

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



304

PARASHAS VAYEIRA

תש"פ

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Tefillah for a Sick Person Without Mentioning His Name

"To visit the sick." (*Rashi*) (יח א) "וירא אליו ה'"
How did *Rashi* derive that the purpose of Hashem's revelation to Avraham was to visit him while he was sick?

Harav Shmaryahu Zalman of Leipnik explained:

The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b) lists several things that can tear up the decree of the sick person, including changing one's name. We can learn from this that it is fitting to refrain as much as possible from mentioning the patient's original name. Based on this we can say that the Torah wrote: "Vayeira eilav Hashem" without mentioning Avraham's name, and this is a hint that Hashem appeared to him while he was sick, to visit him and to bless him.

Nachalas Yaakov - Arnei Shoham [Amsterdam 5484] 10

A Request to Have the Shechinah Present

אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל עבדך" (יח ג)
With these words, Avraham Avinu made a lofty request which is the key to all our *tefillas* and requests to this day: *Ribbono Shel Olam*, "Al na taavor me' al avdecha" – may Your Shechinah dwell among us also, and do not ever hide Your Face from us.

Heichal Rachel [Rav R. Wolfowitz]

Humility as a Condition for Having Tefillah Accepted

"ויען אברהם ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי לדברך אל ה' ואנכי עפר ואפר" (יח כז)

Harav Yitzchak Hochgelernter, the Rav of Zamosc, explained:

Humility is a condition for having one's *tefillah* accepted, because Chazal said (*Sotah* 5b): "A person's *tefillah* is only heard if he puts his heart like flesh [which is soft] as it says (*Yeshayah* 66:23): "Yavo kol basar lehishtachavos." That is what Avraham said, "Hinei na hoalti ledaber el Hashem," and I am sure that my prayer will be accepted because "v'anochi afar v'efer, I am dirt and ash."

Zichron Yitzchak [Zamosc 5582]

Answer 'Amen' Even If 'There's No Chance'

"ותצחק שרה בקרבה לאמר אחרי בלתי היתה לי עדנה ואדני זקן; ויאמר ה' אל אברהם למה זה צחקת שרה" (יח יב-יג)

The *Ramban* asks (18:15): Is it possible that Sarah did not believe the words of the angel?!

He explained: Sarah did not know that these were angels. Because she thought they were simple people, in her heart, she laughed at their words. The claim against her was for the fact that she did not answer amen, because even if they were simple people, she should have said, "Amen, *kein ya'aseh Hashem*."

It is told that **Harav Moshe Feinstein**, a few years before his passing, attended the *bris* of a great grandchild. When the speakers blessed him that he should merit to live a long life and attend the wedding of the child, the elderly *gaon* answered a fervent amen.

With tears in his eyes, he explained:

Although I am old and sick, and naturally there is no chance of this *brachah* being fulfilled, I answered amen with all my heart, because we find that Sarah was rebuked for laughing when she heard about the promise of the angel that she would have a child. HaKadosh Baruch Hu rebuked her when it says (*passuk* 14): "Hayipalei meHashem davar." As the *Ramban* explains, even for the *brachah* of a regular person, she should have replied, "amen, *kein ya'aseh Hashem*."

From here we can learn that if, for example, a poor passerby knocks at the door, and after he is given a donation he gives a *brachah* that doesn't sound reasonable, if the person does not reply "amen, *kein ya'aseh Hashem*" it might be held against him, because there is nothing Hashem cannot do.

"I, too," the *gaon* concluded, "answer amen after the *brachah* with all my heart, because Mashiach can come at any moment..."

Kuntress Mann Malchei Rabbanan [Printed at the beginning of Igros Moshe Vol. VIII] p. 34

In one of the letters that Rabi Akiva Eiger wrote to his son Shlomo, he apologizes that due to his weakness he was unable to attend the wedding of his granddaughter (a daughter of the Chasam Sofer, Hindel the wife of Rav Dovid Tzvi Ehrenfeld), but asked, "Mention us at the celebration of the community in your *simchah*, to bless us because it is very precious to me to be blessed by the *tzibbur* who answers amen."

