

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



294

PARASHAS RE'EH

תשע"ט

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### An Angel Is Created with Every Step

"כי אם אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיכם מכל שבטים לשום את שמו שם לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה" (יב)

The leader of the Chachamim of Yerushalayim, **Harav Yisrael Yaakov Algazi**, brought in the name of the *Midrash*, that every step taken by those ascending to Yerushalayim, an angel was created. He cited the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (42:5) that makes a similar point: "Ki e'evor basach adadem ad Bais Elokim bekol rinah besodah hamon chogeg." "Ki e'evor" – when the *olei regel* began to ascend, then it was possible to count them "basach", while the more they continued to advance "ad Bais Elokim", they were already in the category of "hamon chogeg" – a celebrating throng – because of the many *malachim* that joined them.

Similarly, it is cited in the name of **Harav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev**, that even in our day, going to the shul, which is called a 'mikdash me'at' is as important as going to the Bais Hamikdash and an angel is created with each step taken to shul.

Yosef Tehillos [Chid"i] Tehillim 42:5; Maaseh Yechiel [Harav Y.M. Hibner] Eikev

### Blessed Is He Who Did Not Make Me a Clerk

"ושמחתם לפני ה' אלקיכם אתם ובניכם ועבדיכם ואמהתיכם והלוי אשר בשעריכם כי אין לו חלק ונחלה אתכם" (יב)

The **Ksav Sofer** explained:

"You and your sons" – be happy and thank for the *nachalah*, the land, that Hashem granted you in this world, while the Levi should thank and praise Hashem for the fact that "he has no lot and land with you." That is because he is exempt from engaging in the dealings of this world. As Rabi Nechunyah ben Hakanah would daven when he left the *bais medrash* (*Brachos* 26b): "Modeh Ani, I thank You Hashem that you made my part from those who sit in the *bais hamedrash* and You

didn't cast my lot with the *yoshvei kranos*." *Rashi* [in his first explanation] says that the "yoshvei kranos" were the grocers work for their *parnassah* and do not toil in Torah.

Ksav Sofer

### Mibe'er Emunim

Sources in the Parashah About the Greatness of Amen

### Amen After the Brachos and the Curses

"ונתתה את הברכה על הר גריזים ואת הקללה על הר עיבל" (יא כט)

*Onkelos* translates "venasata es habrachah...v'es haklalah" – as "ותתן ית" [מברכיא [המברכים]...וית מלשטיא [המקללים]". The question is asked: Didn't *Chazal* say (*Sotah* 32a) that the *brachos* and the *klalos* were said by the Kohanim and the Leviim who stood between the two mountains, and by the *brachos* they turned to Har Grizim and for the *klalos* they turned to Har Eival? How then did *Onkelos* explain that the ones giving the *brachos* stood on Har Grizim and the ones cursing stood on Har Eival?

**Harav Yosef David**, the Rav of Saloniki, answered:

Indeed, the Leviim who stood at the bottom of the mountains are the ones that said the *brachos* and the *klalos*. But because the tribes standing on the mountains answered amen after their words – with the *brachos* said towards those who answered amen on Har Grizim, and the *klalos* towards those who answered on Har Eival – therefore *Onkelos* explained that it was as though the ones making the *brachos* and the ones issuing the curses themselves stood on the mountains. After all, "the one answering amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*." (*Brachos* 53b)

Tzemach David

### There Is No Brachah Without Joy

"נתון תתן לו ולא ידע לבכר בתתך לו" (טו י)

There is a well-known question: Why do we not make a *brachah* on the mitzvah of giving *tzedakah*, in contrast to all other *mitzvos aseh*?

**Rav Y. Ben Plat** (cited in the *Avudraham Birchas Hamitzvos*) explained that it is because we do not make a *brachah* on a mitzvah whose fulfillment is dependent on others, like *tzedakah*. If the poor man refuses to take *tzedakah* then we will not be able to fulfill the mitzvah, hence there is no *brachah*.

The *Raavad* offers another explanation, which he derives from this answer (see *Avudraham ibid*): We do not make a *brachah* on a mitzvah that stems from another's lack, because then it looks like we are expressing gratitude for the suffering of another person.

