

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Person Should Never Despair of Mercy

“ורפא ירפא” (כא י ט)

“From here [we learn] that permission was given to doctors to heal.” (Bava Kama 85a)

Every morning, we list the praises of Hashem in the *brachah* of *Yotzer Hame'oros*: “*Borei refuos, nora sehilos, adon haniflaos.*” Rav **Yitzchak of Vorka** said that these words contain an allusion to how every Jew must act in the event that, *chalilah*, he falls ill:

“*Borei refuos*” – first he has to seek the care of an expert doctor and take medications, because “permission was given to the doctor to heal.” If the illness doesn't pass then “*nora sehilos*” – he should plead to Hashem, Who is Nora Alilah, by reciting chapters of *Tehillim* with great *kavanah*. And even if the situation *chalilah* does not improve, he should not despair. Rather he should continue hoping for the *yeshuah* of Hashem because He is “*Adon Haniflaos,*” the Master of wonders.

Bais Yitzchak p. 156

One Who Grabs a Brachah Is Like One Who Steals an Ox

“כי יגנב איש שור או שה וטבחו או מכרו חמשה בקר ישלם תחת שור וארבע צאן תחת השה” (כאל ז)

The *Gemara* (*Chulin* 87a) explains that someone who grabs a *brachah* from his friend must pay him ten gold coins. The source of this obligation is derived by the *Chasam Sofer* from this *passuk*:

The *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 60 6) explains that the gift of Eliezer to Rivka: “Two bracelets...*asarah*, ten golds was their weight” (*Bereishis* 24:22) “corresponding to the ten commandments.” We learn from this that the value of each mitzvah is one golden coin of holy matters, whose value is double the golden coin of *chol*, mundane things (*Bechoros* 5a).

From here we can understand how *Chazal* determined the highest possible penalty for one who grabs away the mitzvah of

saying a *brachah* from his friend. We find in the Torah that the penalty for theft is ten gold coins. Just like one who steals an ox pays five times as much as the theft is worth, thus, one who grabs a *brachah*, whose value is one gold coin of holy matters, pays five times as much as his theft – five golden coins of holy matters which are equal to ten golden coins of *chol*, the mundane.

Toras Moshe

Be'er Emunim

From Rabbeinu Bechayei on the parashah

You Should Not Answer a Widowed or Orphaned Amen

“כל אלמנה ויתם לא תענון” (כב כא)

Chazal (*Brachos* 47a) warned not to answer an “*amen yesomah*,” an orphaned amen, meaning that one should not linger between the end of the *brachah* and answering amen. (See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 124 8). Furthermore, an amen that is answered without *kavanah*, and merely as lip service, it is known as a “widowed” amen.

This *passuk* alludes to these two types of amens: “*Kol almanah veyasom lo se'anun*” – make sure not to answer an amen *yesomah* and an amen *almanah*, an orphaned and a widowed amen.

When One Cries to Hashem Himself His Tefillah is Heard

“אם ענה תענה אתו כי אם צעק יצעק אלי שמע אשמע צעקתו” (ככב ב)

Rabbeinu Bechayei explains:

The *tefillah* of a widow and orphan is different than the *tefillah* of a regular person. A regular person feels in his heart that there is always

someone standing at his side, and as such he does not fix his gaze purely on Hashem. Rather he seeks salvation from others as well. But the orphan and the widow live without a pillar of support, and when they turn to Hashem in *tefillah*, they put all their faith and hope only in Hashem.

Therefore, the *passuk* says regarding their *tefillah*: “*Im tza'ok yitzak Eilai*” – because all their cries are directed only to Me, therefore, “I will hear his cry” because a *tefillah* that is said without any outside interests has a greater *segulah* to be answered.

