

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

"Shleimus", Perfection, Is Preferable to "Gadlus", Greatness

"נח איש צדיק תמים" (ו ט)

We find in the holy Torah that the praise of Noach is expressed in that he was a "tzaddik tamim", meaning that his deeds were perfect.

It is told over that the disciples of the Chozeh of Lublin discussed among themselves which of these virtues is more praiseworthy – gadlus, greatness, or shleimus, perfection. Is it better for a person to strive to reach great achievements and to ignore the fact that through this his deeds will not be done with perfection, or perhaps it is preferable to suffice with low achievements as long as each action is perfect?

When they asked their great Rebbe this question, he replied: Learn from the halachos of betzias hapas, opening bread. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 168 1) rules that someone who has two challos before him, one large but not whole, and the second small and whole, should make the brachah on the whole one despite it being smaller. Hence we see that perfection is better than greatness.

Tov Hapninim

Additionally, we can learn from here how much we must try and make our brachos in front of someone who can answer amen after them, because answering amen completes the brachah, as the holy Zohar says (Eikev 271 1) that every brachah that is answered by amen is a brachah that is suitably complete. As we just noted that even small things done with perfection have an added virtue, then how much more so answering amen, that aside for its great virtue, as the Midrash says (Devarim Rabbah 7 1): "There is nothing greater before HaKadosh Baruch Hu than amen that Yisrael answer," it also has the virtue of shleimus, perfection.

Answer a Fool According to his Stupidity

"ואני הנני מביא את המבול מים על הארץ" (ז)

One year, no rain fell in Frankfurt, Germany and the city's Rav, Harav Avraham Abish gathered the entire community for a mass tefillah. As he was on the way to the tefillah, he met a frivolous, unserious person walking calmly as though this trouble did not affect him. "Why will you not join us for the tefillah?" Rav Abish asked, and the man answered innocently: "Why will my tefillah be effective? Not a drop of rain will fall in its merit."

"You are mistaken," the rav replied wittily, "People like you have already brought upon the world not only rain, but even a tremendous mabul..."

Ohel Avraham [By Rav A. C. Michelson – Pietrkov 5671] p. 32

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

One Who Answers Amen is Called a Tzaddik

"אלה תולדות נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדרתו את האלקים התהלך נח" (ו ט)

The acronym of "Ish Tzaddik" is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the same as amen, to teach us that one who is careful to answer amen is called a tzaddik, as Chazal said (Shabbos 119b) from the passuk (Yeshayahu 26:2): "Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim" – don't read it "shomer emunim" but rather "she'omrim amen."

Toras Yechiel; Zichron Meir Vol. III Drush 32

The rest of the passuk also alludes to this: "Es Ha'Elokim his'halech Noach" – Elokim is numerically equivalent to amen, to teach us that Noach was called an Ish Tzaddik because he habituated himself to always say amen.

Nasi of Bney Emunim Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein

Noach Was Late In Davening For His Generation

"וישאר אך נח" (ז כג)

The language of "ach" which denotes that something is diminished or reduced, is explained by Rashi: "And some say that he was late bringing food for the lion and he bit him..." After being bitten by the lion, Noach became weak and his strength was reduced. The question is, how was Noach not careful about delaying the food of the king of the animals?

The early mochiach, who delivered rebuke, Harav Moshe Kahane of Gibitch, author of Derech Moshe, explained that one should not explain this by way of pshat. Rather, he says, the intention of Rashi here is to allude to the sin of Noach that he refrained from appeasing Hashem with tefillah and korbanos. Therefore, he explains: "He was late bringing food to the lion" – meaning that he did not daven and bring korbanos on the Mizbeach's fire, known as "Ari" as the Gemara says (Yoma 21b): "Five things were said with the fire of the ma'arachah: Revutzah k'ari..."

