

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

"Shenihyeh Lerosh" – In Emunah

וַיֹּאֲרֵא אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֵל יִצְחָק וְאֵל יַעֲקֹב (ו ג)

"Va'eira, I revealed Myself – to the Avos" (Rashi)

Many have wondered about the meaning of Rashi's words: What did he add? Does the *passuk* itself not say the same thing?

There is a well known question (see Ramban ibid 3 6): Why do we say twice in the first *brachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*: "Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak and Elokei Yaakov"? Wasn't it enough to mention the Name of Hashem once? "Elokei Avraham Yitzchak VeYaakov"? The *Panim Meiros* explains that this comes to teach us that a person should not rely on the *emunah* that he inherited from his forbears. Rather, he has to work to reach his own *emunah* in Hashem from his personal understanding, as the *passuk* says (*Divrei Hayamim* 1 28:9): "Da Elokei avicha v'avdeihu, know the G-d of your father and serve Him..." Therefore, we mention "Elokei" for each one of the Avos – because each one of them attained *emunah* with his own strength, and not because Hashem was the G-d of his fathers.

Harav Meir of Premishlan explained on this *passuk*: Rashi is asking, why did the *passuk* mention the word "el" three times: "Va'eira el Avraham el Yitzchak el Yaakov"? Therefore he explained: "Va'eira – el ha'avos" meaning: the *passuk* wanted to emphasize that each one of them was like an "av" a father, in *emunah*. The Avos did not achieve their *emunah* in the sense of "ben", a son, as an inheritance. Rather, Hashem appeared to each one of them like an "av" a father in his own right.

Thus, Harav Yosef Pachenovsky of Lodz explained the words of the request that was composed for the night of Rosh Hashanah when eating the head of a lamb: "May we be a head and not a tail" (*Orach Chaim* 183 2). A *kevess*, a lamb, is reminiscent of the ram of Yitzchak and therefore we ask that we merit to be like the "rosh" of *emunah*, like Yitzchak Avinu, who did not rely on the *emunah* he inherited from his father Avraham, but rather worked to

achieve the *emunah* with his own toil.

Shu"t Panim Me'iros, Vol. 1, 39; *Divrei Meir*; *Pardes Yosef*

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

Amen Under the Chuppah

וַיִּקַּח עִמְרָם אֶת יוֹכָבֵד בַּת לֵוִי לְאִשְׁתּוֹ (ו כ)

The Chida writes in *Chomas Anach* that the acronym of "ויקח עמרם את יוכבד בת לוי" is numerically equivalent to amen. We can learn from this an allusion to the words of Harav Moshe of Rozvadov, that the word "chuppah" alludes to the *yichud* of the Names of Havayah and Adnus, which together are numerically equivalent to amen. The letter ה indicates the eight letters of these Names, and the letters ופה are numerically equivalent to 91. It is worthy for every *chassan* who is a *ben Torah* to think about this when he stands under the *chuppah*.

Navah Tehillah p. 123

"Tatir Tzerurah – Kabel Rinas Amcha"

כִּי יִדְבַר אֲלֵיכֶם פְּרַעַה לֵאמֹר תִּנוּ לָכֶם מִזֶּפֶת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵל אֶהְרִן קַח אֶת מִטְךָ וְהִשְׁלַךְ לִפְנֵי פְרַעַה יְהִי לַתְּנִיץ (ז ט)

What does the word "lachen" mean here?

The Oheiv Yisrael of Apta explained:

Pharaoh would certainly express his surprise to Moshe and Aharon: Bnei Yisrael were up their necks in the impurities of Egypt. How will Hashem redeem them? Therefore, he would demand: "Tenu lachen mofess" – show a miracle as proof that you are worthy of being redeemed. To this Moshe would answer: Know that the spiritual decline of Yisrael stems only from the fact that you are enslaving them, as the holy staff in my hand will testify. If I just toss it to the ground in front of you, it will become a serpent. So, too, Bnei Yisrael look this way because they are under your control. If you just stop enslaving them, they will be purified and turn their hearts to their Father in Heaven.

