

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim



## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Baal Tzefon Prevented Bnei Yisrael from Davening

"דבר אל בני ישראל וישבו ויחנו... לפני בעל צפן... ואמר פרעה לבני ישראל נבכים הם בארץ סגר עליהם המדבר; וחזקתי את לב פרעה ורדף אחריהם" (יד ב-ד)

Harav Shimon Sofer, the Rav of Erloy, explained:

Because the "Baal Tzefon" was the *avodah zarah* of Egypt (*Rashi*), when Bnei Yisrael stood before it they could not daven, because one does not daven in a place of *avodah zarah* (see *Shemos Rabbah* 12 5). When Pharaoh saw that Am Yisrael were camped "before Baal Tzefon" he inferred that "*sagar aleihem hamidbar*" [*midbar* from the root of *dibbur*, as *Rashi* explains on the *passuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 4:3): "*Umidbarech na'avah*" – as *diburecha*, your speech"], meaning: they did not have the ability to daven for their salvation. This strengthened Pharaoh's resolve to pursue them because he knew how dependent they were on the power of *tefillah*.

Shir Maon

### "Sagar Aleihem" Hapeh "Hamedaber"

"נבכים הם בארץ סגר עליהם המדבר" (יד ג)  
Harav Avraham Dovid Warman, the Rav of Butchatch explained:

A person who is mired in the concerns of this world and who is consumed by greed cannot learn and daven properly, because his brain is not available for it. This concept is alluded to in this *passuk*: "*Nevuchim heim ba'aretz*" – those whose minds are busy with the *nevachim*, the intricacies of earthly matters, then "*sagar aleihem hamidbar*" – it

### Beautify Yourself before Him With Brachos

"זה א-לי ואנוהו אלקי אבי וארמנהו" (טו ב)

"*V'anveihu*" – beautify yourself before Him with *mitzvos*; make for him a beautiful *sukkah*, and *lulav* and *shofar*, *tzitzis* and *Sefer Torah*." (*Shabbos* 133b)

*Chazal* said (*Zohar, Raya Meheimna Eikev* 271 1 in the commentary of the *Sulam*): "Each *brachah* that is answered with amen is a *brachah* that is complete the way it should be. Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov was known to say: "A *brachah* without amen is like half a body."

This fact that answering amen completes the *brachah* is also cited as a *halachah* in *Mishnah Berurah* (167 20): "Because answering amen is part of the *brachah*...through answering amen the *brachah* becomes more important." We find that aside for amen being a *mitzvah* in its own right, it also completes the *brachah* and raises its importance, and so we find that one who is careful about his *brachos* being answered by amen fulfills the *mitzvah* of "*Zeh Keli v'anveihu*" that he beautifies himself before Hashem with completed *brachos*.

The *Shach* (*Choshen Mishpat* 382 4) says here that *Chazal's* words (*Chulin* 86b) that the value of each *brachah* is ten gold coins only applies to a *brachah* that is answered by amen.

The Rebbe Harav Yisrael of Modzhitz explains with this the words we recite in *Birchas Hamazon*: "*Kein yevarech osanu... bivrachah sheleimah venomar amen*." Who are we asking to join us in answering amen? We are saying that in order for the *brachah* to be complete we need to be careful on the "*venomar amen*" – that someone should answer amen after it.

Harav Avraham Dovid Bloch of Vilna explained the *passuk*: (*Yeshayah* 26:2): "*Pischu shearim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*" on which *Chazal* said (*Shabbos* 119b): "Don't call it "*shomer emunim*" but rather "*she'omrim amen*". *Shomer* is a term that denotes "*hamtanah*", waiting, (*Rashi* *ibid*), and who is a *goy tzaddik*? One who waits to make a *brachah* until he has someone to complete them with amen.

Rav Moshe Yakar Ashkenazi compares the *brachah* that is not answered with amen to a bland dish without salt. Just like salt is a dominant ingredient in the dish even though its quantity is so small, so, too, amen upgrades the importance of the *brachah*, even though it is just one short word.

*Pesach Einayim* [Rav M.Y. Ashkenazi] p. 7; *Pri Kodesh Hilulim Shaar Habrachos* Ch. 4; *Divrei Yisrael, Noach; Tzitzis Hakanaf* [Rav A.D. Bloch] p. 20

should be read as *hamedaber* [lit. the 'speaker' or the mouth with which we learn and daven], because their mind is not clear to focus on Torah and *tefillah*.

