

# Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Yaakov Wanted to Make a Special Trip to Daven

"ויפגע במקום" (כח יא)

"When he came to Charan he said: Is it possible that I passed the place where my fathers prayed and I did not pray? When he decided to turn around, the way was shortened for him and immediately, 'Vayifga bamakom,' and he reached the place." (Chulin 91b)

Why didn't Yaakov decide to stop and daven when he passed the place where his fathers had davened the first time, and waited instead for his return to Charan?

The Chiddushei Harim explained:

Yaakov did not want to daven as an afterthought, while he was going to Charan. Therefore, it was only after he returned from Charan that he designated a special trip to the place where his forbears had davened so that he could offer up a tefillah there.

Likutei Harim

### Yaakov Wanted to Benefit from the Bread and Clothing

"ונתן לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבוש" (כח כ)

Why did Yaakov need to detail "bread to eat and clothes to wear"? Is there any other use for bread or clothes?

Harav Mordechai Cohen of Tzefas explained: There are many people who have an abundance of bread, but they cannot benefit from it, because they are sick or have a physical problem that prevents them from doing so. Therefore, Yaakov clarified his request: "Bread to eat and clothing to wear" – that in addition to granting him clothing and food, Hashem should also grant him health and the ability to be able to eat from the bread, and to be able to go out of the house and mingle among people dressed in the clothes instead of them resting in the cupboard unused.

Harav Meir Yechiel Shapiro of

Blendov explained this differently: When hunger and lack reign in the world, even those who have everything they need do not feel comfortable eating their fill and wearing nice clothes, as they fear being looked upon with envy. Therefore, Yaakov asked: Please grant all Your creations bread and food as they need, so that I will be able to eat and dress from what You have granted me in Your great benevolence.

Sifsei Kohein; Emes L'Yaakov

### Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

#### Yaakov Revealed to Yosef the Secret of Amen

"נתתה קום צא מן הארץ הזאת" (לא יג)

The Megaleh Amukos says (Parashas Vayeishev):

"Yosef is the gatekeeper, and the gates open in the merit of answering amen, as Chazal taught us (Shabbos 119b) from the passuk (Yeshayah 26:2) 'Pischu she'arim vayavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.'"

"Yaakov was 91 years old, numerically equivalent to amen, when Hashem said to him: 'Stand up and leave this land' and then Rachel gave birth to Yosef for him, and Yaakov revealed to him the secret of amen"

#### What Was Special About Leah's Gratitude?

"הפעם אודה את ה' על כן קראה שמו יהודה" (כט לה)

The words of the Gemara (7b) are well known: "From the day HaKadosh Baruch Hu created His world, there was no person who thanked HaKadosh Baruch Hu until Leah came and thanked Him, as it says, 'This time I will thank Hashem.'" Many have wondered:

Did the Avos not thank Hashem? Are there not pesukim describing where they thank Hashem and even brought korbanos for the good He bestowed upon them?

There are several explanations for this:

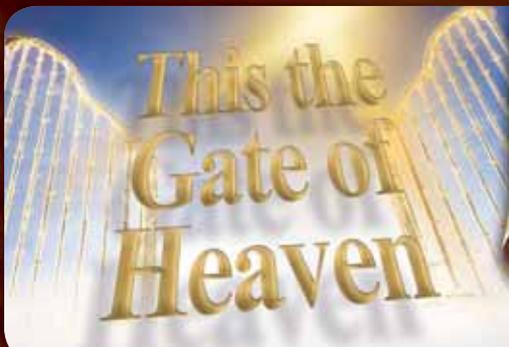
1. Harav Tzvi Hirsch Heller, author of Tiv Gittin, explained:

The meaning of the word "hoda'ah" can also be a person's concession that the other person is correct after initially differing with him. Here, Leah was surely at first pained by the fact that she was "hated", but when she finally saw that from all that, she was granted so much good, as she gave birth to more of the tribes than her rightful share (see Pesikta Zutresa 29 31), she agreed in her heart that the "bad" was for her "good" and as such she conceded and thanked Hashem. Now we can understand that even though the Avos praised and thanked Hashem with their tefillos, Leah was the first to "admit and thank for the bad."

2. The Ksav Sofer explained: Our forbears certainly thanked Hashem and brought korbanos of gratitude, but they did so only after miracles were performed for them that went beyond what was natural. Leah was the first to thank Hashem for a good thing Hashem did to her that was the norm – giving birth to a child.

