

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



327

PARASHAS TAZRIA METZORA

תש"פ

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Birchas Hamilah – For All the Obligations of a Father to His Son

"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו"

"Chazal say, the one making the *milah* says: 'Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al hamilah.' The baby's father says: 'Asher kidshanu...lehachnisu bevrisho shel Avraham Avinu.' Those who stand around say: 'Keshem shenichnas labris kein yikanes leTorah lechuppah ulema'asim tovim.' (Shabbos 137b)

The *Hagahos Meimoneyos* asks: Don't we have a rule that when a mitzvah is performed through an emissary, the emissary is the one that makes the *brachah* on the mitzvah? Why with *milah* is there a special *brachah* for the father of the baby, who appoints the emissary?

The *Avudraham* explained: the *brachah* of *Lehachnisu* was not established only for the mitzvah of *milah*. It is a general *brachah* for all the obligations the father has towards his son, from the mitzvah of *milah* and on. Among them are redeeming him if he is a *bechor*, teaching him Torah, and marrying him off.

The *Levush* explains based on this why the assembled answer this *brachah* with a blessing of their own: "Just like he entered the covenant so should he enter Torah, *chuppah* and good deeds." This means that the father should merit to fulfill the *mitzvos* that he has just made the *brachah* for.

Harav Akiva Eiger emphasized this point according to the *Olelos Ephraim* (392), who says that the removal of the *orlah* from the baby removes from him also the '*orlas halev*', and through that, his soul is prepared and his heart opens to understand his Torah learning and fulfilling the *mitzvos*. That is why it is worthy to make the *brachah* during the *milah* for all those spiritual matters that the son will merit in the future due to its power.

Hagahos Meimoneyos, Milah 3 3; Avudraham Hilchos Milah Ubirchoseha; Levush Yoreh Deah 265 1; Shu"t Rabi Akiva Eiger 141 42

Tefillah While the Baby Cries

"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו" (יב ג)

Harav Eliyahu Gutmacher of Greiditz

Answering Amen Is Preferable to Participating in a Bris Milah

"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו" (יב ג)

The Rav of Ramat Elchanan **Harav Yitzchak Silberstein, shlita**, was asked the following question:

If one regularly says *Birchos Hashachar* with his friends, in a way that every *mispalles* says the *brachah* in his turn and the rest answer amen, and at the same time there is a *bris milah* in that shul – should the person continue to answer amen or should he go participate in the *bris milah*, known for being an auspicious time when Eliyahu Malach Habris is in attendance?

Rav Yitzchak replied: One should preferably stay with the group of those who answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar* than to participate in the *bris*. There are two reasons for this: 1. One who answers amen fulfills the mitzvah actively, while with a *bris*, even though the *baal bris* fulfills a big mitzvah, the participant does not perform a mitzvah. The second is that although Eliyahu Hanavi comes to a *bris*, at the same time, new angels are constantly created from amens that are answered, as the well-known allusion notes: 'Amen' is numerically equivalent to "malach," angel.

Vavei Ha'amudim Vechishukeihem, 46:96

wrote: When the baby cries with the pain of the *milah*, his voice rises to the Heavens, and no hostile force can prevent it from doing so. Therefore, this time is a unique opportunity for every person to *daven* and ask for what he wishes, because his request will rise together with the baby's cries. Harav Gutmacher calls this a 'wondrous idea' and cites an allusion from the words of the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (6:9-10), which refer to the mitzvah of *milah* [as indicated by the beginning of the *passuk* in which this *passuk* is written, '*Lamnatzeiach...hashminis mizmor leDovid*']: "*Shama Hashem kol bichy*" – an allusion to the baby's cries at the *bris*. When the listener joins the baby by *davening* then, "*Shama Hashem techinasi Hashem tefillasi yikach*."

Therefore, he wrote, we should say this *perek* during a *bris*.

Harav Shmuel Eliezer Elfandri, added that because the time of the *milah* is an "*eis ratzon*" when the *tefillah* will be more accepted than any other time..." therefore, after the *brachah* of "*Lehachnisu bevrisho*," those present bless the baby "*keshem shenichnas labris*," which is something we don't find with other *brachos* on *mitzvos*.

This is the place to mention the ruling of **Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** regarding a *bris* on Shabbos. He writes that because it is forbidden to ask for one's needs on Shabbos, he should think his requests in his heart.

