

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



337

PARASHAS CHUKAS

תש"פ

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### "Service of the Heart" Performed With the Mouth

"וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן לאמר: זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר דבר אל בני ישראל" (א-ב)

Why did the Torah repeat: "*Asher tzivah Hashem leimor – daber el Bnei Yisrael*"?

**Harav Eliezer Horowitz**, the Rav of Tarnigrad, explained:

*Tefillah* is called "*avodah shebalev*, service of the heart" (*Taanis* 2a) because it is entirely dependent on the intention in one's heart. At the same time, we are commanded to utter the *tefillah* with our mouth, because uttering the words arouses the *kavanah*. The Ari Hakadosh (*Likutei Torah*, *Tehillim* 65) wrote that even lofty people who did not need help arousing their *kavanah* must to utter the words of *tefillah* with their mouth, because "through the *tefillah* that a person davens, his friend sees him davening and then he also davens."

This concept is alluded to in these *pesukim*: "*Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe v'el Aharon*" – in the eyes of *tzaddikim* like you it might appear that "*zos chukas haTorah asher tzivah Hashem leimor*" – reciting the words of *tefillah* by mouth is like a "*chok*" that does not have a reason, because it is enough to have *kavanah* in one's heart. Nevertheless, you should know that there is a reason for it, and that is: "*daber el Bnei Yisrael*" – so that your speaking will arouse others in Bnei Yisrael to also daven in a fitting way.

Noam Megadim

### "It Is a Gezeirah Before Me"- Against the Prosecuting Forces

"זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' לאמר" (יט ב)

"Because the Satan and the nations of the world taunt Yisrael, saying: 'What is this commandment? What is the reason

### The Obligation of the "Morim" to Warn About Answering Amen

"שמעו נא המרים המן הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים" (כ י)

The early *mochiach*, **Harav Moshe Kahana of Gibitsch**, related:

When the members of the Posna community asked Rav Mordechai Yaffeh, the Baal Halevushim, to serve as the Rav of their city, he first asked to travel to Venice to complete his studies of *Chochmas Ha'ibur* [the study of calculating months and years] from the sage Rabi Yitzchak Abuhav, who was proficient in this subject.

Rav Mordechai traveled to Venice, and one day, when learning with Rav Yitzchak, the Rav's young son entered the room and made a *brachah* out loud. All those present answered amen, aside for Rav Mordechai, who did not notice. Rav Yitzchak got angry at Rav Mordechai and banished him. When Rav Mordechai asked Rav Yitzchak to forgive him and lift the ban on him, Rav Yitzchak rebuked him for the severity of the sin of refraining from answering amen to a *brachah*. He told him that there was a story in earlier generations about a *chassid* who was deserving of death for refraining from answering amen to his son's *brachah*. But then Rav Yitzchak added: Your sin will be forgiven if you undertake that wherever you are, and in every *kehillah* that you step into, you pledge to speak about the great sin of one who refrains from answering amen.

An allusion to the lesson learned by this is explained by **Harav Yaakov Leib Benjamin** from this *passuk*: "נא המורים המן" – the acronym of the last letters of the words make amen. This is to show that refraining from answering amen is very serious, and the teachers and *morei hora'ah* need to warn their students and communities about this.

Rav Yaakov Leib further explained that this allusion comes to teach us that refraining from answering amen is considered rebelling *b'Malchus Shamayim*, as the poet laments in the *kinah* of *Eichah Yashvah Chavatzeles Hasharon*: "She remembers a time when they replied *na'aseh venishma*, and now they do not want to answer amen."

Chelek Yaakov

for it?" Therefore, the Torah referred to it as a "*chukah*", a statute. I have decreed it and you are not permitted to question it." (*Rashi*, based on *Tanchuma* 8)

Didn't *Rashi* later cite the *Midrash* with a reason for this mitzvah - that it is to atone for the sin of the Eigel? Why is it considered a statute?

**Harav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz**, the Baal Hafla'ah, explained:

The Satan and the nations of the world know that mentioning a person's sins evokes *dinim*, judgement upon him. That is why they taunt Am Yisrael, and question the reason for the mitzvah of *parah adumah*, so that they Bnei Yisrael should respond that it is to atone for the Eigel. Thus the sin will be mentioned and the prosecuting forces will be awakened. That is why HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Am Yisrael: Do not reveal to them the reason; rather, tell them: "Hashem has decreed it as a *gezeirah*."