3. The Pardes Yosef explains: In Maseches Pesachim, Chazal say (Pesachim 117a): "Sefer Tehillim was said with ten ma'amaros of praise...the greatest of them all is Hallelukah, which includes Shem and shevach, the Name and praise all in one." Leah was unique to those who preceded her because she expressed Shem and shevach in her praise by naming her son Yehudah, which includes the letters of the Shem Havayah, and its essence expresses gratitude and praise.

Chiddushei Gaonim 3; Ksav Sofer; Pardes Yosef



"They said (Shabbos 119b): 'Anyone who answers amen with all his might then the gates of Gan Eden are opened to him,' and the reward teaches us how much nachas ruach this brings to our Creator. Praiseworthy is the human being who merits to generate nachas for his Creator, there is no greater reward than this, and an Ish Yisrael should be moser nefesh to bring nachas ruach to his Creator."

Chessed L'Alafim [by the author of Pele Yoetz] 56 1



## Birchas Hamazon (Introduction 2)

## The Brachah As a Payment for the Food

The *brachah* after food is like a "payment" of sorts for the eating. Just like it would not enter a person's mind to go into a restaurant, eat his fill of the delicacies, and then leave without paying, so, too, it is inconceivable that a person should benefit from this world without blessing his Creator.

The *Gemara* says (*Brachos* 35 1-2) regarding to the *brachah* before food that Rabi Levi would question the apparent contradiction between the *pesukim* "L'Hashem ha'aretz, umeloah tevel veyoshvei bah" (*Tehillim* 24:1) and "Veha'aretz nassan livnei adam" (*ibid* 115:16). How is it possible that both are true? He answered: "This is before the *brachah* and this is after the *brachah*", meaning that the first *passuk* refers to the time before the *brachah*, when the land and all its fill belong to Hashem, as *hekdesh*, and a person is not yet allowed to benefit from it. The second *passuk* refers to the time after the *brachah*—after the person has "paid" Hashem for the *brachah*, because then he is given permission to benefit from the land.

Based on this, Rabi Chanina bar Papa added: "Anyone who benefits from this world without a *brachah* it is as though he steals from HaKadosh Baruch Hu and Knesses Yisrael." That is because it is considered that he ate without paying, and food without payment is called stealing.

All this teaches us how great the obligation to recite *Birchas Hamazon* properly is, because if we want to benefit from food by right and not as thieves, *chalilah*, then we have to understand the words of the *brachah* that we are reciting. Only that way can we know that indeed, we have thanked HaKadosh Baruch Hu properly, and "paid" for the food that we have eaten.

## The Segulah of Reciting Birchas Hamazon with Kavanah

Aside for the stated obligation to recite *Birchas Hamazon* with *kavanah* and perfection, doing so is also a well known *segulah* for *parnassah* and success in all areas. As the *Sefer Hachinuch* writes (430): "I have received from my *rabbanim*, may Hashem watch over them, that anyone who is careful with *Birchas Hamazon*, then his sustenance is provided to him with dignity all his life, and he will not have to rely on other people."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (185a) cites the promise of the *Sefer Hachinuch* that one who recites *Birchas Hamazon* with *kavanah* will have sustenance all his life, and added: "And one who is careful should take care to *bentsch* from inside the written text and not by heart." Underscoring this matter, he cites the *Chafetz Chaim* in the name of *Sefer Chassidim*, who writes: "There was someone who died, and came in a dream to one of his relatives and said to him: know that every day I am judged for not being careful to make the *brachos* with the right *kavanah* in my heart."

This is also the place to bring the words of the *Rokeach* (*Hilchos Seudah* 337) who notes the fact that all the letters are found in *Birchas Hamazon* except for the *fei sofis* (פ), and this teaches us that the "*af*" (אף) and *cheimah*, anger and fury, do not have a hold in a place where *Birchas Hamazon* is recited with *kavanah*.

The *Chida* writes: Reciting *Birchas Hamazon* aloud and with happiness is a *segulah* for *parnassah*, as it says (*Mishlei* 10:22): "*Birchas Hashem hi ta'ashir*," the *brachah* of Hashem brings wealth, meaning that *Birchas Hamazon*, which is the blessing of Hashem—as we were commanded to do it from the Mouth of Hashem, because it is an obligation from the Torah—will enrich a person who is careful to recite it properly! (*Hagahos Nitotzei Oros* on the *Zohar HaKadosh Vaykhel* 218 1).

