

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Acceptance of the Tefillah Depends on the Way It is Presented

“דבר נא עבדך דבר באזני אדני” (מד יח)

We need to understand what Yehuda’s words mean: “Let your servant speak a word in my master’s ears”—And who had he spoke to until now?

The Dubno Maggid explains:

The way something is expressed has a great influence, sometimes even more than the words themselves. For example, the tone and inflection in the words can indicate if the speaker is pleading or being impudent. Therefore, Yehuda took care to ask: “Let your servant...in my master’s ears” – I want to speak directly to your ears, without the services of an interpreter, and I’m sure that when you hear the words coming out of my mouth you will accede to my request.

Similarly, Chazal have cautioned us with a similar concept with relation to tefillah (Avos 2:13): “And when you daven, do not make your tefillah rote, but rather pleading for compassion before HaMakom Baruch Hu.” That is because the acceptance of the tefillah also depends on how it was presented. Only if the person davens with humility and a pleading tone is his tefillah is accepted.

Ohel Yaakov

“B’Ein Meilitz Yosher” – “Tzadkeinu Bamishpat”

“דבר נא עבדך דבר באזני אדני ואל יחר אפך בעבדך” (מד יח)

What was the meaning of Yehuda’s claim here? Didn’t the brothers themselves declare before Yosef (ibid 9): “He among your servants with whom it is found shall die, and we will also be servants to my master,” while Yosef sufficed with just “he with whom the goblet is found”? So what claim did Yehuda have here?

Harav Yosef Shaul Nathanson explained this according to a concept written by Rabbeinu Eliezer Ashkenazi in his sefer Maasei

Hashem (Maasei Torah 12): When a person sins such a serious sin that it is impossible to punish him in a way that is commensurate with his deed, then there is no choice but to exonerate him totally and not to even punish him mildly, because one cannot give a light

favorably in our judgment.

Divrei Shaul, Likutim

“Poshei Yisrael” - A Condition in Tefillah

“אם לא ירד אחיכם הקטן אתכם לא תספון לראות פני” (מד כג)

Harav Uziel Meizlish, the Rav of Neustadt, explained this passuk to be an allusion to the words of the Gemara (Krisos 6b): “Any fast day that does not include the sinners of Yisrael is not a fast”. This is what the passuk is referring to here: “If your little (הקטן) brother does not come down with you” – if you do not include the sinners of Yisrael in your tefillos, then “you will not continue to see My Face” – in tefillah.

Tiferes Uziel, Shir Hashirim

If There Is No Kiddush, There Is Not Striding Quickly

“וישלח את אחיו וילכו ויאמר אלהם אל תרגזו בדרך” (מה ד)

The Gemara (Taanis 10b, cited in Rashi here) explains the warning of Yosef: They should not hasten to walk in big strides, because that dims the light of a person’s eyes. We need to understand: Why didn’t Yaakov their father warn them about that before they descended to Egypt?

The Maharal Tzintz explains:

The Gemara (Shabbos 113b) says that sight that dims because of “pesiah gassah”, great strides, can be cured by drinking from Kiddush on Friday night. According to this we can say that before they departed, Yaakov did not have to warn them about striding because they were certainly careful about it themselves, knowing that they would not be able to be healed from wine from Kiddush, because from the day they sold Yosef they did not drink wine at all (Shabbos 139a). Now that Yosef had been found, they allowed themselves to drink wine again, and therefore, Yosef had to warn them about striding quickly.

Kometz HaMinchah

Razei Emunim

Hints of Amen in the Parashah

The Brothers Were Frightened by the Secret of “Amen”

“ולא יכלו אחיו לענות אתו כי נבהלו מפניו” (מה ג)
The numerical value of the full letters of Yosef [the letters vav and dalet complete the letter וי, and the yud and vav of וי, and the mem and chaf of סמ and the hei of פה] total 91, which is the numerical equivalent of amen, and that is “ki nivhalu mipanav” – they were frightened by the secret of amen alluded to within [בפנים] the letters of his name.

