

VeChol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Segulah to Annul Invasive Thoughts

“אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה” (ו 1)

The Shelah Hakadosh says: “And I found a manuscript of the lofty Rabi Moshe Cordovero who wrote: ‘An elderly person taught us: to annul a thought – one should say this *passuk* many times: ‘*Eish tamid tukad al hamizbeach lo sichbeh.*’ And in my eyes it is simple that this elderly man was Eliyahu Hanavi, and in the Rav’s great humility he did not want to reveal it.”

The **Kaf Hachaim** cites this *segulah* as advice to annul foreign thoughts that assail a person during *davening*. As the **Shulchan Aruch** rules (*Orach Chaim* 98 1): ‘And the one *davening* needs to concentrate...and he should remove all the thoughts that distract him until his thoughts and his *kavanah* remain pure in his prayer.’

Rabi Yitzchak Sharim, of the sages of Aram Tzovah, said that answering amen with *kavanah* has the power to annul a person’s foreign thoughts that come to mind during *davening*. He brings a *remez* for this: ‘Amen is numerically equivalent to 91 (צ"א); answering amen with *kavanah* removes all the invasive thoughts from the mind.

Shelah Shaar Ha'osiyos 30; *Kaf Hachaim Orach Chaim* 98 8; 16; *Likutum MiPardes, Ma'areches Amen* 3

Amen Without Kavanah Is Not Even Like a Minchah

“וזאת תורת המנחה הקרב אתה...ריח ניחח ואזכרתה לה” (ו זח-ז)

There is a saying that is often cited by the Rishonim (See *Sefer Hayashar* from Rabbeinu Tam, 13; *Chovos Halevavos Shaar Cheshbon Hanefesh* 3:9): “*Tefillah* without *kavanah* is like a body without a soul.” One needs to understand this statement, as it seems to reject any *tefillah* recited without *kavanah* – and we know very well how many times we *daven* without *kavanah*.

Harav Chaim of Volozhin explained:

Although the words of *davening* are compared to the body, and *kavanah* to the

In the Mikdash They Did Not Answer Amen

“אש תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה” (ו 1)

“The rains did not extinguish the fire of the *atzei hama'arachah* [on the *mizbeach*].” (*Avos* 5:5)

In *Maseches Taanis* (16b) it says that in the Mikdash they did not answer amen to *brachos*, but rather ‘*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso...*’ Why is this?

Harav Chaim of Friedburg, a brother of the Maharal of Prague, explained:

When the Mikdash was standing, when the honor of Hashem was revealed to all through the miracles that were performed there, one who answered would join the one making the *brachah* in saying “*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso...*” because he also clearly saw the “*Kevod Malchuso*.” However, during the *galus*, when the Honor of Hashem is hidden, the one making the *brachah* crowns his Creator, and the one answering amen agrees with him and reiterates his words out of *emunah peshutah*.

Harav Chaim Chaiké of Amdor, a disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritsch, brings an allusion to this change from the word ‘amen.’:

Amen is numerically equivalent to 91, to hint to us that since the Shechinah departed from the Bais Hamikdash after the Churban, one needs to then answer ‘amen’ to *brachos*.

Sefer Hachaim, Sefer Geulah V'Yeshuah Chapter 3; *Iggeres Hatiyul, Chelek Hadrash* 2; *Chaim VeChessed* p. 21

‘*neshamah*’, the soul that gives them life, there is also value to a *tefillah* said without *kavanah*. Just like there are all types of *korbanos*, there are also several levels in *tefillah* that were established to correspond to them (*Brachos* 26b). *Tefillah* with *kavanah* rises up like a *korban* that comes from an animal, which has a *nefesh*, while *tefillah* without *kavanah* is like a *Korban Minchah*, that is made of an inanimate material that has no soul. Even though its status is lower than that of an animal, that does not preclude it from rising

up to Hashem with a pleasant aroma.

