

Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



307

PARASHAS VAYEITZEI

תש"פ

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Tefillah Dependent on Kefitzas Haderech

ו"יפגע במקום" (כח יא)

The word "vayifga" has two meanings: One – a meeting of two people who are walking towards one another, and two – tefillah. In this *passuk*, the word can be used in the context of both meanings: Yaakov met Har Hamoriah, which came toward him, and by davening there, he established for generations the tefillah of Arvis. (Rashi, Chulin 91b beginning with Vayifga).

Harav Yaakov Reisher, author of *Shevus Yaakov*, explains that the two meanings are dependent on one another, because if Har Hamoriah had not come towards Yaakov, he could not have davened there and established tefillas Arvis. The *Gemara* explains (*Eiruv* 65a) that in early times, one who came in from a long journey was not able to daven for three days after, because he was so exerted by the sojourn that he could not have kavanah. But because the way was shortened for Yaakov, he was calm and was able to immediately daven, and thus to establish tefillas Arvis.

Iyun Yaakov, Eiruv 65a

Yaakov Credited Merit of the Place

"והנה ה' נצב עליו... וייקץ יעקב משנתו ויאמר אכן יש ה' במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי" (כח יג טז) **Harav Tzvi Hirsh of Liska** explained this *passuk* according to the *Tzelach's* commentary on the words of Chazal (*Brachos* 6b): "When one establishes a set place to daven – the G-d of Avraham helps him. And when that person dies, they say of him: Where is the humble one, where is the *chassid*, from the disciples of Avraham Avinu?" The *Tzelach* explains that one sets aside a specific place to pray shows that in his great humility he does not feel that his tefillah is worthy of being accepted on its own merit. Therefore,

Amen from Two People

ו"יעקב הלך לדרכו ויפגעו בו מלאכי אלקים" (לב ב)

The **Rema MiPano** writes that the words "מלאכי האלקים" are numerically equivalent to "amen amen", and to "Yaakov." Preferably, a person should try to make a *brachah* in front of two people to answer amen after him. (Cited in *Machatzis Hashekel, Orach Chaim* 69)

Asarah Ma'amaros [Rema MiPano] Ma'amar Chikur Din 2 15

This practice is already mentioned in the *Zohar Hakadosh* on this *parashah* (4 180 1), where the words of the *passuk* (*Devarim* 32:3) are cited that "Ki Shem Hashem ekra havu godel l'Elokeinu." "Ki Shem Hashem ekra" – in a *brachah*, "havu godel" – in the plural – "l'Elokeinu," to teach us that two people need to answer amen after the person making the *brachah*. (See Rashi, *Brachos* 21a, beginning with "Ki".)

Based on this, the **Maggid of Brod, Harav Moshe Osterer** explained what Chazal say (*Bava Kama* 30a): "One who wants to be a *chassid* should...lekayem milei dibrachos, should fulfill the matter of brachos..." It would seem that being strict about *Birchos Hanehenin* is an obligation for every Jew, not a practice that is *lifnim mishuras hadin*, for which one would be called a "chassid." Rather, the *Gemara* is saying that "Lekayem milei dibrachos" means he should be careful to have two people answer amen after his brachos, as the *Zohar* writes. This practice is one of *lifnim mishuras hadin*, and one who adheres to it is called a *chassid*. That is what Dovid Hamalech meant when saying (*Tehillim* 31:24): "Ehevu es Hashem kol *chassidav* emunim notzer Hashem umeshalem..." – Who is among the "chassidim" of Hashem? Those who are "emunim notzer" – who are careful that after each *brachah* they utter, there should be two people answering amen. Furthermore, even though others are answering amen, and he is merely making the *brachah*, "notzer Hashem umeshalem," Hashem pays the reward of their answering to the one making the *brachah* as well.

Harav A.T. Marmorstein, Rosh Kollel Mekor Baruch, adds, that this explanation is alluded to in the *Gemara*, because "milei" (with the kollel) is numerically equivalent to "amen."

