

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Cure Said Without Mentioning a Name

“הנה עם יצא ממצרים הנה כסה את עין הארץ והוא ישב מומלי. ועתה לכה נא ארה לי את העם הזה” (כב ה-ו)
Why didn't Balak mention Am Yisrael by name? And why did he ask Bilam to come to Moav? Couldn't he have cursed them from where he was, in Pesor?

Harav Shlomo Kluger of Brod explained that the two questions are answered one with the other:

The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 34a) explains that one who *davens* for his friend does not need to mention his name. The *Magen Avraham* rules (*Orach Chaim* 119 1) that this applies specifically when his friend is standing in front of him. But if he is not there, then he must mention his name.

Because Balak knew that the name “Yisrael” contains special holiness – both in its own right and because it contains within it the Name of Hashem “K-I” – and that would prevent the curse from taking effect, he therefore sought to curse them without explicitly mentioning their name. Hence, he said to Bilam: “*Lechah na arah li es ha'am hazeh*” – come to the place where I dwell, because “and it is sitting across from me” – and when you see them in front of your eyes you will be able to point at them with your hand without mentioning their name.

Imrei Shefer

A Special Shul for Each Community

“וישא בלעם את עינו וירא את ישראל שכן לשבטיו...”
מה טבו אהליך יעקב” (כד ב-ה)

“What did he see? He saw that the openings of their tents are not facing one another, and he said: These are worthy of having the Shechinah dwell upon them.” (*Bava Basra* 61)

Harav Yosef Shaul Nathanson, the Rav of Lvov, explained:

In the *sefer Pri Eitz Chaim* (beginning of *Shaar Hatefillah*) Harav Chaim Vital

brings in the name of his *rebbe*, the Ari Hakadosh, that because each *shevet* has a special *nusach* of *tefillah*, and each one's *tefillah* rises directly through a special gate designated for it, that is why there are Above twelve gates for accepting *tefillas*, one for each of the *shevatim*. Harav Chaim Vital writes that this is where the different *nuschaos* of different communities in Am Yisrael stem from.

Thus we can explain the *passuk*: “And Bilam raised his eyes and he saw Yisrael camped according to the tribes” – when Bilam saw that each *shevet* in Klal Yisrael was *davening* its unique *nusach* he understood that the reason was “because the openings of their tents [their shuls] were not directed one at the other” – and each tribe has its own unique shul, because the *tefillah* of each *shevet* only rises through the gate designated for it. Therefore, he praised them: “*Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov*” – this custom is very good to designate a shul for each community and this way each one will be able to *daven* in a *nusach* that it received from

its forbears, and that is how their *tefillas* will be willingly accepted.

Divrei Shaul, Hashmatos, end of Mahadurah Kama

The Reason We Say “Mah Tov” Before Davening

“מה טבו אהליך יעקב משכנתיך ישראל” (כד ה)

This *passuk* that speaks in praise of shuls was designated to be said at the beginning of *Tefillas Shacharis*. The commentaries ask: Why did *Chazal* choose to begin the *davening* with the *passuk* said by Bilam and not, *l'havdil*, with words of the *Nevi'im* or the like?

There are a few explanations:

1. The *Sfas Emes* explained that there is a special reason involved in the words of Bilam because by doing so we fulfill the commandment of the *Navi* (*Michah* 6:5): “My nation, **remember** what Balak the king of Moav advised and what Bilam ben Be'or answered him...so that you should recognize the Righteous Deeds of Hashem.”

2. **Harav Baruch Epstein** of Pinsk explained that the fact that it was Bilam, who so harassed Klal Yisrael, who said these words indicates how true they are. If a *Navi* would have said them, one could have said that his words are exaggerated because he bears such love for Am Yisrael in his heart.

3. The *sefer Yagdil Torah* brings another explanation: Every *Yid* who comes to *daven* before Hashem is dogged by groups of *mashtanim* and *mekatregim*, hostile elements, who seek to confuse him and prevent his *tefillah* from being accepted. With the recital of *Mah Tov* it is as though we are telling these hostile elements – nothing will work for you! Even Bilam Harasha wanted to curse us and look what happened to him in the end. Learn a lesson from him that one who seeks to curse Klal Yisrael ends up blessing them twofold...