We can learn this concept from the words of *Tehillim* (115:3-4): because their "*atzabehem kesef vezahav...*" – they are anxious about their money and their gold, "*peh lahem velo yedaberu*" – they have a mouth and they do not speak – why? Because their mind is not clear to concentrate on Torah and *tefillah*.

Machazeh Avraham

### Tefillah is Accepted in the Merit of the Shirah

"אז ישיר מזה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה' ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה סוס ורכבו רמה בים" (טו א)

There is a widespread custom in Am Yisrael, especially on Yamim Tovim, to sing certain passages of the davening. The reason for this is explained by the *Ben Ish Chai*:

When Am Yisrael comes to ask for their needs, the prosecuting forces come forward to claim that because of their sins they are not worthy of having their *tefillos* answered. Therefore, Am Yisrael adopted a custom of beginning with song, and this way the prosecuting forces mistakenly think that their intention is to sing and praise, and therefore, they refrain from prosecuting. *Chazal* allude to this in the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 6a): "*Bimkom rinah sham tehei tefillah*, the place of joy, there should be the *tefillah*" because the '*rinah*' prevents the prosecutors from blocking the *tefillah*.

Benayahu Brachos 6a

## "Zeh Keili V'Anveihu" Beautify Yourself Before Him with Brachos



### Dear Yidden!

It is known that the Poskim say (*Rema Orach Chaim* 167 2; *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid* 20) that answering amen is part of the *brachah*, and upgrades it so that it is complete. The holy *Zohar* explains (*Eikev* 271 1) that a *brachah* that is answered by amen is a *brachah* that has been completed properly.

We are careful to beautify each and every *mitzvah* as much as possible, and we also spend a lot of money toward this end. Here, we have a *hiddur*, a beautification of a *mitzvah* that stems from *halachah* and does not demand that we make any investment – either time or money. Why should we not fulfill it?

**Birchas Hamazon – HaRachaman (1)**

**The Source of the HaRachaman Requests**

After concluding the four *brachos* of *Birchas Hamazon*, an early practice was instituted to add a series of requests that begin with “HaRachaman”.

The source of these requests is very ancient, as the *Yesod Veshores* *Ha’avodah* (Shaar *Habechoros* 9) writes, that although the *HaRachaman* requests are not mentioned in the *Gemara*, they were certainly established by early sages, and therefore, it is fitting to say them with tremendous *kavanah*. The *Tur* (189) cites as proof [that it is a time to make requests] the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 46a): “A guest makes the blessing of *Yehi Ratzon Shelo yeivosh baal habayis*.”

**Davening While Doing a Mitzvah**

While doing a mitzvah the *tefillah* is accepted more willingly, writes *Rabbeinu Bechaye* (*Shemos* 19 3). The *Acharonim* added that it is especially worthy for a person to daven while doing a mitzvah for the unique reward for that mitzvah (see *Machatzis Hashekel Orach Chaim* 263 11).

*Birchos Hamazon* is a mitzvah *d’Oraisa*, as the *passuk* says (*Devarim* 8:10): “*V’achalta vesavata ubeirachta es Hashem Elokecha asher nasan lach*.” Therefore, now that we have concluded the *brachah* of *Hatov Vehameitiv*, with which *Birchas Hamazon* comes to an end, it is worthy to add requests for mercy, and we are guaranteed that our requests will be fulfilled in a good way. (*VeZos L’Yehudah* [by Harav Yehudah Ayash] *Biur Birchas Hamazon*)

In the requests of *HaRachaman* we ask for those things that we daven for in *Birchas Hamazon* – that Hashem should fulfill all our needs, that He should redeem us quickly and build the *Bais HaMikdash*. The *Sefer Hachinuch* writes (Mitzvah 430) that one who is careful about the mitzvah of *Birchas Hamazon* merits to have his sustenance in abundance all his life. Hence, it is worthy to ask especially about sustenance, which is the reward guaranteed for doing this mitzvah.

