

Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



312

PARASHAS VAYECHI

תש"פ

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Thanking Hashem for the King's Benevolence

"וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל רֹאשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ" (מז לא)

"Yisrael prostrated himself" – when it is the time of the fox [to be king], bow to him, "at the head of the bed" – He turned toward the Shechinah." (*Rashi*)

From the beginning of *Rashi's* words, it appears that Yaakov was bowing towards Yosef, but from the later words, it appears that he intended to bow towards the Shechinah. So before whom did Yaakov prostrate himself?

Harav Shlom Kluger explained:

One who receives a favor from a regular person must express gratitude for it, because the person had a choice whether to be benevolent or not. But when one receives a favor from the king, he does not have to express gratitude, because this benevolence is given to him from the Hand of Hashem, as it says (*Mishlei* 21:1): "A king's heart is...in the Hand of Hashem; wherever He wishes, He turns it."

Thus we can explain *Rashi's* words: When Yosef received the request to be buried in Canaan, Yaakov sought to thank Hashem for it, and therefore, he turned his face towards the Shechinah and expressed his gratitude. Why did he not thank Yosef? Because he considered Yosef to be a king, as it says "when it is the time of the fox [to be king], bow to him," and if he is the king – then Hashem will sway his heart to be benevolent.

Imrei Shefer

Birchas Habanim – How?

"וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת יָמִינוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ אֲפֵרַיִם וְהוּא הַצֶּעִיר וְאֵת שְׂמֹאלוֹ עַל רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה" (מז יד)

Harav Yaakov Emden cites the famous custom to bless one's children on Friday night, and adds that when giving the *brachah*, the father should put both his hands on the head of the child being blessed, like the Kohanim raise both

Amen – A Declaration of Emunah Through the Generations

"הֲאִסְפוּ וְאָנִידָה לָכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֲתֹכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים" (מט א)

"Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons the end of days, and the Shechinah withdrew from him. He said, 'Perhaps there is a flaw in my descendants, like Avraham, who had Yishmael, and my father, Yitzchak, from whom Eisav emerged?' His sons said to him: 'Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad'...At the same time, Yaakov said, 'Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso l'Olam Va'ed.'" (*Pesachim* 56a)

Rabbeinu Yehudah B'Rabi Yakar expounded beautifully to this *Gemara*:

When the children of Yaakov realized that their father would not reveal the end to them before they recited "Shema Yisrael", they added "K-I Melech Ne'eman!" meaning that even though we do not know the end, we are sure with all our hearts that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is faithful to His promise and will redeem us whenever He deems it the right time.

So we find that the recital of "K-I Melech Ne'eman" before *Krias Shema* (see *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 61 3) was established at the parting of Yaakov from his sons, and that is also the source of saying "Baruch Shem..." after *Krias Shema*. (But see *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 61) which brings in the name of the Ramah, who wrote on the custom of saying 'K-I Melech Ne'eman' before *Krias Shema*: "Yaakov didn't say it, his sons didn't say it and Moshe didn't say it...")

The powerful declaration of *emunah* by Yaakov's sons is the secret of the word "amen", because it says in the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 119b): "What is amen? Rabi Chanina said: 'K-I Melech Ne'eman.'" The three letters of the word "amen" correspond to the three words: 'K-I Melech Ne'eman.' And as *Rashi* explains (*ibid*), one who answers amen "testifies that his Creator is a K-I Melech Ne'eman." And the *Tosafos* adds (*ibid* beginning with *Amar Reb*) that one needs to have these words in mind when saying amen.

Thus **Harav Avraham Dov of Avritch** explained the words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 53b): "One who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*": In the words of the *brachah* "Elokeinu Melech Ha'Olam", the one making the *brachah* accepts upon himself *Ol Malchus Shamayim*, and declares that Hahsem is the "K-I" and the "Melech." The one who answers amen adds a declaration that Hashem is also "ne'eman" and therefore, he is greater than the one making the *brachah*.

