

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Contemplation Is Necessary in Order to Recognize Hashem's Chessed

"התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה'" (ד יג)

It would seem sufficient for Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael: "Re'u es yeshuas Hashem, see the salvation of Hashem." Why did he precede that by saying "hisyatvzu, stand firm"?

Harav Chaim Mordechai Katz, Rosh Yeshivas Telz-Cleveland, explained:

If a person would only contemplate what is happening around him, he will quickly discover that endless miracles are performed for him each day. It is only because he does not take the time to contemplate them that he does not recognize them, and therefore he does not thank Hashem for these miracles. Dovid Hamelech alluded to this in *Tehillim* (92 6-7): "Umah gadlu maasecha Hashem... Ish baa'r lo yeda, How great are Your works, Hashem...A boorish man does not know." Chazal also said (*Niddah* 31a): "Even the beneficiary of the miracle does not recognize the miracle."

It therefore seems that even a massive miracle like *Krias Yam Suf* could have passed over Bnei Yisrael without them actually absorbing the scope of it. That is why Moshe first instructed them: "Hisyatvzu," stand and contemplate, because only then will you see the *yeshuah* of Hashem – with all its details and scope—and then you will be able to thank Him appropriately.

Be'er Mechokek

Yetzias Mitzrayim – for Eternal Freedom

"התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום כי אשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תספו לראתם עוד עד עולם" (ד יג)

The **Bnei Yissaschar** explains:

Chazal established (*Midrash Tehillim* 36 6) that a redemption that is carried out by an emissary can be annulled, but a Redemption carried out by Hashem Himself is extant for eternity. That is what Moshe alluded to Bnei Yisrael: "Stand and see the *yeshuah* of Hashem that He will do for you" – He Himself, and thus you can be sure that

"you will not continue to see them anymore for eternity."

It appears that because of this, Chazal established that we say in *Maariv*: "Vayotzei es amo Yisrael mitocham l'cherus olam," for eternal freedom.

Agra DeKallah; Bnei Yissaschar, Maamarei Nissan Maamar 4 Drush 7

Be'er Emunim

From Rabbeinu Bechayei on the parashah

The Fundamental of the Entire Torah

"ויראו העם את ה' ויאמינו" (שמות יד לא)

"And because *emunah* is the fundamental of the entire Torah, Chazal established for us in *tefillah* and in *brachos* to answer amen, which is derived from the language of *emunah* and from *hoda'ah*, admission. The one answering amen takes upon himself the words of the one making the *brachah* and admits to them. That is what Chazal said (*Shvuos* 36a): Amen [includes three meanings] *kabbalah* [accepting the statement], amen *shevuah* [swearing to the statement], amen *kiyum* [affirmation of the statement]. And of this they said (*Nazir* 66b): The one who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*. This means that the one making the *brachah* testifies in his *brachah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Source of all blessing and one who answers amen is affirming that statement, and that is the main thing. *Testimony of eidus cannot be upheld with just one witness, but rather with two.* The person reciting the *brachah* is the first *eid*, witness, while the one who replies amen is the second witness, and thus completes the *eidus*, which can only be valid with his affirmation.

Rabbeinu Bechayei

Bnei Yisrael Sings Prior to the Ministering Angels

"ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה" (ד כ)

"Rabi Yochanan said: Why does it say 'and they did not get close to one another all night'? The Ministering Angels wanted to say praise. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, the creations of My Hands are drowning in the sea and you are singing praise?!" (*Megillah* 10b)

Why, then, were Bnei Yisrael allowed to sing in praise?

Harav Uri Shraga Feivel Toibes, the Rav of Jasi, explained:

The *Gemara* does not mean to say that the Ministering Angels were not allowed to sing that entire day at all. But up until *Krias Yam Suf*, the angels would precede Bnei Yisrael with their singing. Now that Bnei Yisrael had been *moser nefesh* to enter the sea as per Moshe's instructions, as the *Midrash* says (*Shemos Rabbah* 21 9): "The sea was only split for them after they walked in up to their noses" it was determined that Yisrael would say praise before the angels. As the *Gemara* says (*Chulin* 91b): "The Ministering Angels do not sing praise Above until Yisrael says praise below." Hence, "the Ministering Angels asked to sing praise" – as they usually did, before Yisrael, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu said: My creations are drowning in the sea" – Yisrael jumped into the sea before it split, "and you are saying praise" – before them?!