Rabbeinu Bechayei, Introduction to Parashas Vayeishev

We Will Never Forget the “Ani”

“אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך לא תהיה לו כנשה” (כב כד)

Harav Eliezer Horowitz of Tarnigrad explains:

The way of the world is that whenever *tzaros* befall Klal Yisrael, the longing in their heart for the *Geulah* is aroused, and they immediately raise their eyes Heavenward with a request that Hashem hasten the *Geulah*. By contrast, when they are basking in comfort, and their time is spent trying to amass more money and possessions, they forget to *daven* for the *Geulah*. Therefore, the Torah warns: “If you lend money to My nation” – even at a time when wealth and comfort accompany Am Yisrael in their exile, “*Es ha'ani imach*” – they must make sure that the memory of the Melech Hamashiach [called (*Zechariah* 9 9): *Ani verochav al chamor*, the poor man riding on the donkey] should always be in their mind's eye, and *chalilah* “*lo tihyeh lo kenosheh*” – he should not be forgotten from their memory [*nosheh* from the language of *shachach*, see *Eichah* 3:17].

Noam Megadim



“יִאֲנִי תַפִּלְתִּי לָךְ ה' עַת רְצוֹן... עֲנֵנִי בְצִלְמֹת יִשְׁעֶךָ”

When Am Yisrael makes sure to hear the *brachah* well from the person making it, in order to answer amen afterwards...the Voice announces in all the worlds:

Open the gates to accept the *tefillas* of Yisrael.

Zohar Vayeilech p. 285 2



Prayer of Faith

A Glance at the
Seder Hatefillah

Birchas Hamazon – Birchas Ha'aretz (4)

The Torah Brings About Life for a Person

Everyone knows that the Torah is what infuses a person with life, as it says (*Devarim* 30:20 and see *Targum Yonasan*): "Because it is your life and the length of your days." Therefore, right after we finish thanking Hashem for the Torah – "v'al Torasecha shelimidatani" it was established that we add gratitude for our lives: "V'al chaim chen vachessed shechonantani." In addition, because in the systems of nature, life is contingent on food – then we go back and thank Hashem at the same time for our food: "V'al chaim...v'al achilas mazon." (*Avudraham*; *Haggadah Shel Pesach Chaim Larosh* [by Harav Chaim Palagi].)

We can provide a parable to explain this: A wealthy man paid a large sum of money to a *shadchan* to find a perfect *chassan* for his daughter: a *talmid chacham* with lineage and all the other virtuous traits. The matchmaker made the effort to find that perfect *chassan* who would meet the stipulations of the wealthy man, and indeed, he ultimately found a boy with all these virtues. He lacked just one: his father was an unruly person with not depth or much thought. Nevertheless, the matchmaker decided to forge ahead. He made the suggestion to the wealthy man, deliberately listing all the boy's virtues. When he was asked about lineage, he replied casually: "It doesn't matter; his father is not among the living."

In light of the boy's truly special character, the wealthy man decided to take him as a *chassan*. The wedding date was set. Yet on the appointed day, as they stood under the *chuppah*, the boy's father suddenly appeared, in his unbecoming, shameful clothing, looking as lowly as ever. Upon seeing this, the wealthy man paled in shock. He furiously stormed over to the matchmaker and complained: "Didn't you tell me that the boy's father is not among the living? How did you dare lie to me so brazenly?" But the matchmaker did not flinch; he had the answer ready: "My dear friend," he said, "tell me, is this life considered living?"

Similarly, because life without Torah is not considered life, then the best time to thank for life would be after thanking for the Torah, because that is when this praise takes on a new significance. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Sefas Chaim*)

Life Full of Favor and Chessed

In addition, our wording of praise for life is "v'al chaim chen vachessed" – with additional gratitude, because even if Hashem would have granted us life filled with shame, *chailah*, we would have to thank Him for it. As the wisest of all men said (*Koheles* 9:4): "Because a live dog is better than a dead lion." How much more so is this praise necessary when Hashem grants

us a life filled with *chen* and *chessed*. (*Otzar Hatefillas*)