Peirush Hatefillos Vehabrachos p. 9; *Maharsha Vol. I Shabbos* 119b; *Sanhedrin* 110b; *Bas Ayin Parashas Vayakheil*; *Avnei Shlomo* Vol. II p. 19

their hands when they recite *Birchas Kohanim*. And one should not wonder at the fact that Yaakov placed only one hand on his grandsons' heads, because he did not have much of a choice: He wanted to bless them both as one, so that the preference for Ephraim over Menashe, the oldest, would not be prominent, which would have happened if he had actually blessed Ephraim first and then Menashe.

By contrast, it is brought down that the **Gra** would bless with just one hand, as the *Gemara* says (*Kesubos* 24b) that a stranger who raises both hands (*nosei es kapav*) transgresses a *mitzvas asei*. Harav Baruch Epstein related that he heard from a reliable source that when the Gra blessed Harav Yechezkel Segal Landau, a *dayan* in Vilna, on the day of his *chuppah*, he put just one hand on his head, and stressed that this custom is because the only place we find where one blesses with two hands is the *Kohanim* in the Mikdash.

Bais Yaakov, Hanhagas Siddur Leil Shabbos 7; *Siddur HaGra, Seder Leil Shabbos*; *Torah Temimah Naso* 131

On the subject of the practice of a father blessing his sons, it is appropriate to cite **Rabi Eliezer Papo** with regard to the *brachah* of the parents:

"A person should make the effort and try hard to receive a *brachah* from his father and mother, because aside for the fact that their *brachah* is likely to be fulfilled because the bless him with love and a whole heart, he is also fulfilling the mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim*. As *Chazal* say (see *Zohar Toldos* 146 2) that all the benevolence and kingship that the children of Eisav have in this world are because Eisav deemed his father's *brachah* important. Indeed, we find that after Yaakov took the *brachah*, immediately (*Bereishis* 27:34): "And he wailed a most loud and bitter cry, and he said to his father. 'Bless me too, my father.'"

Pele Yoetz, Brachos

Hamalach
Hagoel Osi
Mikol Ra

"Malach" is numerically equivalent to "amen." Being strict about answering amen guarantees protection from all bad, as it says (*Tehillim* 34:5): "Choneh malach Hashem saviv l'yereiv vayechealtzem."

(*Aleph Binah* [Rav Y. Abuchatzzeira] *Tehillim* 34:5)

Birchos Hashachar



Aloud



With kavanah



Bechavrusa



Passed away on 20 Teves 5749



Give Merits to the Public by Answering Amen

Through the Mevarech and the Oneh, the Eibishter Will Be Praised

In an effort to define the essence of the job of the "gabbai amen" we can summarize with a short description: "Mezakeh harabbim." Chazal have said about one who brings merit to the public, (Bava Basra 9a): "One who activates is greater than the one doing the act." Regarding answerign amen it says (Brachos 53b): "One who answers amen is greater than the one making the brachah." If so, we can imagine the greatness of the 'activator' who answers amen...

As the Pele Yoetz writes with regard to zikui harabbim in the mitzvah of answering amen:

"And because it says 'Do not withhold good from the one who needs it when you have power in your hand to do it', one should be careful to recite brachos out loud, if there are people who he knows want to answer, and he should not withhold this good from them. And he will have a valuable benefit from, because 'gadol hamezakeh,' and when one urges his friend to do a mitzvah, the passuk considers it as though he did it...Hence, from the mevarech and the oneh, the Eibishter will be praised and they will be bestowed with blessings of goodness..."

Giving Merit to a Friend Is Like Giving Him Life

We can expound extensively on the virtues of the mezakeh harabbim, but there does not seem to be anything greater than the promise of Chazal (Avos 5:18): "Anyone who is mezakeh harabbanim will not have sin come through him."

The holy Zohar (Shemos 129 1) says that if a person would know what a great merit and benefit it is to give a friend merits for a mitzvah, he would chase after every opportunity to do so, like one who pursues life.

The Pele Yoetz (Hatzalah) writes: "And if the mitzvah of saving a soul is so great, how much more so...is one who gives his friend the merit to do a mitzvah. Because they said that one who makes him do a sin is worse than killing him, likewise, one who gives him a merit is more than giving him life."

