

# Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS BALAK

תש"פ

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### The Power of the Mouth Is Exclusive to Am Yisrael

"ותרא האתון את מלאך ה' נצב בדרך וחרבו שלופה בידו" (כב כג)

"[The Angel of Hashem] said: This evil one abandoned the tools of his trade – for the weapon of the gentile nations is the sword, and he accosted them with his mouth, which is their calling. So I will take hold of his [tool], and accost him with his calling." (Rashi, based on *Bamidbar Rabbah* 20 13)

Harav Shabsai Meshorer-Bass wrote that the words of the *Midrash* are alluded to in the *passuk* itself. The word "*shelufah*" is written *malei* (with a *vav*), in contrast to the way it is written hence, in *passuk* 31: שלפה – without the *vav*. This shows that the angel meant to say to Bilam: "שלו פה" – the power of the mouth belongs to Yaakov, and you have no right to use it against him.

*Sifsei Chachamim*

### In Order to Rise a Jew, One Must Go to Bed as a Jew

"הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי יתנשא לא ישכב עד יאכל טרף" (כג כד)

The *Bais Yosef* began the *Shulchan Aruch* with a directive: "Rise up like a lion to stand up in the morning to serve the Creator". The *Rema* adds: "And when he goes to bed, he should know before Who he is laying." Harav Meir of Premishlan asks: Didn't the *Shulchan Aruch* speak about rising in the morning? Why is that connected to the words of the *Rema* regarding sleeping? He explained that the *Rema* wanted to give a good piece of advice in order to fulfill the directive of the *Shulchan Aruch*: "One should rise up like a young lion to stand in the morning to serve the Creator" – because already when lying in bed he should know before Who he is lying.

Based on this Harav Yosef Aryeh Fish,

### "Like a Young Lion He Will Rise and Like a Lion He Will Lift Himself" - In the Merit of Amen

"הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי יתנשא" (כג כד)

The early maggid Rabi Yaakov Di Elba explained:

"הן עם כלביא" – the acronym of the final letters is amen. This alludes to answering amen at the end of each *brachah*. The word יקום contains ביום ק', one hundred in a day, an allusion to the one hundred *brachos* that Am Yisrael is careful to make each day. Bilam said to Balak: I cannot harm Am Yisrael with my curse because they rise up against me like a lion in the merit of their adherence to answering amen and saying one hundred *brachos* a day. As the *Tanna Devei Eliyahu* says (*Raba* 10) on the *passuk* (*Shoftim* 5:2): "*Bifroa pera'os b'Yisrael, b'hinadev am barchu Hashem*," – "through whom did HaKadosh Baruch Hu take revenge for Am Yisrael on the nations of the world? Through people who go to shul in the morning and evening and answer amen and bless HaKadosh Baruch Hu..."

*Toldos Yaakov* [Venice 5369]

Based on this, the president of Bnei Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein explained the *Rashi* on this *passuk*: "When they rise from their slumber in the morning, they are as vigorous as the young lion and the lion, to snatch the *mitzvos*." It would seem that the word '*lachtof*,' to snatch, needs explanation. Is that how *mitzvos* are done?

But based on the words of Harav Yaakov Di Elba, that this *passuk* alludes to answering amen, we can explain that *Rashi* meant to allude in his words to the *mitzvah* of answering amen. When a person comes to shul, he must utilize every moment to grab more and more amens, and through that, to become a '*shomer emunim*' one who sincerely guards this *mitzvah* and waits with anticipation for another amen to present itself.

Av Bais Din of Hadad, explained the order of this *passuk*: How does Am Yisrael merit to have the words "*hen am kelavi yakum uk'ari yisnasa*" fulfilled? By fulfilling the words "*lo yishkav ad yochal teref*". As *Rashi* explains: "How is this? He recites *Krias Shema* at night and entrusts his soul in the Hand of Hashem," because only someone who "when lying in bed knows before Who he is laying" merits to rise like a lion.

*Divrei Meir Likutim; Divrei Yosef*

### The Bais Medrash of Yaakov – In Our Day

"מה טוב אהליך יעקב משכנתך ישראל" (כד ה)

"How pleasant are your *batei medrash* in the tent, in which Yaakov your father served," (*Targum Yonasan*); "How good are your tents in which their father Yaakov prayed," (*Targum Yerushalmi*).

From the fact that Bilam praised specifically the shul in which Yaakov Avinu prayed, Harav Yissachar Dov Babad, the Rav of Buska, learned a source for the custom of Klal Yisrael to try and daven in a place where a great person previously prayed.

However, Harav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, Rosh Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov, asks: Did Yaakov serve in those tents in which Am Yisrael davened? Didn't he learn and pray in the *bais medrash* of Shem V'Ever?

He answered: Bilam's intention was each and every shul and *bais medrash* in Am Yisrael, because the Torah and the *tefillah* there are an inheritance from Yaakov Avinu, who engaged in them all his life, and therefore they are called in his name. It is through his power that the *tefillah* offered there is accepted, and that we merit to understand Torah in them to this day.