Based on this, his grandson **Harav Tzvi Yechezkel Michelson**, the Rav of Plonsk, explained the reason why in *Avinu Malkeinu* we first ask: "*kaleh kol tzar umaštin me'aleinu*" and later, "*sesom piyos maštineinu umekatrigeinu*." If the first request is accepted, and those who harass us and slander us will be erased, then why do we need to ask that their mouths be closed from prosecuting against us? We can explain that the first request is intended to ward off the *maštinim* that are created by our sins, while the second – is against the Satan and his minions who are constantly seeking to mention our sins. We ask that their mouths should be closed and they should not be able to prosecute against us.

*Panim Yafos, Shu"t Tirosh Veyitzhar*, 181



## שחר אבקשה, צויר ומשגבי / אערך לפניך שחרי וגם ערבי.

Wednesday, 9 Tammuz, is the *yahrtzeit* of the Shefa Chaim of Sanz, zy"a. In one of his *shiurim*, he said:

"And I have already said this a number of times in an effort to restore the glory, and to implement in our *batei medrash* a *seider hatefillah* with the *shaliach tzibbur*. As was practiced in early times, every *minyan* of davening began with *Birchos Hashachar*. The *sha"tz* first said the *brachos* and then each one said them to himself. One who is a *yarei Shamayim* tries to hear from a few people in order to answer after them *Baruch Hu Ubaruch Shemo* and Amen. My holy grandfather had a regular practice each day, that one and sometimes two of the children would say *Birchos Hashachar* in front of him, with one of his holy sons when they were younger, or one of his grandchildren, or another child."

*Shefa Chaim, Torah Umoadim*, Vol. 19, p. 356





## Taaneh Emunim

Insights into the Virtues of  
Hashkamas Bais Hamedrash

### Birchas Asher Yatzar – Rofei Kol Basar (3)

#### Even One Minute

The word “*rega*” is explained by *Onkelos* to mean “*sha’ah*.” (*Bamidbar* 16:21). Indeed, the source of the word “*sha’ah*” in Aramaic, and its original meaning, is “*rega*”, to mean: a very short period of time.

Based on this, the *Tosafos Yom Tov* explained the *nusach* of the *brachah*: “It is impossible to exist and stand before You for even *sha’ah echas*.” If we would explain “*sha’ah*” the way it is used today, it would evoke a question. When the body’s systems collapse, *chalilah*, one cannot survive even one minute, can they? But if one explains that the original “*sha’ah*” is “*rega*”, then this can be understood. (*Ma’adanei Yom Tov*, *Brachos* 9 22 8)

#### Healing for the Whole Body

The closing of the *brachah* is divided into two parts: “*Rofei kol basar*” and “*umafli la’asos*.” The *Rishonim* explained according to the simple meaning that “*rofei kol basar*” refers to the egestion of waste from the body, which is a healing for the entire body. If this would not happen, the person would die. “*Umafli la’asos*” refers to the preservation of one’s breath in the body even though it has so many perforations and cavities. This is an unmatched wonder, because normally, a flask or waterskin deflates of all its air as soon as there is the smallest puncture in it (*Rashi Brachos* 60b; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 6 1). They further explained that the wonder that we thank for here is the ability of the body to select between the good parts of the food, which it needs, and the waste, which it expels (*Avudraham*, *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid*). Another explanation is that the wonder we thank for here is the connection of the body and soul as one, even though the body is physical and the soul is spiritual (*Rema* *ibid*).

The name of a deathly ill patient was once mentioned to the *Shefa Chaim* of Sanz; the man was close to the Rebbe and they wanted the Rebbe to daven for him. The Rebbe said: “*Chazal* established at the end of *Birchas Asher Yatzar* to say the praise, ‘*Rofei kol basar umafli la’asos*.’ What is the connection between the two?”

