

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



308

PARASHAS VAYISHLACH

תש"פ

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Tefillah – Despite the Promise

"וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיֵּצֵר לוֹ" (לב ח)

What was Yaakov afraid of? Hadn't he been promised (*ibid* 28:15): "And I am with you and I will guard you wherever you go"?

The **Chiddushei Hari"**m replies:

From here we learn the greatness of Yaakov. Despite completely trusting the promise he had been given, because according it appeared to be an 'eis tzarah', a time of distress, Yaakov acted the way one should during such a time and *davened* to Hashem.

His grandson, the **Sfas Emes**, further expounded: It appears that from the start, HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not promise someone something good if as a result he will refrain from *davening*. If the promise of "*Ushemarticha*, and I will guard you" would have caused Yaakov to rely on that and not *daven* for his salvation, then he would not have received such a promise in the first place.

Sfas Emes 5644

### Ask from the Treasury of Free Gifts

"קִטְנִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל הָאֱמֻנָה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֵת עַבְדְּךָ... הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אַחִי מִיַּד עִשָׂו" (לב יא-יב)

"Katonti – he was saying that he was too small to be worthy of all the *chassadim* that He did with him." (*Ramban*)

The **Gra** explained that in his great humility, Yaakov claimed to Hashem: just like I have always been "too small to receive all the *chassadim* and the truth that You have done with Your servant", and still You showered me with countless *chassadim*, *lifnim mishuras hadin*, so, too, now I ask: "save me" even though I have no merit for it.

The Raavad **Harav Moshe Sternbuch** adds:

We also act like our patriarch Yaakov;

### "Venafsho Ivsah Vaya'as" Amen

"וַיִּתֵּן יַעֲקֹב לְבָדוֹ וַיֹּאבֵק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ... וַיֵּרָא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ" (כה-כו)

The Gaavad, **Harav Moshe Aryeh Freund**, said on this *passuk*:

The Ari Hakadosh says (cited in *Bigdei Yesha, Orach Chaim* 167 33) that when someone wants to make a *brachah* but does not have anyone nearby to complete it with amen, if he makes the *brachah* "with great *cheshek* and tremendous love", then an angel will be created from his *brachah* who will answer amen. We can find an allusion to this from the *passuk* (*Iyov* 23:13): "*Vehu b'echad umi yeshivenu venafsho ivsah vaya'as*." In *Tefillas Shacharis* of Rosh Hashanah we add the words "*Nora veKadosh*": "*Vehu b'echad*" – one who has to make a *brachah* alone, "*Umi yeshivenu*" – and who will answer amen on his *brachah*? "*Venafsho ivsah*" – if he makes the *brachah* properly with his heart and soul, then "*vayaas*", with his *brachah*, he makes "*nora vekadosh*" – a holy angel that will complete the *brachah* by answering amen.

So too, we can explain here, "*Vayivaser Yaakov levado*" – without anyone to answer amen to his *brachah*, and therefore "*Vaye'avek ish* [the Sar of Eisav (*Rashi*)] *imo*" – because the *brachah* was not completed with amen. Nevertheless, "*lo yachal lo*" – he could not prevail, because the *brachah* was said properly, and thus an angel was created to answer amen after it. [One can also cite an allusion – that "*lo yachal*" is numerically equivalent to amen.]

Ateres Yehoshua

The Mekubal **Harav Tzvi Hirsch Kaidenover** writes in his *sefer Kav Hayashar* (Ch. 96) that the angels answer amen after the *brachos*. He says: "And it is simple that with each and every mitzvah that a person does, holy angels are born from it, and therefore they are called the "*machaneh*" [the camp] of this mitzvah. And with each mitzvah that he makes a *brachah* over, these angels convene together, and stand around the one making a *brachah*, and listen to the *brachah* and answer amen. An allusion to this is that "*malach*", angel, is numerically equivalent to "amen."

we do not rely on our merits, rather we always ask Hashem to treat us *lifnim mishuras hadin* and to shower us with gifts from His treasury. As we say in *Avinu Malkeinu*: "*Chaneinu v'aneinu ki ein banu ma'asim aseh imanu tzedakah vachessed vehoshienu*."

Taam V'Daas

### Ashirah L'Hashem Bechayai Azamrah L'Elokai B'Odi

"וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשִּׁירָה" (לב כז)

The *Gemara* (*Chulin* 91b) explains the reason why the angel urged Yaakov to hasten to send him off: "The angel said to him: I am an angel, and since the day I was created, it has not yet been my time to say *shirah* until now."

The **Chofetz Chaim** learns a beautiful lesson from this:

Apparently, just like the angels On High are limited during their time of *shirah*, so, too, the souls of Am Yisrael that are kept On High cannot sing at all times. In contrast, in this world, we have countless opportunities to praise our Creator. Because while the *shirah* here is classified as "*avodah*", service of Hashem, in the Upper World, it is classified as "receiving a reward." Let us not allow ourselves to lose out on even one such opportunity, because in the Upper World, who knows when we will merit to do so.

