

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS SHEMOS

תשע"ט

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Krias Shema Subdues the Enemies

"וַיַּפְעֵן כָּה וְכָה וַיַּרְא כִּי אִין אִישׁ וְזֶה אַתְּ הַמִּצְרִי וַיַּטְמֹן בְּחֻולָּה" (ב' ב')

Harav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad wrote:

This *passuk* provides an allusion to the words of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai (*Sotah* 42a): "HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael: Even if you only fulfill the *Krias Shema* of *Shacharis* and *Arvis* – you are not given to their hands [of the nations of the world]." This is what the *passuk* was referring to: "And he turned *כָּה* and *כָּה*," – in the merit of the 25 letters in the *passuk* of *Shema Yisrael* recited at *Shacharis*, and the 25 letters of the *passuk* recited at *Arvis*, "and he struck the Egyptian" – Moshe Rabbeinu overpowered the Egyptian.

Ben Yehoyada *Sotah* 42b

The Death of the King of Egypt – An Auspicious Time for Prayer

"וַיְהִי בִּמְיָם הָהֶם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם וַיַּאֲנֹחֵוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הַעֲבָדָה וַיַּעֲקֹב וַיָּלֹעַת שׂוּעָתָם אֶל הַאלֹהִים מִן הַעֲבָדָה" (ב' ב')

A well known question is asked: Is it possible that Am Yisrael only felt itself being crushed under the burden of the slave labor after the death of the king of Egypt? Why is it specifically now that they cried out in distress?

Harav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz, the author of the *Hafla'ah* explains:

In *Maseches Sanhedrin* (44b), *Chazal* said: "A person should always precede the trouble with *tefillah*, because during a time of trouble the *tefillah* is not accepted, as it says (*Eichah* 3:8): "Gam ki ezak v'ashavea shasam tefillasi, though I cry out and plead, He shuts out my prayer." That is because the pain causes a person not to be able to concentrate on his *tefillah* properly. Furthermore, it often happens that due to the magnitude of the troubles, a person does not feel the pain, like a deathly ill person who does not know and feel exactly where it is hurting him.

The holy *Zohar* (*Shemos* 19:1) explains

the *passuk*: "And the king of Egypt died" – that the minister appointed over Egypt in the Upper Worlds fell from his stature. As such, a doorway was opened to the *Geulah* and the bondage was eased somewhat. Immediately, Bnei Yisrael felt their troubles more than they had before and were able to concentrate in their *tefillos*.

Panim Yafos

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

Pakod Pakadeti in the Merit of Amen

"לְךָ וְאָסֵף תָּזִקְנֵי שִׁירָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֱלֹהִים הֵן אַלְקִי
אֶבְתִּיכְמָן וְנוֹאֵה אַלְקִי אַלְקִי אֶבְרָהָם צִחְקִי וַיַּעֲקֹב לְאַמְרָר
פָּקֵד פָּקָדָתִיכְמָן וְשָׁמְעוּ לְקָלְדָּךְ" (ג' טז-ח)

Rashi says "And they will hear your voice" – of their own accord, because you will tell them these words and they will listen to you. They had already been given a sign by Yaakov and Yosef that they would be redeemed with this language. Yaakov said (*Bereishis* 50:24): "V'Elokim pakod yifkod eschem". And Yosef said to them (*ibid* 25) "Pakod yifkod Elokim eschem."

The letters ז.ק.פ. in the order of the *aleph beis* come before the letters ח.צ.ר. Likewise, the word "pakod" is numerically equivalent to twice amen (with the *kolel*). The Torah thus alluded that by being scrupulous to answer amen a person precedes the healing to the ailment, as *Chazal* promised (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40:1): "One who answers amen with all his might, his decree of seventy years is torn up."

Tzitzis Kanaf p. 108

A Moan of Pain Is Accepted as Tefillah

"וַיֹּאמֶר הָרָא רָאֵתִי אֶת עַנְיָנִי מִפְנֵי גַּנְשִׁי כִּי 'דָעַתִּי אֶת מְכַאֲבוֹר'" (ז' ז)

Harav Itzele of Volozhin explained: "And I have heard their cries because of their slave

masters" – even though their cries and sighs were not directed Above, but just stemmed from the pain and trouble of their bondage, still, I heard their cries and descended to redeem them. That is "ki yadati es machovav, because I know their pain" – because I recognize the pain that prevents them from being able to focus on davening properly.