It can be explained that just like when a vessel breaks everyone understands that there is no one who can fix it better than the craftsman who made it, so, too, we must believe that there is no better “*rofei kol basar*” than the One Who is “*mafli la’asos*”, in the actual creation of the human body. And it is solely to Him that we turn at a time of distress.” (*Lapid Ha’eish*, Vol. II p. 631)

**Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha’olam, asher yatzar es ha’adam bechochmah**, with amazing wisdom that is contained in the functioning of the bodily systems, **ubara bo**, and created within it organs that have **nekavim nekavim** like the mouth and the nose, and others. Likewise, He created organs that are **chalulim chalulim** – where there are cavities, such as the heart and the stomach and the intestines. **Galuy vayadua lifnei Kisei Kevodecha, she’im yipaseach echad meihem** – of these organs, **oh yisasech echad meihem** – of the holes, **eeh efshar lehiskayem vela’amod lefanacha** (*nusach Sephard* – **afilu sha’ah echas** – one minute). **Baruch Atah Hashem, Rofei kol basar** – by removing the waste, **umafli la’asos** – by preserving our breath in the body and ensuring it does not seep out of the holes.

**Amen** – It is true that we must praise Hashem for healing our body by being able to egest the waste, and He performs even greater wonders by preserving the breath inside us despite the many perforations in the body.

#### Asher Yatzar with Kavanah Is a Segulah for a Refuah

The *Mashgiach Harav Yechezkel Levinstein* would tell his students that saying the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* with *kavanah*, from the *siddur*, is a *segulah* for healing. The *Sefer Hachinuch* writes about *Birchas Hamazon* (*Mitzvah* 430): “I have received from my *rabbanim*...that anyone who is careful about *Birchas Hamazon* will find his sustenance provided with dignity all his life.” The reason for this is that one who says *Birchas Hamazon* with *kavanah* ingrains in his heart the *emunah* in the *Hashgachah* that one’s sustenance is dependent only on Hashem. Similarly, we can say that saying *Asher Yatzar* with *kavanah* imbues in a person’s heart the faith that his life and his healing are dependent only on Hashem. Through that, he will merit a *refuah*. (*Tefillas Chana* p. 66; *Chaim V’chessed*, p. 11)

*Harav Shimshon Pincus* once said on this subject:

“A *Yid* approached me and said that in the holy *sefarim* it says that reciting *Asher Yatzar* with *kavanah* is a *segulah* for a *refuah*. At that moment, I had this feeling like ‘is this what you are coming to tell me?’ After all, it’s like someone saying that he’s made an earthshattering discovery: drinking water is a *segulah* not to be thirsty...” (*Tiferes Shimshon*, *Bereishis* p. 60)

There are many stories about sick people and their families who committed to reciting *Asher Yatzar* with *kavanah* and merited a complete recovery. One example was related by *Harav Yitzchak Silberstein, shlit*a:

In one of the *kollelim* in Bnei Brak, there was a young man whose son was very sick. When the news reached the other members of the *kollel*, they gathered for a *keness* of *chizuk*. At the end they resolved to undertake to make the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* as a merit for the child’s recovery. Miraculously, against all the predictions of the doctors, within a short time the boy was cured. (*Tuvcha Yabiu*, Vol. I, p. 270)

Furthermore, *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 53b) that “one who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*.” If the *segulah* of the *brachah* is so great, how much more so is the *segulah* of being careful to answer amen after it, for salvation and as protection against all bad. That is aside for the fact that answering amen to any *brachah* is a *segulah* for *refuah*. There is an allusion to this in the *passuk*, “*ki Ani Hashem rofecha*” (*Shemos* 15:26) – “*ki Ani*” is numerically equivalent to “amen.” (*Imrei Aharon*, *Beshalach*)

## Maaseh Emunim

Pearls and Insights on  
Birchas Hamazon

### Fire at Dawn

It was very early in the morning. As he walked down the street, Reb Wolf glanced at the window of the shul, which was closed, and something did not seem right to him. He picked up his place and neared the shul. Yes, there was a dull, flickering, orange-reddish light coming from the window of the shul, casting a glow in the darkness; his heart skipped a beat.

**One week earlier:** Friday morning. Reb Wolf took a pile of colorful booklets that he had just collected from the shul and which still smelled like fresh print, and was about to put it into the special basket designated for it, like he did every week.

Reb Wolf was not the *gabbai*, but he was someone who cared. The booklets scattered across the shul on Erev Shabbos bothered him. He did not feel it was respectful for the shul to be littered with papers, and designated a special place at the entrance of the shul where all the booklets could be placed neatly. Each Friday, when arriving for *vasikin*, he would collect all the booklets and put them in the place that he had prepared. However, by the time he arrived at the shul, there were already more than ten people in the shul, which made his task more difficult and time consuming. He felt bad each week again that he was not able to get up early enough – because by the time he found himself putting on *tefillin* the *chazzan* was already reciting *Barchu*.