The Reason for Additional Praise for Food

Even though we have already expressed gratitude for the food in *Birchas Hazan*, we continue now to thank: "V'al achilas mazon she'Atah zan umefarnes osanu tamid..." In *Birchas Hazan* we praised the actual creation of food to sustain all creations in the world, while now, in this *brachah*, in which we thank Hashem for the Land, we add praise for the food that comes forth from the land, which the Creator provides for each one of us in accordance with his unique needs. In more detail we take care to praise for the fact that Hashem makes sure to provide us with food "always, each day, at all times and every hour" – throughout the year, in all the seasons and at every hour of the day, we receive the healthy and delicious food that is most suited for that season and that day. The reason that this detailed gratitude is necessary is because the needs of a person fluctuate from day to day, from season to season and from year to year. Sometimes, certain foods suit him, while other times, different foods are better for him. As the *Rambam* says (*Dei'os* 4 8): "During the days of the sun, he should eat cold foods and should not eat a lot of spices, and should eat some vinegar. And in the rainy days he should eat hot foods, and lots of spices and eats just a bit of mustard and [something called] *chilit*. He should do this in the cold places and in the hot places, each place what is suited to it." Therefore, we have to thank Hashem that in each season He provides us with the suitable food. (*Darchei Moshe, Orach Chaim* 187 3; *Nesivos Olam* of the Maharal, *Nesiv Ha'avodah* 18; *Siddur Vayaas Avraham*.)

HaKadosh Baruch Hu Doesn't Have "Receiving Hours"

The Rav of Yerushalayim Harav Shmuel Salant, *zi"l*, was known to be entirely dedicated to anyone needy. In his house, there were no receiving hours; anyone who sought his advice or assistance could come to the house and speak to him at any time.

He was once asked by someone: The Rav is no longer young; why does he not set up times to receive the public, when anyone can come to present his question?

Harav Shmuel replied: The Torah commands us to cleave to the *Middos* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Tell me please: Does the Creator have "receiving hours"? Don't we testify each day in *Birchas Hamazon*: "She'Atah zan umefarnes... bechol yom uvechol eis uvechol sha'ah"? If I want to cleave to His ways, how can I to limit the ability to seek me out to certain hours? (*Otzar Margalios* Vol. II, p. 464)

A Story of Faith

A Weekly Story About
Amen and Tefillah

An "Awakening" In the Middle of Birchos Hashachar

This story began more than four years ago, in the two weeks leading up to Rosh Hashanah. Sarah Chana, the daughter of a respected family originally from France, had begun studying in a seminary located outside the city where she lived. One morning, as she dashed towards the bus stop, she was suddenly struck in the head by a passing van, and fell to the road, unconscious.

She arrived at the hospital in critical condition, after failed efforts to resuscitate her. She was immediately taken to do a battery of tests. Regretfully, the doctors who examined the results of the tests did not have good news to share. They just crisply described the situation: "Her brain is showing almost no signs of functioning..."

The news of the accident and its tragic results shocked all those who knew her. Sarah Chana's classmates were devastated about her condition and they organized constant *Tehillim* shifts to *daven* for her recovery.

Gatherings were held in the seminary offering *chizuk* and *tefillas*. One of the speakers at one of these gatherings was Mrs. T. Baron, who exhorted the girls to take upon themselves to strengthen their gratitude to Hashem for all the good He has granted us – a *kabbalah* that has already proven to effect wondrous *yeshuos*.

The girls accepted the idea enthusiastically. As per Mrs. Baron's suggestion, each one of them wrote down a *kabbalah* she would take upon herself, *b'ezras Hashem*, when the miraculous *yeshuah* would transpire, as a form of gratitude to Hashem. She then put the note in a safe place. Likewise, from that day on, at the end of every advertisement and notice calling for people to *daven* for Sarah Chana's *refuah*, a line was added calling on people to reiterate their gratitude to Hashem as a merit for her.

The days passed and there was no significant improvement. Sarah Chana's parents took care to update people about every minor improvement or optimistic predication, even when it sounded delusional and unreasonable. But the situation was more than desperate.

It was the week before Chanukah. The mother was taking the night shift at Sarah Chana's bedside in the intensive care unit at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital. Sarah Chana's father had fallen asleep on his bed in the nearby room that had been allocated for them. It had been quite some time already since their young daughter was lying here, her condition unchanged; she showed no signs of life. Throughout, her dedicated parents did not leave her bedside.

The inky predawn blackness enveloped the world. The dim light from the corridor just made Sarah Chana's face appear even paler, and her mother clutched her daughter's hand with compassion. Suddenly, the mother decided to see...

Perhaps she had regained some consciousness, even the slightest amount. She bent over towards her daughter and whispered in her ear: "Sarah Chana, if you hear me, press my hand..." But like previous times, there was no response.