A similar concept was brought by the Pnei Menachem of Ger in the name of Harav Yaakov Klems, the Rav of Moscow:

Rav Yaakov served at the time when the Communists drained the Jews of the Soviet Union of every last vestige of their Judaism. All the shuls and Torah institutions were ordered closed, except for one shul in Moscow, where the Rav davened. Although it was the only shul open in Moscow, just a handful of old Jews davened there. Even on Yom Kippur, due to fear of the authorities, the Jews who lived in the city were afraid to be absent from work. Only when they returned home, towards the end of the fast, did a few hundred of them sneak to shul for *Neilah*. Before the *tefillah* began, the miserable Jews raised their eyes to the Rav, expecting to hear words of *chizuk* and encouragement. The Rav, who knew that the shul was crawling with undercover KGB agents, went up to the *bimah*, his lips murmuring a *tefillah* that he should not fail in his message. He began to tell a story:

"In my past I served as the Rav of a small town. One day, two Jewish neighbors came before me for a *din Torah* with a hen in their hands. Each one of them claimed that the hen was his, without bringing proof of his words. I thought about their claim, and in the end I ruled that they should put the hen on the boundary between the two yards and set it free. When the litigants did so, the hen immediately trotted over to the yard where it had grown up, and the thief was shamefully exposed.

"You too, fellow Jews!" Rav Klems raised his voice. "Throughout the day you were busy with your work, but your eyes saw that as soon as this burden was lifted, you hurried to bask in the courtyard of Hashem..."

"This is what we ask for in the *tefillah* of *Ana Bekoach*," the Rav concluded as the entire crowd wept emotionally. "Tatir tzerurah – if you just release Am Yisrael from their bonds, they will immediately run to shul, thus "Kabel rinas amcha, accept the joy of Your nation."

Oheiv Yisrael; *Kovetz Meor Yaakov* p. 3

"Fortunate are Yisrael that they merited this. One who has a good stone, and his head hurts, he hangs it on his head and is healed. He has pain in his stomach, he rests it on his stomach and is healed. So, too with amen: a person answers with all his might and his *kavanah*, and immediately he is overcome with *Yiras Shamayim* and repents and his decree is torn up..."

Midrash Ashrei Drush 102

Amen – One Word that Includes Everything!



Birchas Hamazon – Birchas Ha'aretz (Introduction)**Birchas Ha'aretz
in Birchas Hamazon**

The second *brachah* in *Birchas Hamazon* is called in the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 48b) "*Birchas Ha'aretz*." As explained in the introduction to this segment, the concepts in this *brachah* were established by Yehoshua Bin Nun when Bnei Yisrael inherited the Land.

Many have questioned the connection between *Birchas Ha'aretz* and *Birchas Hamazon*. The Kozhiglover Rav explained by way of *drush*: In this *brachah*, we appease the Land over the violation that our forbears executed against it during the sin of the *Meraglim*. As the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* says (106:24) "*Vayima'asu b'erez chemdah*, they rejected the desirable land." Yet, even the spies agreed to praise the quality and virtues of the fruits of the land, as they said in their report upon their return (*Bamidbar* 13:27): "*Vegan zavas chalav udevash hi vezeh piryah*, it is also flowing with milk and honey and this is its fruit." Therefore, as is customary in human interaction, when a person comes to appease his friend, he first mentions a detail in which he did not offend him, we, too, after beginning with gratitude for our food – the fruits of the Land, we have an opportunity to appease the Land for offending it during the sin of the *Meraglim*, by reciting *Birchas Ha'aretz*. (*Eretz Tzvi, Beshalach*)

**The Obligation to Mention
"Bris" and "Torah"**

Because Yehoshua established this *brachah* when Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael, therefore, the primary gratitude in it is for the good of the Land. However, *Chazal* also added other expressions of gratitude, as explained in the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 48b):

"Rabi Eliezer says: Anyone who did not say *Eretz chemdah tovah urechavah* in *Birchas Ha'aretz*...did not fulfill his obligation. Nachum Hazaken says: One must mention *bris*. Rabi Yosi says: one must mention in it *Torah*. Flimu says: One must precede *bris* to *Torah*, because this was given with three *brisos* (covenants) and this was given with thirteen *brisos*. Rabi Abba says: It must have gratitude at the beginning and at the end, and one who offers less – should not say less than one [gratitude] and anyone who says less than one, that is repulsive."

So we find that in *Birchas Hamazon* we include additional gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for many good things that He has done and continues to do for us since we were formed as a nation to this day. When we think about this, the *brachah* takes on a much more significant meaning.

There is a well known parable offered by the *Chovos Halevavos* (*Shaar Habechinah* ch. 6) about a boy who was born in a prison dungeon. With his great compassion, the king had mercy on him and provided him with all his needs while he was there. This included food and drink, as well as an education. In time, the boy grew up to be an intelligent person. At that point, the messenger of the king who was in charge of

providing his needs told him that everything he had received was from the king, and he had to thank him for it.

