

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

What Was So Unique About Yisro's Praise?

"ויאמר יתרו ברוך ה' אשר הציל אתכם מיד מצרים ומיד פרעה" (יח י')

Chazal say in *Maseches Sanhedrin* (94a): "It is a shame on Yisrael that they did not say 'baruch' until Yisro came and said 'baruch.'"

This seems puzzling: Didn't Am Yisrael praise their salvation with a long and lofty song after the sea was split? What is the issue of them not saying 'baruch'?

Harav Yosef Shaul Nathanson explained: The wonderful song of Bnei Yisrael was said only after their rescue was complete, when they saw their enemies drowning in the sea. But Yisro realized that gratitude was in place even at the beginning of the miracles, as he said, 'Baruch Hashem, blessed is Hashem Who saved you from the hand of Egypt' – even though the rescue was not yet complete.

The **Ksav Sofer** explained this differently:

In the *Shiras Hayam* each member of Bnei Yisrael thanked Hashem for his personal salvation, but Yisro's innovation was that a person should also thank Hashem for the salvation of his friend, as he said, 'Baruch Hashem asher hitzil eschem,' plural of you.

Divrei Shaul [Aggados] Sanhedrin 94a; Ksav Sofer

One Can Attain an Answer from Above Through Tefillah

"אם את הדבר הזה תעשה וצוך אלקים ויכלת עמך" (יח כג)

"Consult with the Almighty; if He will command you to do so, you will be able to stand. But if He prevents you, you will not be able to stand." (*Rashi*)

If we peruse the written words we do not find that Moshe consulted Hashem about Yisro's idea; what then does this mean?

Harav Shmuel ben Rabi Meir Arik explained:

Be'er Emunim

From Rabbeinu Bechaye'i on the parashah

After the Dibros They Answered Amen

"וידבר אלקים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר" (כ א)

The **Bais Avraham** of Slonim wrote that for each one of the *dibros* that Klal Yisrael heard they all answered amen. He explained that he learned this from the fact that *Rashi* cites (20:1) in the name of the *Mechilta* that after the *dibros* whose essence is "aseh," a positive commandment, Bnei Yisrael answered "hein", yes, and after a "lo saaseh", a negative commandment, they answered "lav" (no). The *Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Yirmiyahu 267)* says that the *dibros* "Anochi" and "Lo Yihiyeh Lecha" were said in one breath. According to the simple explanation of *Rashi*, how did they answer "hein" and "lav" as one? So certainly *Rashi* does not mean that after each *dibrah* they clearly said "hein" or "lav", but rather they agreed with what was said by responding "amen", and it was considered that they answered based on the context of each one, "hein" or "lav."

It is possible that this is what **Rabi Yehudah Halevi** was alluding to when he wrote in his *piyut* of *Yonah Matzah*, in the stanza that relates to the Ten Commandments: "Upaschu v'anu Hashem Echad" – that by answering amen, which unites the numerical value of the Names Havayah and Adnus, then it is considered as though they answered after each one of the *dibros* "Hashem Echad."

Bais Avraham Michtavei Kodesh Letter 12

Another allusion can be derived from the *nusach* of the *Tefillah* of *Tikanta Shabbos*: "אז מסיני" is an acronym for "amen" [as stated by Ri bar Yakar, *Peirush Hatefillah Vehabrachos, Yerushalmi* Edition p. 112]. Likewise, this can be explained from the fact that in *Parashas Yisro* it says ten times the word "Ha'Elolim" which is numerically equivalent to "amen" corresponding to each one of the ten *dibros*.

Emunas Yitzchak Vol. 1 p. 53

Maseches Brachos (29b) cites the words of Eliyahu Hanavi to Rav Yehudah: "And when you go on the way, consult Your Creator and then go." The *Gemara* explains: "This is *Tefillas Haderech*." Why did Eliyahu use the term "*Himalech beKoncha*," consult your Creator? Would he be given an answer from Above? The **Chida** explained this according to the words of Rabi Chanina ben Dosa (ibid 34b): "If my *tefillah* is fluent on my lips – then I know that it is accepted..." That is the meaning of the word "*Himalech*" – that he should say *Tefillas Hederech*, and if he finds that it is fluent on his lips then he knows that he will succeed on his trip.

