

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Yiras Shamayim in the Hands of Shamayim: How?

“ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע” (יג טז)

“He prayed for him, ‘may Hashem save you from [joining] the counsel of the spies.’” (Rashi, based on Sotah 34b)

The commentaries ask: How was Moshe’s tefillah for Yehoshua to be saved from the ideas of the Meraglim effective? Isn’t the choice between doing good and bad not in the Hands of Heaven, but in the hands of each person, as Chazal say (Brachos 33b): “Everything is in the Hands of Heaven except Yiras Shamayim?” It can be understood that when a person davens for himself that he not sin, the fact that he is asking this indicates that he has chosen good. But when he distances himself from bad as the result of the tefillah of others for him, doesn’t this contradict the power of bechirah, of choice?

Harav Yehudah Leib Adel, the Maggid of Slonim, explained:

Indeed, the tefillah of others cannot prevent a person who chose bad to refrain from sin, but it can help a person who is not interested in sinning not to be dragged into a situation that causes him to sin, which happened to the Meraglim. Their fear of the nations in Eretz Yisrael caused them to sin.

Harav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad further explained:

The tefillah is not effective for a person who sins intentionally, but it can be effective in the event that the yetzer hara misleads a person to think that the sin is actually a mitzvah. This happened with the Meraglim, who were tempted to speak badly of the land, thinking that the reward of Am Yisrael would increase – because despite the fearful information, they would trust in Hashem and would enter the land to conquer it.

The Meshech Chochmah added:

Indeed, the tefillah of Moshe was contradictory to free choice that is given

### “I Will Honor Those Who Honor Me”

“עד אנה ינאצני העם הזה ועד אנה לא יאמינו בי” (יד יא)

Rabbeinu BechayeI wrote (Shemos 14:31): One who answers amen properly honors the Name of Hashem truly, and of him it is said (Shmuel I 2:30): “Ki mechabdai achabed.” “And anyone who is not careful with the word amen, and does not concentrate with all his might is shaming the Name of Hashem, and of him the passuk says (ibid) ‘ubozai yekalu.’”

The source of this is the Sefer Hazohar (Vayeilech 285 1), and the Rema”z there explained that because it is an easy thing to do to have in mind when answering amen, one who is lax about it is considered to be shaming Hashem, and he will ultimately be dealt shame and humiliation – measure for measure.

Harav Yaakov Katina of Chust wrote in his sefer Rachamei Ha’av (56):

“Be very careful about answering amen, because what will he answer when the day of reckoning comes, and he is asked: ‘Why did you not answer amen, what work is involved?!’ And that is what the allusion in Tehillim is referring to (83:17): ‘מלא פניהם’ קלון’ where the last letter of each word makes up the word “amen.”

Rabbi Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, Chairman of Bnei Emunim, brings an allusion to this from this passuk: “עד אנה ינאצני העם הזה” - , whose acronym is numerically equivalent to amen. “And until when will they not believe Me” – until when will they be lax about answering amen, as was explained that one who is lax about this is like chalilah being mena’etz, blaspheming Heaven.

to a person, but it was not an issue in this case, because Moshe and Yehoshua were on such a lofty level that they no longer had bechirah chofshis, free choice.

Maharsha Brachos 10 a, Iyei Hayam, ibid, Brachos ibid; Ben Yehoyada Sotah 34b; Meshech Chochmah, Introduction to Chumash Shemos

### One Who Comes to Daven – Receives Assistance

“ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע” (יג טז)

“He prayed for him, ‘may Hashem save you from [joining] the counsel of the spies.’” (Rashi)

Why did Moshe daven only for Yehoshua and not for the other Meraglim? Wasn’t it the case that ‘at that time they were righteous’? (Rashi ibid 3)

The Chida explained:

Harav Shlomo Estruk explained that Moshe did not daven for Yehoshua not to be dragged into the sin of the Meraglim, because knowing his greatness Moshe was not concerned about it. His tefillah was only that he should be spared their wrath and they should not kill him when he expressed his opposition to their plan. Based on this we can understand why he did not need to daven for Kalev, because it is known (Rashi 14:24), that although Kalev did not agree with the Meraglim, he concealed his views from the others, and therefore, he was not at risk of their wrath.