Likutei Yehudah; Baruch She'amar Siddur Hatefillah page 5; Yagdil Torah

Razei Emunim

Allusions to Amen in the Haftarah

“Like a Lion He Will Rise” in the Merit of Amen

“הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי יתנשא” (כג כד)
“הן עם כלביא” – the acronym of the last letters of these words is “amen.” The word *יקום* is made up of the letters “ק יום” one hundred a day. The *passuk* is alluding to amen which is answered after each and every one of the one hundred *brachos* that a person needs to make each day. Thus Bilam said to Balak, I cannot harm Am Yisrael with my curses because they rise up against me like a lion in the merit of their adherence to answering amen at the end of each *brachah*.

Toldos Yaakov [Rav Y. De Elba, Venice 5369]

Hen Am Kelavi Yakum Uk'ari Yisnasa

The Shefa Chaim of Sanz said at a *Chumash Rashi shiur* during *Parashas Balak* 5739:

“I have already said this a few times, in an effort to restore the crown to its glory, and to establish in our *batei medrash* a *seder tefillah* with the *sha"tz*, as was the custom in earlier times, where in each *minyan* they began from *Birchos Hashachar*. The *sha"tz* should first recite the *brachos* and then each person says it himself. And a *yarei Shamayim* should try to hear from a few more people in order to answer after them *Baruch Hu Uvaruch Shemo* and Amen. And there was a regular practice by my grandfather every day that two of the children would say before him *Birchos Hahachar*, whether they were his young sons or one of his grandsons or a different child.”

Shefa Chaim Torah Umoadim Vol. 19 p. 356



In the King's Palace (3)

The Place for Davening Is in Shul

The previous segment covered the great virtues of davening with the tzibbur. This segment will explain that there is an even greater virtue – and an obligation – to daven in a specific place set aside for tefillah, meaning in a shul, whether one davens betzibbur or individually.

The Gemara (Brachos 6a) explains: "A person's tefillah is only heard in a shul, as it says (Melachim I 8:28): 'Lishmoa el harinah v'el hatefillah' – in a place of rinah ["in the shul where the tzibbur says songs and praises with pleasant and sweet voices" (Rashi)] that is where there will be tefillah."

[In the notations of Chochmas Manoach (Brachos 6a), there is an explanation that cites the Shaarei Orah that all the tefillos that a person davens alone wait, and are not heard, until he davens a tefillah in a shul, and then those tefillos will be heard with it.]

The Ramban rules like the Gemara (Tefillah 8 1, according to Lechem Mishneh ibid), that although every tefillah can be answered, in a shul it is heard at all times, and even the tefillah of an individual davening in a shul is heard. As such, the Shulchan Aruch ruled (Orach Chaim 90 9) like the Gaonim cited by Rabbeinu Yona (Brachos 4a Midapei HaRif, and see the Tur there) that even someone who had no choice but to daven alone, should better daven in a shul than in his house, because that is his regular place that is designated for tefillah betzibbur.

Indeed, Rabi Yehoshua Ibn Shuib explained in his drashos (Parashas Shemini): "And being that tefillah is a holy thing, they designated a place in the shul and bais medrash for it. And if it is worthy in every place, it is more worthy and accepted and heard in a holy place called 'Bais Elokim.'"

Obligation to Daven in a Shul

Moreover, the early sages wrote (see She'iltos DeRav Achai Vayeitzei 22) that tefillah in shul is not only a virtue, but an integral part of our obligation of tefillah. The author of Halachos Gedolos (Hilchos Brachos p. 56) wrote that tefillah in shul is obligatory. He also brought as proof the words of the passuk (Bereishis 28:11): "Vayifga bamakom" [he davened in a makom, a place, that is special for tefillah], and as the Gemara says (Brachos 26b): "Ein pegiah ela tefillah."

Likewise, the commentaries on the Yerushalmi (Brachos 4:4) say: "A person must daven in a place that is designated for tefillah, and why? (Shemos 20:21, see Rashi and Baal Haturim): Because "Bechol hamakom asher azkir es Shemi [Avo eilecha ubeirachticha] – 'it does not say here 'asher tazkir es Shemi' [that you should mention My Name] but rather 'asher azkir' [meaning that the Shechinah will be found there.]"

It is interesting to note that the Targum Yonasan on the passuk (Shemos 18:20) says: "הודעת להם"

. "את הדרך לכו בה" And impart to them that they should daven their tefillos in their batei knesios. And it is possible that from this passuk we can learn the source of the obligation to daven in a shul.