Here, too we can explain that this is what Yisro said to Moshe: Daven to Hashem about my idea, and if the *tefillah* is fluent on your lips, know that it is accepted before Hashem and its success is guaranteed.

Chomas Anach Shir Hashirim 16; Tal Torah Hachadash p. 127

Moshe Went On High – Like a Ben Bayis

"משה עלה אל האלקים" (טו ג)

In the *piyut* "*Hiskabtzu Malachim*" that we recite on Simchas Torah, the poet asks three times: "Mi alah lamarom [who went on High]?" and then answers three times "Moshe alah lamarom...!" Why is this?

Harav Yosef Pachenovsky of Lodz explained that the poet alluded here to a special praise of Moshe:

How many human beings have merited to rise On High in their lifetimes (see *Yalkut Shimoni Yechezkel 364*)? Even those that went up, did not come down, while Moshe was unique in that he went up and down like a *ben bayis*, a familiar person there. We find that he went up to get the first *luchos*, then came down, and then went up to get the second *luchos*.

Pardes Yosef

"אנכי ה' אלקיך... לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני"

"When answering amen a person declares that he admits to and believes the *brachah* of Hashem, and as such it is like he is saying that anything else is false and nothingness and doesn't exist..." (*Shem MiShmuel Ki Savo*)

Birchos Hashachar Aloud With kavanah Bechavrusa

Birchas Hamazon – Birchas Ha'aretz (3)**The Connection Between
Bris and Torah and
Birchas Ha'aretz**

Chazal write (*Brachos* 48b) that it is incumbent upon someone saying *Birchas Hamazon* to mention “*bris v'Torah*” in *Birchas Ha'aretz*, and if he did not, he did not fulfill his obligation. This segment will explain the significance of mentioning these concepts and their connection to *Birchas Hamazon*.

We can understand the reason for mentioning “*Bris*” in *Birchas Ha'aretz* based on what is cited in the *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah* 46 9) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu made a condition with Avraham Avinu: “If your children will fulfill the *milah* they will enter Eretz Yisrael and if not they will not enter the land.”

Later, the *Midrash* cites the *passuk* said in the *parashah* of *milas Yisrael* before they entered the land (*Yehoshua* 4 8): “*Vezev hadavar asher mal Yehoshua*,” and they explained: “*Davar*, something, *Yehoshua* said to them and then circumcised them. He said to them: Do you think you can go into the land uncircumcised? Thus HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Avraham Avinu (*Bereishis* 17:8): “*Venasati lechah ulezaracha acharecha* – in order so that (ibid *passuk* 9): “*Vatah es brisi tishmor*, and you should uphold My covenant.”

**Bnei Yisrael Entered
the Land in the Merit
of Torah**

Similarly, *Rashi* explained the reason for the obligation to mention “*Torah*” in *Birchas Ha'aretz*. The merit of *Torah* also stood for Yisrael to help them enter the land (See *Mechilta Beshalach, Masechta Deshirah* 9), and as the *passuk* says (*Devarim* 8:1): “*Kol hamitzvah*—The entire *mitzvah* that I am commanding you today, are you to guard to as to fulfill, in order that you live and multiply and arrive to inherit the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers.” (*Rashi Brachos* ibid)

The *Chasam Sofer* further explained:

Mentioning the *Torah* and *mitzvos* is a necessary condition to fulfilling the obligation of thanking Hashem properly for the food. It is known that the purpose of food that is given to us is to sustain the body, and that is in order that through the body we will be able to serve Hashem properly with learning *Torah* and fulfilling *mitzvos*. Therefore, if we would just randomly thank Hashem for sustaining the body, that would not be “*hoda'ah*,” because what is the point of thanking for a human being that exists without a purpose and a goal? Therefore it was established to mention in our gratitude the *bris* and the *Torah* which symbolize the objective of the existence of the body – in order

to serve Hashem, because only thus is the gratitude complete. (*Toras Moshe Devarim* 24 4)