Darash Moshe, Tehillim 31:24

he designates a specific place so that the holiness of that place will aid his tefillah in being accepted. As such, it is worthy to call him an "anav", a modest person. This concept is alluded to in these *pesukim*: Even though HaKadosh Baruch Hu revealed Himself to Yaakov in his own merit, as it says, "Vehinei Hashem nitzav alav", Yaakov attributed it to the merit of the place where he was standing, saying, "Achen yesh Hashem bamakom hazeh." In his great humility, "V'Anochi" – that the revelation occurred in his merit, "lo yadati" – did not enter his mind at all.

Tzelach, Brachos 6b; Ach Pri Tevuah

"Lavan Ben Nachor" – Indeed?!

ו"יאמר להם הידעתם את לבן בן נחור ויאמר ידענו" (כט ה)

From this *passuk*, **Harav Yisrael Isserlin**, author of *Terumas Hadeshen*, brings proof of the words of **Rabi Yehudah Hachassid** that when calling up to the Torah a person whose father was a total *rasha*, he should be called by his father's father's name (as the *Shulchan Aruch* rules in *Orach Chaim* 139 3). Here, too, because the father of Lavan was the evil *Besuel*, Yaakov mentioned him with his grandfather's name, "Lavan ben Nachor."

Sefer Chassidim 791; Terumas Hadeshen 21

Reb Meir's Tefillah

לא עת האסף המוקנה השקו הצאן ולכו רעו" (כט ז)

Harav Meir of Premishlan would offer a prayer and ask:

Ribbono Shel Olam, even if, *chalilah*, "lo eis he'asef hamikneh" – the time for the Redemption has not yet arrived, please, at least, "hashku hatzon ulechu re'u" – give plentiful *parnassah* for Your holy flock, Am Yisrael, during their time in exile.

Margenisa DeRabi Meir

The mekubal, **Harav Tzvi Hirsh Kaidenover** writes in his sefer *Kav Hayashar* (ch. 96) about the amazing power of answering amen as a merit to open the gates of blessing:

"HaKadosh Baruch Hu, in His great compassion and chessed, looks out and seeks to illuminate and bestow an abundance of holiness from Above, a spirit of wisdom and insight...by answering amen with kavanah. Because anyone who answers amen with kavanah and hurries to shul to answer amen – merits these influences."



Birchos Hashachar
Bechavrusa -

Open the Gates
of Blessing



Birchas Hamazon – Hatov Vehameitiv (6)

Hatov Vehameitiv Lakol

The crux of the *brachah* of *Hatov Vehameitiv* are the words “*Hamelech Hatov vehameitiv lakol*.” The Rishonim cited in the introduction to this *brachah* say that it was initially established as a short *brachah* on its own to commemorate the miracle of the martyrs of Beitar. Only later, when it was inserted into *Birchas Hamazon* for reasons previously explained, were the requests and praises added to it. Among them are the three “*Malchuyos*,” the three “*Gemulos*” and the three “*Hatavos*.” (*Tosafos, Brachos 46b; Orchos Chaim, Birchas Hamazon 45*)

In general, the *brachah* of *Hatov Vehameitiv* is said for the benevolence that benefits both the one making the *brachah* and for others (*Shulchan Aruch 222 1*). It needs to be explained that the miracle of the martyrs of Beitar was good for them and for others. The fact that they did not smell despite being exposed for a long time – was a benefit for them, and when they were buried, it was good for those who remained alive, because as long as they were left unburied in humiliation, it was a tremendous shame for all of Klal Yisrael. (*Avudraham, Hapshat Veba'iyun Brachos 48b*)

Another aspect of benefitting others in this miracle is explained by the Rebbe Harav Yoel of Satmar, according to the Avudraham, that those killed in Beitar were allowed to be buried after the sages of Yisrael, headed by Rabban Gamliel and his *beis din*, *davened* and fasted for it. Because their *tefillos* surely effected *yeshuos* for all the generations [as explained in the *Zohar Bereishis 137 1* that the *tefillos* of *tzaddikim* make an impression for generations] here “*hameitiv*” – refers to the good for others, in later generations. (*Divrei Yoel, Vayeichi p. 611*)