It is well known that the Ramban says in his commentary on the Torah (Shemos 13:16) that "Because K-el Elyon does not want our pleas, rather that the person should know to thank the G-d Who created him." Therefore, it was established to daven specifically in a shul, along with many others, so that this should be done in public. As he writes there: "That people should have a place where they gather and thank Hashem Who created them, and they should publicize this and say before Him, 'we are Your creations.'"

The Segulah of Davening in Shul

Chazal praised the virtues and the segulos of davening in shul. The Yerushalmi (Brachos 5:1) cites Rabi Pinchas in the name of Rabi Hoshaya: "One who davens in shul is considered to have sacrificed a Minchah Tehorah." The Midrash further states (Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim 833) that "Anyone who enters a shul in this world merits to enter a shul in the World to Come, as it says (Tehillim 84:5): 'Ashrei yoshvei beisecha od yehalelucha selah.'"

Corresponding to this, the Yerushalmi refers (ibid) to the severity of the sin of one who does not daven in shul: "Rav Chunah said: Anyone who does not enter a shul in this world does not enter a shul in the World to Come..."

The Gemara (Brachos 8a) brings the Reish Lakish on this subject: "Anyone who has a shul in his city and does not enter to daven there – is called a shachen ra [bad neighbor]...Not only that, but he also causes exile for himself and his children." The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 90 15) explained that this punishment is middah keneged middah, a measure for a measure. He was too lazy to go to a shul when it was nearby, therefore he will be exiled to a distant location. The Yerushalmi also says (ibid) about one who davens at home: "Rabi Yochanan said that one who davens in his home it is as though he is surrounded by a wall of steel..."

The Gilyonei HaShas, by Harav Yosef Engel, the Av Bais Din of Krakow, explains (on the Yerushalmi, ibid, and similarly see Maharash Sirilau ibid), that someone who does not daven with a tzibbur in shul, and rather davens in his home, it is as though he is surrounded by a wall of steel that prevents his tefillah from rising on high.

The sefer Derech Moshe (Day 8) writes that "Permission was not given to mention the Name of HaKadosh Baruch Hu in every place, only in shul, and each person will admit to the truth that all the decrees and troubles have come upon Yisrael due to our great sins, are because they do not daven in shul."

With Song and Gratitude We Will Bless Hashem

The Shesilei Zeisim shul is one of the oldest and well known in Bnei Brak. Many people daven there each day, including a large number who attend the vasikin minyan.

The person to whom this story happened, Rabi Ezra Mizrachi, shlita, has served as the regular chazzan at this minyan for more than two decades. Day after day, year after year, he davens at the amud and honors Hashem with his pleasant voice.

Naturally, with the chazzan and the nusach so consistent, any change in the tefillah catches the attention of the people davening there. Indeed, that is what happened four years ago, when, one morning, Reb Ezra began to recite Mizmor Lesodah in Pesukei Dezimrah in a pleasant tune.

After davening, he explained to the members of the minyan who had gathered around him curiously, wanting to hear the reason for his new practice:

"Yesterday, I came across a halachah that is not sufficiently publicized, but is clearly stated in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 51 9): "Mizmor lesodah should be said in song, because all the songs are destined to be annulled, except Mizmor Lesodah." In other words, that wondrous passage that expresses more than anything the deep gratitude that we feel to Hashem, and which we tend to just recite routinely, should be said differently – in a song that expresses gratitude that emerges from the depths of our hearts towards the Creator."

"What do you say that from today on we start to say it properly, in song?" Reb Ezra suggested to the people. "I'll try to make it a fast, cheerful upbeat song so that it should not delay the length of the tefillah," he reassured several of the mispallelim who raised an eyebrow in doubt. After all, most members of this vasikin minyan were in a hurry to begin their workday.

Reb Ezra was happy when the mispallelim unanimously agreed to his suggestion. They were all gratified to be partners in fulfilling this little known halachah, especially as they knew that it would be sung in a cheerful tune, with the pleasant voice of their respected chazzan. So from that day on, the minyan members joined the chazzan's song for Mizmor Lesodah. Even after they got used to the new tune, it was still able to infuse them with joy each morning anew.

About a year after that day, the chazzan, Reb Ezra, suddenly began to feel unexplained pain. He suffered a lot from the pain, and it didn't pass even when he tried all kinds of painkillers. His family doctor was not able to figure out the reason for his pain, and he sent him to a specialist, who quickly prescribed a battery of tests.