Harav Tzvi Hirsch Kahana, one of the *Rabbanim* of Warsaw, explained it differently:

The praise that the Angels sought to sing cannot be compared to the praise of Bnei Yisrael. The Angels, who had not been enslaved by Egypt wanted to sing about the downfall of Mitzrayim, and Hashem did not want that, because He is not pleased with the downfall of the wicked. But Yisrael sang about their redemption and emergence into freedom, and that is what Hashem wanted. This is evident in the wording of the *shirah* (15:2): "Azi vezimras Kah" – Why was Bnei Yisrael given permission to say *shirah*? "Vayehi li l'yeshuah" – because they focused on their redemption and not the downfall of Egypt.



Zeh Keili V'anveihu – Beautify the Mitzvos Before Him

Dear Yid!

You are accustomed to beautifying every mitzvah you do as much as possible, and even spend a lot of money to do so. **And what about saying brachos?!** Answering amen is part of the *brachah* (*Rema Orach Chaim* 167 2). The *Zohar* says (*Vayeilech* 285 2) that a *brachah* that is answered with amen is a *brachah* said in a worthy fashion.

This is a tremendous hiddur mitzvah that requires no monetary investment. Make sure you make your brachos in front of someone who can answer amen to them!



Birchas Hamazon – Birchas Ha'aretz (2)**Yetzias Mitzrayim in
Birchas Ha'aretz**

Although we were commanded in the Torah (*Devarim* 16:3) to remember *Yetzias Mitzrayim* each and every day, the mentioning of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was not cited in the *Gemara* as part of the *Birchas Ha'aretz*. (However, see *Bach Orach Chaim* 192 6 who compared mentioning it to *bris* and Torah.) Many ask what connection it has to *Birchas Ha'aretz* and why is it mentioned there.

Here, Harav Y.M. Tikochinski testified that when the Rav of Yerushalayim, the Aderes, *zi"l*, was on his deathbed a short time before his passing, he spoke with those around him about *Birchas Hamazon*. Among other things he said: "I'm sorry that despite having made the effort, I did not find in *Chazal* a source for the mention of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in *Birchas Hamazon*." (*Aderes Eliyahu* [about him] p. 144)

Although we do not find in *Chazal* a source for mentioning it here, the *Rishonim* did bring a reason for it: Because at the beginning of the *brachah* we praise the good land that Hashem gave us, it is incumbent upon us to then mention *Yetzias Mitzrayim* because our entry to the land was the conclusion and completion of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The process of accepting the yoke of *mitzvos* that began with the first *mitzvos* Bnei Yisrael were commanded at *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was completed with their entry into the land and their acceptance of the *mitzvos hatehuyos ba'aretz*. (*Hamaspek L'Ovdei Hashem*, Vol. II, chapter 29)

**MeiEretz Mitzrayim
Umibeis Avadim**

The *Ohr Hachaim* explained the redundant language "You took us out of *Eretz Mitzrayim* and redeemed us from *Bais Avadim*", (*Shemos* 20:2) in ten different ways [see there]. One of them is: There is a unique praise here, because if we would have left *Mitzrayim* by fleeing, we would have remained with the name of "avadim," slaves, forever. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu took us out with dignity, in front of all the Egyptians, and thus, we did not remain with even a vestige of that identity as slaves.

The commentaries also explained it based on what is known, that *Yetzias Mitzrayim* had two significant meanings: one – physical redemption from the slavery, and two, spiritual redemption from the impurities of Egypt. That is why we divide

the praise in this *brachah* to two: "You took us out of *Eretz Mitzrayim*" – from the slave labor, "and you redeemed us from the house of slaves" – from the impurity of Egypt. (*Be'er Moshe* of Ozherov, and see *Mechilta Yisro* end of 5).

**Preceding the Praise
of the Land to Yetzias
Mitzrayim**

We need to understand: Didn't the exodus from Egypt come before Bnei Yisrael's entry into *Eretz Yisrael*? Why then do we precede in the *brachah* "al shehinchalta l'avoseinu" to "v'al shehotzeisanu mei'Eretz Mitzrayim"?