Some explained by way of *drush* that there is a special praise in the word “*hameitiv*” – that in His great desire to be benevolent to His creations, HaKadosh Baruch Hu sometimes has to help a person improve his deeds, so that the sin should not prevent him from receiving the abundance of Hashem’s compassion and *chesed*. That is what “*hameitiv*” means – that he makes a person *tov*, good, so that he can benefit from all the benevolence. (*Binyan Shlomo, Likutim, 37*, in the name of Rav A.Y. of Sadigura)

**Positioning a Request
Next to Gratitude**

The meaning of the words “*hatov vehameitiv*” is: because the essence of HaKadosh Baruch Hu is “good”, therefore He is “*meitiv*” *lakol*, to all of His creations. Because someone who is not in essence good, will only do good to those people that he likes. (*Be'er HaTorah Kuntress Birchas Hamazon*)

When we thank Hashem for the good that He has bestowed upon us in the past and the present, we express our confidence that He will continue to be benevolent to us in the future as well. It is fitting here to cite the Rebbe Harav Yaakov Aryeh of Radzimin in his letter, that “*bitachon* is when a person grasps that the good of Hashem Yisbarach has no measure, and even though he [the person] has sinned, He is benevolent to those who are both bad and good. The more a person grasps that Hashem is in essence good, the more he brings upon himself all that he needs.”

In another letter, he cites the Kozhnutzer Maggid explaining the words of Chazal (*Shemos Rabbah 23 5*): “Am Yisrael are destined to say *shirah l'asid lavo*.” What does this mean? “Am Yisrael are destined that if they need a *yeshuah* from Hashem, they need to trust that He will surely help them, and they should precede by reciting *shirah*, praise to Hashem before He helps them [*l'asid lavo*], the same way they would say *shirah* after the assistance.” (*Bikkurei Avi v*), from the holy writings at the end of the *sefer*)

Past, Present and Future

In this *brachah* we mention the praises in order: past, present and future. But in the wording of the well-known praise, “*Hashem Melech, Hashem Malach, Hashem Yimloch l'olam va'ed*,” the order is present, past, future. Indeed, the *Kolbo* (25) says that some first say “*meitiv*” and then “*heitiv*,” and the reason is because of the order of this praise. (See more in the *Meshech Chochmah, Bamidbar 23:21*)

An explanation for the version that we commonly recite is offered by Rav Nosson Shapira, Av Bais Din of Horodna (commentary on *Birchas Hamazon*) regarding the praise “*Hashem Melech...*” This refers to the greatness of Hashem, and thus it is fitting to precede with the present, because there is no reality of time with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it says (*Tehillim 102:28*): “*V'Atah Hu ushenosecha lo yitamu*.” All the times – past, present and future – are present for Him. But the gratitude that we express in *bentsching* relates to us – humans who receive the benevolence, and are not considered a description of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. As we stress: “*lanu*”, and because as mortals, we have a past, present and future, it is fitting that we should begin with the past, which is the order in which things occurred.

Rav Dovid Moshe of Chortkov says that this also has a meaning that can be interpreted as *tefillah*: We ask Hashem: “*Hu Heitiv*” – that it should be good for us, “*Hu meitiv*” – that we should be good, “*Hu yeitiv*” – that good should flourish for us in that we should be able to benefit others. (*Divrei Dovid Hashalem p. 41*)

Double Salvation in the Valley of Death

Among the tens of thousands of miracle stories that are recounted about the Holocaust period, which reflect the rock solid *emunah* that the holy members of our nation displayed to strengthen their will to live and refuse to despair, even with the carnage that surrounded them, the story of Rav Yaakov Marocco, *z"l*, stands out. It is one link in a chain of miracles that led to his survival, and which he recorded in his remarkable book, “*Sha'agas Me'unekh*” [Shout of the Tortured].

As he describes his experiences during the Holocaust, Rav Yaakov often stresses his adherence to *tefillah* as the source of salvation for him in all times, sometimes against all odds, like this story:

The lives of Poland's Jews during the Holocaust were much like the sand in an hourglass – they were constantly slipping away. The process of annihilating them by the cursed Germans began with the onset of World War Two, and grew worse as the war progressed. As the days passed, the German noose tightened around the necks of the Yidden, until most of them were murdered in the death camps. *Hashem yikom damam*.

