

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Why Did I Come And There is No Respected "Ish"?

מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי" (כה ב) **Harav Yosef Pachonovsky** of Lodz, explained:

The passuk used the word "ish", which symbolizes importance [as it says (Melachim I 2:2): "Vechazakta vheyisa l'ish". Rashi explains (Shemos 15:3): "l'ish - l'gibor" to a strong person], to teach us that if the leaders of the nation would giving their donations first, they would cause the rest of the nation to contribute after them.

Based on this we can explain the words of the Gemara in Brachos (6b): "When HaKadosh Baurch Hu comes to the shul and doesn't find there ten people - He immediately gets angry, as it says (Yeshayahu 50:2): 'Why did I come and there is no ish, no man? I called and no one answers.'" Why did the passuk there use the word "ish"? Isn't the claim here against ten people? Based on the above, we can explain that the primary anger is directed at the "ish", the respected one among them, because if he would have come first, everyone would have learned from him and come also.

Pardes Yosef

The Shechinah Does Not Rest in Every Shul

"ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם" (כה ח)

The question is well known: Why did the Torah use the "besocham" in the plural to refer to the Mikdash, instead of "Veshachanti besochu"?

Harav Yosef Pachonovsky of Lodz explained: In the commandment "Make for Me a Mikdash" there is also a commandment for all the generations to build shuls in the Jewish communities, as Chazal refer to a bais knesses as a mikdash me'at (Megillah 29a). Therefore, the passuk does not say "besochu" because the honor of Hashem is not contingent on the actual existence of the shul, but rather "besocham," on the fact that Am Yisrael davens in it. The passuk is coming to tell us that even if a shul is built with

great grandeur and elegance, as long as the worshippers are not careful to enter it each day regularly for Shacharis and Arvis, the Kavod of Hashem will not rest there.

Pardes Yosef

Be'er Emunim

From Rabbeinu Bechayei on the parashah

Amen - The Most Important Terumah

"דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו" (כה ב)

The acronym of the final letter of the words "אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה" are numerically equivalent to amen, to allude that answering amen is the "terumah" that is most important. As the Midrash says (Devarim Rabbah 7 1): "There is nothing greater before HaKadosh Baruch Hu than an amen answered by a Jew" as long as it is answered "from every man whose heart impels him to generosity", meaning, with kavanah of the heart.

Bnei Shlomo

The Importance of Parables as Part of Divrei Torah

"ועשית בדי עצי שטים וצפית אתם זהב...; לשאת את הארון בהם; בטבעת הארון יהיו הבדים לא יסרו ממנו" (כה ג-טו)

Harav Eliyahu Hakohen of Izmir, author of Shevet Mussar, wrote: From these pesukim we can learn about the importance and virtue of meshalim, parables, through which Chazal explain the words of Torah to the simple people in the nation, and thus draw them closer to their Father n Heaven. As is said about Shlomo Hamelech (Koheles 12:9): "And more than Koheles was wise, he also taught knowledge to the nation and listened and sought out and he established many

proverbs." Chazal explained in the Midrash (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1 8) that "he made oznayim [handles with which to grasp] the Torah."

Rav Eliyahu Hakohen explained the words of the passuk as follows:

"And you should make two poles of acacia wood...to carry the aron with them" - make for yourself parables [which are like simple 'wood' with regard to the greatness of the Torah] through which you can make the deep words of Torah [the 'aron'] more accessible to the hearts of the simple people in the nation. "And you should cover them in gold" - despite the simplicity of the parables, you should hold them dear and make them important because "In the rings of the aron the poles must remain. They must not be removed from them," because of their importance as a vessel for conveying Torah, they are sanctified with the holiness of Torah.

The **Ari Hakadosh** explained the words of the brachah of Atah Chonen similarly:

"Atah chonen l'adam da'as" - You, Hashem, give wisdom in the heart of the virtuous people[adam] to establish their words in a parable and allegory, "umelamed l'enosh binah" - and through that the simple people [enosh] merit to understand the words of Torah.