Peh Kadosh

Two Kavanos in Tefillah

"וּמְרוּ לִי מָה שָׁמוֹ מָה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים; וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל
מֹשֶׁה אַהֲרֹן שְׂדֵךְ אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַל קָדְשֵׁךְ ... שְׁלָחֵנִי
אֶלְכֵם" (ג' ג-טו)

The question is asked: And until now did Bnei Yisrael not recognize the Name of Hashem?

The *Chasam Sofer* explained:

With the question of "Ma Shemo – what is His Name" Bnei Yisrael meant to inquire which *kavanah* they should have when standing in prayer before Hashem. They were told from Above that there are two *kavanos*:

1. "Eheyeh asher Eheyeh" – and in the words of the *Rambam* in *Moreh Nevuchim* (1:63): "The *Nimtza* (One Who is Found) *asher Nimtza*", meaning that you have to keep in mind that you are standing before Hashem Who is Present and ready always to hear the *tefillah* of every mouth. In fact, the *Rivash* testified (*Shu"t*, 157) about Rabbeinu Shimshon of Keinon, who was proficient in all the secrets of *Kabbalah*, that he concentrated only on the simple *kavanah* in the meaning, like the children do —that he was standing before Hashem.

2. "Hashem Elokei Avoseichem" – You can also have in mind that your *tefillah* is being recited with the knowledge of the holy Forefathers, who, having established the three *tefillos*, certainly know the depth of their meaning.

Chasam Sofer

During the days of Shovavim, in which we seek to purify our souls and draw closer to Hashem, let us remember the holy words of Rabbeinu Moshe ben Machir, in his renowned *sefer Seder Hayom* (*Seder Avodah*):

"One who answers amen expands and perpetuates the power of holiness and purity, and weakens and breaks the power of impurity."



Prayer of Faith

A Glance at the Seder Hatefillah

Birkas Hamazon – Birkas Hazan (4)

Ka'amur Poseach Es Yadecha

In *nusach Sefard*, before the closing *brachah* of *Birkas Hazan*, a *passuk* from *sefer Tehillim* (145:16) is recited that explains the language of the *brachah*: “*Umeichin mazon lechol beriyosav asher bara*” – “*ka'amur, as it says ‘Poseach es yadecha umasbia lechol chai ratzon’*.” This addition is already brought down in the *Rishonim* (See *Siddur Rav Amram; Mordechai Brachos* 217), and was set down as *halachah* by the *Bais Yosef* (*siman* 187).

By contrast, the *Rema* (*Darkei Moshe* ibid *Siman Kattan* 2) writes that one should not say it, as the *Kolbo* says (*siman* 25), explained by the *Drishah* (181): Being that this *brachah* was established by *Moshe Rabbeinu*, the master of all *Neviim*, and one of the principles of faith is to believe in his prophecy, how is it possible that after he established the clear *emunah* that Hashem sustains the world, we then need to bring a supporting *passuk* from the words of *Dovid Hamelech* in *Kesuvim*? Therefore, he rules that this *passuk* should not be added.

As a response to those who do say it, the *Mabit* says that this *passuk* fundamentally was said by *Moshe Rabbeinu*, and he is the one that established it in *Birkas Hamazon*. Then *Dovid Hamelech* incorporated it into *sefer Tehillim*. Even though we precede by saying “*ka'amur, as stated*”, it is possible that over the years, this word was added. The *Mabit* adds that that it is not unusual that in the *nusach* of the *brachos* that were composed before the time when the *Neviim* or *Kesuvim* were written down, there are *pesukim* from those *sefarim*, because *Moshe Rabbeinu* certainly knew everything that they said, and the ones that came after him learned their *Torah* from him. (*Bais Elokim Shaar Hayesodos* 61)

Saying the Passuk With Intense Kavanah

The *Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah* writes (*Shaar Habechoros* Ch. 9) that even those who do not have the custom of mentioning this *passuk* in *Birkas Hazan*, but rather at the end of *Birkas Hamazon*, in the passage of *Yiru Es Hashem Kedoshav*, there is certainly an obligation to recite this *passuk* with intense *kavanah*, because it is the crux of the meaning of *Birkas Hamazon*. The *sefer Hanhagos Adam* [*Hanhagos Al Pi Ha'Ari* p. 1] brings that when saying “*Poseach es yadecha*” one should have in mind that the acronym of “*poseach es yadecha*” is numerically equivalent to 91, or amen. See also the *Shaar Hakavanos* of the *Arizal* (p. 18 1) that the acronym of “*poseach*

es yadecha” is “*בָּשָׁ*” and the acronym of the last letter of each word is “*תְּמִ*”, and we need to concentrate on these two names when saying this *passuk*, as they are a great *segulah* for *parnassah*.