One of the stages of that process occurred in Elul 5702, when the residents of the Warsaw Ghetto, among them the young Marocco family – Reb Yaakov, his wife and their baby son – were informed that from the next day, the ghetto area was being reduced to just three streets.

The announcement was made very late at night, and the deadline for moving to the “new” ghetto was ten o'clock the next morning. The Germans' intention was clear – to seal the death fate of all the residents. Indeed, already the next morning, the S.S. brigades swarmed into the new ghetto, and anyone who was caught walking around – and there were thousands – was sent immediately to a place from where no one returned.

Reb Yaakov and his young family hurried to find shelter in the new ghetto. They dashed around desperately in the dark of night, until finally, an acquaintance recognized them and brought them into his own hiding place. It was a small bunker, into which some 140 people were crammed. Its opening was concealed behind a pile of old scrap metal.

But their relief did not last long. Several of the people in the bunker did not take kindly to the presence of the baby. They were deathly afraid that his crying would arouse the attention of the Germans, who were on the prowl for every Jew who was in hiding, and they declared that there was no choice but to send the young family away.

Reb Yaakov tried to plead with them, but in their fear, these people closed their ears. They scolded Reb Yaakov for endangering the lives of the rest of the people in the bunker and some decided to forcibly remove the young family.

The first to be pushed out was Reb Yaakov. He was gripped by hefty arms and carried out of the bunker. But as soon as they emerged, the people realized their fatal mistake. When the door opened, the pile of scrap metal that covered the doorway shifted, and a few pieces clattered to the ground, alerting the Germans who were not far away.

The door was slammed shut immediately, leaving Reb Yaakov alone outside. He didn't have too many choices, and he fled into the next house. Out of the corner of his

eye, he saw German soldiers beginning to hunt for the source of the noise.

The building that he had entered was abandoned, and the doors to its apartments were open wide. Reb Yaakov hurried to go into the first door. While he imagined it would be the first door his pursuers would enter as well, as noted, he didn't have too many options.

He entered the kitchen and noticed a small room off it. Without thinking, he dragged a heavy cupboard and concealed the door to the little room. He left a small slit through which he then squeezed himself into the room. It was only then that he realized that the small room had a huge window looking out onto the street that was teeming with soldiers, so he had to lay down on the floor of the room, hoping that the Germans would not notice him from either inside or outside.

Reb Yaakov lay huddled on the floor, murmuring silent prayers. He was frantic about his family that had remained in the bunker. He knew that his life, like theirs, was hanging in the balance. Outside, he could hear the tumult of the soldiers searching for them, but then he remembered the words of Chazal: “Even if a sharp sword is resting on his neck...a person should not despair of mercy.” And “the gates of *tefillah* are never locked.” He began to *daven* fervently for his life and the lives of his wife and son.

He lay for many hours this way, his lips never stopping to murmur in prayer. In the interim, he heard the noise of the soldiers running through all the apartments in the building, breaking doors and smashing furniture in their searches. But it was as though they were blinded and for some reason they did not enter the apartment he was in – the one closest to the entrance of the building.

When darkness fell and the noise quieted down, he hastened out of his hiding place and ran to the place where he had left his family hours earlier. He groped around in the dark, and indeed, what he had dreaded had happened: the terrible scene in front of his eyes told him that the Germans had apparently discovered the bunker and killed all its inhabitants.

And yet, Reb Yaakov did not despair. Amid strong faith in the power of *tefillah*, he decided to try...He entered the bunker, and was stunned to find that indeed, a miracle had happened. In the corner, he discovered his wife and baby son, huddling in terror, but alive.

Later he found out that a moment before the Germans burst into the bunker, his wife noticed a small niche in the corner. She pushed herself inside with the baby, and blocked the opening with a large pillow. Miraculously, the Germans did not notice the niche, and that's how she and the baby remained alive – the only survivors from the whole bunker.

Reb Yaakov endured much suffering and terror until he merited salvation from the inferno. His remarkable and unbelievable story is related in his book, which is testimony to future generations that Hashem will never abandon His Nation, even in the depths of the darkness and death. The gates of tears are never closed, and the power of *tefillah* from the depths of the heart can tear up decrees and save people from death.

Sha'agas Me'unekh p. 107