"Sarah Chana," her mother tried again, "Maybe you want me to tell you about the beautiful birthday party we made for your sister Tamar..." This time, as well, there was no response.

"Sarah Chana," the mother did not desist; her voice began to crack, "Maybe you want me to sing for you a song that you like... Please, squeeze my hand... Sarah Chana... maybe..." She couldn't continue any longer. Her voice was choked with tears. How much more could she bear...

The Angels of Mercy surely watched this scene from Above as the Jewish mother insisted on trying to elicit a reaction from her daughter lying in a vegetative state. All she heard were the monotonous sounds of the many machines surrounding the bed. How awful.

The darkness outside only added to the darkness of gloom and despair that began to grip her heart. For the umpteenth time, she tried to strengthen herself, but it was getting too hard to bear.

The first rays of sunlight began to color the room in a more vibrant light, when suddenly, a vague memory flashed through her mind, a memory that caused her to burst into tears.

She remembered how not that long ago—although it seemed like an eternity—some time before the accident that changed her life, her daughter excitedly returned from a gathering for high school girls. A prominent *Rebbeztzin* had spoken there about the importance of reciting a *brachah* out loud and of saying it in front of someone who can complete the *brachah* by answering amen.

"An excellent opportunity to strengthen this matter," the *Rebbeztzin* had said, "is given to us each morning at *Birchos Hashachar*. In this series of *brachos* we thank Hashem for the countless good things He has done for us. If we make the effort to say it properly, in a way that someone completes the *brachos* by answering amen after them, then when we finish the *brachos* with the concluding request: "Vesigmeleinu chassadim tovim" we can be sure that our request is going to be accepted, *b'ezras Hashem*.

The daughter had been so moved by these words that she had decided to accept the practical application. She asked her mother to agree to be her *chavrusa* to recite *Birchos Hashachar* with *kavanah*, together, and to complete the *brachah* with amen. She had no way to know for what a short time they would practice this *kabbalah*...

The words were etched on the mother's heart as though they had just been said. Suddenly, a

tearful cry burst forth from her heart:

"Sarah Chana! The sun has already risen; it's morning. Do you want me to say *Birchos Hashachar* and you will answer amen?"

Ribbono shel Olam... The mother's hand had been pressed, of that she was certain. She ran out of the room in panic: "Abba! Get up! Sarah Chana is waking up! She wants to answer amen to *Birchos Hashachar*..."

The stunned father got up, trying to rub the sleep from his eyes as he ran to his daughter's room to view the miracle for himself: Each of the parents said *Birchos Hashachar* in front of Sarah Chana, and she responded to each *brachah* with a press of the hand—weak but unmistakable, as if she was answering "amen."

A week later, when it was already clear to all that the girl was hearing and responding, either with her eyes or with a press of the hand, the physical therapist decided to begin training her to move her mouth and lips.

"Let's help her to start speaking again" – she told the parents in a professional tone.

The mother replied in a voice filled with true Yiddishe *emunah*: "I have an idea that will certainly be effective. Sarah Chana loves *Birchos Hashachar*. She always tried to give others the merit by answering amen after *Birchos Hashachar*. These *brachos* express our gratitude to Hashem for having arisen healthy and whole, and the more we thank and praise Hashem with *kavanah*, the more miracles we will surely experience..."

The physical therapist did not quite understand what the mother was saying, but she was tolerant and respectful. She looked at the mother who was finding the right page in the *Siddur* and then turned to the girl: "Sarah Chana, I'll make the *brachah*, and you try to answer amen. We've experienced miracles already and we want more..."

Sarah Chana lay in the ICU, her eyes open, gazing blankly into the distance. When her mother cried from the *Siddur*: "Pokeach ivrim... Zokef kefumim," tears could be seen dripping out of her eyes. And when she finished emotionally: "Hagomel chassadim tovim l'amo Yisrael," no one present could remain indifferent. The girl clearly mouthed the word "amen."

It was the first word she had uttered since the accident.

Today, as Sarah Chana is back to being among her friends, and functioning almost fully, she does not forget for one moment to say thank you, and immediately after that to plead for more *chassadim*, beginning with *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* until the end of the day that is replete with the goodness and *chessed* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu bestows up on us each and every minute.

Heard from Mrs. T. Baron