The *Yaavetz* (in his *Siddur*) explains: HaKadosh Baruch Hu promised *Eretz Yisrael* to Avraham Avinu many years before his children descended to Egypt. Because a promise by HaKadosh Baruch Hu never goes unfulfilled, then from that time on, it is considered that we were "muchzak" on *Eretz Yisrael*, and as though we already merited to have it. Therefore, it makes sense to precede the land to the exile from Egypt.

Similarly, the *Chasam Sofer* writes (*Toras Moshe* beginning of *Ki Savo*) that because throughout their wanderings, our fathers' faces were always turned to the Holy Land, even when they were mired in the slavery of Egypt, they knew that their purpose at the end was to come to *Eretz Yisrael*. As the *Shevatim* told Pharaoh when they entered Egypt (*Bereishis* 47:4): "*lagur* [from *geirus* and temporariness] *ba'aretz banu*." Therefore, it is fitting to precede the praise of *Eretz Yisrael* to the mention of the *land* has been in our mind's eye throughout our travails.

By way of *Drush* some explained this according to the *Targum Yonasan* on the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 19:4): "*V'esa eschem al kanfei nesharim v'avi eschem Elai*." Before Bnei Yisrael departed Egypt, HaKadosh Baruch Hu carried them on the clouds of glory and brought them to the *Makom HaMikdash* so that they should sacrifice the *Korban Pesach* there. According to this we can understand that because Bnei Yisrael first went to *Eretz Yisrael* before they emerged from Egypt therefore that is mentioned first. (*Birchos Avi* p. 112)

A Shul In the Cellar of the Red Army

"Mameh!" – the frightened cries of the child echoed throughout the town.

"Ephraim Fishel!" his mother wailed, but her screams were swallowed up by the squeaking of the wagon wheels of the military carriage growing distant with every second.

It was the difficult time of the *Cantonist* decrees in Russia. Ephraim Fishel was taken, as were thousands of children in his generation, to the barracks of the Red Army, leaving his widowed mother alone and shattered. It was only the first chapter of a terrible period in his life as he endured the efforts to strip him of all his *Yiddishkeit* and turn him into a standard Russian citizen.

A faint hope persisted in his mother's heart that her son would be given back to her as soon as the army officers found out that he was so weak that he could not serve in any significant capacity in the army. But that is not what happened. The officers were happy to get their hands on every child possible in order to fill the quotas that the tsar had imposed on them. His military future was totally unimportant to them.

Ephraim Fishel's Jewish name was changed to Naff, and like his other *Cantonist* friends, he was handed over to a coarse Russian peasant who was supposed to serve as his "uncle" from that point on.

"Do you know what an uncle is?" the peasant thundered as he entered the house. When Naff didn't answer, he immediately received a generous helping of blows to his head. "There, now you know," the uncle jeered as the young boy began to cry in pain.

The "uncle's" job was to reeducate him and he did with brutal dedication. "If you convert," he promised the boy from time to time, "I will be like your father." But Naff didn't think consider agreeing to the proposal for even a moment.

The hunger and suffering that Naff endured over the next few years only strengthened his spirit. Despite being taken from his mother's home at a young age, he tried with all his might not to forget where he had come from. He remembered a few *tefillot* that he murmured from time to time. He also remembered that his mother had once promised him that when he grew up he would get his father's *tefillin*. He still hoped with all his heart that this would happen. He also made sure not to forget his Jewish name. This last thing was not so hard, because his mother's wailing his name when he was taken still resonated in his ears.

When he reached the right age, Naff was taken by the uncle to a military camp. He was greeted by a stern-faced officer who was known as the Dreadful Zarkovsky. The officer looked at the slight boy standing in front of him and the uncle lowered his eyes in shame.

"What's your name?" Zarkovsky asked the frightened boy. Confused, the boy replied: "Ephraim Fishel." Zarkovsky immediately glared at the uncle

and Ephraim Fishel hastily corrected himself: "Naff," he tried to say. But it didn't help.

"Give the criminal ten lashes for the terrible education he gave his student," Zarkovsky ordered his soldiers, pointing at the uncle, whose huge hulk seemed to suddenly shrivel in fear. "And another ten for the food that he withheld from the boy," he added as he sized up the skinny lad.

It was a halfhearted triumph for Naff, a ray of light in the darkness of his life, as the man who had been so cruel to him was punished, even if only a bit.

"So, they call you Naff..." Zarkovsky said mockingly. "And what can you do?"

