that clerk to handle my case, I had to fill out a form and submit it to yet another clerk. I waited yet another time just to discover that the clerk I needed had to leave the office unexpectedly...

After three failed tries I decided to speak to the manager.

I had to wait to get into his office as well, but this time I decided to persist. I sat down in front of him and poured out my tale of woe, clearly impatient: “I’ve been here for hours and everyone keeps sending me to someone else,” I exclaimed. The manager listened and it was clear that he was sympathetic. “Wait here,” he pointed to a waiting area in a nearby corridor; “I’ll deal with your file myself.”

I was pleased, I was sure that finally, salvation had arrived, and I mustered up my last vestiges of patience to wait yet again.

As I was waiting, I witnessed something very unusual: I noticed a secular person emerging from the nearby restrooms; he washed his hands and then took out a yarmulke from his pocket and fervently made the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*. I was puzzled; the man recited the *brachah* with fervent *kavanah*; I listened carefully and—likely influenced by the conversation I had had the night before—answered an equally fervent *amen* when he was finished. The man looked to me in surprise; he didn’t understand what I had said. I was curious to know what the story behind his *brachah* was. I was about to ask him about it, but he turned away and was quickly swallowed up by one of the rooms.

About half an hour later, I realized that things weren’t so simple. I peeked into the manager’s room and he was in the midst of what seemed to be a very long phone call... My patience was wearing very thin. It was almost time for the office to close. I had been there for hours, and had prepared so extensively for this meeting, and now I would return home exactly as I’d come—with no progress towards a resolution of the problem.

Daringly, I opened the door to the manager’s office and gave him a piercing stare; it didn’t look like I moved him much because he just motioned for me to continue waiting...

“Sir!” I addressed the manager firmly, ignoring the receiver pressed to his hear. “I must finish this matter today!”

He turned back to me with an angry expression, covered the mouthpiece and rebuked me soundly: “Don’t you see that I am busy? I said I would deal with your file myself...!” I was almost convinced of his sincerity but a moment later, it seemed that he also realized how late it was and that he wouldn’t be able to fulfill his pledge. He walked out of his office and pointed to a peeling door at the end of the hallway: “Wait here, a clerk will be right there to deal with your issue.”

I knocked at the door and no one answered. I was about to explode—waiting again...But I

was afraid to incur the wrath of the manager, so I waited quietly. In my heart I was coming to terms with the fact that I would have to come back another time.

Finally I was called to come in. It looked like indeed, the manager had sent me here for naught... The clerk was getting ready to leave and hardly noticed my entrance. But when I looked into his eyes I was surprised to see that it was that person who I had seen making an *Asher Yatzar* earlier with such *kavanah*...

As I said, I had already come to terms with the fact that I would not be able to finish dealing with my complicated case today, but I could not suppress my curiosity and I gently asked the man: “I saw you making *Asher Yatzar* before with so much concentration. You don’t look Torah observant; what brought you to adopt this habit?”

The man was surprised by the question, but answered right away: “Uhh...It’s something that I took upon myself many years ago. I became more aware of the subject during the *shivah* for my mother, and since then I am strict about it.” He paused for a second and then asked me a question: “If we’re talking already, I saw that you answered *amen*, and I really didn’t know what connection you had to the *brachah* that I had made to Hashem,” he asked me innocently.

I was happy for the opportunity to use the information I had learned just the night before and began to explain to him the significance of answering *amen*, how it completes the *brachah* and what reward is in store for one who is careful about it.

I spoke for quite some time, but it did not appear that the clerk was losing patience; he listened attentively and did not conceal how impressed he was at the idea that one such small word could have such significance...

When I finished speaking I stood up but the man stopped me: “Wait a minute, what did you come here for?”

I had almost forgotten why myself...I quickly explained to him why I was there. He listened patiently and said: “The truth is, I don’t know why you came to me because this is not something I handle, but I am very impressed by you...Wait here a few minutes, maybe I can do something for you. I’ll try to speak to the manager.”

He walked out of the office with the stack of documents I had given him. A few minutes later he came back with one sheet of paper in hand, signed and stamped, stating:

“I hereby affirm that I checked the conduct of this non-profit organization and did not find any flaws in its activities. All claims filed against it are null...Signed, Income Tax Commissioner.”

I stared at the paper in disbelief. That was it? No further audit? A process that was supposed to take a few weeks was over in a few minutes. I stood up and hurried out of the office—after thanking the dedicated clerk effusively of course.

He didn’t understand...” All I did was answer *amen* after you...” – he said with a mischievous sparkle in his eye, and then I left the office.