Nachal Kedumim

### “Hosha” Corresponds to Yehoshua

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“He prayed for him, ‘may Hashem save you from [joining] the counsel of the spies.’” (Rashi, based on Sotah 34b)

In contrast to Yeshouah, who was saved from the plan of the Meraglim as the result of Moshe’s tefillah to Hashem, without needing to invoke the zechus avos, Kalev needed to daven at kivrei avos in Chevron in order to be spared. Likewise, we also do the same: in all our tefillos we first mentioned the zechus avos that we have, except for tefillos said in a time of danger. Then, we ask using the term “hosha” as an allusion to his tefillah when he did not mention zechus avos. As we learned (Brachos 28b): “One who is in a place of danger davens a short tefillah, he says, הושע השם את עמך, את שארית ישראל, בכל פרשת העבור [and even at a time when they are separating to do an aveirah] their needs should be before You.”

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## Tefillah on Time - A Privilege That Is an Obligation

Chazal say (Eichah Rabbah, Pesicha 10) when one engages in the affairs of his day without tiring, and only sees coming to tefillah on time as a burden and an exertion, and is therefore lazy about it, the passuk says of him (Yeshayah 43:22): “Velo Osi karasa Yaakov ki yagata Bi Yisrael, But you did not call Me, Yaakov, for you wearied of Me, Yisrael.”

ולא אתי קראת יעקב



Bney Emunim. The zerizim rise for Birchos Hashachar.

**Birchas Asher Yatzar – Rofei Kol Basar (1)**

**A Brilliant Masterpiece**

The *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar* begins with praise of Hashem “Who created man with wisdom”, and indeed, creation of man is the manifestation of wondrous Divine Wisdom.

Some sources in *Chazal* explain that with the word “*chochmah*,” we thank Hashem for the actual wisdom that He granted to us, through which we can recognize and delve into the tremendous *chassadim* that He has done with us from Creation to this day. And for that it is certainly worthy that we should use this wisdom to observe and study the depths of the wisdom and *chessed* contained in the creation of man. Through that we will thank Hashem from the bottom of our hearts.

In their explanation of this *brachah*, *Chazal* expounded in detail of the special wisdom that exists in the person’s bodily systems. We will cite a bit of what the *Avudraham* says in his description of the wisdom of Hashem in creating the human body:

“He made him eyes with which to see. He made him eyelids to close his eyes and sleep and not to look at bad things...He made holes in the ears to be able to hear through them...He made him the windpipe, through which the breath of life rises and descends from the heart from within the lung to the nostrils and to the mouth, and to utter the sound of speech that emerges from the bronchus of the lungs that come from the breath of life. He made him a heart to be a production house for the breath of life, and to think all thoughts...He made him the spleen on the left side of the black gall to cool the innards and the intestines and the stomach that they should not dry out and destroy the food and drink...And all that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created was only for the person’s needs and to

**Person All His Life**

*Chazal* offer a few explanations of the essence of the wisdom that we thank for in this *brachah*:

*Rashi* in *Brachos* (60a, beginning with *Umafti*, see *Bais Yosef Orach Chaim* 6, beginning with “*v’al*”) explained that our intention to thank for the special wisdom in the creation of a person, which we then detail: “And He created in him *nekavim nekavim chalulim chalulim*” because “the body is hollow like a wineskin, and if this wineskin has a single puncture, the air cannot remain inside it. HaKaodsh Baruch He created man with so much wisdom that despite the many punctures and holes, the person’s breath of life remains inside all his life – and this is most brilliant and remarkable.”

This is similar to someone who has a barrel of wine and he

commands his employee: ‘Break the barrel and keep the wine inside so that it should not spill.’ Anyone with common sense realizes that this is impossible. Yet, HaKadosh Baruch Hu created man like a flask full of air, with punctures, yet the air remains inside as long as the person lives.