Dedicating Time to Benefit Others

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh writes (Devarim 22:1):

"And a person should not say, I follow the path of Torah and mitzvos and I save my soul. Rather, every person is obligated to give merits to the public on all matters of Torah and to return the children to the bosom of their Father in Heaven. We learn this from hashavas aveidah, restoring a lost item to its owner. If a person has an obligation to return a Jew's money, then how much more so is he obligated to return a person's body to his Father in Heaven."

In the introduction to his well-known sefer, Shaarei Yosher, Harav Shimon Yehudah Hakohen Shkop expounded on the obligation that each Jew has to be diligent for his friend's benefit. He writes: It is incumbent on a person to dedicate his time to benefit others,

and that is the fundamental root of the purpose of our lives – that all our service and toil should always be dedicated for the benefit of the klal.

By doing this we will follow the Conduct of HaKadosh Baruch Hu: Hashem's every act in creation, and every single minute that He keeps the world in existence, is solely for the benefit of the creations. And the Will of Hashem is that our acts should always be dedicated to the good of the klal.

All the Credit Goes to the One Giving the Merit

As noted in the introduction, there is an exceptional virtue in being mezakeh the rabbim in a mitzvah where, if not for him, it would not be performed. Moreover, the gabbai ei amen do not only give the merit to those making the brachos by completing their brachos. In fact, many note that it is only because of the gabbai ei amen that they strengthened themselves in general with the mitzvah of answering amen. And all the merits that they receive as a result are attributed to the one who began with the mitzvah.

The sefer Chovos Halevavos is very emphatic on this subject (Shaar Ahavas Hashem Chapter 6):

Even a person merited to do a tikkun for his soul to the point that he reaches the level that is close to that of the prophets, his merits do not reach those of a person who is mezakeh and who strengthens others in avodas Hashem. That is because one who rectifies only himself has fewer merits, because he has only those good deeds that he himself did. But when someone rectifies other people, he has countless merits, because he also receives credit for all the actions of those who were strengthened because of him.

It Was All Worth It to Strengthen One Yid in Emunah

Harav Shalom Schwadron related something he heard from an eyewitness: Towards the end of the Chofetz Chaim's life he hardly left his house. Yet, when he was once asked by Harav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, zt"l, to come from his home in Radin to Vilna to speak on the subject of taharas hamishpachah, the Chofetz Chaim acceded to the request.

With great effort, he traveled to Vilna, and exerted himself to speak on Friday night and Shabbos morning. In addition, he also received people after Shabbos. Thousands jostled to be able to receive his brachah; among them was a person whose emunah was weak. The Chofetz Chaim sensed this and dedicated a few minutes to speaking to this person and strengthening his emunah, to the point that he felt that his words had made an impression. When the person left the room, people heard the Chofetz Chaim whispering to himself, "Yisrael Meir, it was worth traveling from Radin to Vilna to strengthen one Yid's emunah..." This is remarkable: of the thousands of people that the Chofetz Chaim had given chizuk to in Vilna, he was most moved by this one Yid whose emunah he had managed to strengthen. (Lehaggid, Vol. III, p. 209)

What Is a Kohein Doing in Hong Kong?!

This story was related by Harav Asher Anshel Katz, shlita, Gaavad Chareidim, who has been involved for many years in efforts to improve kashrus.

Hong Kong welcomed the team of kashrus mashgichim, headed by Rav Katz, with its notorious traffic jams. Long rows of cars snaked down the roads, their headlights twinkling in the darkness, and the car horns blared amidst the skyscrapers that abound in the city.

The city was familiar to the mashgichim, who had arrived to kasher a production line in a factory that produces extracts and ingredients necessary for Pesach food products. They were well aware that residents and visitors to the city needed to fortify themselves with lots of patience to meander through the ubiquitous traffic that the city is known for. But this time, they did not have patience and they looked impatiently at the clock, which was ticking ahead far too quickly.

The production of the necessary extracts required a process that lasted several days, and which could not be halted in the middle. Because the factory also produces chometz items, the supervision on the kosher line required them to be on the highest alert twenty-four hours a day to ensure that not a speck of chometz or non-kosher food mistakenly got mixed into the kosher production line.