**He Can Ask for Anything He Wants...**

In the various *nuschaos* of *tefillah* we find various changes in the order of the *HaRachaman* requests. In the *Ashkenaz Siddur*, there are fewer than those of the *Eidut Hamizrach*, where there are lots of requests. The commentary *VeZos L’Yehudah* on *Birchas Hamazon*, by Rabi Yehudah Ayash, says that the custom of the communities of Sepharad is to say eighteen *HaRachaman* requests, corresponding to the *tefillah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. And he expounds in detail about how the *HaRachaman* requests correspond to the order of the *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

On the same subject, the *Kaf Hachaim* writes (191 5) that because the requests of *HaRachaman* were established as part of *Birchas Hamazon* it is worthy to say them while seated, with solemnity. One should remain seated at least until saying *Oseh Shalom Bimromav*, which is the equivalent of moving one’s feet out of position in *Shemoneh Esrei*.

In the *siddurim* of Rav Saadya Gaon and Rav Amram Gaon and in the *Machzor Vitri* (83), more *HaRachaman* requests

are cited, although we do not say them in our day. The *Avudraham* (*Birchas Halechem*) added that each person can add requests in *HaRachaman* for whatever he wishes. The Ben Ish Chai rules in *Shu”t Torah LiShmah* (51) that a person can ask in *HaRachaman* for everything that he lacks. As an example, he writes that someone who has monetary debts can ask: “*HaRachaman Hu yiten li ezer veyecholes leshalem kol chov she’ani chayav libnei adam, velo yischallel Shemo bi*, May the Merciful One give me aid and the ability to pay any debt that I owe to people, and may His Name not be defiled by me.”

**Answering Amen after HaRachaman**

The *poskim* write that after each *HaRachaman*, the listeners should answer amen (*Magen Avraham* 189 2). The *Shelah* writes (*Shaar Ha’Osiyos Kedushas Ha’achilah* 179) that just like we answer amen after *HaRachaman*, so too, we answer amen after every plea and request, even though there is no mention of Hashem’s Name and of *brachah*. It is thus explained in *Orchos Chaim* (Vol. I, *Hilchos Aniyas Amen* 3) in the name of *Teshuvus Hageonim*, see there. And see also in the *Kolbo* (99). Therefore, in the court of Chernobyl, there was a custom of saying *HaRachaman betzibbur*, and the *tzibbur* answered amen after each and every request. (*Otzar Yisrael* Vol. I, 225)

**Saying HaRachaman on Shabbos**

With regard to saying *HaRachaman* on Shabbos, the *Ohr Zarua* writes (Vol. II 89) that one should not worry about this with regard to asking for his needs on Shabbos, because it is the regular *nusach* of *tefillah*. Some explained that *HaRachaman* is not said as a way of request, but rather as an expression of trust in Hashem that He will surely fulfill our requests, as indicated by the words “*HaRachaman Hu Yimloch...*” and *suchlike*. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Ohr Yesharim* in the name of Reb Meir Meserhi)

**Love of Hashem Is Like a Mother’s Love for Her Son**

A *talmid* of Harav Eliezer Gordon, *zi”l*, Rosh *Yeshivas Lomza*, related:

I once came to his home when he was *bentching*. I observed him *bentching* with his characteristic enthusiasm, but a minute before he finished *HaRachaman*, he suddenly paused. It looked like something was bothering him, but a few seconds later he continued as usual.

I was puzzled, and after the Rosh *Yeshiva* finished *bentsching*, I asked him and he explained: When I began reciting the requests of *HaRachaman*, I wondered: How is it possible that after we thank Hashem for giving us our sustenance, we still can dare add so many more requests?

But then I was calmed when I realized that Hashem treats us like a mother treats her young son. When a mother wants her child to eat when he refuses to do so, she tempts him with a candy, even though it appears strange – not only does she give him food for free, she is also giving him a treat to convince him to eat it... Similarly, HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants our good always and gives us from His good. When we enjoy the food that He gives us and bless Him for it, He gives us as many gifts as we want. (*Binos Desheh, Bereishis* p. 52)

**“Mipi Ollelim...Lehashbis Oyev, The Words of the Children Thwart the Enemy”**

This story took place a number of years ago in one of the prominent *chadarim* in the northern region of Israel. This *cheder* had an interesting custom: each Erev Shabbos, a short time before dismissal, the first grade students would gather to recite a few chapters of *Tehillim*. Then they each received a treat for Shabbos.