*Otzar Yad Hachaim, Clalim, Bais Knesses; Zahav Misheva*

The first *halachah* in *Shulchan Aruch*, "he should strengthen himself like a lion to rise in the morning to serve his Creator," is based on the *passuk* that we read in this *parashah* (*Bamidbar* 23:24): "*Hen am kelavi yakum uk'ari yisnasa*."

Fellow Yid!

This is the time to strengthen oneself in the *mitzvah* of '*hisgaber k'ari*' and to come to shul early and merit many *mitzvos* and *tefillah* according to *halachah*, with *kavanah*.

**Bnei Emunim - Rising for Birchos Hashachar**

הן עם  
כלביא יקום  
וכארי  
יתנשא





## Birchas Elokai Neshamah (1)

## A Gift Called 'Neshamah'

The Torah describes the order of the creation of man (*Bereishis* 2:7) as such: First HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the body of man – “*afar min ha'adamah*”, earth from the ground, and when the body was perfected with all its limbs and organs, He infused it with *neshamah*, as it says “*vayipach b'apav nishmas chaim*”, and He blew the breath of life into his nose. Then, “*Vayehi ha'adam lenefesh chayah*,” man became a living soul.

In *Birchos Hashachar* we thank Hashem in this same order. After thanking Hashem in *Asher Yatzar* for the wondrous body He gifted us with, it behooves us to thank Him for the main thing – restoring our pure souls to our body each day. It is the *neshamah* that gives our body life and enables us to fulfill the Torah and *mitzvos*. And through the *neshamah*, we merit to cleave to the Shechinah. (*Darchei Moshe Orach Chaim* 62)

This gratitude is especially important prior to standing before Him in prayer, because it contains a declaration and a reminder for us that the purpose for which we were given a *neshamah* is to strengthen our service of Hashem – and *tefillah* is a central tenet of that *avodas Hashem*. (*Sifsei Kohein al HaTorah*, *Devarim* 4:6)

The primary principle of the *brachah* of *Elokai Neshamah* is gratitude for the fact that Hashem restores our soul each morning for another day of *avodas Hashem*, after it rose On High for the night to give a reckoning to the Creator (*Levush Orach Chaim* 46 2). However, in actuality, in this *brachah* we also thank for the fact that the *neshamah* exists and was given to us during Creation. The *neshamah* is the spiritual force that guides us and forges our path in the service of Hashem. It is similar to a long rope that has been sent down from On High to this world. Its root is in the Hands of Hashem, and the other end is in the body of a person. Through this rope, the person can always connect his soul to holiness. (*Reishis Chochmah*, *Ahavah* 3, *Olos Tamid* 7)

## The Body and the Neshamah

Because the objective of the person's descent to this earth is to fulfill the Will of the Creator, it is important for us to remember how decisive a role the *neshamah* plays toward this end. Without it, the physical body would constantly be hankering after the desires of this world, and we would never reach the purpose of our creation. As the Chofetz Chaim explained in his beautiful parable:

There was once a wagon driver who had a hefty horse that had accompanied him for decades. Together, the wagon driver and his horse traversed the road going up to the big city and back, sometimes even a few times a day, carrying passengers and merchandise.

The horse had taken the route so many times that he became experienced. Without needed special instructions, he traveled the route quickly, stopped where he had to, turned where he had to, and safely carried the passengers to their destination.

One morning, they were out on a routine drive. After a long night of no sleep, the wagon driver felt his eyes closing. In normal times, he would have politely asked the passengers to allow him a half an

hour nap on the road. But that day, he was hurrying. So he had a foolish idea: My loyal horse knows the way; what will happen if I fall asleep on my seat for a bit and let him lead the carriage to our destination?!

And that's what he did. A moment later, his head slumped down on the seat, while the carriage continued its journey. At first, the ride was smooth, but after a few minutes, the carriage began to rock wildly. Before the wagon driver realized what was going on, it has tipped over on its side, spilling out the passengers and the merchandise.

The wagon driver learned the hard way that although his horse was smart, he was still a horse, and when he saw the grass growing on the side of the road, nothing could stop him from getting to it, at any cost.

Our physical bodies are like that 'smart' horse: it constantly wants to stray from the path to pursue trivial pleasures. If not for the only tool that can stop it – the *neshamah*, which is the G-dly part of us, it would be mired in worldly pleasures completely. How much must we therefore thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for this precious gift. (*Telalei Oros*, *Tefillah* Vol. 1, p. 66)

## Tehorah Hie

At the beginning of the *brachah* we note that the *neshamah* is “*tehorah*”, pure. We learn about the purity and holiness of the *neshamah* from the words of Chazal (*Brachos* 10a): “Like HaKadosh Baruch Hu fills the whole world, the *neshamah* fills the whole body. Like HaKadosh Baruch Hu sees and cannot be seen – the *neshamah* sees and is not seen. Like HaKadosh Baruch Hu nourishes the entire world, the *neshamah* nourishes the entire body; like HaKadosh Baruch Hu is pure, so is the *neshamah* pure; like HaKadosh Baruch Hu dwells in the inner sanctum, the *neshamah* also resides in the inner sanctum. So someone who has these five attributes should come and praise the One Who has these five attributes.”