By way of *remez*, the *Chasam Sofer* added that this is alluded to in an acronym of the words that the *Gemara* listed in the *brachos* that need to be mentioned in *Birchas Ha'aretz*: *Bris, aretz, mazon, Torah* – בְּרִית אֶרֶץ מַזֶּן תּוֹרָה, to teach us that only a *brachah* that includes these four matters is a *brachah* that is said *b'emes*, with truth. (*Chasam Sofer al HaTorah, Va'eira*)

Harav Meir Shapiro of Lublin would explain on this subject:

The relationship between Am Yisrael and its land is essentially different from the non-Jews' relationship with their lands. Each nation of the world needs a homeland so its people can live there in tranquility and comfort without being subjected to foreign rule. But Bnei Yisrael need their land so that they can fulfill the *mitzvos* of Hashem, and thus to be differentiated with their holiness from all the non-Jews. The biggest proof of this is that even when the land was desolate and destroyed, occupied by foreign regimes, the longing in the heart of every Jew to go live there has never dimmed.

Therefore, it was established for us to include in the *Birchas Ha'aretz bris* and *Torah* to show us that we do not treat the gift of the land only as a place of tranquility and refuge from our troubles. Rather, it is to enable us to perform more *mitzvos* and learn *Torah* there. (*Birchas Dovid* p. 124)

**V'Al Chukeya
She'hodatanu**

Mentioning “*Torah*” is actually divided into two subjects: *Torah [Al Torasecha shelimadetanu]* and *chukim [al chukeya shehodatanu]*, and the *Maharal* explained that in the additional gratitude for the *chukim* we express a full gratitude for the entire system that sustains us, our body, our mind and our soul. The *bris* is fulfilled on the body, the *Torah* is fulfilled in the mind that understands and the *chok*, which the mind has no understanding of, is fulfilled by the spiritual soul. Therefore, it says of the *Torah* “*shelimadetanu*” – that You taught us, meaning with the understanding of the mind, while the *chukim* are referred to with “*shehodatanu*” – with the admission that they do not include a reason. That is because the mind does not grasp the *chukim* and therefore they were not given to us as a “*limud*,” but rather as a *hoda'ah*—we were informed of them. (*Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Ha'avodah* 18)

The Last Tefillah of Prisoner Number 48723

As part of the German's heinous campaign to destroy our nation, they prepared an organized plan whose purpose was to strip the Jews of every last vestige of humanity. They did this in very lowly ways, such as withholding basic needs from them, distributing food in a humiliating, degrading fashion and in negating their personal identities.

As part of their brutal plans, the Jews lost their right to bear their own name. Instead, they were each assigned a number. When the prisoner entered the camp, the number was burned into his arm, and from that time on it would be his form of identification.

If that was not enough, the Germans made sure that the prisoners would never forget the number. A prisoner who was caught not knowing his number by heart was punished in the cruelest fashion. Thus, for fear that they might forget their number, the Jews made sure to call each other by their numbers—and thus another part of the Germans' plan was successfully implemented.

The camps were often located in the forest; the Jews were not allowed to have a watch or a calendar that would help them keep track of the passing time and be aware when the *Yamim Tovim* would fall. The only “*watch*” they could have was the roll call. The Germans would punctiliously conduct these roll calls at set hours every day, morning, noon and evening.

From day to day the rows of people thinned out. There were prisoners who attended the morning roll call but no longer appeared in the evening. Some had lost their lives in the harsh labor and some were sent to the crematoria for some reason or another, on the other side of the camp. No one returned. As the days passed and no salvation seemed to be in the offing, the prisoners grew more and more dejected. But there was one prisoner, number 48723, who was different from them all. No one knew his real name, but his friends saw him as an emissary from Above to infuse them with hope and good cheer.

He would refer to the three roll calls by the names of the *tefillos*: *Shacharis, Minchah* and *Arvis*. This was agreed upon by all the prisoners. This way they felt a connection the authentic Jewish experience that they had all but forgotten.

Even during the roll call, prisoner number 48723 did not lose his humanity. He would stand at the end of the row, holding a small *Sefer Tehillim* in front of his fiery eyes, and he would recite the *pesukim* in a quiet, heartwarming tune.