Shu"t Vechiddushei Rabi Akiva Eiger [Yerushalayim 5707] 15

Who Established Tefillas Vasikin?

"ויאמר לוט אלהם אל נא אדני; הנה נשאתי פניך גם לדבר הזה... השמש יצא על הארץ ולוט בא צערה" (י טיח; כא; כג)
"בבעו מיניך, אמתין לי שעה זעירא עד דנתבוע רחמין מן קדם ה'" (תרגום יונתן פס' יח)

Chazal say (*Brachos* 26b): "The Avos established the *tefillas*," and the Avudraham writes (*Tikkun Hatefillos*) that the second letter of the name of each of the Avos indicates the time of the *tefillah* that he established: אברהם is *boker*, morning; יצחק is *tzaharayim*, or midday, and יעקב is *erev*, evening. The *Chiddushei Harim* added that Lot was the one who established *tefillas vasikin*, and this is also alluded to in the second letter of his name, which is *vav*.

Proof of this is cited by **Harav Shaul Moshe Silberman**, the Viershover Rav, from the words of the *Targum Yonasan*: After Lot asked for "sha'ah ze'ira" a small amount of time, in order to *daven*, Hashem acceded to his request, and at the time when "the sun came out onto the land" the city of Tzoar was saved.

He'aros Hagrasha"m at the beginning of Sefer Pardes Yosef Vol. II

"Dayan Ha'emes" on the Severity of the Middas Hadin

"ותבט אשתו מאחוריו ותהי נציב מלח" (יט כו)

In *Maseches Brachos* (54b and see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 218 8) it says that one who sees the wife of Lot, who became a pillar of salt, recites two *brachos*: "Baruch Dayan Ha'emes" on the *Middas Hadin* that struck her, and "Baruch Zocher Es Hatzaddikim" for the fact that Lot was spared in the merit of Avraham, as it says (19:29): "And Hashem remembered Avraham and he sent Lot out from the upheaval."

The *Chofetz Chaim* asked: The *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 225 9) that because the *brachah* of *Dayan Ha'emes* was established in a time of distress, and it should not be recited for a non-Jew who dies, why then should it be recited for Lot's wife?

He answered, indeed, we do not make the *brachah* because of our distress at the death of Lot's wife, but rather at the severity of the *Middas Hadin* that was displayed at that time: Even the merit of Avraham the *tzaddik* could not spare the wife of Lot, and she became a pillar of salt.

Shaar Hatzion, 218 22

"Hayipalei MeiHashem Davar -

Is There Anything Hashem Cannot Do?"

When we answer amen for a *brachah* or good wish, we express our *emunah*, our faith, that Hashem can fulfill any blessing or wish.

(According to *Ramban* in this *parashah* 18:15)

Venomar amen - Let us answer amen with *emunah*.

Birchos Hashachar



Aloud



With kavanah



Bechavrusa



"היפלא
מה
דבר?"

Birchas Hamazon – Hatov Vehameitiv (3)

“The Tenth Is Holy
for Hashem”

Because of the holiness of this *brachah*, Chazal composed it to begin with a series of ten praises, in an ascending order. They are: Ha-Kel, Avinu, Malkeinu, Adireinu, Boreinu, Goaleinu, Yotzeinu, Kedosheinu Kedosh Yaakov, Ro'enu Roeh Yisrael and Hamelech Hatov Vehameitiv.