Another unique answer is offered by **Harav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov** based on this *passuk*:

From the fact that the Torah warned the one giving *tzedakah* "velo yera levavcha besitcha lo", and your heart should not hurt when you give him, we learn that we must give *tzedakah* with joy. As the *Chinuch* writes (*Mitzvah* 479): "To do *tzedakah* with the one who needs it with joy and kindness." Because the one giving *tzedakah* does not usually do the mitzvah with joy, as stipulated, therefore no *brachah* was established for this mitzvah.

Ma'or Vashemesh, Pinchas

### The Matzah Prays That We Should Eat It

"שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עוני" (טז ג)

The **Chasam Sofer** explains:

The *passuk* calls the matzah "lechem oni", to teach you that the matzah itself answers (*oneh*) and daven that we should eat it.

Similarly, the *Sfas Emes* explains the *passuk* in *Krias Shema* (*Devarim* 11:3): "Vahayah im shamoa tishme'u el mitzvosai..." that the mitzvah itself emits a plea asking the person to fulfill it.

Drashos Chasam Sofer, Vol. II, p. 274 2; Sfas Emes Eikev 5631

3 Elul is the *yahrtzeit* of the youngest son of the Divrei Chaim, **Harav Yeshaya of Tchechoiv, Hy"d**. It is told that each morning, he would recite *Birchos Hashachar* before his holy father "and it was frightening to see how the Divrei Chaim grabbed his head and jumped up with enthusiasm when he answered amen after him. All those around him were in awe and fear of his holy service of Hashem." (*Rabbeinu Hakadosh MiTchechoiv*, p. 9)



Birchos Hashachar Aloud With kavanah Bechavrusa



## Hashkamas Bais Hamedrash (4)

## Learning Before Davening

As explained in the last segment, in order for *tefillah* to be said properly it needs advance preparation. Therefore, "the early *chassidim* would spend one hour [preparing] and then *daven*" (*Brachos* 30b), in order to prepare themselves suitably.

Many of the *gedolim* throughout the generations did this as well, and even instituted the practice in their communities and stated it in their wills for their progeny, to prepare for *davening* with Torah learning. Toward this end, they would rise at dawn and begin their day with Torah learning. Then they would *daven*. There are many virtues to this practice, some of which we will share in this segment.

The Virtue of Learning  
Before Davening in Chazal

Let us begin with sources cited in the *sefarim* in the name of Chazal:

The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 31b) says: "One does not stand to *daven* out of sadness...but rather with joy of a *dvar mitzvah*." *Rashi* explains: "Like *divrei tanchumim shel Torah*," and *Tosafos* explains (beginning *Rabbanan*): "such as engaging in *divrei Torah*."

The *Yerushalmi* (*Brachos* 1:5, see *Mishnah Berurah* 60 4) relates that several of the Tannaim recited *Krias Shema* before *davening* so that "they should stand up to *tefillah* amidst *divrei Torah*."

The *Zohar* (*Bereishis* p. 202 2) explains from the words of the *passuk* (*Mishlei* 13:2): "*V'eitz chaim ta'avah ba'ah*": Someone who wants Hakadosh Baruch Hu to accept his *tefillah* should try hard in his Torah learning, which is the "*eitz chaim*", and thus the "*ta'avah ba'ah*", his requests will be accepted by Hashem, will be fulfilled.

The *Pesikta Rabbasi* further explains (40) the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (17:1-2): "*Tefillah leDovid shimah Hashem tzedek hakshivah rinasi ha'azinah tefilasi belo sifsei mirmah milfanechah mishpati yetzei einecha techezenah meishtarim*..."

"*Belo sifsei mirmah*" – we did not stand up to *daven* amidst idle talk nor amid lips of deceit, but rather out of Torah and *mitzvos* and good deeds. Therefore, "*milfanecha mishpati yetzei*." And don't look at the bad deeds that we have – as it says "*Einecha techezenah meishtarim*."