On the side, his friends observed him with both admiration and envy. They could not understand how he had the emotional fortitude not

to lose his mind in the Nazi Gehinnom. How was it that at the time when human beasts were toiling to uproot the last vestiges of humanity from him, he was still able to find comfort in the words of Dovid Hamelech?

This became a regular habit of his during roll call. When the Nazi guard passed him he would fall silent and hide the *sefer* in his clothes. When the guard passed he would take it out again and continue mouthing its holy words.

It was only natural that this figure aroused curiosity among the other prisoners. Usually, because they were all so similar to one another with their emaciated appearance and their drawn faces that were blackened from hunger, no one asked anyone else's name. But this Jew's personality stood out among the others, and many wanted to know his name and the story of his past.

To their surprise, the man firmly refused to divulge his identity. “In such times,” he would reply to those who asked, “there is no place for an individual among the many. We are all one entity, in a time of suffering under foreign rule. My number is 48723 and that is how I will be known until we are redeemed.”

It was late one Tuesday night, almost Wednesday morning. Outside, the barracks were enveloped in thick darkness; inside, the prisoners lay crowded onto wooden bunks trying to ignore the pain of the beatings they had sustained, and to give their bodies a bit of much needed sleep.

Suddenly they heard a terrifying whistle from outside. They all awoke in panic. They were familiar with the whistle; it was a sign of a sudden roll call. The barracks issued a collective sigh. Another needless roll call was about to start. From their bitter experience they knew well that some of them would not return to their bunks and straight from the roll call they would be sent to the unknown.

Blood curdling shouts accompanied by the barking of hungry dogs were the background music to these roll calls. Beaten by truncheons, the still half sleeping Jews were hustled to the roll call plaza.

Hundreds of Jews wearing nothing but their thin shirts stood in the bone chilling cold. They waited desperately for the moment the roll call would begin, but that moment did not arrive and they began to look at one another in an effort to find some comfort in a supportive glance or weak smile. When their hopes waned of getting any of these, their eyes rested almost automatically on prisoner number 48723, who, as always, was standing on the end of the row, his eyes focused on the *Tehillim* in his

hand and his lips murmuring the words.

Suddenly, like a stormy wind, an armed brigade of guards rushed onto the roll call plaza. Their commander, a tall, broad Nazi with a cruel face, riding on a horse, went up and down scrutinizing the people, a leather whip in his hand that he waved in every direction.

The Jews remained rooted to their places, but they could hardly suppress their cries of pain. Suddenly, the commander noticed prisoner number 48723 and his fury seemed to spill over.

“What are you holding in your hand, cursed Jew?!” the Nazi howled at him. The prisoner remained standing in his place without lifting his eyes out of the *Tehillim*. “Come here Jew!” the Nazi called furiously as he took his pistol out of his holster.

Now, too, the prisoner did not move. His dark eyes stood out on his pale face remained fixed on the *Tehillim* in his hand, and his back swayed to the rhythm of the quiet tune.

“What are you reading there?” the Nazi roared. “Stop muttering, you're bewitching all of us!” he added, his trembling hands still gripping his pistol as he aimed it at the Jew's head.

Instead of responding, the Yid raised his voice and began reading the *pesukim* aloud. The Nazi tried to pull the trigger, but his hands did not obey him. He was suddenly overcome with an unexplained terror, and his hands dropped to his sides helplessly.

His loyal dog, which understood his master's heart, also tried to assail the Jew and to tear him apart, but suddenly drew back and retreated with his tail between his legs.

The scene was an awesome one. The tension was palpable. And in the middle stood prisoner number 48723 as though this had nothing to do with him. He was pale as death, and his mouth did not stop moving as he read the holy words.

Suddenly, without any warning, the Yid sank to the ground, lifeless. He wasn't even able to close his eyes. The Nazi got back onto his horse and fled the scene. In the roll call plaza, the rest of the Jews stood staring in shock, their hearts weeping in longing for the inspiring figure among them, whose name they did not even know.

The *neshamah* of prisoner number 48723 rose to the Heavens purified and holy, accompanied by the tune of his *tefillos* and saturated by the tears that had accumulated in the Flask of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, preserved for the day when He will send a salvation for His nation.

Bais Haknesses Shanah Gimmel p. 299