A few days after the tests, Reb Ezra was asked to come to the specialist's office to discuss the result. No one prepared him for the difficult news:

"I don't want to worry you too much," the doctor began carefully as he perused the results, "but something about these tests results doesn't look right..."

The doctor continued to study the results, as Reb Ezra's tension mounted. Finally, the doctor took off his glasses, and began to speak. His words fell on Reb Ezra's ears like a thunderbolt:

"Listen, my friend, I've been a doctor for many years, and it's still hard for me to give this news to my patients...The diagnosis is not final, and you'll have to come back and take some more tests in three weeks, but in the meantime, you should be prepared..."

"Just so you know the bigger picture," the doctor tried to calm Reb Ezra. "There are very advanced treatments today that can help cure you, although you will have to prepare yourself for a difficult period ahead..."

The room was enveloped in a thick silence. Reb Ezra absorbed what he had just heard. Although the doctor hadn't explicitly said the dreaded words, the diagnosis seemed clear and frightening: the dreaded disease, cancer...

It took him a few minutes to recover, but finally Reb Ezra stood up, his eyes raised heavenward, as

he thought: Life until now was wonderful, thank You Hashem. I believe that just like You gave me a wonderful life until now, You can grant me many more happy, good years.

When he emerged from the doctor's office, Reb Ezra didn't quite understand why, but he found himself humming the familiar tune of Mizmor Lesodah. He took this as a Divine sign.

Three weeks passed, during which Reb Ezra continued his regular schedule. On the day before the tests, he arose early, as was his habit, and when he sang Mizmor Lesodah as usual, he had an idea. Right after davening he set out to put it in motion. After eating some breakfast and updating his family, he headed to the bus stop and waited for the bus to Tzefas. He wanted to daven at the kever of the Bais Yosef, author of the Shulchan Aruch.

As soon as he bent down over the holy headstone, his dam of tears burst. As he always did, Reb Ezra began by expressing his deep gratitude for all the beautiful years he had merited, for his family, for life, health and parnessah. Then he began pouring his heart out in prayer.

Like a repentant son before his father, he expressed his worries about the crucial tests he would be undergoing the next day. He pleaded for his life and for his children, who needed a healthy father. And suddenly, the cry burst forth from his mouth:

"Maran, Bais Yosef! You established and ruled many halachos and Am Yisrael is careful to uphold them. One of them is not sufficiently well known, and I adopted it with all my heart. For some years now, I have been singing Mizmor Lesodah in public. Bechasdei Hashem, I have also had the privilege to give the merit to the rest of the members of the minyan, who thank Hashem properly each day together with me.

"There is now a sword resting on my neck. Please, arouse Heavenly Mercy before Hashem to give me the merit to get through the tests tomorrow safely, and that the results should prove that I have no growth and no illness, no worry and no pain, only health, happiness and comfort so that I can continue to thank Hashem for them..."

Even after he had recited a few chapters of Tehillim, Reb Ezra was still not calm, until he emotionally sang Mizmor Lesodah with his trademark tune. Then he repeated it, as he danced with heartfelt gratitude.

Right after that, he traveled back to Bnei Brak. His heart was calm and he felt at peace.

The next morning, Reb Ezra arrived at the clinic where his tests were scheduled to be done. It was long and exhausting, but throughout, Reb Ezra did not stop davening and thanking Hashem...He strengthened his emunah and bitachon, and then waited for the results.

When he was finally called to the doctor's room, he was surprised to find the doctor looking baffled and quite astonished. He perused the test results for several long moments, comparing the various images in front of him. Finally he said:

"Listen, in my entire medical career I do not remember such a strange thing," he pointed to the images. "This is the image we took three weeks ago, and you can see the growth here and here, along with smaller metastases next to them. Now look at this images we took yesterday – there's no trace of either the bigger growths or the smaller ones! The blood tests are also normal...It's just an unbelievable turn of events."

"How can it be?" the doctor was nearly shouting now. "How could it be that within three weeks the body was restored to full health as though nothing had happened?! The results are totally clear – even more than they are after treatment, especially as the growth appeared to be a very malevolent one..."

The doctor continued to express his amazement but Reb Ezra wasn't listening anymore. His eyes were closed as he hummed to himself his beloved song: "Mizmor lesodah hari u' l'Hashem kol ha'aretz..."

Likras Shabbos Malkesa Vayeishev