Hagahos Hager"l a Gutmacher LeShas, Shabbos 130a; Shu"t HaSaba Kaddisha Vol. II 10; Bemechitzas Rabbeinu p. 119; Hatichos Shlomo, Tefillah 17:31

Lashon Hara Precludes the Tefillah from Being Accepted

"וטמא טמא יקרא" (יג מה)

"Tanya: "וטמא טמא יקרא" – we have to announce his pain in public, and many ask for mercy for him." (Shabbos 67a)

Why is the *metzora* different from other sick people? Is he the only one who needs the *tefillas* of others? Moreover, didn't Chazal say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 53 14): "The *tefillah* of the sick person for himself is nicest of all"?

Harav Yonasan Eibeshitz explained:

The *Zohar* (*Metzora* 53:1) explained that when someone sins with *lashon hara*, a *ruach tumah* comes upon him that prevents his *tefillah* from rising on High. Therefore, in contrast to other sick people, for whom their *tefillah* for themselves is preferable, the *tefillah* of the *metzora* who sinned with *lashon hara* is not quickly accepted, and therefore he must ask others to *daven* for him.

Harav Yaakov Rekach of Tripoli brought a *remez* to the words of the *Zohar* from the request of Dovid Hamelech in *Tehillim* (17:1): "*Tefillah leDovid shimah Hashem tzedek hakshivah rinasi ha'azinah tefilasi belo sifsei mirmah*": Listen to my *tefillah* because I am '*belo sifsei mirmah*' – without *lashon hara*.

Midrash Yehonasan; Ma'ateh Tehillah, Tehillim 17:1

Much has been said by Gedolei Yisrael about the remarkable *segulah* of reciting the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* with *kavanah* for a *refuah sheleimiah* and good health.

The *sefer Seder Hayom* (*Kavanas Habrachos*) writes that the *segulah* of the *brachah* is also effective for a healthy person to remain healthy "and not fall ill all his life and not need a doctor or his healing."

Harav Shimshon Pincus once said on this subject: "A Yid approached me and said that the holy *sefarim* say that reciting *Asher Yatzar* with *kavanah* is a *segulah* for a *refuah*. At that moment I felt like saying, is this what you are coming to tell me? It's like someone comes and says that he made an amazing discovery: drinking water is a *segulah* not to be thirsty..." (*Tiferes Shimshon, Bereishis* p. 60)

It is a time of trouble of Am Yisrael; many Yidden need a *refuah*. Each and every day we hear of more people who have become sick. Let us undertake to make the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* aloud and with *kavanah*, and to make sure it is answered with amen. And may it be that with this, we merit to have all the harsh decrees annulled, amen.



Birchas Hamazon – The Requests of Harachaman (10)

**Concluding the HaRachaman
with a Request for the Geulah**

As we reach the conclusion of the requests of *HaRachaman*, there is a special and moving request, which is the eternal request of every Jew throughout the generations: “*HaRachaman Hu yezakeinu liyemos haMashiach ulechayei Olam Haba*.”

The reason that it was established for us to ask this at the end of *Birchas Hamazon* is explained by the *Rokeach* (Hilchos Seudah 337) based on the words of *Tehillim* (132: 15-17): “צידה ברח אברך אבינוהי אשביע לחם...שם.” “אצמיה קרן לדוד ערכתי נר למשיח.” From here we learn that the time when we make a *brachah* on bread is the most auspicious to ask for the *tzemichas Keren Dovid* and the hastening of the complete Redemption, and the arrival of Mashiach Tzidkeinu, may it be speedily in our day.

**True Waiting Is a Condition
of the Geulah**

As noted, in this request we express the eternal yearning of every Jew wherever he is for the final Redemption. As a way to demonstrate this, the Chofetz Chaim related that when the seat of the Rav became available in Brisk, the residents of the community sent a dignified delegation to the Bais Halevi, Harav Yosef Dov, who served then as the Rav of Kovno, asking that he accept the position in their community. Out of great humility, the Bais Halevi firmly refused to take the position, claiming that he was not worthy of it. When the delegation had nearly given up their efforts to persuade him, one of the elder residents of Brisk – a simple person who represented the wagon drivers – stood up and cried emotionally: ‘Rebbi, how can you not accept our wish? Forty thousand Jews of the city are waiting for you!’ When the Bais Halevi heard this, he was moved and said, “If forty thousand people are waiting for me, I cannot refuse to go.” And he traveled to Brisk with them.