Harav Aviezri Zelig Margulies, author of Kesef Nivchar offers a similar explanation, but differs on the connection between tefillah and ari:

The Navi in Yechezkel describes the Maaseh Hamerkavah (1:10) and says that the upper Merkavah has four figures: a person, a lion, a bull and an eagle. And here, the holy Zohar (Tikkunei Zohar Hachadash 24 2) says that Tefillas Shacharis [which is the first of all the tefillos because it was composed by Avraham Avinu (Brachos 26b)], receives in its arms the "ari" in the Merkavah. That is what Rashi was referring to: "Because Noach brought the food late to the "ari" in the Merkavah late, by refraining from davening for the members of his generation, therefore the lion below, in the teivah, bit him.

Derech Moshe (Amsterdam 5459) in the introduction; Kesef Nivchar (Amsterdam 5472)

כי אתה רחיתי צדיק לפני צדור היום

"Reciting amen should not be light in your eyes, because a person is only called a tzaddik if he answers ninety amens each day. If so, who is the person that will see all this and his hairs will not stand on end, and like a lion will stand guard on the holy watch so as not to lose even one amen." Siach Yitzhak [By Rabi Eliyahu Manny] p. 279

Recite Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa each morning and merit to accumulate 90 amens.



Birchas Asher Yatzar

רופת כל בשר

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After receiving many requests, we will dedicate the next few segments to the brachah of Asher Yatzar, the wonderful brachah we have are privileged to have to thank Hashem for the proper functioning of our bodily systems. Reciting this brachah with kavanah is a renowned segulah for good health, with siyata diShmaya. May these holy words be a merit for a refuah for all the sick in Am Yisrael, and for yeshuos for individuals and the klal in all that they need.

Gratitude for a Wondrous Creation

Each morning, when we arise from our night's sleep and stand on our feet, stable and firm, we remember once again the wondrous mechanisms that the Creator of the world put at our disposal so that we can serve Him and fulfill his mitzvos without any obstacles—the systems of our wondrous bodies that Hashem granted us in His great benevolence and compassion.

There isn't a single superfluous detail in this system. Every single part is a world in and of itself, both with regards to the benefit that we derive from it and as far as the Divine Wisdom and the complexities with which it is constructed.

In order for us to be able to properly thank for this tremendous gift, Chazal composed for us (Brachos 60b) a special brachah, Asher Yatzar, in which we praise HaKadosh Baruch Hu for creating our bodies with wisdom and insight. We also thank Him for the tremendous chessed that He performs for us every hour, especially when we are able to attend to our bodily needs, when the systems of the body all function properly, in remarkable and precise coordination, so that we can continue to serve Hashem in good health, both physically and emotionally.

The Yalkut Meam Loez (Bereishis Vol. I, p. 87) imparts some inspiring words on this subject: "Anyone who introspects into the secret of the creation of the person and his organs will see that the person needs to serve Hashem with his heart and soul, even without receiving reward, but only because of the tremendous chassadim He has performed for us – for making us so perfectly. Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu has performed such a tremendous chessed of creating the person with all the organs he needs, therefore, we are obligated to bless Hashem and praise Him for this tremendous good that He has done for us."

Birchas Hagomel Every Day

Due to the fact that the essence of the brachah is individual gratitude for the proper function of our bodily systems in general, and our digestive system in particular, the Rishonim wrote (see Shu"t Min Hashamayim siman 34) that its halachah is like Birchas Hagomel that a sick person recites upon being healed, because you do not have anyone who is more ill than one whose digestive system does not function properly, chalilah.

A Complicated Operation, With No Anesthesia or Pain

The author of Seder Hayom writes: "And he should make the brachah with kavanah, and should say it word for word, and he should have kavanah

about the great chessed that Hashem does with the person every time he attends to his bodily needs, and egests everything that he has eaten...If not for this, all the money in the world would not be enough to heal him, and ultimately he would die...In His great compassion, HaKadosh Baruch Hu created mechanisms and systems and different matters in the person's body to be able to ingest what he needs and then to egest what he does not need, to absorb what he needs and to expel the waste, and to keep his body healthy so that it can be ready and worthy of serving Hashem.

