

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS DEVARIM

תשנ"ט

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Birchas Hamazon in the Desert Was D'Rabbanan

"אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל" (א א)

In his introduction to *sefer Devarim*, the **Ramban** explains: Although at Sinai we were commanded about all the *mitzvos*, Moshe waited to detail some of them until *Sefer Devarim* "because perhaps they only practiced those *mitzvos* in the land...or because they are not frequent, he only mentioned them to the children who inherited the land."

The **Radbaz** asks: How can one define all the *mitzvos* in *Sefer Devarim* as "not frequent"? Is the *mitzvah* of *Birchas Hamazon*, which was commanded in *Parashas Eikev* (8:10) "v'achalta vesavata ubeirachta" considered a rare *mitzvah*?

Harav Meir Don Plotzky, the Rav of Ostrov-Mazobietzk, answered:

Unlike the understanding of the **Radbaz**, the reason that Am Yisrael were not commanded about *Birchas Hamazon* until *Chumash Devarim* is not because of the infrequency of the *mitzvah*, rather because they were not obligated in it until they entered the land. This is evident from the words of the *Gemara*: "**Moshe established** (תקן) for Yisrael *Birchas Hamazon* when the *mann* descended for them," (*Brachos* 48b), so in the desert, Am Yisrael only made the *brachah* because of the *takanah* of Moshe. Only upon entering the land did it become obligatory for them from the Torah.

Shu"t Haradba"z, Vol. VI, 2143; *Kli Chemdah*

Rebuke and a Limud Zechus At the Same Time

"אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל בעבר ה' ירח" (א א)

"Because they were words of admonishment, and because Moshe intended to recount here all the places where they angered Hashem, he therefore said these words in an obscure manner and only intimated [that they had sinned in these places] to uphold the honor of Am Yisrael. (*Rashi*)

There is a well-known rule that the word "*Eileh*" comes to indicate a detraction (see

Bereishis Rabbah 12 3). What detraction is there here?

Harav Shlomo Kluger, the Rav of Brod, explained:

Even when Moshe admonished Am Yisrael, he did not cease from being *melamed zechus*, advocating in their favor, before HaKadosh Baruch Hu. As *Chazal* said regarding the *Cheit Ha'egel* (*Devarim Rabbah* 1 2): "He said to Yisrael (*Shemos* 32:30): '*Atem chatasam chata'ah gedolah*', while to HaKadosh Baruch Hu he said (*ibid* 32:11): '*Lamah Hashem yechereh Apcha b'amecha*, why Hashem should You be angry at Your nation.'" That is what the *passuk* was alluding to: "*Eileh hadevarim*" – the *mussar* and the rebuke, "*asher diber Moshe el kol Yisrael*" – that he spoke before Am Yisrael, but before Hashem he was *melamed zechus* on them.

Imrei Shefer

Razei Emunim

Allusions to Amen in the Haftarah

Amen Saves from the Fear of the Judgment

"ואמר אלכם לא תערצון ולא תיראון מהם" (א כט)
"*Velo sir'un meiheim*" – the acronym of these words is "מות" death, and the last letter of each word forms the word "amen." This teaches us that one who is careful about answering amen should not fear the day of death, because he is guaranteed the gates of Gan Eden will open for him immediately. As *Chazal* said (*Shabbos* 11b): "anyone who answers amen with all his might – the gates of Gan Eden are open for him." The **Ben Ish Chai** explains (*Ben Yehoyada* *ibid*) that one who answers amen, immediately, when his soul rises to the Upper World, he will see the gates of Gan Eden open to welcome him, before he even has fearful thoughts about the Heavenly Judgment.

Yoshia Tzion 24

The Poor Need to Daven for the Wealthy

"לא תכירו פנים במשפט כקטן כגדול תשמעון" (א יז)

During the tenure of **Harav Yeruchem Yehudah Leib Perelman** as Rav of Minsk, a great dispute broke out among several wealthy merchants. By nature, the Rav was very busy dealing with this issue, and several members of the community were disgruntled, claiming that the Rav's job was to stand on the side of the poor, to preserve their rights and to save them from those who seek to extort them!