**Gratitude for Preceding the Needs of the Person**

*Tosafos* (ibid beginning with *asher*) explains that this great wisdom in the creation of man is in the fact that his sustenance was prepared for him before he was created. In fact, man was created on Friday, after all the other creations that were made to serve him. The commentaries add that this is proven by the fact that as soon as a baby is born, his sustenance is waiting for him right away. (See *Tzelach Brachos* 10a)

Not only a person’s sustenance preceded his creation; a cure and balm for all of mankind’s maladies were also created. The way of the world is to measure the wisdom of the doctor by his ability to find a balm for every ailment. But even the wisest doctor cannot create a medicine for a disease that has not yet been seen in the world. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu foresaw to the end of all the generations, and even before the creation of man, He prepared a remedy for every ailment and every lack that would arise at any time. And that is the tremendous wisdom for which we thank Him. (*Avodas Yisrael, Shemos Parashas Zachor*)

**Gratitude for the Wisdom Given to Man**

Some commentaries (*Rabbeinu Manoach Tefillah* 7 5; *Maharsha* Vol. I *Brachos* ibid and others) did not explain the word “*bechochmah*” to apply to the creation of man, because all the traits of the body exist also in an animal as well. From the *nusach* of the *brachah* “*Asher yatzar es ha’adam...ubara bo*” it appears that our intention is to thank Hashem for the special wisdom that only humans have. Therefore, they explained that our gratitude is for the wisdom and the mind that Hashem granted mankind, thereby elevating us above animals.

But *Chazal* specifically established that we make this *brachah* when emerging from the restroom, because if not for that, the person would be prideful about his wisdom and that he is elevated above other creations. This could, *chalilah*, lead him to *kefirah*. But when emerging from the restroom, he recognizes how low he is and there is no concern that he will reach a state of pride. (*Shalmei Tzibbur* ibid, in the name of the *Megillas Sefer*)

**Tefillah Between the Pages of the Newspaper**

The *tzaddik* Harav Yitzchak Zilber, *zi”l*, Rosh Yeshivas Toldos Yeshurun, was renowned for having raised the glory of *bnei Torah* who emigrated from the Former Soviet Union with the network of *yeshivos* and *kollelim* that he established in Eretz Yisrael, which is still vibrant to this day.

His rise to greatness was strewn with tremendous obstacles, and it was not easy for him to have gotten to where he did.

Rav Yitzchak spent most of his life under the oppressive regime in the Soviet Union during the rule of the cruel despot, Stalin, *ym”s*. Together with his communist cohorts, Stalin was determined to eradicate any trace of the Jewish religion. Indeed, tragically, tens of thousands of Soviet Jews became assimilated among the gentiles, and almost lost their Jewish identity entirely. In Hashem’s great compassion, he left them with a handful of *mosrei nefesh*. Even amidst the thick darkness, they risked their lives and their freedom and with *mesirus nefesh*, kept the embers glowing and kindled more flames amongst the remnants of the glorious communities that had dotted the massive expanse. In time, as Communism fell, these small flames joined into a huge blaze that once again illuminated Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora.

One of those *mosrei nefesh* was Harav Yitzchak Zilber, *zi”l*, who, in his unique fashion, rose to greatness amidst tremendous difficulty. In time, he was able to get of Eretz Yisrael, where his light rose like the sun at dawn, illuminating the path for thousands who followed him. Towards the end of his life, those close to him compiled his very eventful life in the remarkable book entitled *To Remain a Jew [Lehisha’er Yehudi]*, which also contains the following story:

It was when Reb Yitzchak lived in the town of Stolevici, deep in the Russian steppe. Under the Communist regime, it was mandatory for every citizen – or comrade in their language – to work for his livelihood, because if not he was sentenced to death by starvation. So Reb Yitzchak had to serve as a math teacher in a nearby non-Jewish school.