"And if a person will concentrate completely and will recite the words properly he will not fall ill all his life and will not need a doctor or his healing, and if so, it is surely worthwhile to make the brachah with total kavanah and with the full awareness of the Healer of All Flesh Who Performs Wonders... And from the brachos of a person his nature becomes evident—whether he is a talmid chacham and yarei Shamayim, or if he is a fool in his service of Hashem."

The sefer Damesek Eliezer (by Rav A. Papo [of Sarajevo] letter A, entry Asher Yatzar 2) writes:

If we are obligated to make all brachos with awe and love, how much more so this brachah, where our eyes see people around us who are suffering endlessly over the bodily functions that seem to be so simple, while we merit to execute those functions without any pain. Therefore, how can we make this brachah without kavanah, while wiping our hands, or even worse, we get distracted and forget to make the brachah at all?

Therefore, one who fears the Word of Hashem should take care to make this brachah with great joy, awe and love, and it is enough if he has kavanah in his heart to understand the simple meaning of the words he is reciting, and surely he will receive his reward from Hashem.

Many have expounded specifically on this brachah, because it is a basic hakaras hatov to the One Who performs such great miracles for us each and every day. Therefore, it is very important to recite it with kavanah and concentration, so that our gratitude will be complete. The renowned mashpia, Harav Elyahu Roth, z"l, would always tell his students: "Do you understand why you are obligated to make the brachah of Asher Yatzar?! You just endured a complex and difficult 'operation' during which waste was cleansed from your body. Instead of this operation taking place under anesthesia or with pain, the greatest Doctor in the world—the Creator—had mercy on you and did it in the easiest way possible, with no payment. Is it not worthy that you should praise him with great kavanah for this?!" (Hamevarech Yisbarech p. 64)

The Mashgiach, Harav Yechezkel Levinstein, z"l, added: The actual fact that for decades our body works in the same fashion without any changes is a miracle as tremendous as Yetzias Mitzrayim. Even the best machine in the world breaks down from time to time from overuse, how much more so, our bodies, which are comprised of hundreds of sophisticated little "machines"...and nevertheless, they do not stop working each and every day for many years. (Telalei Oros)

The Giyores Worked from Above

If you want to know how important tefillos on behalf of the souls of lonely deceased people are, and how grateful they are towards those who daven for the elevation of their souls, then read this remarkable story about the convert Yemima Moskorah, who was killed four years ago in a murderous terror attack in Yerushalayim, not far from the Kosel.

"Yemima bas Avraham Avinun." There seems to be no one who has not heard of the holy convert who was fatally wounded in a terrible terror attack on Erev Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan 5775, and passed away two days later on 2 Cheshvan from her wounds. That was the same attack that killed the baby Chaya Zissel Braun, Hy"d, at the age of just three months.

Eight months before she perished, Yemima went through a halachic conversion at the bais din of Harav Nissim Karelitz, shlita. A short time after the attack, one of the newspapers ran an article written by the dayan who was involved in her conversion, in which he related the moving story of the young South American woman who cleaved with mesirus nefesh to the Jewish nation.

The article related that at the time of the attack, Yemima was on the way to a shiur at the Ayelet Hashachar seminary in Ramat Eshkol, not far from where the attack took place. The writer expounded in the article about the noble and refined middos of the giyores, her remarkable Yiras Shamayim, her uncompromising caution against speaking lashon hara, and the middah of chessed at which she excelled.

As expected, the article generated a lot of feedback. Many who had learned more about this unique person through the article wanted to do something for the elevation of her soul, but one of the readers was so moved that he decided to take the significant step of "adopting" her soul. How? He pledged to recite Kaddish for her neshamah for the entire eleven months after her passing and to light a neshamah candle for her each Yom Tov when Yizkor is recited.

This is what the man related: "For an entire year I recited Kaddish for her, three tefillos a day, and whenever I was able, I also davened for the amud in her memory. Whenever people in shul asked me who I was davening for—as they knew my mother had passed away years earlier and my father was baruch Hashem healthy and well—I would explain that I was doing it for the

neshamah of a convert who had no one to say Kaddish for her.