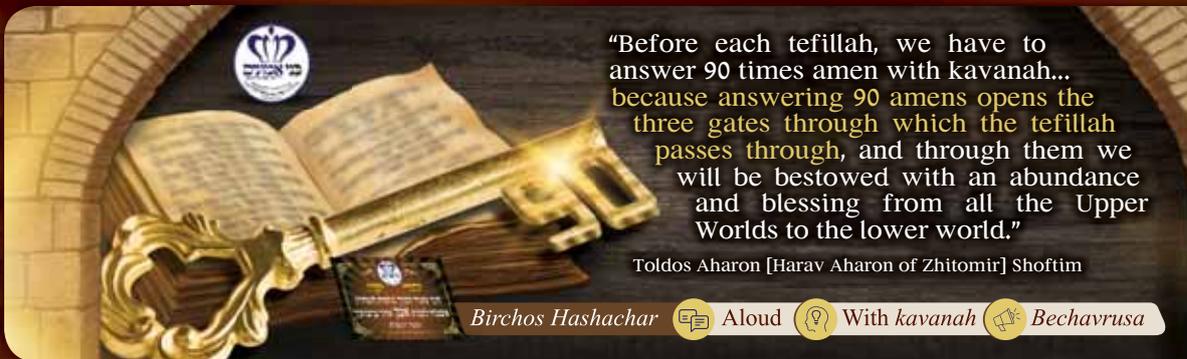
Midrash Talpiyos entry Aron; Shaar Bas Rabbim

"I Know Twelve"

"ונתת על השלחן לחם פנים לפני תמיד" (כה ל)

The Targum Yonasan (Shemos 40:4) explains that the twelve breads, the lechem hapanim, corresponded to the twelve tribes. **Harav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin** added that this is what the poet was alluding to in the poem of "Echad Elokeinu" in the Haggadah: "Who knows twelve...Twelve shevatim," meaning, wherever the number twelve is mentioned, such as in the lechem hapanim, it corresponds to the twelve tribes.

Pri Tzaddik Emor 11



"Before each tefillah, we have to answer 90 times amen with kavanah... because answering 90 amens opens the three gates through which the tefillah passes through, and through them we will be bestowed with an abundance and blessing from all the Upper Worlds to the lower world."

Toldos Aharon [Harav Aharon of Zhitomir] Shoftim

Birchos Hashachar Aloud With kavanah Bechavrusa

Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa - All the Gates Are Open!

Birchas Hamazon - Birchas Ha'aretz (5)

General Gratitude For all
the Benevolence

After we detail in Birchas Ha'aretz several praises for the many good things Hashem has granted us, and on Chanukah and Purim we add more praises and blessings relating to those days, we conclude the brachah with a general praise: "V'al hakol, for everything Hashem, we thank You." This is what Chazal instructed us (Brachos 49a): "Rabi Aba said: It is necessary to express gratitude at the beginning and the end" - so at the beginning we say Nodeh Lecha and at the end "V'al Hakol...anachnu modim Lach."

With this general gratitude we are given a special opportunity to think about and feel the magnitude of the hakaras hatov that we owe HaKadosh Baruch Hu for all the good and benevolence that He showers upon us every day, so that we can live in His world in peace and comfort.

"V'al Hakol" - Gratitude That
Is "Above All" Gratitude

When Harav Yaakov Shimshon of Shpivovka traveled to Eretz Yisrael in 5559, and saw how poor and downtrodden the Yidden living there were, he volunteered to travel to the Diaspora to raise money to support them. On his travels to Bavel (Babylon, modern day Iraq) he visited the home of the one of the great tzaddikim. When the host heard that his guest was from Poland and that he was a disciple of Harav Baruch of Mezibuzh, he asked for a dvar Torah from his Rebbe.

To his surprise, even though his Rebbe's Torah was etched in his heart at all times, this time, Reb Yaakov Shimshon was not able to remember any special chiddush. Finally he remembered something, which he shared with his host: I'll tell you something small that I recall. My Rebbe wondered why it is that after we thank in detail in the brachah of Nodeh Lecha for all the good that Hashem has granted us, we have to then thank again: "V'al hakol...anachnu modim Lach." In order to reconcile this, he explained the brachah as follows:

"V'al hakol" - more than all the brachos and praises that we have thanked Hashem with until now; "Hashem Elokeinu" - for the actual fact that You are Hashem Elokeinu, our Leader in compassion Who watches us over each and every one of with Hashgachah pratit, "we thank You and bless You."