When the boy heard this he said: "I hereby praise the master of this dungeon, for choosing me in his goodness, and noticing me and keeping an eye on me to provide me with all my needs in abundance." But the emissary hushed him and said: "You must not say that, because the king is not only the master of this pit, but also of many expansive lands. He is not only benevolent to you, but also to tens of thousands of people who are under his rulership. When you praise the king, you have to also mention and list all the many benevolent acts that the king has done for you and all his subjects, from the beginning of his rule to now."

Only then did the youth really understand the significance of the good that the king had done to him, and his generosity. He recognized that amid all the king's greatness and power, and his jurisdiction over tens of thousands of subjects, he paid attention to a young boy residing in a pit in the jail, and provided for his personal needs above and beyond the call of duty. As such, his gratitude to the king for his goodness took on a new, infinitely broader meaning.

Similarly, we can also say on this *brachah*, that this is the reason it was established that we offer gratitude in *Birchas Hamazon* far beyond our personal needs, and we also include the many good things that we have merited from the Hand of Hashem, along with all our brethren, from the time we became a nation to this day. In this way, each detail of the gratitude takes on a much more significant meaning, as it is part of an entire network of benevolence that the King of king showers upon us, paying attention to each and every single individuals of the tens of thousands in Klal Yisrael, from then to this time. (Based on the introduction to the *sefer Siach Yitzchak – Chagim Uzmanim*)

Rav Yehudah Aryeh Dunner, *shlita*, said of his father, Rav Yosef Tzvi Dunner, *z"l*, *Av Bais Din* of London, that when he would recite *Birchas Hamazon* and reached *Birchas Ha'aretz*, he would tick off on his fingers each and every praise mentioned in it. He explained that he did so in order to think and feel each *chessed* of the many *chassadim* that we thank Hashem for, and to give special gratitude for each matter unto itself. (*Darchoi Yosef Tzvi* p. 79)

This practice is already mentioned in the *sefer Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah* (*Shaar Habechoros* 9), which says: "Therefore, a person should be careful to say this *brachah* slowly, to pause between each good thing, in order to discern between one subject and the other...and he should not begin to utter the second good thing until he internalizes the previous good thing."

"Mikolos Mayim Rabbim...Adir Bamarom Hashem"

The renowned *chassid* Rav Yitzchak Dovid Grossman, *z"l*, traveled only twice from Eretz Yisrael, where he lived, to his Rebbe, Harav Aharon of Karlin.

It was 5631, when he returned from the second visit to his Rebbe's court. His heart still planted in the court, Rav Yitzchak Dovid boarded a ship that would take him back to the Holy Land. It was sure to be a journey filled with travails and dangers, as was typical of those days. It was Friday afternoon, and the ship was at sea, when suddenly, winds began to whistle and a strong storm hit, threatening to sink the ship and all its passengers. The captain tried mightily to steady the ship that was floundering on the waves like a walnut shell, but suddenly, tragedy struck. A ship was approaching from the opposite direction, and the strong wind carried it right in the direction of the original ship. Before the captain was able to move his ship out of harm's way, a huge explosion was heard. The ships collided head on; the nose of the incoming ship landed on the deck of the ship upon which Rav Yitzchak Dovid was traveling.

A few moments later, the storm subsided. Only then did the panicked passengers on both ships begin to assess the results of the hapless collision. The situation seemed bleak. The bottom ship began to sink under the weight of the ship that was resting on it, and it was clear that within a short time it would disappear under the surface.

The captains of both ships began to discuss how they could salvage whatever possible from this dangerous wreckage. After deliberating, they decided that there was no choice but to wait for a strong gust of wind, and when that would come, the captain of the upper ship would rev the steam engines to the highest power in order to try and disconnect from the ship below.

It was clear that this action would generate tremendous pressure on the lower ship and would drown it, so it was decided that the passengers of the lower ship would be taken onto the deck of the upper ship. But then the age old dictum of "Eisav despises Yaakov" came into play, and wrought its wrath on the handful of Jews traveling on the lower ship.

The captain of the upper ship, a rabid, cruel and heartless anti-Semite, decided that because there was only limited space on his deck, only non-Jewish passengers would be allowed to board. The Jewish passengers would be left to their fate on the lower ship. The sailors, whose hatred of Jews was no less rabid, fulfilled his orders to the letter. They physically blocked the Jewish passengers from boarding the upper ship.