The *gadol* of Minsk replied: It is a mistake to think that the Rav's obligation to judge truthfully is intended to preserve the rights of the poor. On the contrary: From the words of *Rashi* in the *passuk*: "*Kakaton kagadol tishme'un*" – "he should not say this one is a poor man and his friend [opponent] is a rich man and since he is commanded to support him, I will rule in favor of the poor man and thus he will be supported in a tidy manner," it sounds like the Torah was concerned for the rights of the wealthy man as well. Moreover, not only should the poor not be distraught that the Rav of the city was engaged in settling disputes between the wealthy, on the contrary, they have to *daven* for the success of the wealthy, because when they succeed in business, they support hundreds and thousands of people, and all damage caused to them also harms those who are dependent on them.

Hagadol MiMinsk, Fourth Sichah

Tefillah Helps the Dayan Rule on Halachah

"הדבר אשר יקשה מכם תקרבון אלי ושמעתי" (א יז)

Harav Yechiel Schlesinger, a *talmid* of the *Chasam Sofer*, related:

I stood beside my *rebbe* the **Chasam Sofer** when he was presented with a complex and difficult halachic question. I noticed that before he replied, he closed his eyes in concentration, and only then did he respond. When he noticed that I was puzzled about what I had seen, he explained: The Torah teaches the *dayanim*: "*vehadavar asher yikskeh mikem*", when you encounter a difficult question, "*lakrivun Eilai*" – become closer and cleave to Me, and in that merit, "*ushema'atvi*" – I will illuminate your eyes to be able to rule on the *halachah*.

Bais Yosef Hachadash, p. 111

וכל מאמינים

The reason one who answers amen is called "*shomer emunim*" (*Shabbos* 119b) is because through answering amen one preserves (*meshamer*) the *emunah*, "because the main principle of *emunah* is dependent on answering amen." (*Megaleh Amukos, Haazinu*)

In honor of 13 Av, the *yahrtzeit* of the *Megaleh Amukos*

Birchos Hashachar Aloud With kavanah *Bechavrusa*



Hashkamas Bais Hamedrash (1)

As part of this series on *tefillah*, we have covered thus far the format of the *tefillah* – reciting it with a quorum, in shul, in a regular place. In the coming segments, we will explore the importance of rising early to *daven* at a set time – as early as possible.

Rising Early – the Secret of Success for the Day

Each morning, in the *Breisa D'Eilu Devarim*, we list the things “that a person eats their fruits in this world and the reward exists for him in the world to Come.” Among them are: “*Hashkamas bais hamedrash Shacharis v'Arvis*.” Rising early to go to the *bais medrash* is mentioned among such great *mitzvos* as honoring one's parents, doing *chesed* and others, indicating its importance. Let us therefore try to shed some light on this subject using sources from *Chazal*.

It is widely known that it is not for naught that the *Shulchan Aruch* chose to begin his magnum opus in which he teaches about the conduct of a Jewish life, with the words: “He should rise up like a lion to stand up in the morning to serve his Creator, that he should rise with dawn,” because the fundamental of all the *mitzvos* and of *avodas Hashem* is encapsulated in this *halachah*. When the day begins with rising with alacrity, as is fitting, then the entire day continues in a worthy fashion.

This explains the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 58a): “One who comes to kill you – *hashkem lehargo*, rise up to kill him.” The secret of overcoming the *yetzer hara* is contained in rising up early in the morning. When a person begins his day with overcoming the *yetzer hara*, which tries to tempt him to continue sleeping, then a thread of *chesed* is cast over him for the entire day, and it has the power to save him from the temptations of the *yetzer hara*. (*Pele Yoetz*, entry *Hashkamah*)

Honor of Heaven Should Not Be Less Than Your Own Dignity

The *sefer Menoras Hame'or* (1 91) addresses of the importance of rising early for *tefillah*:

“A person should always act with alacrity and with speed to rise in the morning from his bed, without laziness, to thank Hashem for the *chassadim* that He has performed for him...And if he should notice that even if he is sleeping, if someone would call upon him with an offer to profit even one golden coin, he would get up very quickly...What needs to be done to serve the One Who created the world?...Then he will resolve wholeheartedly to rise early to serve the Creator, to go to *daven*...”

The Chayei Adam, in his renowned will (*Bais Avraham* 8) explained this with a parable, apt for those days:

When a merchant travels to the fair in Leipzig, he is so careful during the days of the fair to rise early from bed so as not to miss a single opportunity that perhaps will come his way to purchase merchandise at a low price, in order to later sell it for a lot of money.