The *Tanna Devei Eliyahu* (*Rabba* 2) brought a parallel to the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 29:2-3): "*Hishtachavu l'Hashem behadras kodesh; kol Hashem al hamayim*" – "From here they said: a person should not stand up to *daven* until he says a *halachah* or a *passuk*, therefore it says: '*Hishtachavu l'Hashem behadras kodesh; kol Hashem al hamayim*' – water means *divrei Torah*."

## A Special Practice for Shabbos

Some bring another source from the *Tannah Devei Eliyahu* (*Rabba* 1): "This is what HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael: My children, did I not write in My Torah: '*lo yamush sefer haTorah hazeh mipicha*'...from here they said a person should always rise and learn on Shabbos, and should go to shul..." [Similarly, it is brought in the *teshuvos* of the Gaonim (*Musafiya* 87) "This is what we were shown from Heaven, that when [Bnei] Yisrael rise early and come to shul on Shabbos and on Yom Tov and learn, that is a good *middah* that they practice. That is the practice in Bavel since the beginning of the first exile."]

It appears from the words of the *Yerushalmi*

that what is said above applies to someone who is unable to do so in the weekday. But someone who is able to during the week should also rise early and learn and then *daven*. (*Shu"t Mishneh Sachir* [Rav Y. Teichtal] *Orach Chaim* 20)

## Dispute Between Rashi and Tosafos

In *Maseches Brachos* (5b) Rashi and Tosafos dispute whether it is permitted to learn before *davening*. Rashi (beginning with '*samuch*') writes that it is prohibited and Tosafos (beginning with '*ela*') writes on Rashi's words: "I do not know from where he takes that" and says that certainly one is permitted.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 89 6) states that the prohibition of learning before *davening* is only once *zman tefillah* has arrived. It is for someone who is *davening* in his house or *bais medrash*, where it is possible that that because he is so busy learning he will miss *zman Krias Shema* and *tefillah*. But someone who *davens* regularly in a shul at a set time, and someone who gives a *shiur* to an audience, may learn before *davening*. The *Mishnah Berurah* (ibid *se'if kattan* 30) added that even someone who began learning before the time that he is allowed to *daven* may continue. He also permits someone to learn if he appoints a '*shomer*', a guard, that is not learning Torah to remind him to *daven*.

The *sefer Birchas Avraham* by Rav Abish the Av Bais Din of Frankfurt (*Brachos* 5b *Tosafos* beginning with *ela*) settled the dispute of the Rishonim:

Rashi's words apply to those select individuals in a generation who cleave to Hashem and as soon as they arise from bed, they desire to serve Hashem. Then, it is better that they should *daven* right away because perhaps their Torah learning will separate them somewhat from that cleaving to Hashem. But the Tosafos referred to people like most, who, when they arise from bed, become busy right away with business and other mundane matters. For them, it is better to engage in Torah learning right away so that they can separate themselves from the material concerns and perhaps they will be able to *daven* better. Their words specifically apply to someone who is in distress and is not allowed to *daven* (*Brachos* 31a), because through engaging in Torah with happiness he will reach a level of joy, as it says (*Tehillim* 19:9): '*pekudei Hashem yesharim mesamchei lev*.'

## To save an Entire Tzibbur

The *Pri Megadim* (*siman* 1 *Mishbetzos Zahav* 8) writes that someone who is a *baal Torah* should learn before *davening*. Harav Nosson Wachtfogel, zt"l, the Mashgiach of Lakewood, said:

"The Mashgiach once called a group of *bachurim* and said to them: Each one of you has a wondrous opportunity to merit to save the entire *tzibbur*. How? When a person comes early to *davening*, before the *davening* starts, and he sits and learns Torah. He explained this with a parable (see *Zohar* Vol. II p. 131 2) to a king who comes to a city. If the residents of the city don't come out to welcome him, he imposes harsh decrees on them. But if there are a few members of the city who come early and greet the King, then the king is appeased. Even though the rest of the residents are late, the king remains appeased and does not issue harsh decrees.