In his will to his sons (printed at the beginning of his *sefer*) the author of *Yesod Veshores Ha'avodah* testifies of himself that each and every day, before *Birchas Hamazon*, he would offer a special *tefillah* to Hashem that He should watch over him and prevent any person from coming into his house during the time he was making the *brachah*, lest he interrupt his *kavanah*. Likewise, at the end of the *brachah*, he would thank Hashem for giving him the merit to make the *brachah* in its entirety.

## Making the Brachah Desirable to Hashem

We will conclude with a story related by Rav Yisrael Najara in his *sefer Kli Machazik Brachah* (Chapter 2) about one of the Chassidim of his generation, Rabi Mordechai Mesanot, who merited to be both a Torah scholar and wealthy.

Three wise sages came to his house to ask him to contribute towards a *mitzvah*, my [Rabi Yisrael's] father among them. When they entered, they saw him sitting at his desk, his face turned upwards and his hands raised Heavenward, and he was reciting *Birchas Hamazon* with intense *kavanah*.

So engrossed was Reb Mordechai that he did not notice the sages who entered his home, and only after he completed *Birchas Hamazon* did he realize they were there. Then he rose to his feet and said: 'Welcome! Excuse me for not noticing your entrance, because I was in the midst of speaking to my Creator, directly.' That's how deeply he was focused on his *kavanah* and how closely connected he was to Hashem during *Birchas Hamazon*.

Rav Yisrael Najara concludes with amazement: That is the *brachah* most desirable to Hashem, and it is no wonder that the one who makes a *brachah* like that will surely be blessed with wealth and honor.

Let us all try to learn, to delve and to understand the meaning of this holy *brachah*, so that we will be able to know that indeed, we recited it properly and thanked Hashem properly for the many *chassadim* that He does with us.

## The Shechinah Is Revealed at the Kosel

A pious *chassid* named Rabi Avraham Halevi Bruchim lived in the city of Tzefas. Rabi Avraham was a very pious and G-d fearing man, who served Hashem with all his being from a very early age. He was proficient in Kabbalah as well but was especially known for his genuine anguish over the pain of the Shechinah in exile.

For many years he would awaken each night close to *chatzos*, and go out among the alleyways of Tzefas, knocking at windows of homes and awakening the residents to recite *Tikkun Chatzos* and to daven that the Shechinah should rise up from the ashes.

Rabi Avraham, whose material life was extremely Spartan and ascetic, did not spare any effort or expense in his *avodah* to bring the Geulah closer. Whenever possible, he would deliver *drashos* to raise people's awareness about their obligation to work towards drawing the Geulah closer and to lament the loss of the Bais Hamikdash, which was destroyed due to our sins, and bemoan the fact that the holy Shechinah is in exile. When he spoke about it, his eyes would fill with tears and his face would reflect his deep pain.

He was so involved in these matters that the Ari Hakadosh said that his *neshamah* was a reincarnation of the soul of Yirmiyahu Hanavi. One day, Rabi Avraham took ill. His friends and acquaintances, who were used to arising in his merit to recite *Tikkun Chatzos*, were very surprised when he failed to come.

One of his friends decided to go to Rabi Avraham's home to what was the matter. He was disturbed to find him lying in bed, his breathing labored, and writhing in pain. The friend quickly called a doctor, who came to check and said somberly: "I do not find any reason for his illness, but his condition seems to be deteriorating from minute to minute and if he won't be treated immediately he will be at death's door."

More doctors were summoned to Rabi Avraham's bedside, but they also could not find a cure for his ailment. Rabi Avraham grew weaker and his breathing became heavier and more labored. The doctors had nothing to say and Rabi Avraham's family and friends began to prepare for the worst. It looked like even Rabi Avraham himself had begun to prepare for the day he would return his soul to its Maker.