When the tzaddik heard this, he stood up in reverence from his chair and said: "Do you call this a minor lesson? The Rav's words contain so much greatness." He immediately began to explain lofty secrets that can be derived from this explanation, and for the three days that Rav Yaakov

Shimshon spent in his home, he did not stop speaking about that subject. (Mekor Baruch [Rav Reuven Margulies] 12; Butzina D'Nehora - Matters of Eating 20) [And in sefer Melech Beyofyo (p. 864) it says that this explanation was most favored by Harav Y. Abramsky, zt"l.]

Modim Anachnu Lach...Al She'anu Modim Lach

In the sefer Be'er Moshe, the Ozherover Rebbe (Shemos Vol. II, p. 447) explains this according to Rashi (Sotah 40a beginning with "al") on the words of gratitude that conclude the Modim D'Rabbanan: "Modim anachnu Lach...al she'anu modim Lach," that this is a special gratitude: "for giving in our hearts to cleave to You and to thank You."

This gratitude, as well, is a continuation and a conclusion to the series of thankful statements we have detailed from the beginning of Birchas Hamazon, and we note before it "V'al hakol" because the greatest gratitude of all that we have said until now is for the great merit that is given to us each day that "we thank You and we bless You."

When Seeing "Hakol"
The Gratitude Grows

Another beautiful explanation was offered by the Rebbe Harav Shaul Yedidya of Modzhitz, according to the concept explained in the passuk (Bereishis 1:31): "Vayar Elokim es kol asher asah vehinei tov me'od." When looking at a small detail in our lives we may mistakenly think that it is bad for us, but in the future, when we will understand that this detail as an integral part of the overall good that Hashem bestows upon us, then we will understand that this detail as also "tov me'od" very good, for us.

Similarly we find that Balak advised Bilam (Bamidbar 23:13) about Yisrael: "efess katzeihu tيره vehulo to sireh kevavnu li misham" - when you see the "kulo" the entirety, then you will not be able to curse them. Only when you examine a "katzeih, an edge" then you will be able to find a flaw in them and attribute your curse to it.

Therefore, Chazal took care to add us this special and seemingly redundant brachah: "V'al hakol...anachnu modim Lach," because aside for all the individual things that we expressed gratitude for, when we look at the general picture of all the good that we merit from Hashem, in one view, then the gratitude will grow several times over. (Yisa Brachah Bechukosai)

This story was sent to us recently through a student who merited to grow stronger in her recital of amen as part of Bney Emunim's programs in her school. She had always felt a strong bond to this important mitzvah because her grandfather also treated it with great respect. But only after she heard the fascinating story behind her grandfather's special love for this mitzvah, did she realize the depth of gratitude that she owed the mitzvah, which drastically affected the life of her family. This is her story:

Since I was a young girl I always wanted to be like my dear grandfather, who answered every amen with awe and trembling. But I was afraid to do it. I was embarrassed to act differently to my social circles, who, regretfully, were not as respectful of this mitzvah as my grandfather was. Until you, Bney Emunim, came and restored the glory to answering amen, so today, anyone who is not strict about answering amen is the one who needs to be ashamed. Ashreichem, you should be praised for meriting to increase Kavod Shamayim.

It is in your merit that I was able to strengthen my observance of this mitzvah, as I had always wanted. In addition to my gratitude to you, I want to share with you a special personal story that my grandmother shared with me last Shabbos, after I asked her to answer amen to my Birchos Hashachar. She warmly agreed, and even shed a tear as I said the brachos. When I finished she told me:

"You are surely aware that your grandfather was very strict about answering amen." I nodded; I know. My grandmother continued: "There was a special reason for this. Do you want to hear the story?"

"Of course!" I replied. This is what she told me:

"Saba came to Eretz Yisrael after the war as a teenage refugee, alone without his family, after he lost all his relatives in the Holocaust. Those were hard times. Saba, along with hundreds, thousands, of other youths, were placed in transit camps organized by the Zionist organizations. These camps were hardly religious. The small Siddur that had accompanied him throughout his travails during the war and after was forgotten, buried at the bottom of his valise.