Aderes Eliyahu [Rabi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad]

punishment for a heavy sin. Therefore, when Moshe asked Hashem to forgive Am Yisrael for the sin of the eigel, he magnified the sin (Shemos 32:31) by saying: “Ana chata ha’am hazeh chata’ah gedolah”, a great sin, - and therefore You have to forgive them.

Here, Yehuda claimed to Yosef: “If you cannot punish us the way we deserve, then you cannot just punish us mildly and only imprison Binyamin. You have to completely forgo punishment and release him.”

Based on this, Rav Yosef Shaul explained our request during the Yamim Noraim to Hashem: “B’ein meilitz yosher mul maggid peshah” – because our sins are so great, and when “tagid l’Yaakov davar chok umishpat” – it will be found that there is no punishment that can atone for us, then all You can do is exempt us from punishment – “vetzadkeinu bamishpat HaMelech Hamishpat” – judge us



Erev Shabbos 6 Teves is the yahrtzeit of Harav Yechezkel of Shineva, who, like many tzaddikim, would listen to several people recite Birchos Hashachar. The sefer Divrei Yechezkel (p. 319) states:

"Rabbeinu tried to listen each day to several people reciting Birchos Hashachar so he could answer amen to the brachos."

Let us adopt this holy practice, and dedicate a few minutes each morning to hear Birchos Hashachar from someone else, and thus the Gates of Heaven will open to accept our tefillos with compassion and willingness.

Birchos Hashachar Aloud With kavanah Bechavrusa

Tzaddik Shomer Emunim



Birchas Hamazon – Birchas Hazan (2)**The Brachah in Third Person**

In contrast to the *brachos* of *Ha'aretz* and *Boneh Yerushalayim* [*Nodeh Lecha* and *Rachem Na*] which are said in second person, *Birchas Hazan* is said in third person: "Hu nosein, He gives..." and so forth. There are a few explanations for this.

1. Rav Leib Oppenheim of Gluga explained this according to the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 54a) that as long as Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they were like a "kallah in her father's home" who was not yet used to her *chassan*. Only once they entered Eretz Yisrael did the nation become compared to a "kallah in her father-in-law's house", used to her *chassan*. Therefore, the first *brachah*, which Moshe composed for Bnei Yisrael while they were still in the *Midbar*, in the desert, before they entered Eretz Yisrael—the House of Hashem, was established in third person. The *brachos* of *Ha'aretz* and *Boneh Yerushalayim* that were composed by Yehoshua and Dovid Hamelech after they entered the land were said in second person. [The *brachah* of *Hatov Vehameitiv*, composed after the *Churban*, was said in third person, because at the time the *Shechinah* no longer dwelled in Yisrael.] (*Mateh Yehuda*, Offenbach 5481)

2. Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin explained this according to the *Gemara* (*Kesubos* 110b): "Anyone who lives in Eretz Yisrael is compared to someone who has a G-d, and anyone who lives outside Eretz Yisrael – is compared to someone who does not have a G-d." According to this we understand that the *brachah* of *Hazan*, which was composed before Bnei Yisrael came into Eretz Yisrael, before they were "like someone who has a G-d", was composed in third person, while the *brachos* of *Ha'aretz* and *Boneh Yerushalayim*, which were composed after their entry into Eretz Yisrael, were composed in second person. (*Tzidkas Hatzaddik*, 247)

3. Harav Chaim Kanievesky, *shlita*, explained: Because the *brachah* of *Hazan* was composed at a time when Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, when the Honor of Hashem rested among them in an open way, day and night, with the pillar of fire and the cloud, therefore it was not respectful towards Hashem to use the second person language (see *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deah* 242 16, 23). But the *brachos* of *Ha'aretz* and *Boneh Yerushalayim*, which were composed after they entered the land, could be composed in second person. (*Tefillah LeMoshe*, *Birchas Hamazon*)

A Special Request for Am Yisrael

As stated, this *brachah* was established when the *mann* descended. Indeed, we thank Hashem for the fact that even during the forty years that our forebears were in the desert they did not lack for food due to the *mann* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu brought down for them from Above, as the *passuk* says (*Nechemiah* 9:21): "And forty years You supported them in the desert