In the *nusach* of the *brachah* we emphasize that the *neshamah* is “*tehorah hie*” – even in its current state. Even though it is in such a physical body, it remains in its pure state (*Peirushei Siddur Tefillah L'Rokeach*). And even if it is wrapped in layers of filth, as a result of the person's sins, beneath all the coverings “it is pure.” Therefore, we can always repent, and sanctify and purify ourselves through the *neshamah* (see *Ohr Hachaim Vayikra* 23:15). However, some write not to say “*tehorah hie*,” and rather to say “*tehorah*”, as the Mekubalim wrote (*Sha'ar Hakavanos Birchos Hashachar* 12) that in this *brachah* there are exactly 47 words. If we say “*hie*”, then it will have 48 words (*Shalmei Tzibbur* 46). Moreover, our intention is not to say “*tehorah hie*”, today, after we have sinned so much, but rather that it was pure at the time when it was placed in us (*Kesher Gadol* [Chida] 5 8).

This knowledge that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave us a pure soul is very uplifting, and at the same time it obligates us. If the soul inside us, which gives us our life, is the G-dly part of us and is so pure, then it behooves us to preserve it in its pure state, and to use the endless power that it has to serve Hashem with purity, and not *chalilah* to misappropriate it this precious deposit that was given to us. (*Nefesh Shimshon*, *Tefillah*, p. 90)

## One Amen Tipped the Scale

This unique story took place a few years ago during a luxurious *Shabbos hisachdus* held for the donors of a well-known Torah institution in Eretz Yisrael.

The production of such a *Shabbos* is a tremendous logistical operation, which requires huge financial resources and human effort. In order to get the most out of such a *Shabbos*, lots of advance preparation and detailed planning is required. But all the effort is worth it in order to be able to express gratitude to those donors who regularly share their fortune with the institution. Aside for that, the investment is usually worthwhile and productive, as the hearts of the participants open and they feel connected – thus leading to increases in their monthly donations.

The *Shabbos seudos* were generous and elegant, and top tier lecturers delivered inspiring *drashos*. The *Shabbos tefillos* included talented *chazzanim*, and generated an uplifted atmosphere.

On *Shabbos* morning, after *Shacharis*, before taking the *sefer Torah* out from the *aron*, the *gabbai* banged on the *bimah* and announced that he would be selling all the *aliyos* and *kibbudim* to the highest bidder. The money would go towards expanding the *mosdos*.

“One thousand dollars – Kohein” the *gabbai* announced. And the bidding began. This *aliyah* was ultimately sold for six thousand dollars, but from one *aliyah* to the next, the prices kept rising. The most distinguished donors were all competing over the more honorable *aliyos*.

Slowly, all the *kibbudim* were sold – and just the final *aliyah* remained. There was an especially vigorous contest for this one. The administration of the *mosdos* wanted to sell it to the highest bidder, because the money would come into very good use. At the same time, many of the guests wanted to have the *aliyah*, whether to augment their own prestige, or to be the “*acharon acharon chaviv*,” the best is the last.

The *gabbai* began the bidding and the price quickly spiked. As the price rose, bidders dropped out, until just two people remained. The first announced: “\$24,000,” and the assembled waited with bated breath. Would he earn the *aliyah*? But after a few

seconds – which felt like much longer – his friend announced: “Twenty five thousand.”

Silence hung in the air. The first bidder seemed to be mulling over whether to give up. But then, things took a surprising turn. From the corner of the shul, one of the wealthy men stood up. He was a quiet, introverted man, and until that point had not participated in the bidding at all. Now, he announced loudly: “I'm ready to double the price to fifty thousand dollars!”

A lower rumble rippled through the crowd, and then the man continued, with tears in his eyes:

“I have just one condition for the sale: My son, who got married more than seven years ago, has not yet merited to have children. I am ready to pay for this *aliyah* fifty thousand dollars, on condition that after I have the *aliyah*, while I am standing in front of the *sefer Torah*, the *gabbai* will make a *Mi Shebeirach* in the merit of my son and his wife to see a *yeshuah*. And when he finishes, everyone here should join the *brachah* by answering amen.”

Of course, they all nodded, eager to comply with the man's request. After all, an additional twenty-five thousand dollars was nothing to sneeze at, especially in return for a most modest request. The *gabbai* announced: “Sold!”

The *baal korei* began to *lein*. One after another, the *gyirim* came up for their *aliyos*. When it came time for the last one, the *gabbai* called up in a sing song voice: “*Yaaleh, Ploni ben Ploni*,” and the man came up for his *aliyah*. After the reading, when the *oleh* completed the *brachah* of *Asher Nasan*, there was silence in the shul. The *gabbai* recited a *Mi Shebeirach* for a *yeshuah* for his son. When he finished, the *gabbai* sang out “*Venomar amen*” and a thunderous “amen!” resounded through the shul.

It felt like a bolt of spirituality had electrified the air. Suddenly, the listener sensed the power of the amen that they uttered dozens of times a day. Everyone was sure that the *tefillah* would be accepted.

Needless to say, less than a year after that event, the wealthy man's son finally merited to have a baby boy, after so many years.

Heard from a participant at the *Shabbos*