"From time to time, Saba remembered his old Siddur and felt overcome with shame. As a young man, alone in the world, he did not dare violate the instructions of the freethinking counselors. Whenever he dared speak to

Amen Revives the Soul

them about the subject that so weighed on his mind, they told him very adamantly: 'Your Siddur was necessary in the exile. There, you kept all the mitzvos so that you should maintain your identity as a nation. Now we are in the Jewish homeland. The Redemption is upon us, and there's no need for external symbols to show it.'

When the ship first docked in Eretz Yisrael, Saba got off with great awe. His valise - with all his possessions - was clutched tightly in his hand. He felt overcome with emotion.

In time, Saba realized that the "Redemption" that awaited him in Eretz Yisrael was very different from the one his melamed had spoken about in cheder in those long ago days. It was very different from the Redemption he had learned to yearn for in his parents' home. There were frequent air raid sirens; there were security incidents that took the lives of hundreds. And there was an atmosphere that encouraged throwing off all vestiges of Torah observance, R"l.

Once he arrived to the kibbutz, he also had a hard time acclimating. The loose Israeli mentality was strange to him. He sought a way out of the mess but could not find one. He asked himself often: 'Is this the redemption we yearned for?' But he had no answer.

The turnabout came one morning, when the kibbutz counselors announced to all the boys that they would be taking a trip to Tel Aviv that day. "The first Hebrew city!" the counselor declared proudly. Saba's heart filled with hope. Who knew? Perhaps his salvation would arise from this trip; perhaps he would see the sparks of the Redemption he yearned for with all his heart.

The bus stopped near the beach and the children hurried off to frolic in the sand. Saba, by contrast, was in no hurry...He took advantage of a moment of inattention and slipped away from the counselor's usually constant surveillance.

As he walked the streets of Tel Aviv, he suddenly noticed a large, impressive building with tall windows. It was the Great Synagogue of Northern Tel Aviv. Saba slowly walked inside. The mispallelim welcomed him warmly. Someone sat him down, placed a yarmulke on his head and showed in him the Siddur where the minyan was up to.

It was in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei. Saba looked around and saw everyone swaying and whispering quietly. He tried to remember from where the scene was familiar, but was not able to. The chazzan began the brachos of Chazaras Hashatz.

Saba listened, but did not yet connect. But suddenly, he heard a thundering "amen" from the tzibbur, something moved in his heart. It all came rushing back: the painful memories of those long ago days, of a world that was no longer, which he had tried to unsuccessfully suppress in recent years. Now they rose up and flooded his mind.

He joined the next amen like an expert - aloud and with emotion - as he had been used to answering in his shul during his childhood. His eyes were closed, but the tears managed to leak out, washing away all the pain and distance that he had felt in the few years since he had reluctantly had to cut off all ties with his heritage.

The tefillah came to an end and Saba had a hard time leaving the shul. The question that had niggled in his mind in recent years rose once again in full force.

"Where is the Geulah that we were promised?" he suddenly asked an older man with a venerable appearance who was about to leave the shul. "Where is the Geulah they promised us we would see when we were in the DP camps and on the ship to Eretz Yisrael?"

The older man gazed at him with kind, warm eyes and said:

"My dear boy! The Geulah is here, already now. Although we are in galus, although we have just arisen from the terrible destruction of our nation, from the annihilation of European Jewry, the Geulah exists in the heart of every believing Jew who stands in shul and answers amen fervently. The work of the land will not bring the redemption. It is the pure emunah, the pure faith, in the Creator. When we answer amen, we link the past, present and future into one entity, and that is how we connect to the chain of faith that has passed down from generation to generation, and we are promised that very soon, we will merit to herald the footsteps of Mashiach."

Saba did not return to the kibbutz that day, or any of the days after that. He endured a turbulent life journey at the end of which he returned to a life of Torah and mitzvos, and established a beautiful family.

The mitzvah that brought this all about - the mitzvah of answering amen - is something he never forgot. Until the end of his life he was strict to answer amen and encouraged others to do the same.

How fortunate I am to have merited following his path!