

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



343

PARASHAS EIKEV

תש"פ

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Tefillah 'Transfers' the Decree

"וכל מדוי מצרים הרעים אשר ידעת לא ישמם בך ונתנם בכל שנאיד" (ז טו)

What is the blessing in the words "*unesanam bechol sonecha*, but will give them to all your enemies"? Isn't it enough to bless with "*lo yesimam bach*, He will not place upon you"?

Harav Meir of Premishlan explains:

The Mishnah (Brachos 34b) says that Rabi Chanina ben Dosa would pray for the sick, and then he would say "*zeh chai*, this one lives" – when his tefillah was accepted, and "*zeh meis*, this one dies" – when his tefillah was not accepted. Why then, when his tefillah was not accepted, and it was decreed for the person to pass away, did he have to state this? Don't Chazal say (Pesachim 3b) say about one who shares bad news that (Mishlei 10:18): "*Umotzei dibah hu ksil*, one who spreads slander is a fool?" It can be explained as follows: Rabi Chanina knew that disease cannot disappear from the world, but with the power of tefillah it can be transferred from a Jew to a non-Jew. Therefore, he prayed and said "*zeh [Yehudi] chai*" and "*this [non-Jew] dies*" – in his stead.

Hence we can explain this passuk: "*Vechol madvei Mitzrayim...lo yesimem bach*, and all the harmful diseases of Egypt, He will not place upon you" – and even if a sickness is decreed upon the person – He "will give them to all your enemies."

We can similarly explain the tefillah of "*Unesaneh Tokef*" as follows: "*U'teshuvah u'tefillah u'tzedakah ma'avirin es roa hazezeirah*" – the decree is transferred from the Jews to their enemies.

Harav Yaakov Edelstein once poured out his heart to the holy cobbler Rav Moshe Yaakov Ravikov, that that a relative had fallen critically ill and the doctors had despaired of curing her. "Tell her that she should go into the street and look for a random non-Jew," the cobbler advised Rav Yaakov. "When she finds one she should go over to him and say: 'Take my illness as a gift...'"

### Remember Hashem Despite the Power

"וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנתן לך כח לעשות חיל" (ח יח)

The Ksav Sofer explains:

Those people who are blessed with success in their endeavors, even though they invest minimal effort but see much blessing, clearly realize that their *parnassah* comes directly from Above. It is not so praiseworthy on their part that they recognize "because He is the One Who gives you strength to be successful." But when those who earn a living with tremendous toil and effort still recognize the fact that their *parnassah* comes from Above – that indicates the intensity and strength of their *emunah*.

Chazal allude to their greatness, saying (Shabbos 119b): "Anyone who answers amen *bechol kocho*, with all this strength, has the gates of Gan Eden open to him." In other words, someone who toils for his *parnassah* "with all his strength" and power, and still "answers amen" – with the pure *emunah* that all this good comes to him from Above, will surely merit to be saved from sin and the gates of Gan Eden will be open before him.

Shu"t Ksav Sofer, Orach Chaim 29

She heeded the cobbler's words, and right after that, her situation began to improve until she was completely cured. The disease seemed to have been passed to that non-Jew.

Marganisa DeRabi Meir; Likutei Rabi Moshe Yaakov Vol. I, at beginning of the sefer

### "Yemin Hashem Osah Chayil"

"ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך...; השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך..." (ח י"א)

The Ksav Sofer explains:

From the closeness of these to *pesukim* to one another it appears that the mitzvah of *bentsching* after eating is intended to engrain in our hearts that our sustenance and

livelihood are not dependent on "my strength and the power of my hand" but on the Creator alone, Who gives us the strength to succeed. Therefore, Chazal say (Brachos 51a) that when one makes a *brachah* on a cup, he should hold it in his right hand while he does so, because this makes it clear that he believes that his *parnassah* does not come from "the power of his hand" but rather "the Right Hand of Hashem deals valiantly" (Tehillim 118:15).

Shu"t Ksav Sofer, Orach Chaim 29

### An Innocent Prayer Opens the Gates of Heaven

"ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר" (יא יז)

The Rebbe Harav Moshe Eliyakim Beriayah of Kozhnitz related:

In the days of the holy Baal Shem Tov, there was a severe drought. The *tzaddikim* decreed a fast day and cried out in tefillah to Hashem, but they were not answered. One day, the Baal Shem Tov noticed that one of the simple townfolk was reciting *Krias Shema*. When this person reached the passuk "*V'atzar es hashamayim velo yihyeh matar*" (11:17), he suddenly burst into tears and cried from the depths of his heart. After the davening, the Baal Shem Tov asked him, "My son, what did you have in mind when you said this passuk with such emotion?" And the villager replied innocently: "I davened to Hashem, 'Riboono Shel Olam, please, with Your compassion, 'va'atzar' – squeeze [from the language of 'atziras zeisim v'anavim', squeezing olives and grapes] the heavens' until 'lo yihyeh matar' there should be no rains left inside them, because it will all come down to us..."