A terrible fear took hold of the Jews, as they tried tearfully

to plead for their lives. But the captain hardheartedly refused. He was not willing to back down from his decision in the slightest. The Jews were panicked, and it was clear that only those who were allowed on the upper ship would survive, while they would drown to death. Their bodies would become prey for the denizens of the sea, and they would not even merit a Jewish burial.

As the cries and wails of the Jews echoed all around, there was one Jew who was silent...

Among the passengers, there was one who seemed totally oblivious to what was transpiring. That was the *chassid* Rav Yitzchak Dovid. It was as though he had spent his whole life preparing for this moment, and now, he mustered up his fiery *emunah*, and with a tranquil expression, he stood up and announced to his friends: "*Rabbosai! Ba Shabbos ba menuchah! We have been commanded, 'Ukarasa leShabbos oneg'. Why are you crying and distraught?'*"

The passengers gaped wide-eyed as he went over to his valise and took out his Shabbos garments. He donned his *shtrimmel* and elegant clothes, and immediately began to daven *Hodu*, the *tefillah* recited at the beginning of *Minchah*, with great enthusiasm and holy emotions, as though he was in the Rebbe's *bais medrash*.

When he finished davening *Minchah*, Rav Yitzchak Dovid began reciting *Kabbalas Shabbos* with lofty emotions, singing the words with fervor. When he reached the passage of *Kegavna*, his mind was already floating in Upper Worlds and his heart was concentrating on the tremendous *kavanos* enscenced in the words, known only to those who are proficient in *Toras Hasod*.

When he finished davening, he immediately began to make *kiddush* on wine, with his regular *kavanos* and *yichudim*. Then he washed his hands, took two matzos out of his bag, and sat down to eat the *Shabbos seudah* slowly and with utmost placidity.

Throughout this time, his desperate brethren gazed at him with puzzlement and shock. They could not fathom how he was so peaceful. In their despair, they had almost forgotten that it was Shabbos, and here he was, sitting in his corner and singing *zemiros* as though his life was not going to be ending very shortly.

In their hearts they thought: "Poor man, he is probably so desperate that he has lost his mind." But Rav Yitzchak Dovid read their thoughts, and he immediately rose from his place. He could not stand the despair that had gripped his friends, and he decided to infuse them with hope. "My dear brothers! Today is Shabbos! *Shabbos hi mitzok!* On Shabbos we must not be

distraught! The *Kavod* of Hashem is cast upon all the nations of the world, and He will surely not abandon us at this time. Let us keep His *mitzvos*, let us rejoice in the joy of Shabbos and we are guaranteed that very soon we will see a *yeshuah*. Our enemies will be subdued and will fall, and we will rise up with encouragement."

Rav Yitzchak Dovid's fiery *emunah*, and the simplicity with which he delivered his message, somewhat calmed the frightened passengers. Slowly, each one went to his corner, washed his hands for the meal, and some were even able to sing a bit of *zemiros*.

The night passed; the passengers of both ships waited with tense expectation. Only towards dawn did the long-awaited wind begin to blow, and the evil captain quickly took advantage of the opportunity. The steam engines were fired up and the passengers stood on the deck, watching the events unfold with bated breath.

Only the handful of Jews remained on the bottom ship, waiting for their bitter fate. The upper ship began to move out of its place, as expected. The tension mounted, but then, something happened. Instead of jerking forward and crushing the lower ship beneath it, the upper ship tipped onto its side. Before any of its passengers could digest what had happened, it capsized and sank to the depths with most of its passengers, among them the brutal captain.

The ship upon which Rav Yitzchak Dovid and his friends were waiting remained on the surface of the water, unharmed. The passengers who were able to board the lifeboats, including the captain of the lower ship, came back up to the deck injured and depleted of all strength. They gazed shamefacedly at the Jews who they had abandoned to their fate. They clearly saw their punishment for this and the Name of Heaven was sanctified before all of them.

That captain, who just a few hours earlier had observed with scorn together with Rav Yitzchak Dovid's friend how he davened, now fell on his knees. "It is clear to me that you are a holy person and that G-d is with you! It is clear to me that by nature you had no chance of surviving, and it is only in the merit of the prayers of this pious man among you were you saved!"

Thus Rav Yitzchak Dovid and his friends reached Eretz Yisrael unscathed and he vowed never to leave the Holy Land again.

He kept this vow to the end of his life, and despite his strong yearnings for the court of his Rebbe in Karlin, he never left Eretz Yisrael again.

Gadol B'Yisrael Vol. I, p. 67