– they did not lack." (*Avudraham*)

From the wording of the entire *brachah* it appears that this gratitude relates to the benefit derived by all denizens of the world, as we see from the words "es ha'olam kulo, the entire world...*hazan es hakol*." But gratitude and this request – "we have always not lacked and we shall never lack" – applies particularly to Klal Yisrael. For this reason, when referring to the rest of the world, we mention only "betuvo", in His Goodness. In contrast, when referring to Klal Yisrael we add: "ubetuvo hagadol", in His great Goodness. That is because the miracle of the *mann* was performed for Klal Yisrael with great and special goodness, and when it was given to them, they never lacked for food. Even someone who took less than the allotted amount found that the quantity was supplemented, as it says (*Shemos* 16:18): "And he who took less did not lack". (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Ohr Hachamah*)

Gratitude for the Past, Request for the Future

In the midst of the praises of the *Birchas Hazan*, we add a request, that just like in the *midbar* no one in Klal Yisrael lacked for food, so too, should this *chessed* continue to be bestowed upon us and we should never lack for food. (*Eitz Yosef*) By way of *pshat*, this additional request is intended so that it should be possible to close the *brachah* of *Hazan* with "Baruch," because we have a rule (see *Rashi Kesubos* 7b, beginning with *Birchas*) that every *brachah* of praise that does not have in the middle a request, is not concluded with "Baruch." (*Vayaas Avraham*, p. 345)

Others explained this according to the explanation of Gr"a on the words of the *tefillah* of *Nishmas*: "Ad heinah azarunu Rachamecha...until now Your compassion has helped us...and do not abandon us Hashem Elokeinu for eternity." After we recognize the fact that without Heavenly Compassion we would not have been able to manage until now, we can be sure that in the future, as well, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will continue to have mercy on us, and will not abandon us. Here, too, we can explain in this way: After we realize the fact that only "with His great benevolence we never lacked" are we confident that "we will never lack food for eternity." (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Bnei Yehuda*)

It should be noted that this explanation has the words "v'al yechsar lanu mazon" as part of the gratitude and not as a request for the future. This is how it is explained in *Iyun Tefillah* (*Otzar Hatefillas*) and *Olas Tamid* (Ch. 30). It seems that there is a difference with regard to the intention of the amen after this *brachah*, because if it has a request then we need to concentrate to say "amen and halevai [may it be]" and if it is only praise, then we only have to concentrate on that it is "emes, truth". [But see *Olas Tamid* (Ch. 23) who writes that we need to have in mind "truth and halevai", and this needs more perusal.]

How Awesome Is the Place...And This Is the Gate of Heaven

Yom Kippur. The congregants at the Great Synagogue in Berlin were all seated in their places, dressed in white and wrapped in their *talleisim*. The signal had just been given that *Shacharis* was over, and the *gabbai* banged hard on the *bimah* and cried "Yizkor!"

As though very experienced at this, many of the people stood up, especially the younger ones, and turned to leave the shul, in keeping with the custom that only the children of the deceased remain in shul during *Yizkor*.

The courtyard in front of the shul resounded with the sounds of children playing, as they took advantage of the break to stretch their legs and refresh themselves a bit. Suddenly, the frolicking stopped, replaced by a tense silence.

World War One had just ended, during which Germany had been quashed by the allied powers. Their feelings of shame and embarrassment were overtaken by feelings of nationalism, and anti-Semitism began to rear its head. German Jews felt the tension and hostility around them.

The fear of the *mispallelim* was now aroused because of the sight of an elegant government car driving importantly towards the shul, accompanied by several police cars. It screeched to a halt right in front of the shul.

This unusual development sowed panic among the worshippers. Who knew what the authorities were going to do now? But they were very surprised when the door to the vehicle opened, and the figure that emerged was one that was familiar to several of the older people.