Within the hour, rains began to fall, and the Baal Shem Tov revealed to his *talmidim* that this pure tefillah is what had brought the *yeshuah*, because "*Kudsha Berich Hu liba ba'i*" (Sanhedrin 106b) – HaKadosh Baruch Hu especially loves the tefillos that are said with heartfelt *kavanah* and deep concentration.

Be'er Moshe, Shemini Atzeres



"ועתה ינשאל מה [מאה] ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך"

Dear Yid,

The mitzvah of *Meah Brachos* accompanies us all day, from *Birchos Hashachar*, established so that we can reach this quota of one hundred *brachos* a day (Tur Orach Chaim 46) to the last *brachos* we make each day.

Take note of what Rabbeinu Bechaye writes in this parashah (Devarim 8:10) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not need our *brachos*; rather, we need them. They protect us from all trouble and bring upon us an abundance of *brachah*.

100brachos a day - slowly, with kavanah, bechavrusa.



## Taaneh Emunim

Insights into the Virtues of  
Hashkamas Bais Hamedrash

### Learning the Pesukim of Birchas Kohanim (1)

#### Learning Torah Right After Birchas Kohanim

There is a well-known *halachah* that all the *brachos* on *mitzvos* are said right before the *mitzvah* we are blessing for is performed; there is no *hefsek* between the *brachah* and the *mitzvah* – over *l'asiyas* (see *Pesachim* 7b). Likewise, after making the *brachah* on the *mitzvah* of Torah learning, one should learn a bit in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of Torah learning right after the *brachah* for it (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 47:9; *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 19). As such, the ones who arranged the *tefillah* established that we should learn some *pesukim* from the Torah right after *Birchas HaTorah*. It is for this reason that the early sages (see *Tosafos Brachos* 11b, beginning with *'shekvar'*) chose the *pesukim* of *Birchas Kohanim*, which the Kohanim recite when they bless Am Yisrael with love, as they were commanded. *Birchas Kohanim* is made up of three *pesukim*, and three *pesukim* is considered substantial learning that is worthy of having a *brachah* made on it, as we find that one who goes up to the Torah must read at least three *pesukim*. (*Divrei Chamudos* [by *Tosafos Yom Tov*] on the *Rosh Brachos* 1:75)

Some have a custom of reciting *Birchas Kohanim* in its entirety from "*Vayedaber*" until "*V'Ani Avarchem*", so that it should be recognizable that we are saying these *pesukim* as a way of learning and not as a *tefillah* or *brachah*. (*Siddur Tzelosa D'Avraham* p. 14)

#### Why Specifically Birchas Kohanim?

There are many reasons why these particular *pesukim* were chosen with which to fulfill the *mitzvah* of learning after the *brachah*. Following are a number of them (and see *sefer Yevarechecha Hashem*, in the introduction, which brings 26 reasons for this):

Harav Avraham Hayarchi explained that because in *Birchas HaTorah* we make a *brachah* both on the Torah *Shebichsav* and the Oral Torah (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 47b), they chose these *pesukim* that have 60 letters, corresponding to the sixty *masechtos* of *Shas*. (*Sefer Hamanhig, Tefillah* 13)

The *sefer Seder Hayom* (*Birchos Hashachar*), explains that it was established this way "in order to begin our learning with a something good and a *brachah*, so that we should be blessed by Hashem with a complete *brachah* and that we can engage in Torah as per the *din*, properly, without disruptive thoughts and burdens."

Another explanation is that these *pesukim* are used because even young children and simple people recognize them. This way, these people will also fulfill their obligations of learning Torah, because everyone is equal in these *pesukim*, as all Jews can say and understand them. (*Eshel Avraham* [Rav Avraham Dovid of Butchatch] 47a)

#### Three Pesukim - A Treasure of Brachos

*Birchas Kohanim* is divided into three *pesukim*, which include in them all the *brachos* that a person needs: The first *passuk* includes a *brachah* for material matters. The second, for spiritual matters, and the third is the *brachah* of shalom, of peace. But in actuality,

*Birchas Kohanim* includes six *brachos*, because each *passuk* has two *brachos*: 1. *Yevarechecha* 2. *Veyishmerecha* 3. *Ya'er* 4. *Vichuneka* 5. *Yisa* 6. *Shalom*. (*Levush Orach Chaim* 128:45; *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 170)

There are many explanations for this *brachah*, whose each and every word contains explicit and implicit meanings. In this segment, which relates to its inclusion in *Birchos Hashachar*, we will try to present the basic concepts explained in *Chazal*.