Based on this, **Harav Zelig Reuven Bengis**, the Raavad of Yerushalayim explained the request of the Navi from Bney Yisrael (*Hoshea* 14:3): “*Uneshalmah parim sefaseinu*” – *daven* with *kavanah* so that your *tefillah* should rise up like the *korban parim* and not just like the *minchas soless*.

The **Brisker Rav** further explained what Harav Chaim Volozhin says with regard to answering amen without *kavanah* (*Kesser Rosh* 25): “Regarding amen without *kavanah* he said that he did not find any *limud zechus*, a way to judge favorably.” He means: Even though Rav Chaim found a *limud zechus* for *tefillah* without *kavanah*, which is accepted like a *minchah*, he did not find any *limud zechus* with regard to answering amen, which was not established to correspond to the *korbanos*.

Kesser Rosh 22; *Liflagos Reuven* Vol. I, p. 128; *Kesser Meluchah* p. 286

A Source for the Brachah of Achilas Hazevach

“ובשר זבח תודת שלמיו ביום קרבנו יאכל לא יניח ממנו עד בקר” (ז טו)

Rashi writes (*Brachos* 48b, beginning with “*Ki*”) that before eating the meat of the *korban* one should make the *brachah*: “*Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu le'echol es hazevach*,” because it is a *mitzvas aseh*, as it says (*Devarim* 12:27): “*Vedam zevachecha yishafech...vehabasar tochel*.”

The **Noda B'Yehudah** asks: Why did **Rashi** learn the source of this mitzvah from the *passuk* written in *Chumash Devarim*? Couldn't he have learned it from the *passuk* in this *parashah*: “*Beyom korbanu ye'achel*”?

The answer is: This *passuk* was not said in the *tzivuy*, the commanding form, and it can be interpreted that the Torah allows the meat to be eaten, as the meaning of the word “*ye'achel*”, it can be eaten, implies. But the *passuk* “*Vehabasar tochel*” is said in the commanding form, and therefore **Rashi** cited that *passuk* as the source for the mitzvah of eating it.

Tzelach Brachos 48b

Az Rov Nissim Hifleisa

Sunday 11 Nissan is the *yahrtzeit* of the Shelah HaKadosh. In his holy *sefer*, *Shnei Luchos Habris* (*Maseches Tamid* 80) he extols the great virtue of answering amen, and the tremendous *yeshuos* that can be effected with its power. He writes:

“The *sefarim* of the Mekubalim, who draw from the fount of the holy Zohar, expound on the secret of the word amen and its letters, and they wrote that the Upper and Lower worlds all depend on the word amen, and it is the principle and root and *yesod* of all the worlds.

“And one who concentrates on each *brachah* that emerges from the mouth of the one making it, and answers amen with *kavanah*, generates a lot of holiness Above, and can bring about an abundance of good to all the worlds, because he opens the higher Source of life, like opening the spring to irrigate all those who need watering...”

Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa – surrounded by miracles



The Brachah of Netilas Yadayim

Sanctifying the Physical Activities

As we near the end of the series on Birchas Hamazon, and due to requests we received, we are going back to expound on the mitzvah and brachah of Netilas Yadayim, performed in the morning, and before eating bread:

In His great compassion, Hashem granted us with a pair of remarkable, multipurpose devices, with which we can carry out countless acts, simple and complex alike, and to benefit ourselves and others in this world and the World to Come.

The hands are the vessel of *ma'aseh*, activity in this world, and their activities are primarily physical. Our goal in *avodas Hashem* is to sanctify the physical activities, and therefore Chazal established that we should wash our hands and purify them before eating. This is to show that we are not eating to fulfill our heart's desire, but rather in order to strengthen ourselves and acquire strength to serve Hashem. (*Keren Orah Sotah 4b*)

An Essence of the Avodas Hamikdash

The Torah instructed the Kohanim to wash their hands and feet with water before doing the service in the Mikdash, as it says (*Shemos 30:20*): "And when they come to the Ohel Moed they should wash water and they will not die, or when they approach the Mizbeach to serve..." Onkelos explained: "tirchatzu" to mean "yekadshun" – meaning that through this washing from the water of the Kiyor the Kohein sanctifies his hands for the service.