Dugma Misichos Avi, 37

Furthermore, the words of the Chofetz Chaim help explain the *Chazal* (*Tanchuma* 96 7): "Anyone who answers amen in this world, *zocheh*, merits to answer amen in the next world" – because in contrast to the rest of the souls who are not permitted to praise their Creator at all times, one who is scrupulous about answering amen in this world will merit to praise his Creator with amen in the next world as well.



### "Save Me From the Hand of My Brother, from the Hand of Eisav"

The *Megaleh Amukos* in this *parashah* writes that in the merit of the mitzvah of amen, Yaakov's *tefillah* was accepted and he was saved from Eisav. Regarding the *segulah* of answering amen to open the gates of *tefillah*, the *Zohar HaKadosh* writes (*Vayeilech* 285, 2 according to the commentary of the *Sulam*, there):

"When Yisrael down below take care to answer amen and to concentrate the way they are supposed to, how many gates of *brachos* are opened Above, how much good is found in all the worlds, how much happiness there is in everything. And what is the reward for Am Yisrael who cause all this? Their reward is in this world and in the World to come. In this world, at a time when they are being harassed and they offer a prayer before their Creator, the Voice declares in all the worlds: (*Yeshayah* 26:2): 'Open the gates and a *goy tzaddik shomer emunim* will enter.' Don't read it "*emunim*" but rather "*amenim*", meaning that they take care to answer amen. Just like Yisrael opened the gates of blessing, so too, now open the gates, and their *tefillas* against those who harass them should be accepted."



**Birchas Hamazon – Hatov Vehameitiv (7)**

**The Difference Between  
“Hatavah” and “Gemul”**

As explained in the last segment, Chazal established in this *brachah* that we double our language of gratitude with both “*gemul*” and “*hatavah*”: “*Hu gemalanu... Hu heitiv...*” We double our praise because there is a difference between “*gemul*” and “*hatavah*”. *Gemul* is the action that a person does in exchange for a mutual act that another person did to him earlier. The more the recipient gives something good to the one who gave earlier, the more he will be able to act with goodness to him. The converse is also true. By contrast, “*hatavah*” is given to the recipient irrespective of his actions, and only due to the kindness of the giver who wants to be benevolent to him. (*Birchos Avi, Vayishlach 2; Lehodos Ulevakesh* based on the *Malbim* in *Yeshayah 59:18*, see there).

On this subject, with the words “*Hu heitiv*” we thank for the good that was given to us because of Hashem’s benevolence. These are things that we need for our existence in this world. But when we say “*Hu gemalanu*” we thank for the multitude of good that we have merited from Hashem in reward for our good deeds. (*Rokeach*, according to the *passuk* in *Yeshayah 63:7*)

**Ein Od Milvado**

Harav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch (*Devarim 8:10*) explains the reason that we repeat the word “*Hu*” a number of times during the *brachah*: “*Hu heitiv, Hu meitiv, Hu yeitiv... Hu gemalanu, Hu gomleinu, Hu yigmeleinu.*” It is because the *brachah* was composed in memory of the martyrs of Beitar, and we know that uprising for which Beitar was destroyed took place because of the pride of its heroes, who relied on their own strength and power and sought to rise up against Rome against Hashem’s wishes (see *Yerushalmi Taanis 4 5; Rambam Taaniyos 5 3*). During the destruction of Beitar, Am Yisrael were at a very low level and their pride was suppressed when

the dead of Beitar were left in the fields. Until HaKadosh Baruch Hu, in His compassion listened to the *tefillas* of the sages and permitted them to be buried. This all took place amid a tremendous miracle – that their bodies did not rot and smell despite the time that had passed since their deaths. Therefore, the sages who established this *brachah* in memory of those martyrs made sure to emphasize no less than six times: “*Hu*” with rehard to Hashem, to inform and teach everyone what happened to the people of Beitar, and that they should not rely on their own strength and power, and internalize that only Hashem gives strength for people to accomplish anything.

**15 Requests Correspond to  
15 Seudos**

In the *nusach* of the *brachah* we mention fifteen different words of request: “*Lechen, lechessed, ulerachamim, ulerevach, hatzalah, hatzlachah, brachah, v’yeshuah, nechamah, parnassah, vechalkalah, verachamim, vechaim, veshalom, vechol tuv.*”

Rav Nosson the son of Rav Shimshon Shapiro of Horodna (one of the *gaonim* of Poland 500 years ago, and the grandfather of the Megaleh Amukos), offers in his commentary on *Birchas Hamazon* seven reasons why it was established specifically to say 15 terms of request in *Birchas Hamazon*. We cannot bring them all at length, but this is the first reason:

It was established to correspond to 15 *seudos* that the person eats each week – two meals on each of the seven days, and a third meal on Shabbos – after which we recite *Birchas Hamazon*. It emerges, if so, that we recite *Birchas Hamazon* 15 times each week. Rav Nosson Shapiro cites as an allusion the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (115:18): “*Va’anachnu nevaresh K-H,*” which is spelled *yud* and *hei*, equivalent to 15 times in the week that we bless Hashem for our food, “*mei’atah v’ad olam...*”

**She’asah Li Kol Tzorki – Even in My Illness**

It was during one of the many visits that the *posek hador*, Harav Shmuel Halevi Wosner, *zt”l*, paid to the Maayani Hayeshuah Hospital. The Shevet Halevi presided over the halachic decisions made at the hospital, and he came to visit to be able to discuss some of the relevant questions regarding the regular hospital operations at the time – shortly after it opened.

The Rav toured the different departments, joined by hospital founder Rabbi Dr. Moshe Rothschild, *zt”l*; *ybl”c* the Rav of the hospital at the time, Harav Yisrael Zicherman, *shlita*, and a number of doctors.

Towards the end of the tour, Rav Zicherman presented Rav Wosner with a halachic question that was asked by a dignified Yid laying seriously ill in one of the wards.

“This is an elderly man who has been suffering for a long time with pain in his whole body. He is bedridden, and cannot really move any of his limbs. He is completely dependent on the benevolence of the doctors. His days and nights are one long torturous stretch, because he cannot do a single thing for himself. His painful question is: Can he make the *brachah* of “*She’asah li kol tzorki*” in the morning if he is limited and cannot attend to his needs at all?”

When Rav Zicherman finished asking the question, Rav Wosner heaved a compassionate sigh. He understood the depths of suffering from which the question was being asked, and said: “I have to hear such a question from the patient himself. Let us go to his room and hear it from him.”

So, despite his age and lofty stature, the Rav went to the patient’s room in the internal medicine ward. When he entered, he was clearly able to discern the patient’s serious condition. He lay motionless in bed, a grimace of pain distorting his face. His body was hooked up to a number of machines.

A wan smile lit up the patient’s face when he saw the distinguished visitor. He tried to sit up a bit, but Rav Wosner stopped him.

“How are you? How do you feel?” he asked sympathetically. In response, the patient sighed deeply. He could not even respond.

“Do you want to hear a story?” Rav Wosner asked. The patient nodded slightly with his head and the Rav began:

“When I was a *bochur*, I learned in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, under my *rebbe*, the famed Harav Meir Shapiro, *zt”l*. One day, my *rebbe* called me and asked me to join him on a *bikur cholim* visit to a Yid he knew, who was so ill he could not get out of bed. I happily agreed, and the Rav put on his hat and hastened with me to the patient’s house. When we arrived, we saw how bad of a state he was in. He lay in bed,

unmoving, and his face was pale as plaster. But I was very surprised when, as soon as the patient noticed us entering, he smiled broadly, literally ‘from ear to ear.’

“His smile was a diametric contradiction to his serious condition, and my *rebbe* expressed his surprise to the patient – asking why he was so happy.

“The tortured patient’s response surprised us both:

‘Each day, good people come to visit me. When they come I want to honor them like I used to do in the good days, with food and drink. Especially when dignified people like you come, I should be getting up to honor you. But to my great distress, in my condition I cannot do it.

‘The only way I have to honor those who come to me is by showing them how happy I am with their visit. I cannot do it any other way other than putting a smile on my face. Is it not then fitting that I should put the biggest smile I can on my face for you?!’

Rav Wosner finished the story and warmly shook the patient’s hand, as he said:

“When I entered your room and saw the small smile on your lips, I remembered this story. I heard from the hospital Rav that you are asking how you can make the *brachah* of “*She’asah li kol tzorki*” when you cannot take care of even a single one of your needs, and I wonder about your question:

You have a great mission to do right now. Even in your difficult state, you can smile brightly and make those visiting you happy. Don’t refrain from doing so! From today on, try to smile at anyone who enters your room, smile at others and smile to yourself. That is your “*kol tozrki*” and you can surely make a *brachah* for that...”

Before he turned to leave, Rav Wosner gripped the patient’s hand and said warmly:

“Know that the more you encourage others, the more you will find yourself encouraged. I give you a *brachah* with Hashem’s help you should merit to happily recite the *brachah* of *Matir Assurim* when Hashem sends you a *refuah sheleimah* and you can get out of bed and return to your strength.”

Rav Zicherman relates that he clearly saw how from that day on, the patient’s condition improved. He did not feel superfluous in the world anymore. He was careful to follow the Rav’s directions and to greet everyone who came to visit him with a smile. And the Rav’s *brachah* came true, when some days later, he indeed, got off the bed, and slowly regained his strength.

Beer Hachaim, Lag BaOmer p. 167