The Mashgiach said: Engaging in Torah is receiving the Shechinah, and it is explained that if a person sits before everyone arrives to *davening* and learns, he can save an entire *tzibbur*." (*Leket Reshimos* – *Tefillah* p. 83)

The Shell That Became Lodged in  
the Roof of the Shul

In the *hesped* delivered by the *mechutan* of the Vilna Gaon, Harav Avraham Danzig, author of *Chayei Adam*, on the Gra in the large shul in Vilna (printed in *sefer Shaarei Rachamim* p. 27), the Chayei Adam recited the *passuk* (*Melachim* II 2:12) "*Avi avi rechev Yisrael uparashav*." He then added the *Targum Yonasan*: that he benefited Yisrael with his *tefillah* more than a chariot and riders, and reminded the assembled: "Remember the day of the war, when he came here to the shul to *daven*, and with his *tefillah* he saved us from all the chariots and riders? If so, we are certainly obligated to tear our clothing for him. Tear your garments, because Hashem has torn a *gaon* from us..."

Which *tefillah* was the Chayei Adam referring to in his *hesped*? This is the story:

It was 17 Tammuz 5554, about four years before the passing of the Gaon. The Russian armies seeking to capture Vilna from the Polish nobles who controlled it laid siege to the city and mercilessly bombarded it with cannon fire.

The city was steadily being destroyed, but its stubborn defenders refused to give up. Hundreds of people lost their lives in the Russian fire, among them many of the city's Jews. It reached a point that in one day, more than thirty Jewish people perished.

The Russian siege on Vilna lasted about thirty days. Between one bombardment and the next, there were efforts to negotiate between the Russian Army commanders and the Polish nobles to get them to surrender before the entire city was destroyed and its citizens' blood would run in the streets like water. But the Polish nobles, seeking to preserve their dignity, refused to capitulate.

But the Russians also dug in their heels and continued besieging the city obstinately. Thus, for thirty days, the siege continued, with the dead, wounded and destruction mounting daily. On 15 Av, after receiving another firm refusal from the Polish nobles, the Russians lost their patience and decided to launch the heaviest bombardment yet on the city, from several different directions. They were sure that ultimately, they would succeed in breaking into the city and capturing it.

The heads of the Jewish community were aware of this danger threatening them, and immediately called an *atzeres tefillah*. In the midst of the

battles raging over the city, the whole community gathered to recite *Tehillim* in the big shul. They cried and pleaded with Hashem to have mercy on those who had survived thus far, and to spare them the horrors.

The Vilna Gaon joined the *tefillah*, and according to the historians:

"All of the Jewish community of the city, with their wives and children, gathered in the large shul with prayers and pleas. The Gaon Harav Eliyahu went up to the *Aron Kodesh* and opened it and began to recite the *mizmor* "*Yaancha Hashem beyom tzarah*." Suddenly a loud sound was heard, and a cannonball whistled by and struck the roof of the shul in which the community of Vilna was gathered.

"Everyone's hearts froze in fear, and at that moment, Harav Eliyahu cried aloud '*batel, batel, nullified nullified!*' and the miracle occurred: The cannonball lodged into the roof and the fire stopped. The defenders of the city capitulated and conquerors entered the city with drums and cymbals, and there was reprieve."

Only after the Russians captured the city did the magnitude of the miracle become clear: The stubborn defenders had decided not to capitulate, and to fight to the last bullet, even if it meant that the entire city would be razed to the ground.

But at the same time that the Jews gathered to *daven* in the shul, one of the Polish noblemen who lived in Vilna could not stand to see his city being destroyed. So he decided to take his life in his hands and to open the gates of the city to the Russian army.

Needless to say, this was a huge risk to him, and it took a lot of effort. But when the Gaon declared "*batel, batel*", his efforts bore fruit. The gates opened wide and the Russian army marched in triumphantly – and for the Jews there was light and joy.

The memory of the Gra's great power remained visible for generations, until Vilna was destroyed during the Holocaust – that cannonball remained lodged in the ceiling of the great shul of Vilna. It was the cannonball that signified the end of the war, and it was a memory of the miracle for all who saw it, who witnessed the power of *tefillah* that hastened the salvation in a most remarkable way for the city and its Jews...

Hagaon Hachassid MiVilna