If everything went well, the process would be completed on Friday morning, which would give the mashgichim enough time to travel to an area with some Jewish infrastructure, where they intended to spend Shabbos at prearranged accommodations. If not – they would have to spend Shabbos in the massive factory, amongst slant-eyed non-Jews, eating canned fish and matzos. It was certainly not an ideal scenario for them.

As far as Shabbos observance, it was not a problem, because they'd "just" have to make Kiddush and daven Nishmas amongst the production vats and huge steam systems...And to continue to be present in the production floors on Shabbos as well to ensure that no chometz got into the kosher run.

Now they were stuck in the seemingly endless traffic jam, wondering about the production run whose onset was being delayed, and the ramifications this could have regarding where they would spend the upcoming Shabbos. The tension was evident on their faces, but there was nothing they could do except raise their eyes Heavenward in prayer that the jam should ease up quickly so they could end the production run before Shabbos.

Baruch Hashem, after a few hours, the traffic eased and the car darted forward toward the factory. When it arrived, they immediately began the process of preparing for production. The machines were cleaned, the workers were given instructions and soon enough, the machines went into motion. Throughout the days of the production, a cloud of worry hovered over the mashgichim regarding the upcoming Shabbos. A few hours before Shabbos, production ended. But only once the vats with the valuable products inside were sealed with the plumba, the special kashrus seal, did the tension finally

dissipate, replaced with a deep sense of relief. Finally, they could smile with satisfaction.

At this late hour, Rav Katz had no choice but to call the Rav of the community closest to the factory and ask if he could possibly host them for Shabbos.

The Rav answered the phone courteously, and when he heard who his guests would be, his excitement knew no bounds. "I don't believe it! I can't believe it!" he cried emotionally. "Of course, you can come!" he said with unconcealed happiness. Rav Katz as the Rabbi curiously as to why his reaction was so effusive, asked the rabbi.

"There's no time to talk now. Shabbos is coming soon. I'm waiting for you, come quickly and we'll talk!" the Rabbi said. The team of mashgichim set out.

When they arrived, Rav Katz and the mashgichim where warmly welcomed, and the local rabbi shared this remarkable story that they were part of without even knowing:

"About a month ago, a son was born to one of the community members. The family has recently become much stronger in its observance, and the father wanted to hold a pidyon haben as per halachah. In our small community, made up of Jews who have just returned to their heritage, there is no Kohein. I, as the Rabbi, was trying to break my head to figure out how to get a Kohein here.

This Motzaei Shabbos, the baby will be thirty days old, and for the last week, I have made every possible effort. I made dozens of phone calls, and tried to get a Kohein from among the visitors here, or nearby – and even from quite far away, but to no avail. None of the Kohanim who I spoke to agreed to spend Shabbos here.

I was helpless and didn't know what to do. This family was making its first steps in the world of Yiddishkeit and seeking to perform the mitzvah of pidyon haben, the date was rapidly approaching, but there was no Kohein to be found.

With all my efforts exhausted, all that remained for me to do was daven. I raised my arms to Hashem and asked, in the simplest of words: "Ribono shel Olam, I have to get a Kohein. I have done everything in my power, to no avail. I ask You, Ribono shel Olam, send me a Kohein. I don't know how, but You can do anything..."

And the unbelievable happened. I just about finished my prayer and I get a phone call from you. I pick up the phone and on the line is...a Kohein! I have no doubt that Hashem sent you to me, after hearing my tefillah.

On Motzaei Shabbos, when you serve as a Kohein at the pidyon haben, know that you are not only a Kohein, but also an angel sent from Above," the Rabbi concluded his emotional story.

On Motzaei Shabbos a pidyon haben was held and all those present were amazed to hear of the miracle. Aside for serving as the Kohein, Rav Katz's presence was a living proof of the power of tefillah, and how it can plant – against all odds – a perfect Kohein at the right time in a remote Jewish community.

Peninei Parashas Hashavua, Noach 5780