Explaining the Words of the Passuk

The simple explanation of this *passuk* is that HaKadosh Baruch Hu opens His benevolent Hand and Himself gives the good to each and every living creature [as the *Gemara* says at the beginning of *Taanis* that the key to *parnassah* is in the Hands of HaKadosh Baruch Hu], as He wishes and desires, with abundance and not with scarcity. (*Metzudas Dovid Tehillim* 145 16, *Haggadah Shel Pesach Arvei Pesachim – Korban Pesach*)

The *Tzelach* (*Brachos* 4b) wonders about the *nusach* of “*lechol chai ratzon*.” It would seem that it should have said “*umasbia lechol chai mazon*, he satiates every living thing with food.” He explains that this word contains special gratitude for the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu ingrained in a person the *middah* of being happy with his lot. We see that there are those whose sustenance is more sparing and frugal, yet that does not prevent them from being happy with their lot. As it says of Rabi Chanina ben Dosa, that a Bas Kol said of him: “*Chanina Beni dai lo bekav charuvim*, for Chanina My son it is enough a measure of carob” – to teach you that HaKadosh Baruch Hu ingrains a “*ratzon*”, a willingness in the hearts of His creations that they should be happy with their lot.

Based on this, we can beautifully explain the beginning of the *brachah*: “*Uvetuvo hagadol tamid lo chasar lanu*.” One would think to ask: Does there exist a person who can say that he has never lacked for anything?! But as we explained above, Hashem, in His greatness, ingrained in our hearts the ability to be happy with our lot. One who acts with this *middah* and is happy with what he has can say with full confidence that he has never lacked for anything. As the *Zohar* (*Pinchas* 226 1) explains: “*Umasbia lechol chai ratzon*” – that is the sustenance of the poor, who are satisfied of their own will, and not from a surfeit of food.

These words also contain a special gratitude for the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not give us food forcefully only so that through it we should exist in the world [like, *l'havdil* a car is fueled only to make it run]. Rather, He makes sure that it is sweet and appetizing and that we should eat it willingly. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Arvei Pesachim – Korban Pesach*).

A Story of Faith

A Weekly Story About Amen and Tefillah

The Dignity of the Shul Won in Court

Readers of Jewish newspapers in the United States were surprised to read the following item on Erev Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5713:

“Last week a court case in a Philadelphia court came to an end after two years. In 1950, a young religious man named Hershel Fisher was hired by the *gabbai* of a shul in Philadelphia to daven for the *amud* for the *Yamim Noraim*, but although the two sides signed a contract, Fisher did not daven in the shul on the holidays...

“The *gabbai* of the shul refused, therefore, to pay him the salary they had agreed upon. But the young man demanded it, claiming that the *gabbai* were responsible for violating the contract...He decided to summon the *gabbai* of the shul to a *din Torah*, and after the *gabbai* did not heed the summons, he then filed a lawsuit in civil court, after being given permission to do so by *rabbanim*. As noted, the trial came to an end last week.

“The verdict issued by a non-Jewish Christian judge of Irish descent decided in favor of the young man, and it generated a tumult among the Jews in America...”

The fascinating story behind this article was publicized by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, in the second issue of the *Dos Yiddishe Vort* magazine, published in Shevat 5714/1954. This is the story:

Hershel Fisher was no *rav* or *Torah* scholar. He was a simple salesman, and a member of the Agudath Israel branch in Boro Park. He was never seen vying for honor or power; he would always daven in his little corner and stay on the sidelines. But when the time came, Reb Hershel carried out a brave and heroic act of *Kiddush Hashem* that served as an example of how a Jew acts with *mesirus nefesh*.

Religious Jewry in American in the 1950s was very different from what it is today. But it is specifically during that very materialistic time, when dollars took over the soul and bribed it to the point where it negated its identity, that this story took place. This is what happened:

It was summer of 1950. Reb Hershel Fisher was the sole breadwinner in his family, and he found himself out of a job at the time. Having been blessed with a sweet voice, he decided to utilize his talents to supplement his income. Fortune smiled on him and at the end of that summer he signed a contract with a shul in Philadelphia to serve as the *chazzan* for the *Yamim*

Noraim, in exchange for a sum of two thousand one hundred dollars – a princely sum at the time.