#### "If There's No Flour, There's No Torah"

In the first *brachah*, "*Yevarechecha Hashem*," the Kohanim bless Am Yisrael that their assets should multiply (*Rashi Bamidbar* 6:24, based on *Bamidbar Rabbah* 11 5). This *brachah* teaches us that the success of a person is in the Hands of Heaven; he may try to take action, but ultimately it is "the idea of Hashem that will stand." *Chazal* (ibid) expound on the significance of this *brachah*, and explain that it includes all the *brachos* mentioned in *Parashas Ki Savo* (*Devarim* 28:1-14).

Indeed, it is clear that the focus of a Jew's aspirations need to be about spiritual matters and not material ones. But in actuality, the material abundance has an effect on spiritual success, as *Chazal* say (*Avos* 3:15): "*Im ein kemach ein Torah*, if there is no flour there is no Torah." Therefore, they preceded it with a special *brachah*. (*Seforno* ibid)

#### A Brachah With a Shemirah

The second *brachah* in this *passuk* – "*Veyishmerecha*" – completes the *brachah* of wealth that precedes it. Unlike a flesh and blood king, who, after giving a gift to his servant cannot be sure that the gift will be preserved, HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Almighty, and He can give from His generous Hand. And He can also make sure that His gift is guarded by the recipient, and will be protected against those who seek to do bad. (*Rashi* ibid, according to *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ibid)

*Chazal* further explain (ibid) "*Veyishmerecha*" – from the *yetzer hara*. This *brachah* also complements the preceding blessing for wealth, because someone who has been blessed with wealth is more vulnerable to the dangers of being tempted by the *yetzer hara*. As the *passuk* says (*Mishlei* 30:9): "*Pen esba vekichashti v'amarti mi Hashem, lest I become sated and deny, and I say 'Who is Hashem?'*" Therefore, the Kohanim make this *brachah* that even if Hashem blesses a person with assets, He should protect him from the *yetzer hara*. (*Emek Hanetziv, Nasso*, 40)

Moreover, aside for the fact that someone who is blessed with wealth needs extra protection from sin, he also needs a special *brachah* that he should use his wealth for the purpose for which it was intended – to help fulfill Torah and *mitzvos*. That is why *Chazal* added (*Bamidbar Rabbah* ibid) the word "*Veyishmerecha*" – that you should do *mitzvos* with it, and use the money for *tzaddakah* and *chesed*, and through that, you should merit that Hashem should continue to bestow upon you an abundance of blessing (*Chiddushei Harad*'al, ibid).

## Maaseh Emunim

Pearls and Insights on  
Birchas Hamazon

### Two Kidneys and a Kallah – In the Merit of One Amen

This story was related by Rabbi Yoel Gold, *shlita*, a Rav in Los Angeles, who heard the story from who it happened to, Reb Freddy Betesh:

The story begins in Eretz Yisrael, after Freddy had been learning for three years in yeshivah there, during which time he strengthened his observance of Torah and *mitzvos*. One day, he began to feel unwell, and with each passing day, his condition grew worse. First it was erratic headaches, and then he began vomiting frequently, which exhausted him. Within a short time, he'd lost nearly 30 pounds. At this point, he told his mother what was going on, and she quickly bought a ticket and boarded a flight. When she arrived, one look at her son was enough to realize that something was seriously wrong. She quickly took him to the hospital.

In the emergency room, Freddy underwent comprehensive testing. The results were not long in coming, but the doctors – stunned at the seemingly unreasonable diagnosis – wanted to do the tests again, in case there had been a mistake. But after the results came up identical to the first test, there was no recourse for the doctor other than to deliver the bad news to mother and son: Freddy was suffering from acute kidney failure. His kidneys had stopped working and he would need dialysis to take over their function.

Freddy went from being a young, healthy *bachur* to a sick young man whose life depended on the dialysis machines. After an initial course of dialysis, Freddy returned to America, and was immediately placed on a waiting list for a kidney transplant. This list is about 100,000 people long.

Based on the national average, he would have to wait about eight years for his turn to come. But Freddy knew that dialysis patients didn't usually live longer than five years – and that he needed a miracle to survive.