This is the case with merchandise - where he is not even guaranteed to succeed, because maybe he will not find cheap merchandise, and even if he does, perhaps it will be damaged or stolen, and he might not be able to sell it – yet he gets up early during the fair because maybe that will help him earn a bit more. How much more so should a person be careful to rise early for the mitzvah of *tefillah*, upon which a person's entire life is dependent! Even

if, *chalilah*, his *tefillah* is not answered, he will still remain with the mitzvah for eternity, and therefore he must be careful to rise in the morning to fulfill the mitzvah properly so that he should not lose out on so much reward because of a bit of laziness.

Similarly, the *Ksav Sofer* writes in his commentary on the Torah (*Parashas Eikev*) that it is not for naught that the words in *Krias Shema* “*Ul'avdo bechol levavchem*” are written next to “*venasati metar artzechem*.” This is because sometimes, getting up to *daven* with a *tzibbur* might take a person away from his business, and if he has to do something for business specifically during that time, the *yetzer hara* tempts him to *daven* on the way, or alone. Hence the Torah tells us that one who fulfills “*ul'avdo bechol levavchem*” – when he *davens* at a specific time and with a *tzibbur*, he is guaranteed to merit “*venasati metar artzechem b'ito*” – and certainly his business will not suffer because he is careful to adhere to his *davening* practices.

The Order of Avodas Hashem is like the Knot of the Pearls

The Mashgiach Harav Yeruchem of Mir would often quote his *rebbe*, the Alter of Kelm, when explaining the importance of a *seder* in *Avodas Hashem*, comparing it to the knot in a strand of pearls. Even though the main thing is certainly the pearls, and the knot is secondary, it is still vitally important because if that knot is opened, all the pearls will fall.

That is the importance of *seder*, order, in the service of the day; it is what preserves all the other spiritual acquisitions that a person makes throughout his day. Therefore, if he is careful to get up at a certain time, and to *daven* at a set time, then all his Torah, *tefillah* and *mitzvos* are done in an order and with regularity, and only then can he be sure that the spiritual acquisitions that he makes during his day will be preserved in his soul for eternity. (*Daas Torah*, *Bamidbar* p. 17)

The Mashgiach Harav Yechezkel Levenstein, one of the eminent *talmidim* of Kelm, was very scrupulous about rising at a set time to prepare for *tefillah*. He would often say in his *sichos* that *tefillah* without preparation is not *tefillah*, and if one doesn't come to it on time, then he cannot have the proper *kavanah*. As such, he was careful to always come a long time before *davening*, to prepare properly and to begin the *davening* with the order of *Birchos Hashachar*, aloud with *kavanah*. His students testified that he was never late for *davening* – except once, when the yeshiva was in Keidan. It happened when the Mashgiach was lodging in a room that was rented for him at a boarding house, and in the morning he found feathers that had come out of the blanket that had covered him. Because he was afraid that it had happened because of him, and he would transgress the sin of stealing, he took the time to gather up each and every feather, and therefore he was late to *davening* that day.

Harav Aharon Tzvi Marmorstein, *shlita*, Rosh Kollel Seret Vizhnitz in Bnei Brak and a *talmid* of the Shevet Halevi, relates that he merited to hear from his *rebbe*, towards the end of his life, that from the time he came to Eretz Yisrael, after he fled from Europe during World War Two, he did not *daven Shacharis* after 7:00 in the morning. He emphasized that he had not deviated from this practice on even one day.

What Did Rav Aharon Daven For?

The year was 5714/1954. A large crowd of *bnei yeshiva* and bearded *avreichim*, as well as *chassidim* and members of the Old Yishuv, gathered in the Bnos Yerushalayim hall on the outskirts of the Batei Ungarin neighborhood. They were there to participate in the wedding of the *chassan*, an eminent yeshiva student, and the *kallah*, the daughter of one of the most prominent families of Yerushalayim at the time.

The sounds of clinking forks indicated to all who entered that the *seudah* was still in progress. The guests were seated at modestly laid tables, and the fare was the norm for the time: There was plenty of cold drinks, kugel, herring and crackers, and there was also plenty of wine, produced by the *chassan's* father.