As every week, the week before this story took place, he took the stack of booklets that he had collected. He was about to put them in their place when he caught sight of a new booklet that he had never seen before. Naturally curious, he began to leaf through it, but realizing it would make him later to davening, he took a copy, folded it and put it in his pocket to peruse later on.

After davening, he sat down and took out the new booklet, entitled “*Vehachazireinu*.” It wasn’t a regular brochure; it was actually an expansive work about the *kavod* of *tefillah*, published by Bnei Emunim, the brainchild and initiative of the president of the organization, Rabbi Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, *shlit*a. He reviewed the content and felt that the material spoke to him.

Because he was chronically late to davening, Reb Wolf had to almost always say *Birchos Hashachar* after he finished. He knew that this was not the right way to do things. But with *vasikin*, there is no leeway. Time is time, and Reb Wolf felt regret each day at the way things were going.

In this brochure, he read about the great virtue of rising early to go to shul, and beginning to daven on time, after reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*. Then and there, he resolved to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* on time, a few moments before davening. No matter what.

He got right to action. That Sunday, Reb Wolf was the first one to turn

on the lights in shul. Ten minutes before davening, he was in his place, wearing his *tefillin*, after having recited *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* with Reb Tzvi Hirsch, a veteran of the *vasikin minyan*. He even had time to slowly recite the *parshiyos* of the *korbanos*, with concentration.

It was like a new era in his life. That day, he davened in a way that he hadn’t in a long time. At the end, he decided that from that point on, he would not forego this pleasure.

Reb Wolf continued this practice the following days, and he was surprised at how easy it was for him and how much satisfaction he garnered from *tefillah* recited properly.

Friday was a relatively ‘lax’ day at the *vasikin minyan*, as many of the members were not hurrying to their regular busy schedule, and were able to daven later in the morning. But Reb Wolf rose early once again to be the first in shul. Now he was walking at that early hour towards the shul, and when he looked at the windows he saw the flickering light.

As he drew closer, his nose was assailed by the acrid smell of scorched plastic. He dashed towards the door and pulled it open; a thick cloud of smoke hit him in the face. Reb Wolf coughed and pulled out his cell phone to call the fire department. At the same time, he grabbed the fire extinguisher and began spraying. Even after the fire was out, the smoke continued to pour out of the electric box, and when the fire department arrived, they still had a lot to do.

The *vasikin minyan* took place in a nearby shul that morning. After davening, Reb Wolf walked over to the shul to assess the damage from the fire. The last of the firefighters were still there. The entrance hall was black from soot and wet from the water, but the shul itself, which was actually a caravan made of easily combustible materials, was unscathed.

“That initial firefighting action that you did saved the shul,” the firefighter remarked as he finished writing down a record of the incident. “Had you come just five minutes later, there may not have been what to save. The fire would have spread very fast in such a structure, and within a few minutes, it would have been burned to the ground, with the *sifrei Torah* and all the *sefarim*.”

Reb Wolf looked at the scorched walls, realizing the significance of what the firefighter was saying. He lowered his eyes to the floor, which was flooded with black water, and a colorful booklet caught his eye. He bent to pick it up; the title was barely legible: “*Vechol Ma’aminim...*” Today was Friday, he recalled.

“It’s all in the merit of this booklet,” he said, and didn’t wait for the firefighter to understand.

*Submitted by the person it happened to*

## Michtavei Emunim

Letters from our  
Loyal Readers

Dear Bnei Emunim,

I wanted to thank you for your recent campaign to increase awareness and strengthen the observance of reciting 100 *brachos*. It is remarkable that we merited to return to *tefillah* in shuls just before Shavuot – the *yahrtzeit* of Dovid Hamelech, who established the *takanah* of reciting *Meah Brachos*. *Chazal* alluded (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) to the *takanah* of Dovid in the *passuk* (*Shmuel* II 23:1): “*Ne’um Dovid ben Yishai vene’um hagever hakam al*” – על is numerically equivalent to 100, corresponding to the 100 *brachos* that were established in his merit in Am Yisrael. And we should add that the word על has the same letters as amen, because answering amen completes the *brachah*.

B.D. - Jerusalem