\*

Freddy liked to read, and when he got ahold of a book that was published at that time, entitled *Just One Word – Amen!*, he read it voraciously from beginning to end. The book speaks about the power of *tefillah* and of answering amen, and it introduced Freddy to the concept of a *seudas amenim*, or a *brachos* party. He showed the book to his mother and she liked the idea, and believed that perhaps in the merit of this *mitzvah* they would merit a *yeshuah*. She decided to organize such an event as a merit for Freddy's recovery.

The next day, Freddy's mother attended the weekly *shiur* in a shul in their area. When the Rav finished the *shiur*, she spoke to the other women there and related that her son was unwell and she wanted to make a *brachos* party in his merit. "Can anyone here help me organize such a thing?" she asked. One of the young women there immediately volunteered to help.

Within a short time, Freddy's mother and the young volunteer organized a lavish *amen seudah*. One hundred and twenty women participated, and each one, at her turn, made a *brachah* on a food, and the rest answered amen. The party took place on Wednesday, and three days later, during the Shabbos *seudah*, the phone suddenly rang.

Freddy relates: "We were sitting at the Shabbos morning *seudah* and suddenly we heard the phone ring. The answering machine picked up and we heard the following message: 'This is the Montifiore Kidney Transplant Center, and you, Frederick Betesh, have just won the lottery. Congratulations! We have a one-out-of-10 million perfect matching kidney for you. Please call us back as soon as possible.'"

Due to the *pikuach nefesh* involved, Freddy picked up the phone. The secretary told him that a short time earlier, a person with a matching kidney had died in an accident in Texas. Freddy needed to get to the hospital immediately.

"You've been put at the top of the waiting list, because the DNA of this kidney matched your kidney almost perfectly – or as the doctors said: 'a six antigen match.'"

"I didn't just say you won the lottery," the secretary added, "because the chances of a full match with all six antigens is one in ten million – the same as hitting all six numbers in the Powerball lottery."

Eight days later, Freddy was out of the hospital, with a new kidney and on the road to a new life. His health was restored, and he became the energetic, vibrant young man he had been beforehand.

In an act of gratitude, Freddy's mother called the girl who had helped her organize the *amen seudah* and told her about their wondrous *yeshuah*. As they chatted pleasantly, she had an idea...

When she hung up the phone, she contacted the girl's family and suggested her son as a *shidduch* for her. Three months later, they were engaged. Ten years passed, during which time Freddy and his wife adopted the *mitzvah* of *amen* as an integral part of their family life.

This beautiful story could have ended here, and left the readers with the impression of the power of *amen*. But Hashgachah ordained a no less remarkable continuation.

Ten years after the transplant, Freddy began to feel unwell again. Red lights flashed in his brain and he immediately went for testing. He found out that his fears were well founded, and his implanted kidney had stopped working. The doctors explained that a kidney that is harvested from a deceased person usually has a "shelf life" of ten years – which he had received to the maximum. So Freddy found himself hospitalized again for dialysis. Again, he was put on the lengthy waiting list...

The Betesh family continued to strengthen itself in the *mitzvah* of answering amen, and in their *emunah* in Hashem. And the *yeshuah* once again arrived: It was on a particularly difficult night, after an exhausting day of treatment, and Freddy and his wife felt on the verge of despair. And then the phone in Freddy's pocket rang...

On the other end was Moshe, Freddy's young brother, who had grown stronger in his observance thanks to his brother. His voice was choked with tears as he informed them that just a few minutes earlier, he had received a positive result.

"I couldn't watch you suffer so much," Moshe explained. "I thought to myself: you gave me real life, the life of Torah and *mitzvos*; hasn't the time come for me to pay you back with life?!" So I secretly took tests for compatibility to donate a kidney to you, and the doctors were stunned: my kidney is a match for you – with six antigens! You know that that means, and what the chances of it happening are..." Moshe concluded.

A short time later the surgery took place. Moshe's kidney was removed and implanted into his older brother's body – giving him back his life...

Reb Freddy concludes his remarkable story:

"The chances of getting a kidney that has a six antigen compatibility twice, and while doing so to find my *zivug* – are virtually nil. And to think that it is all in the merit of one word – amen – is simply unbelievable! The effect that these many *amens* generated Above apparently caused all the *brachos* to be channeled to us and on our behalf.

"You should make a significant effort to listen to *brachos* and answer amen. You will merit a small moment of genuine and pure connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and it's likely that tremendous miracles will be bestowed upon you as a result. By answering amen, you generate a 'spiritual force' that will work on your behalf and will help you obtain all the gifts and *brachos* that you are so waiting for."