It was self understood that, as a frum Jew, he first verified ahead of time that it was an Orthodox shul that adhered to all the accepted customs. But a month after the contract was signed, Reb Hershel Fisher found out that the *gabbaim* of the shul were swept up in the sick race for modernism that was spreading throughout the country, and had decided to take down the *mechitzah* that had existed until then at the shul. Beginning Rosh Hashanah, the men and women would be seated together.

Reb Hershel Fisher was very upset when he found this out but he did not rush to look for leniencies, and also made the effort not to be influenced by the fear of losing out on his livelihood. He was not even influenced by the temptations of the *yetzer hara* that it would even be a *mitzvah* to daven there so as to bring closer those who have strayed. His path was clear: as a frum Jew, he must not serve as the *chazzan* in such a shul.

At first, he tried to fight it. He called the *gabbai* and tried to persuade him to retract the decision. In addition to his claims that they had altered the character of the shul, he also raised legal claims, according to which changing the character of the shul is a breach of the contract that was signed with him. This was especially the case because he had found it out just a few days before Rosh Hashanah and thus, the chances of another place hiring him was virtually nil.

When his request fell on deaf ears, he tried to summon the *gabbai* to a *din Torah*, but they refused to appear before the *Bais Din*. Instead, they decided to go ahead with their plans.

We can imagine the raging dilemma in Reb Hershel's soul: There were just a few days to Rosh Hashanah. His debts were pressing, and he had to support a wife and children. Winter was approaching...But, being infused with *emunah peshutah*, he strengthened himself with the *passuk* from *Tehillim* (55:23): “*Hashlech al Hashem yehavcha, veHu yechalkelecha*, cast yourself on Hashem your Creator and He will sustain you.”

After some effort he got a position as a *chazzan* in a small shul, with a measly remuneration of one hundred dollars.

After the *Yamim Noraim* passed Reb Hershel found that he could not get back to himself. He was convinced that he could not remain quiet about what happened. In addition to the financial

damage, there was a matter of principle here, and a dangerous breach of consensus: This shul, even after seating men and women together, continued to present itself as Orthodox, and there was a risk that other shuls would follow.

This dangerous process of distorting and blurring the image of *chareidi* Jewry aroused deep pain in Reb Hershel's sensitive soul, and he decided to take action:

As stated, after the *gabbaim* ignored all his summons to *dinei Torah*, he received the approval of his *rabbanim* to sue them in court.

The trial lasted two full years, and it centered around Fisher's claim—supported by prominent *rabbanim* that he brought to testify—that an Orthodox shul that permits forbidden practices loses its right to be called Orthodox. As such, the shul had violated the contract that had been signed with him.

In return, the *gabbaim* claimed that despite the mixed seating, the shul remained Orthodox. Separation between men and women—the “scholarly” *gabbai* tried to claim—has no basis in *Torah*, and therefore it was Fisher who had violated the terms of the contract after refusing to serve as the *chazzan* in an Orthodox shul.

The trial continued, as stated, for over two years, after which Judge Smith, a Christian judge of Irish descent, rendered his clear verdict. Just reading it shows that even the mind of the simple non-Jewish judge understood the basic principle that the *gabbai* of the shul tried to distort.

His decision was that Fisher was justified in refusing to daven there, and that the *gabbai* had to pay Fisher the two thousand dollars that he had lost because of them. Besides that, the judge decided to emphasize the reasons upon which he had based his ruling, and among other things she wrote emphatically: “Orthodox Jewry requires a partition between men and women in the synagogue. The source of this obligation is the *Torah*, in the *Rambam* and in the halachic rulings of *Rav Yosef Karo*. An Orthodox cantor cannot, in keeping with his conscience, pray in a shul that is ‘treif’, meaning that it desecrates Jewish *halachah*.”

News of the trial and the ruling became the talk of the day in the Jewish community in America, and indeed, around the world. It had a lot of influence on the future of American Jewry, which was amazed at the fact that a non-Jewish judge understood the simple logic that a shul that denies clear *halachah* then becomes ‘treif’.

Shabbos Supplement Mikeitz 5758