The news of Rabi Avraham's illness reached the Ari Hakadosh, who hastened to visit him. With great difficulty, Rabi Avraham managed to sit up in his bed in order to honor his revered guest. The Ari sat down and began to speak:

"Know Rabi Avraham, that your days have already been fulfilled, and by *din* you do not have much time left to live. However, because you merited to be one of those who speak out about, and deeply

feel the pain of, the *galus* of the Shechinah, you have just one hope for recovery. If you muster up the energy to go to Yerushalayim, to the Kosel Hamaaravi, and to daven there from the bottom of your heart, then you will merit to see the Shechinah and you are guaranteed to see salvation and live many more years."

The Arizal's words were like cool water to a parched soul for Rabi Avraham, and although at the time he was bedridden, and almost helpless, he resolved in his heart to fulfill the Arizal's advice, whatever the price he would need to pay for it.

At the time, hundreds of years ago, this was no simple matter. The journey from Tzefas to Yerushalayim was lengthy and perilous. In order to make the trip safely, despite his serious condition, Rabi Avraham needed to pay a significant sum of money, which was more than he could afford. The trip did not seem feasible, but Rabi Avraham did not lose hope.

A few days after the Arizal's visit, there was a sudden improvement in his condition. His body seemed a bit stronger and his breathing became a bit easier. Rabi Avraham hastened to take advantage of this improvement to depart for Yerushalayim.

In order to fund the trip, Rabi Avraham had to sell most of his possessions. Before he set out on the long journey, he closeted himself in the house for three days, davening and pleading for the success of the journey. Only then did he leave.

As stated, there was a long, difficult journey ahead of Rabi Avraham to Yerushalayim. Several times along the way it seemed like he would not be able to continue, but with the power of his strong *emunah*, he mustered up the strength to continue, until he was finally standing at the gates of the holy city.

When he reached the holy city, despite his serious condition, he did not go to find lodgings where he could rest from the journey. Rather, he immediately headed for the Kosel to complete his mission.

It was already late at night when Rabi Avraham finally reached the Kosel. There wasn't a soul in sight, and Rabi Avraham allowed himself to give expression to both his pain and his hopes. He burst into bitter tears and began to daven to Hashem. He stood for a long time, pouring out his heart, screaming and crying, until, drained and exhausted, he collapsed helplessly to the ground.

His consciousness began to fade and suddenly, out of the fog and the dark he discerned, to his surprise, a tall figure wearing black, rising from the stones of the Kosel. Rabi Avraham realized that this was the moment that his Rebbi, the Arizal had referred to, and that this was the Shechinah before his

eyes, in tremendous anguish over the destroyed Bais Hamikdash, and Her children that were taken into exile. He immediately tore his clothes and fell on his face, his body trembling in grief and weeping, and is mouth crying soundlessly: "*Oy li, woe is me, woe is my soul that I have seen the pain of the Shechinah like this.*"

Rabi Avraham was in such a tortured state that he fainted, and as though in a dream, he sensed the black shrouded figure drawing closer to him, placing its Hand on his head and saying to him: "Be comforted My son Avraham. Be comforted that I will return quickly to have compassion on My children and I will gather them from the exile."

The figure began to fade, and Rabi Avraham felt infused with new strength. Slowly, he awoke from his faint and regained consciousness. He continued murmuring the words that he had heard. "There is hope...veshavu banim ligvulam."

Rabi Avraham spent a few more days in the holy city of Yerushalayim, during which time he grew stronger until he was able to undertake the journey home.

After a long and draining journey, Rabi Avraham found himself approaching Tzefas once again. The pallor of his face when he had departed had been replaced with a vibrant ruddy complexion, and his body looked healthy and well.

When Rabi Avraham went to visit his Rebbi, the Arizal's face glowed as he said: "Fortunate are you, my son, that you merited to experience this rare moment of the revelation within the deep *hester*, concealment, that we are in throughout the long and difficult *galus*. Know that you only merited this because you have dedicated your entire life to spreading awareness among your friends and acquaintances to lament the *galus* and grieve with the Shechinah's pain.

Like you merited this, so, too you are guaranteed to live many more years in good health so that you can continue your holy work to bring the Geulah closer.

Indeed, as his Rebbi had blessed him, Rabi Avraham merited to recover from his illness and to live another twenty two years, during which he continued serving Hashem with all his strength. With his special way, he awakened the hearts of Yisrael to bring them closer to their Father in Heaven and to yearn endlessly for the arrival of Geulah.

Shem Hagedolim [Chida] entry Rabi Avraham Bruchim; Kav Hayashar 94