Thus the year of mourning passed, and, as stated, during that time I tried not to miss even a single tefillah to be able to say Kaddish. I often davened for the amud, and each time, I clearly stated, "L'iluy nishmas the kedoshah, Yemima bas Avraham Avinu aleha hashalom."

Even after the year passed, I made sure to observe the date of the yahrtzeit, 2 Cheshvan. On this day I light a candle for her soul, daven for the amud and say Kaddish. I even purchase Mafir on the Shabbos before the yahrtzeit, as is customary, as if it was the yahrtzeit of a family member of mine."

The person continued to relate:

"More than a year ago I married off my son, baruch Hashem, and then Hashem granted me another simchah, and in the last year my daughter also got engaged. The simchah was great, but not complete, because while I had merited to marry off my children, my older sister's daughter was still sitting at home, awaiting her shidduch.

"The pain over this festered in my heart, and I decided to do something. On Erev Shevi'i Shel Pesach, while I lit the candle for the giyores, as my custom has become, in honor of Yizkor, I decided to tearfully turn to Hashem to plead for my niece. I found myself standing in front of the candle and speaking, so to speak, to the neshamah of the holy giyores, and sharing my great pain with her:

"Although I do not know you, it is clear to me that you know me well, in the merit of the packages of mitzvos that I have sent and continue to send on your behalf from this world to the Kisei HaKavod. I ask you: please, daven to Hashem to send the shidduch for my niece, Plonis bas Plonis, and that we should merit to see her simchah even before my daughter's wedding, because only then will my simchah be complete."

I continued to daven tearfully for many long moments, and six weeks later, at the candle-lighting on Erev Shavuos I repeated my fervent tefillah.

What happened next was truly remarkable: A few days after Shavuos the phone rang. It was my older sister on the line, excitedly informing me that finally, they would be making a l'chaim that night.

"Mazal tov!" I exclaimed, and only the One Above knows how great my joy was to hear this. No one knew how many tears I had shed in my tefillos for a yeshuah for my niece, and baruch

Hashem, the tefillah had been accepted.

My daughter's wedding took place at the appointed time, and the simchah was all the greater as we knew that in a short time hence, our family would also be celebrating the long awaited marriage of our niece.

It would seem that the story could end here, but no:

During the Shabbos Sheva Brachos of my niece, a conversation developed between me and the mechutan, the chassan's father, who is a prominent dayan in a city in the center of Israel. As we spoke, it emerged that his primary field of expertise is in conversions, and that from time to time, he had a practice of adopting the geirim that he converts, and serving as a father figure to them. When I heard this, I quickly asked: 'In your capacity, did you by any chance know the giyores Yemima bas Avraham Avinu, who was murdered in the terror attack?' His reply: 'Of course I did. She was one of the geirim who I had adopted and she was raised in my house like a daughter.'

Suddenly I understood it all: This was the dayan who had adopted Yemima as a daughter...This was the dayan who had published the article after which I undertook to be active on behalf of her neshamah.

Without hesitation, I asked to speak and stood up. The hall fell silent when I told the assembled with great emotion: 'Although there is a shadchan here who received payment for his shidduch, you should know that the real shadchante here is the giyores, Yemima the daughter of Avraham Avinu, a"n. That same Yemima who I tried, since her passing, to be active on behalf of her neshamah, has now repaid me with her own chessed by matching up her 'brother', the son of the dayan who was involved in her conversion and had adopted her as a daughter, with my niece.'

The audience gaped at me in disbelief and I began to relate the story at length. There wasn't a dry eye in the room by the time I finished. Everyone clearly saw how the soul of this giyores worked to advocate for the acceptance of the tefillah of the person who had benefited her with his tefillos, by matching up his niece with her adopted 'brother', the son of the rav who had brought her into the fold. How wondrous!

Luach Davar B'Ito, 1 Marcheshvan 5778