The Maharal explained:

“As we already said, the *brachah* of *Hatov Vehameitiv* is the loftiest *brachah* of them all, in that Hashem is good and benevolent to all. That is why the ten levels ascend until it is entirely holy because each tenth thing is holy, and with regard to this level that is the tenth [HaMelech HaTov VehoMeitiv], He is good and benevolent to all. And you should understand these things very well.” (Gevuros Hashem, Haggadah Shel Pesach)

The Middas Hachessed
Within the Din

The description of “HaKel” said of Hashem expresses the measure of His strength and power (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 12 1), as the *passuk* says (Melachim II 24:15) “*Eilei ha'aretz*.” On the other hand, it expresses His *middah* of *chessed* and compassion, as it says (*Tehillim* 53:3): “*Chessed Ke-l kol hayom*” (*Rashi Shemos* 34:6; *Sharei Orah Shaar* 7). The holy *Zohar* explains (see *Zohar* 96, p. 30 2 – 31 1) that this symbolizes the strength that is in the compassion, that if a person is worthy, then with the power of this *middah*, the compassion overpowers the *din*, even when *Middas Hadin* reigns in the world.

The *Tosafos* (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b in *hagahah*) explains that the *Middah* of “Ke-l” specifically applies to the sustenance that Hashem provides to all His creations, as it says, “Ke-l” is the *middah* of strength because with a *yad chazakah*, a strong hand, He prepares food for all creatures.” Rabi Yitzchak Lampronti – (*Pachad Yitzchak, Thirteen Middos*) linked the words of the *Tosafos* to the words of Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah cited in the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 118a): “The sustenance of a person is as hard as splitting the sea,” and he explained that “that is why the *middah* of *gevurah*, strength, is needed for this, to overcome nature and provide sustenance for all creations.”

Many have asked on this subject: Is it possible that there is something difficult for Hashem, the Almighty, to do? Why is extra strength required specifically for the matter of sustenance?

Some explained that the *Gemara* is certainly not referring to the actual food, but rather to the fact that in many cases, due to his deeds, a person is not worthy of receiving sustenance. And if we draw a parallel to a human king – is it possible that he will provide sustenance to those who sin against him, thus providing them with strength to work against him?!

But our Compassionate Father is not like that, and for this purpose, He linked *Middas Harachamim* with *Middas Hadin*, so that despite a person's sins he should be able to continue to exist in this world. That is a special *gevurah* the likes of which was displayed at the splitting of the sea, when even people from Am Yisrael who were not worthy of it because of their deeds, were saved. (See *L'Enosh Binah*, p. 405)

Sons of the King

The combination of the terms “Avinu Malkieinu” appears often in our *tefillas*, especially in prayers said at special times, such as *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and the fast days. This phrase has a special *segulah*, as the *Gemara* relates (*Taanis* 25b) that during a drought year, Rabi Eliezer prayed many *tefillas* and was not answered, and when Rabi Akiva came after him and said “Avinu Malkieinu” he was immediately answered.

It would seem that these two titles contradict one another, because a father treats his children with compassion while a king operates with the *middas hadin*. However, this difference is only present in a human king, where the connection between a father is one that exists for eternity, while that is not the case with the bond between a king and his servant. If the king wants, he can remove him from his position. But the Creator is Avinu Malkieinu, and even though we are servants to His Kingship, His covenant with us lasts for eternity. That is our extra virtue, that Hashem is Avinu Malkieinu, meaning, His Kingship over us is eternal like a father who will forever remain a father to his son. (*Prashas Derachim* 25)

Another point in this combination of titles is explained by Harav Shimshon Pincus: Even though the king is the king of all the people in the land, everyone knows that he gives special treatment to his son. So we find that Avinu Malkieinu is a combination of descriptions that symbolizes endless compassion, that even in the height of the *Middas Hadin*, they have the power to help us. (*Nefesh Shimshon, Siddur Hatefillah* p. 301)

Bread and Jam Sent from Heaven

The holy Rebbe, Harav Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, *zt”l*, the Shefa Chaim of Sanz-Klausenberg, was known for the tremendous fortitude and strength with which he endured the travails of the Holocaust. During those years, he lost his wife and eleven children, *Hashem yikom damam*, but his spirit did not flag. He rose like a lion from the ashes to re-establish the empire of Sanz.