Even when he was in the direst of straits, Reb Yitzchak did not compromise on the slightest nuance of his Torah observance, although it all had to be done clandestinely. Three *tefillos* a day, *Shacharis, Minchah* and *Maariv* were a daily challenge, because as part of his job he had to be in school from early in the morning. When he was home he could not daven, because he shared one apartment with a hostile Russian gentile who kept him under constant scrutiny. As such, he had to find a solution that would enable him to daven without being discovered.

When he arrived at work in the school he began scouting for a concealed place in the building where he could daven regularly. He eventually came upon a pair of huge doors at the entrance to one of the building’s wings. The wide doors were always open and one of them formed a large enough niche behind it where he could stand and daven quickly. Reb Yitzchak designated this as his regular place to daven. In the morning, before lessons began, after reciting *Pesukei Dezimrah* on his way to school, he lay *tefillin* and davened *Shemoneh Esrei* in this corner. He davened *Minchah* during the lunch break and *Maariv* after the school day ended.

Another advantage of this *tefillah* corner was that there remained a crack between the door and the wall through which Reb Yitzchak could catch sight of unwanted guests, especially his students, who occasionally looked for him.

One day, Reb Yitzchak was a bit delayed, and the moment he was about to begin *Shemoneh Esrei*, he heard the clanging bell heralding the

end of the break. All teachers and students were expected to enter their classrooms.

In Communist Russia there was no such concept as ‘late’ and Reb Yitzchak was compelled to cut his *tefillah* short to enter the classroom. However, at this point in the davening he was not allowed to speak, and Reb Yitzchak, who was scrupulous in his observance, decided that he would not speak no matter what.

Instead of speaking, Reb Yitzchak pointed out to his students the page number in the book with the exercises they needed to solve. Then he wrote his instructions on the board. He hoped this would carry him to the end of the lesson. But instead of obeying his instructions, the shocked students stared at him in alarm. Innocently, they thought that the teacher did not want to speak to them because he was angry. All they wanted to know now was – why?

“Why is the teacher angry?” one of them dared express his worry aloud. “Did we do something wrong? If so, please tell us what and we’ll try to fix our mistake.” But Reb Yitzchak did not respond. He actually decided to play along with them, and instead of answering, he squinted his eyes and scowled as though trying to contain his anger. He remained silent this way until the end of the lesson.

When the lesson ended, he quickly left the classroom, straight to his corner...By the end of the short break he was able to finish davening, and then returned to class. This time, he put on a calm expression, which caused his students again, to express their concern: “What was the teacher angry about?”

“Don’t you remember that last week you ran away from the classroom to a show in the middle of the day?” Reb Yitzchak pretended that he did not understand what they were so surprised about. “Did you think I would just let it pass?!” The students lowered their eyes in shame.

Another time when he could not daven in his regular corner, Reb Yitzchak had to find an alternate solution. With his creative mind he crafted an escape plan. He approached the newspaper stand near the school, picked up one of the papers, and pretended to read it, as his lips murmured the *tefillah*.

But at that moment one of the teachers, named *Terasovich*, decided to consult him about a mathematical problem he was grappling with. *Terasovich* was known as a sworn Communist who always tattled on anyone who he suspected in the slightest of opposing the regime.

Even in this dangerous time, Reb Yitzchak preferred to find a creative solution that would make it possible for him to refrain from talking in the middle of *Shemoneh Esrei*. When *Terasovich* clapped him on the back and began presenting his question, Reb Yitzchak clutched at his chest and grimaced, as he groaned in pain, as if he was experiencing a heart attack.

*Terasovich* became alarmed and hurried to the office to order an ambulance. Meanwhile, Reb Yitzchak finished the *tefillah* and was able to reassure his colleague that everything was fine. He was feeling much better....

Thus, with *siyata diShmaya* Reb Yitzchak was able to get through those torturous years without foregoing even one *tefillah k’halachah*. Apparently his *tefillos* are what helped him ultimately escape from behind the Iron Curtain, physically and spiritually sound, and to make *Aliyah* to the Holy Land and teach thousands of students the path of Torah.

*To Remain a Jew [Lehisha’er Yehudi]*, p. 158