The reason for the establishment of this *chevras Tehillim* is a remarkable story heard firsthand from the person it happened to:

Ephraim, a G-d fearing Jew, lives in a northern town in Israel. He is a beekeeper by profession; he raises bees and tends to the hives to produce honey. This profession needs a lot of knowledge and very accurate understanding – traits that Ephraim acquired over the years in the business, first as an apprentice beekeeper and later as the owner of his own business. His reputation for high quality products spread, and *baruch Hashem*, he was very successful. He had many hives, and they generated a lot of quality of healthy, quality honey.

Over the course of a few years his businesses thrived. Dvash Ephraim was in high demand and it was sold at a good profit. The clients were pleased. Ephraim was full of praise to Hashem for the abundance of good he had been bestowed with, and for the fact that he could earn a living in a dignified way.

But one day, the tranquility of Ephraim’s life was disrupted when he sustained a blow that many northern farmers fall victim to: Robberies. Arabs from the nearby towns, who until now had “sufficed” with filching agricultural products, fruits and vegetables from Jewish fields, suddenly decided to branch out, and began targeting Ephraim’s hives.

Once every few days, Ephraim awoke to a bad feeling. When he went out to the field, his fears were realized. The thieves raided his hives and would steal the honey laden ones – after he had toiled so hard to raise the bees and cultivate the honey.

At first, Ephraim tried to fight back; he solicited a few friends, and they tried together to keep watch at night over the hives. But these Arabs were smarter than that, and were somehow always able to past the watchmen and get what they wanted.

Ephraim and his friends tried to solicit the help of the police, but they did not seem capable of doing anything to stop the scourge, and the situation got worse.

Often, the robberies took place on Friday night. The Arabs, knowing that Ephraim and his friends were Shabbos observant, took advantage of that fact to raid the hives on Friday nights, causing the beekeepers tremendous losses.

Thus, nearly each Motzaei Shabbos, Ephraim received a phone call from the regional security officer in his area reporting about another “visit” the Arabs had made to his fields. Ephraim had no choice but to buy insurance for his products. Due to

the high risk involved, the insurance company wanted to charge a very high monthly premium for the policy. But the hives were worth even more than that, and he had no choice but to agree to the price.

But a short time after he signed on to the policy, Ephraim – a G-d fearing Jew, said to himself: HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Almighty; He makes people poor and people rich, and gives life and takes life. Isn’t it better to ‘insure’ the hives with Him...?! He shared his thoughts with a friend, another Torah observant beekeeper who was also suffering from the robberies, and the latter agreed with him immediately.

Upon deciding to take action, Ephraim remembered his erstwhile friend, the principal of a successful *cheder* in one of the cities up north. He called him and shared his problem, and then presented the following idea:

“How about we make an agreement: each Erev Shabbos the first grade children in *cheder* will say a number of chapters of *Tehillim* for me and for my friends so that we should be protected and see success and that no damage should occur to my hives. I will pay the amount that I would have paid on insurance to support the *chinuch* of children, which protects the world, and indeed, is one of the pillars on which the world stands. Surely this can protect my *parnassah*.”

The principal happily agreed and the agreement went into effect. Each month, the beekeeper would transfer a generous sum to his friend the principal, and in exchange, each Erev Shabbos a few chapters of *Tehillim* were said for the *parnassah* of Ephraim and his friends.

The agreement worked beautifully. From that Friday on, it seemed as if the Arab neighbors found a new source of income. Perhaps they went to try their luck in other places. Whatever the case, the beehives were safe, and the ‘insurance company’ met its obligations.

This agreement was successfully in effect for a long time. Ephraim and his friends got used to the quiet, and they calmed down. But suddenly, one Motzaei Shabbos, once again, the phone rang in Ephraim’s house. It was the regional security officer, laconically informing Ephraim that there had been a large number of robberies over Shabbos, and that many of his hives had been stolen; it was a hugely damaging loss for him. What did he do?! He picked up the phone to the principal of the ‘insurance company.’ The principal was horrified to hear what had happened and promised to investigate...

He came back with a remarkable finding: it turned out that on the previous Friday, unusually, the first grade *rebbe* had been unable to attend *cheder*, and there was a substitute who knew nothing about the deal. The *Tehillim* was not recited. The ‘insurance company’ didn’t work and the theft was not long in coming.

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