It was none other than Walter Rathenau, who was serving at the time as the Reconstruction Minister in the new German government, and later served as the foreign minister before he was assassinated. Rathenau was an assimilated Jew, the son of one of the wealthy families of Germany known for its electronics company, AEG, that it controlled and which exists to this day. This man was known to have an especially sharp mind and exceptional financial acumen. As such, he was chosen to lead the reconstruction efforts after the war.

Now he surprised them all when he entered the shul in the middle of *Yizkor*, took a *Siddur* from the shelf, placed a white yarmulke on his head and began reciting *Yizkor* fervently in memory of his recently departed father.

The *mispallelim* observed him with looks ranging from surprise to curiosity, but there was also some scorn and criticism in their gazes. The absurd was so glaring: to come to shul on Yom Kippur amidst blatant desecration of the day, just in order to say *Yizkor* for his father...Who had ever heard of such a thing?!

Truth to be told, the action was completely in tune with the man's status, which was notorious due to a series of articles he had published in Germany's newspapers calling on Jews to assimilate into the German nation and forfeit their Judaism. But maybe despite all that – the thought flashed through their minds – something inside him had awakened and caused him to come to shul on the holy day.

In time, *Yizkor* came to an end. The *mispallelim* turned to go back inside, while the minister returned to his car, and without exchanging a word with anyone, drove off, leaving behind him a community of stunned, curious people.

Another guest was in shul that Yom Kippur. It was, *l'havdil*, the young *gaon* Harav Yecheiel Yaakov Weinberg, who, in time became known as the *Seridei Eish*. Rav Weinberg, who was studying in Berlin at the time, chose to daven on Yom Kippur in that shul, and when he saw the commotion, he inquired as to what it was all about.

"Rabbosai!" Rav Weinberg hushed the excited *mispallelim* after hearing what they were up in arms about. "Let us continue davening. It is not fitting that such an event should disturb our entire Yom Kippur."

"In any case," he added in a stern tone, "don't ever scorn a Jewish emotion that arouses a person's heart, distant as he may be. There is no doubt that the Jewish emotion of honoring one's parents and tradition has brought the minister to make the effort to come to shul to recite *Yizkor*, and I'm sure that this emotion can be an opening for him or his family for a true awakening to return to the embrace of *emunah*."

As proof of his words, Rav Weinberg explained the words of Yaakov Avinu: "Mah nora hamakom hazeh, how awesome is this place, ein zeh ki in Bais Elokim vezeh Shaar Hashamayim." The *Gemara* (*Chulin* 91b) explains that Yaakov's awakening to daven at the site was because it was a place where his forbears had prayed.

Thus, we can understand that this was the place where the Bais Hamikdash was destined to be built; why was Yaakov not impressed by that fact?

We can say that that is the power of a holy emotion that is aroused within a Jew with regard to honoring his parents. It is from this emotion that Yaakov exclaimed: "Vezeh Shaar Hashamayim!" – this the gate to genuinely drawing close to the *Shechinah*.

A short time later, Rathenau's life came to a tragic end when a group of anti-Semitic nationalists assassinated him as he was traveling in his car through the streets of Berlin.

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The end of the story was related by a disciple of Rav Weinberg, and the one who disseminated his Torah to the world, Harav Avraham Abba Weingort:

"Almost one hundred years passed since that story. At the time I was asked to deliver a *shiur* at a private home in Modiin, as part of Torah *shuirim* that are regularly delivered there on Motzaei Shabbos.

"I chose to speak about the subject of honoring one's parents, and among other things, I related this story in the name of my Rebbei, Harav Weinberg.

"I was thus very surprised and moved when, after I finished telling the story, someone stood up and said, 'The Rabbi mentioned Rathenau?! I am descended from Rathenau!'

"I was tremendously moved at the remarkable display of *Hashgachah*. I had just finished telling this story, and apparently, my Rebbei's words had been a virtual prophecy.

"The spark of holiness that was kindled in the heart of that assimilated Jew who said *Yizkor* for his father ignited many years later into a flame in the soul of his relative, who repented and became a believing, Torah observant Yid.

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