

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



339

PARASHAS PINCHAS

תש"פ

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

The Segulah of Tefillah Lasts Through the Generations

"ויכפר על בני ישראל" (כה ג)

The *passuk* in *Tehillim* praises Pinchas (106:30-31): "Va'ayamod Pinchas vayepalel....ad olam, Pinchas stood up and executed justice, and the plague was stopped. It was accounted for him as a merit, for generation to generation to eternity." Why was Pinchas' deed considered so great that it was considered a merit for eternity, more than the action of Aharon, who also halted the plague through the *Ketoress*, as it says earlier (17:13): "Va'ayamod bein hameisim, he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague ceased"?

The *Tiferes Shlomo* explained:

Aharon stopped the plague through an action that was effective only for the generations that lived during the time of the Mikdash, when it was possible to bring the *Ketoress*. In contrast, Pinchas gave Am Yisrael a method to halt plague in all generations, as he stopped it with the power of *tefillah*, which is practiced in every generation. Therefore, the *passuk* held this in great esteem and notes: "litzedakah ledor vador ad olam."

Tiferes Shlomo, Tehillim

The New Brachah of the Children of Korach

"ובני קרח לא מתו" (כו יא)

"And Korach's sons did not die: They were involved in the conspiracy at first, but during the dispute, they repented in their hearts. Therefore, an elevated area was secured for them in Gehinnom, where they remained." (Rashi based on *Sanhedrin* 110a)

The *Chida* wrote that it was revealed in a dream to **Rabi Moshe Goakil**, one of the sages of Yerushalayim, that Dovid Hamelech said *Perek* 40 in *Tehillim* against the children of Korach. He wrote it in the singular form, because they were spared as one. He

Amen Opens the Gates of Wisdom

"לפוח משפחת הפוני" (כו כג)

"It should have said "הפוח", and the Torah wrote "הפוני" to teach us that all of Am Yisrael turned to him (פונים אליו) to learn from his Torah." (*Baal Haturim*)

Harav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger explained:

פוח is numerically equivalent to amen. The *passuk* alludes here that one who engages in Torah has to be especially careful about concentrating on the Names of Havayah and Adnus, which come together in the word 'amen.' When one does so, the gates of wisdom open for him and he merits "that all of Yisrael should turn to him to learn his Torah."

Harav Moseh Dovid Estreicher, the Rav of Tchimpia, added:

That is why we say in *Birchas HaTorah*: "Venihyeh anachnu vetze'etzaeinu...kulanu yodei Shmecha." This alludes to the two Holy Names that come together in the answering of amen. We learn from here that it behooves those who learn Torah to be strict about this holy *Yichud* so that they should merit the *brachah* of "lomdei Torasecha lishmah."

Toras Yechiel 63; *Tiferes Adam*, Mattos

explains: "Kavo kivisi vayet eilai vayishma sha'avasi" – when they repented, Hashem listened to their cry, "vaya'leini mibor shaon mitit hayaven vayakem al sela raglai konen ashurai" – and saved them from the pit into which they were swallowed together with the group of Korach, by making a pillar of stone and placing them on it so that they should not descend to the 'sheol tachtis,' the bottomless depths. "Vayiten befi shir chadash tehillah l'Elokeinu" – after the children of Korach were saved, they made a new *brachah* that no one before them had ever recited: "Baruch morid sheol vaya'al." (See *Shmuel* I 2:6)

Nachal Kedumim 10

Tefillah in an Illustrative Way

"פקד ה'...איש על העדה...ולא תהיה עדת ה' כצאן אשר אין להם רעה" (כו טז-יז)

There is a tremendous question here: Does HaKadosh Baruch Hu need an explanation or a parable in order to 'understand' why He needs to 'place a person over the nation'? Why did Moshe add: "and the nation of Hashem should not be like a flock that has no shepherd"?

The **Imrei Emes** explained that Moshe did not intend to explain his request, but rather added another request. He asked that even if his *tefillah* was not accepted, and Bnei Yisrael would not merit a leader, they should not *chalilah* be "like a flock that has no shepherd". Rather, HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself should lead them, as the *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 23:1): "Hashem Ro'i lo echsar, Hashem is my Shepherd I shall not want."

The Mashgiach **Harav Eliyahu Lopian** further explained: Moshe was not referring to Hashem in his parable, but rather to himself: He wanted to offer an illustrative description with his *tefillah* about how Klal Yisrael would be in a serious situation without a leader, and this would help his *tefillah* come from the bottom of his heart.

Lev Simchah 5744; *Shalmei Simchah* Vol. I p. 229

Tefillah On Time Is Like a Commandment from Hashem

"את קרבני לחמי לאשי...תשמרו להקריב לי במועדו" (כח ב)

Harav Yechiel Meir of Gustinin explained:

Chazal said (*Brachos* 26b): "Tefillos were established to correspond to the *Temidim*." Based on this we can explain that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is *kaviyachol* asking Am Yisrael: "My Korban...make sure to bring to Me on time" – make sure to *daven* each *tefillah* at its time, because I also make sure to give you all your needs at the time when you need it, as it says (*Tehillim* 145:15): "V'Atah nosein lahem es achlam b'ito, and You give them their sustenance in its time."