From the mitzvah of sanctifying the hands and feet practiced with the service of the Mikdash, Chazal learned about the mitzvah of washing one's hands in the morning before *davening*. Upon dawn, the person becomes like a new creation, and he needs to thank Hashem for being created in order to praise Hashem and to bless His Name. Therefore, he must sanctify himself and wash his hands from a vessel, like the Kohein who sanctifies his hands from the Kiyor before the service. (*Rashba, Shu"t Vol. I, 191*). We also learn about washing hands for a *seudah* from the washing of the hands in the Mikdash, as the *passuk* says (*Tehillim 26:6*): "Erchatz benikayon kapai v'asovevah es Mizbechacha Hashem, I washed my hands with cleanliness, and I encompassed Your altar, Hashem." Chazal said (*Menachos 97a*) that a person's

table is like the *Mizbeach*. (*Chochmas Shlomo, Orach Chaim 158 1*)

Brachah of Al Netilas Yadayim

Like all the *Birchos Hamitzvos*, the mitzvah of washing one's hands also has a *brachah*: "Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al netilas yadayim." Even though, as noted, this is not a mitzvah from the Torah, the word "vetzivanu" is still used, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu instructed us to listen to the words of Chazal, as it says (*Devarim 17:11*): "Based on the Torah that they will teach you... Do not deviate from what they tell you." (*Rambam Brachos 6b*)

However, even though the mitzvah of washing one's hands is not obligatory from the Torah, Chazal found (*Chulin 106a*) a proof from the *passuk* (*Vayikra 15:11*): "Vechol asher yiga bo hazav veyadav lo shataf bamayim...vetamei." The *passuk* seems to be divided into two types of impurities: one who is touched by the *zav*, and one whose "hands are not washed in water." From here we learn that one needs to wash his hands before eating bread.

Netilah, Not Rechitzah

We need to understand why Chazal chose to use the words "al netilas" and not "al rechitzas yadayim." Isn't the latter more similar to the language of the *passuk* (*Shemos 30:21*): "Verachatzu yedeihem veragleihem velo yamusu."

Many were asked this question and there are a few explanations:

1. The *Aruch* (entry of *Netel*) explained that in their times this washing was done through a vessel that held a *revi'is* of a *lug* and it was called a "natla". We say "al netilas yadayim" because of this vessel.
2. The *Sefer Hapardes* by Rashi (*Inyanei Netilas Yadayim*) brings in the name of Rav Hai Gaon that it is because Chazal said (*Sotah 4b*) that one who washes his hands needs to raise them high, and *netilah* means *haramah*, elevating, as the *passuk* says (*Yeshayah 63:9*): "Vayinatlem vayinasem."
3. Some explained that it was established to make the *brachah* with this language to stress that this mitzvah is not intended for just washing to remove contamination from the hands, but rather to purify them and to elevate their status, and *netilah*, as stated, means *haramah*, elevation. (*Siddur Otzar Hatefillos – Iyun Tefillah*)

The Blackout that Removed the Threat

This story was submitted by the renowned writer Rabbi Yair Weinstock, who heard it firsthand. Some details have been changed, but the story itself is accurate and the message is very clear: HaKadosh Baruch Hu listens to the *tefillah* of every single person, even the most minor of requests are heard and answered, and the power of *tefillah* can sometimes alter a situation in the most surprising, original way.

Reb Moshe and his family live in a *chareidi* city in central Israel, quite far from their extended family that lives in the south. Because they have friends who live in the south whose family lives in the central region, Reb Moshe's family and his friend's family sometimes switched apartments. They traveled south to spend Shabbos with their family there, and those people traveled to the center for Shabbos with their family.