While many of those who were in the camps were so shattered that they lost their human dignity, the Rebbe, *zy”a*, with great *mesirus nefesh*, maintained his holy conduct. Even in the valley of death, in Auschwitz and Dachau, after later as a slave laborer in the Moldorf camp, he adhered to every stringency. Thus, people saw him making every effort to avoid carrying on Shabbos, cutting *lechem Mishnah*, convening *minyanim* for *tefillah* and more. He maintained these practices as if he was not in the immediate danger of death.

During the Holocaust, the Rebbe was very strict about kashrus of his food. In time, he said of himself that when he entered Auschwitz, he took upon himself not to rely on the *heter* of “*pikuach nefesh*”, and to refrain from eating *treif*. He kept to this pledge throughout his time in the camps. This courageous decision required tremendous amounts of *mesirus nefesh* on his part, because the *treif* soup that was served to the prisoners was a mainstay of the meager rations that kept them alive. The prisoners around him could not fathom why he refrained from eating the food, and some even tried to force him to eat, claiming that he was risking his life. But the Rebbe did not capitulate.

Many years later, in 1984, the Rebbe related at a *Chumash shiur* that he was giving:

I came to Auschwitz on Erev Shabbos Kodesh at ten in the morning. As soon as they took us off the trains, the Nazis forcefully and brutally pushed us to hurry into the camp. After they selected the people who were capable of working, myself among them, they served us a fleishig food. Being starved to death, everyone fell on the food that was given to them. My friends urged me to do the same, but I refused, saying that I absolutely refused to defile myself with forbidden foods. These beasts had robbed me of everything that I had; would I allow them to take my soul as well?!

So I fasted throughout that Friday, and when the sun set, and Shabbos came, I was starving and very weak. And that's how I fell asleep on that dreadful night.

On Shabbos morning, we again heard a call through the camp summoning the prisoners for breakfast. As the earlier meal was, this, too, was made of *treif* meat. In a moment, the barracks was

empty of all its occupants. I was left alone, starving and thirsty.

Already at the beginning of the Holocaust I had taken upon myself to accept everything I would endure with love. I did not cry at all, especially on Shabbos, but that time, the tears poured from my eyes, and I could not stop them. Suddenly, a terribly bitter cry burst forth from the depths of my suffering. I cried to my Creator: “*Ribbono shel Olam*, You have taken everything that I have; I have remained alone in this world, with nothing and no one – can it be that specifically now it is decreed on me to have to eat *treif*?! No, no! I do not want that! I will not eat *treif* under any circumstances!” I declared with determination and with pure *emunah*.

While I was still weeping, a Yid entered the barracks and asked me, in alarm: “Are you the Klausenberger Rebbe?!” I didn't answer right away; I was overcome with fear, knowing that the Nazis went out of their way to kill the Rabbanim and prominent people. But then another Yid entered and said, “Rebbe, you must come right away; someone is waiting for you right near the barracks.”

I had no choice but to go to the door; I was afraid that the someone was perhaps a kapo, or worse, an S.S. soldier, seeking to kill me. But I had nowhere to flee.

I was surprised then, when I saw an elderly Yid, with a dignified demeanor, who asked me: “Was the Kshanover Rebbe your uncle...?” I was surprised at the question. How did this Yid know my identity and who had told him about my lineage? But I replied, “Indeed! Harav David of Kshanov, *zt”l*, was my uncle.”

When I said this, the Yid hurriedly handed me a fresh loaf of bread and jar of jam, saying, “I brought this so that you should have what to eat...”

Before I could respond or thank him, the man disappeared. I never saw him again.

I clearly saw that Hashem had not left me for one moment. He listened compassionately to my *tefillah*, and was pleased by my pledge to avoid *treif* food. At that moment, I reiterated the *kabbalah* that I had accepted on myself. I promised again that I would never eat *treif*. And then I made Kiddush on the bread; *bechasdei Hashem*, I even found water with which to wash. I made *Hamotzi* and sat down to partake of the Shabbos *seudah*.

Many of those who mocked me and tried earlier to get me to break my vow, now saw with their own eyes that Hashem was there and He was watching over the souls of His *chassidim* and saving them.

Lapid Ha'eish, Vol. I, p. 173