Naff offered a prayer in his heart, and without knowing why, he replied: "I know how to cook."

"You know how to cook? Excellent! Then I have work for you. My cook needs a helper, you know...sometimes he is drunk, sometimes he just has no strength. He needs someone at his side."

And that is how Naff's service in the Red Army came to an end. He moved into Zarkovsky's cellar, where he shared a room with the cook—a native born Russian gentile. From time to time the cook got very drunk, but he knew how to prepare the delicacies that Zarkovsky thoroughly enjoyed.

During the long hours he spent beside the cook, Naff learned how to cook. At first, the cook was very strict with him, but slowly he softened, and shared all the secrets of the trade with him.

Time passed; Naff worked alongside the cook, as his heart filled with longings for a past he hardly remembered. One day, the cook turned to him suddenly with a request: "For a long time I've been trying to figure out the secret behind the delicious fish that Jews prepare for Shabbos. You are a Jew; maybe you can try and learn it for me?"

The suggestion was like a ripe fruit falling into Naff's lap. He'd been waiting for just such an opportunity and he had no intention of missing it. "In order to find out the secrets of the fish, I have to go and learn from my Jewish brothers," he replied.

"No problem, I'll get permission for you," the cook said, and Naff could hardly contain his elation.

The approval was given and on Erev Shabbos, Naff found himself standing at the door to a Jewish family. After he introduced himself, he asked to learn the secret of how they prepared fish for Shabbos. He was welcomed warmly by the father of the house, who was horrified to hear of the situation of this young Jewish man. Naff hardly remembered anything from his childhood, but he had one request: he wanted to put on *tefillin*.

"Maybe you can get *tefillin* for me," Naff pleaded.

"Gladly," the Jew replied. "I will try to get them for you as soon as I can, but in the meantime, you can use mine."

So for several weeks, Naff would spend his Erev Shabbos in the Jewish house, "learning" the

secrets of cooking. At the same time, he also acquired some basic concepts in *Yiddishkeit*. On the day that his approval expired, he parted tearfully from his host, and was surprised when the latter handed him a gift: a pair of *tefillin* and a *Siddur*.

Naff returned to work, and from that day on, he did not miss a single day of putting on *tefillin*. Whenever he could, he hid behind the large oven, put on the *tefillin* and davened. Then he returned to his work in the kitchen.

One day, as he was still wrapped in his *tefillin*, he suddenly heard Zarkovsky roaring, "Naff, come here right away!" Naff was surprised and by mistake forgot to remove his *tefillin*. Only after he entered the room did he recoil when he realized he was still wearing them. He tried unsuccessfully to conceal them in his sleeve, but it was too late.

"What are you doing?" Zarkovsky howled.

"P-praying," Naff stammered.

"Really?" Zarkovsky growled. "Then why did you stop in the middle? Are you afraid of me more than your G-d?! You will get twenty five lashes for a *chillul Hashem*..."

It was most surprising to hear such words from Zarkovsky's mouth. Let's not forget, this was a time when the Russians worked tirelessly to close as many shuls as they could and to get hundreds of thousands of Jews to convert. But in the dreadful Zarkovsky's house, he provided a "shul" for one Jew.

Naff got twenty five lashes that day, but he never forgot the lesson. From then on, he made sure never to say a word while wearing *tefillin*.

The unexplainable treatment continued. Naff, who was once again called Ephraim Fishel, continued to grow stronger in his observance. In the meantime, the cook passed away and Naff was appointed the chief cook. One day, he was offered a *shidduch* with a good Jewish girl, and he was not surprised when Zarkovsky offered to host the wedding in his dining room.

It was a very strange and rare sight: a fully kosher Jewish wedding held in the home of a senior officer in the Red Army. Surely not something that happens every day.

Not all the Jewish *Cantonists* merited what Ephraim Fishel did. Many of them were killed during their army service, but even more assimilated entirely into the Russian nation. Ephraim Fishel, by contrast, remained steadfast in his faith until the end of his military service, and when he was an old man, having seen a fourth generation being brought into the covenant of Avraham Avinu, he related his story to the *Sandak*, the Rav of Moscow, Harav Yaakov Mazah, who recorded this unique personality in his own memoirs for posterity.

Zichronos [Rav Y. Mazah] Vol. II p. 59