Because both families benefited from the arrangement, and this continued for a number of years with great success. Even if there were occasional mishaps, it was usually forgiven and forgotten within a short time.

One detail always disturbed Reb Moshe's wife on those Shabbosos. One of the daughters of the other family suffered from what can delicately be called 'overcuriosity', and therefore, each Shabbos, little 'souvenirs' were left in the closet, a sign that once again, the girl had not been able to control her curiosity.

The mother of the visiting family was aware of the issue, and she candidly told Reb Moshe's wife about it, adding that as far as she was concerned, it was nearly uncontrollable. Despite her best efforts to prevent it, the girl always found creative ways to feed her curiosity, and the only thing her mother could do was warn Reb Moshe's wife about it. Reb Moshe's wife was very sensitive about her privacy, and this was most disturbing for her. The girl's mother offered a simple solution: hiding sensitive objects and documents in a locked closet; Reb Moshe's wife tried to do that.

That was what happened that Shabbos when this story happened. Reb Moshe's family was invited by their southern family. He called his friend and asked if they wanted to switch apartments, and was happy to hear an enthusiastic yes. Apparently it was an important Shabbos for their community and they were happy at the chance to be able to participate.

Shabbos began. This time as well, Reb Moshe's wife had prepared accordingly, as she always did, but on Friday night, in the middle of the *seudah*, she suddenly remembered that a very sensitive and confidential document had been inadvertently left in one of the cupboards.

"Oh no!" she suddenly cried. Even Reb Moshe didn't know what the problem was. "I forgot to hide an important document and I'm afraid that nosy girl is going to get to it," the woman said fearfully. She then explained to her husband, who was hearing it for the first time:

"The mother of the family staying by us

told me that her daughter has a weakness that she rummages around in cupboards in other people's home. I'm always careful to put everything private and sensitive under lock and key before we leave. Today, in the pressure to leave, I forgot to hide that document, which is both important and private, and now that girl will be able to see it."

From that moment, she had no peace. In her mind's eye, she envisioned the girl invading every corner of her house, and she was so disturbed that she could not sleep.

Reb Moshe first considered trying to soothe his wife. He didn't think the discovery of the document was so catastrophic, and he felt his wife was being overly nervous. Why should the child decide to look specifically at this document?! But knowing his wife's nature, and her zealous protection of her privacy, he knew that is words would only add fuel to the fire of her anxiety.

Instead, he soothed her, "Let's *daven*. We believe that there is nothing that can stand in the way of *tefillah*. Let's *daven* that your fears should not be realized, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu will find a way to prevent this curious girl from getting to the document that you are afraid she will see."

And so, late at night, Reb Moshe and his wife went onto the porch of the house where they were staying, and *davened* to Hashem to find a way to prevent their private secrets from being seen.

Their *tefillah* was effective immediately in the sense that the family felt much calmer afterwards. They were sure their *tefillah* would not be rejected.

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On Motzaei Shabbos, after *Havdalah*, Reb Moshe's cell phone rang. His friend – father of the family they had switched with – was on the line. "Hello," he said in a tone that sounded bitter. "What a miracle you were not home for Shabbos." Reb Moshe tensed, and the man explained: "Early Shabbos morning, I'm not sure what time, the electricity blew in your home. We got up to a cold house, and worse, the hot plate was off and the *cholent* pot was nearly cold. We had to leave the apartment and spend the rest of the day at the home of compassionate acquaintances that agreed to host us. We were there until now and we just came back to get our things.

"When I went to the electric box and pulled up the main switch, everything began working as though nothing had happened. I do not understand what made the electricity fall in the middle of the night, but that is what happened..."

Reb Moshe commiserated with his friend, but it was not really wholehearted because his heart filled with joy and gratitude to Hashem. Their *tefillah* had been answered. It was not a *tefillah* for something standard like *shidduchim*, health problems and the like, but it was surely a *tefillah* that emerged from the depths of the heart, and was answered as soon as it was uttered.