The Yerushalmi *darshan* had just finished his captivating speech, which was both inspirational and joyful, and the waiters began to serve the main course – peppery gefilte fish, with carrot, and strong-smelling *chrein*...

The most dignified guests were seated at the head table, among them the *chassan's rebbi muvhak* who had also served as the *mesader kiddushin*, Harav Aharon Kotler, *zt"l*, Rosh Yeshivas Lakewood and a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. He was the son-in-law of Harav Isser Zalman Meltzer, *zt"l*, Rosh Yeshivas Eitz Chaim, who had passed away a short time before.

At this head table, the portions remained nearly untouched, because the guests seated here were filling themselves with Torah. Sounds of vigorous debates could be heard – after Rav Aharon raised a sharp question, and a group of *talmidim* who surrounded him tried to answer it in several ways. In between them sat *Gedolei Torah* trying to provide proof for both sides of the argument...

Then the announcement was made that the *chassan* was emerging from the *yichud* room, and the drummer began beating his drums as a choir of singers began the traditional songs...*Oho, oho, oho, ay, ay, ay...*

Feet flew in the air with spirited dancing; the circles went round and round at a dizzying pace, welcoming the *chassan* who was raised on the shoulders of a friend.

The joy was reaching a crescendo, but suddenly, it stopped...

A grating, dreadfully familiar sound suddenly penetrated the festive atmosphere: wooooo-eeeeeee-oooooo-eeeeeee...

An air raid siren. It was a total surprise. In the years between 1948 and 1967, there was a tense quiet on the border near the hall, the border that divided the city. The other side of the border was controlled by the hostile Jordanians, but until now, *baruch Hashem*, relative quiet had been maintained, and life proceeded normally on both sides of the border.

Only very rarely were there clashes between the sides. This was one of those times.

All at once, the hall was plunged into thick darkness. The tragically familiar explosions could be heard, and the festive air gave way to terrible panic.

Shrieks and cries filled the hall. Some of the guests tried to flee outside, while others tried to stop them claiming that outside was much more dangerous. Instead, they should lay on the floor and cover their heads, as per the instructions of the defense establishment. In the ruckus, tables were overturned, and the dishes went shattering to the floor. Bottles of beverages spilled onto the floor, and people young and old collided with each other.

It was pandemonium laced with deathly fear.

Harav Shalom Schwadron, who was also in attendance, later shared what he witnessed:

“The Jordanians were firing in all directions, and the place where the hall was, next to the border, sustained most of the fire. People inside the hall tried to flee outside and people from the street tried to get inside. Inside the hall it was totally dark, which made the panic much worse. And amidst all that, as though untouched by all that was going on, Harav Aharon Kotler, *zt"l*, lay on the floor, his hands covering his head, his eyes closed as he fervently offered up a *tefillah*. I bent down to listen – what was the *gaon hador davening* for at this difficult hour with all that was going on around him?

I listened and this is what I heard:

“Ribono shel Olam,” Rav Aharon pleaded for his life, “*Ich vill veiter lernen Dein heiliger Torah* – I want to continue learning Your holy Torah! Please, spare my life...”

“Even after the explosions quieted down, the pandemonium did not. The darkness remained, and it was not yet clear what damage the bombardments had caused. People were looking for their parents and children, and there were hysterical cries and shrieks drowning out the loud voices.

“Rav Aharon seemed oblivious to what was going on, and was still immersed in his *tefillah*. One of his students, Rav Ezra Novik, related to me that he bent over towards him to help him get up, and he was able to hear him cry bitterly: ‘*Tatte, ich vill Dir noch badinen*, I still want to serve You!’ Rav Aharon continued to plead in this way, never mentioning his own personal benefit; he seemed focused entirely on Hashem, and was pleading to be able to continue to serve Him.”

“Let us think about it,” Rav Shalom concluded his story with a resounding lesson: “If we would have been standing there at that time, what would we have been thinking about? Surely about ourselves and our families; for Rav Aharon, however – the only thing that interested him at the time was eternal life, so that he could continue to acquire Torah and wisdom and to do more for the sake of *Kavod Shamayim*.”

“That was his hope and his prayer all his life, and it is surely through the power of these *tefillos* that he became what he did.”

Kol Chotzev p. 167