The Chofetz Chaim said: If thousands of people would wait with such genuine yearning for Mashiach, there is no doubt that he would arrive, and if he is not yet here, it is a sign that we are not waiting enough for his arrival. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Tevuos Shemesh*)

Indeed, the Chofetz Chaim is most worthy of conveying this message, as it was known that he prepared himself a bag with his Shabbos attire, and it stood ready and waiting for when Mashiach would come and everyone would go to Yerushalayim. (*Haizaddik Rabi Shlomo*, p. 31)

**“Veyikrevenu Liyemos
HaMashiach”**

The *Avudraham*’s version of the *HaRachaman* is “*HaRachaman Hu yezakeinu veyechayeinu veyikrevenu liyemos haMashiach ulechayei Olam Haba*.” (*Eliya Rabbah* 187 1)

Harav Tzvi Hirsh of Munkatch wrote that one should not say “*veyikrevenu*”

because this *nusach* also addresses “*Chayei Olam Haba*” mentioned subsequently, and it would appear that a person is yearning for *Olam Haba* soon, *chalilah*, and it could be a matter of “*Al tiftach peh laSatan*” (*Shu”t Tzvi Tifere* s 92).

The Ramban wrote (*Shaar Hagemul*, Shevel Edition p. 303) regarding this *HaRachaman*: “And throughout the generations it has been commonly said whether in the request or at the end of *Birchas Hamazon* and all the *tefillos*, ‘*HaRachaman yezakeinu veyikrevenu liyemos haMashiach ulechayei ha’Olam Haba*.’ We say *Yemos HaMashiach* first, and this does not mean to ask that the time of death should be brought closer and that they should be in the World of the Souls.” In other words, we first ask for *Yemos HaMashiach*, because this way it sounds like the request of *Chayei HaOlam Haba* refers to *Olam Haba* after the *Yemos HaMashiach*.

Another proof of the Ramban’s words is brought by Harav Y. Mintz in his *hesped* for Rabbeinu Moshe Isserles – the Rema: The fact that the *nusach* of this *HaRachaman* was written in the plural indicates that we are not asking about “*Chayei Olam Haba*” of each individual in the World of *Neshamos* after his long life. Because this request is not equal for everyone, as each person earns his World to Come based on his deeds. What is the purpose of including the *rabbim* with us in this request? Instead, our intention is surely to ask as the Ramban says for a life of *Olam Haba* that will come after the arrival of Mashiach. (*Drashos Mahar”i Mintz*, Sixth *Drush*, 5757 edition, p. 114)

**From the Pangs of the Arrival
of Mashiach We Will Emerge
to Salvation**

Harav Aharon Teumim of Worms explained what we ask: “*Hu yezakeinu liyemos haMashiach*, and not “*lebias haMashiach*”, to the arrival of Mashiach. Because before the arrival of Mashiach, Am Yisrael will endure very difficult days known as the *chevlei Mashiach*, which we refer to here as “*Yemos HaMashiach*.” We ask that we merit to hold on to our faith in these days, and this merit should help us reach “*Chayei Olam Haba*”, in the time of the arrival of Mashiach. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Chaluka D’Rabbanan*). We also ask for this in *Shemoneh Esrei*: “*Vesechezenah eininu beshuvcha leTzion berachamim*”: that the “*yemos haMashiach*” that precede his arrival should pass over us with mercy and not with pain and difficulty. (*Panim Yafos, Shemos*)

However, there are some Gedolei Yisrael that used to say “*HaRachaman Hu yezakeinu lebias haMashiach*,” and they explained that we are already in the “*yemos HaMashiach*,” which began in the time of the Ari HaKadosh, and from now, we are just waiting expectantly for his arrival. (*Toldos Kol Aryeh*, p. 89; this was the practice of the Minchas Elazar of Munkatch, *Darchoi Chaim Veshalom* 309)

The Cry That Transformed the Situation

Last month, on his 91st birthday (טז), the renowned *mohel* and supporter of Torah Rav Avraham Hakohein Cohn, *zt”l*, passed away after succumbing to corona.

Rav Avraham Hakohein was known for founding the renowned foundation in his name, the Keren Avraham Hakohein, which nurtured many of the Torah and *halachah* giants in our generation. He was also a renowned *mohel*, who performed *brisos* on tens of thousands of babies over decades, all over the world. He was still engaged in this holy work the last week of his life. Rav Avraham, as one of the elder *mohalim* in our generation, felt it was his mission to advocate for the pure *halachah* in this mitzvah in light of the entities both from within and from without that wanted to violate the tradition of this mitzvah passed down through the generations. Towards the end of his life, Reb Avraham related:

It happened at the peak of the battle over *bris milah* that was waged by American Jewry. At the time, I wanted to take out a large advertisement in *The New York Times* to make it clear in public that there was no truth to the claims being raised against the performance of this mitzvah and that it was pure anti-Semitism not grounded in any reality. When I queried about the price of the ad, I recoiled when I heard it would cost tens of thousands of dollars per page.

Because I had learned over the years that when one wants to do something *l’Shem Shamayim*, the *siyata diShmaya* is guaranteed, I did not despair and waited to see how things would develop. Indeed, surprisingly enough, a few days later, the editors of *The New York Times* reached out to me and asked me if I would agree to be interviewed to represent the *chareidi* side of the very hot button issue. They even asked permission to accompany me to a number of *brisos* that I performed so they could view the procedure from up close.

It was literally a gift from Above for me. I should have ostensibly grabbed the offer. Publication in such a prominent place could contribute a lot to the battle and influence its success. But in actuality, the dilemma was far greater. No one was ready to guarantee that my words would be presented as is, without any alterations, and that they would not be presented in a way that would cause more harm than good. This would defeat the purpose of my efforts.

Like before every step in his life, Reb Avraham went to consult with gedolei hador about his dilemma. The answer he got was that because the law had already been enacted, he probably would not cause any additional damage from such an interview. The worst had already been done. On the other hand, if his words would be portrayed in the right light, then perhaps it would have a positive effect on the public opinion in the United States regarding this mitzvah, and perhaps would even affect the court decision on the appeal to annul the law.

Rabbi Cohn continued: When I received the approval of Gedolei Yisrael I called

the newspaper back to accept the offer. I received the approval of the family whose *bris* I was to perform at the time to have reporters there at the time.

The *bris* took place the next morning. The journalists arrived long before the appointed time. Even before the *bris*, I saw the journalists following my every move. From their piercing gazes it was evident that they had prepared well for this, and I offered a *tefillah* that I would merit to be a good *shaliach* for Klal Yisrael.

The *bris* was about to begin. As was my custom, I began with the *tefillah* for a *mohel*. Suddenly, I burst into uncontrollable sobs. One of the journalists hurried over: “Did something happen?!” he asked worriedly.

I reassured him and explained: ‘Look, I am an older man. All my life I have tried to sanctify the Name of Heaven, even during the Holocaust, when this was literally a matter of life and death. Now, in my old age, I have been presented with a serious challenge, and I am praying to G-d that I overcome it successfully and that Hashem’s Name should not be desecrated through me.’

For some reason, my spontaneous remarks, without any advance planning, touched the hearts of the reporters. Some of them patted me on the back and said that I could relax; they could see that most of the claims that were aired against the mitzvah were not correct. They saw the absolute sterility I practiced before doing the *bris*, after which there almost no chance to affect the child’s health.

Their words calmed me down. I began doing the *bris*, as the journalists followed my actions. When I concluded they clapped and complimented me that they had never seen such a work of art done in accordance with medical practices and with such caution. And from then, it was clear to them that all the claims were groundless, and that it was only anti-Semitism that was motivating the whole uproar.

A few days later, the three-page article appeared in *The New York Times*. The journalists detailed at length their positive impressions about the way the Jewish tradition of *bris milah* is performed with utmost caution, in a way that will reduce to a minimum the baby’s distress and goes to great lengths to safeguard his health.

The article was so successful that some claimed that I had commissioned and funded it, which of course, was not true. At first, it had been discussed that it would go on the front page, but a dramatic news item that day pushed it to the inner pages. But the message that it sent resonated, and it is very likely that it ultimately contributed to the law being struck down.”

Reb Avraham passed away last month at an advanced age, after contracting corona. Because he did not leave any children, the public is asked to learn and daven for the pure soul of Rav Avraham ben Rav Yom Tov, *zt”l*.

Related by one of his friends