Mei Hayam 49

"צו את בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם את קרבני לחמי לאשי ריח ניחחי תשמרו להקריב לי במועדו" (כח ב)

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, was careful to arrive in shul at least ten minutes before davening. He would instruct others to do the same, explaining: **When you come to a meeting with the king, you don't come at the last minute, and you certainly don't come late...**

(*Shalmei Simchah*, Vol. I p. 221)

Bnei Emunim - Rising early for Birchos Hashachar



The Brachah of Elokai Neshamah (2)

Briah, Yetzirah, Nefichah, Shemirah

From the wording of the *brachah*: “*Atah barasah, Atah yetzartha, Atah nefachtah bi*” it emerges that the breath is given into a person in three stages: *briah* (creation), *yetzirah* (formation) and *nefichah* (blowing of the breath). The *Noda B’Yehudah* explained:

In *barasah* we thank Hashem for creating the soul, which was created from nothing even before man was created. “*Yatzartah*” is gratitude to Hashem for giving it a form of a spiritual organ, so that it influences the entire human body. In “*nefachtah*,” we thank Hashem for infusing with breath the soul that He created and formed into our bodies. (*Tzelach Brachos* 60b)

Further along in the *brachah* we declare that aside for infusing our *neshamah* with breath, Hashem also preserves it - “*meshamrah*” - in us. The soul, being a lofty spiritual entity, is constantly yearning to separate from the body to return to its source and its root. If HaKadosh Baruch Hu would not preserve it in the human body, it would depart from our body. *Chazal* in *Midrash Tehillim* (62 3) explain this: “The *neshamah* in the person, every hour that it rises and descends it seeks to exit the body. How does it remain? HaKadosh Baruch Hu fills the entire universe with His Honor, and when the *neshamah* wants to leave and sees its Creator, it retreats.”

Master of All Deeds

This *brachah* concludes with praise for the Creator: “*Ribbon kol hama’asim, Adon kol haneshamos*.” Which deeds are we declaring HaKadosh Baruch Hu to be the Master over? What connection do “*ma’asim*” have with “*neshamos*”?

Chazal say (*Brachos* 7b): From the day HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the world, there wasn’t a person who called Him *Adon*, until Avraham came and called Him *Adon*.” In the earliest generations, people lived with the mistaken conception that it was not befitting for the Creator to manage His lowly world. Therefore, they believed that while He managed the upper worlds, He handed the leadership of the lower worlds to His servants - such as the Heavenly signs and the *mazalos* (see *Drashos HaRa”n*, ninth *drush*). Avraham was the first to uproot this thought from their hearts when he taught them that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Master of the World, and He Alone leads it, every moment of every day.

In order to imbue this fundamental of *emunah* in our hearts, *Chazal* included this praise in the *brachah*: “*Ribon kol hama’asim, Adon kol haneshamos*” - so that we will internalize that just like He is the ‘*Adon*’ in the world of *neshamos*, so, too, He alone leads and manages all that occurs in this world as well. (*Tzelach Brachos* 7b)

Hamachazir Neshamos Lifgarim Meisim

The commentators have differing opinions about the meaning of the closing of the *brachah*: “*Hamachazir neshamos lifgarim meisim*.”

The *Avudraham* (*Seder Shacharis Shel Chol Upeirushah, Birchos Hashachar*) explained that we are thanking Hashem for having our soul returned to us after sleeping each morning. The reason the body is called during a ‘*peger*,’ a corpse, while it sleeps is because sleep is comparable to death, as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 57b): “Sleep - one sixtieth of death.”

But *Rabbeinu Manoach* (*Tefillah* 7 3) explained that we thank here for *techiyas hameisim* that will take place in the End of Days. The reason it is mentioned here is because a person’s rise from his sleep is an example of what *techiyas hameisim* will look like. According to this explanation, ‘*pegarim meisim*’ is the literal explanation of the term.

As a result of this disagreement among the *Rishonim* there is a dispute in *halachah* regarding someone who davens before reciting this *brachah*:

Some hold that if a person davened before saying *Elokai Neshamah*, then he should not make the *brachah* after davening, because has already fulfilled his obligation of thanking for *techiyas hameisim* in the *brachah* of “*Mechayeh Hameisim*.” But others believe that this *brachah* does not refer to *techiyas hameisim*, but rather is about receiving our soul back in the morning after sleeping. Therefore, even someone who davened before reciting it should make the *brachah* after davening. In order to resolve all doubts, it is worthwhile to make sure to recite the *brachah* of *Elokai Neshamah* before davening. (See *Mishnah Berurah, Orach Chaim* 52 9; *Biur Halachah* *ibid* beginning with “*umikol makom*.”)

“And Mordechai Would Neither Kneel Nor Bow”

This amazing story took place many years ago in Iran. It was related by a witness, Rav Yehuda Ezrachi, one of the *Rabbanim* in Iran at the time.

The story happened to Harav Avraham Mordechai Hirschberg, *zt”l*, a beloved student of Harav Meir Shapiro, *zt”l*, of Lublin, who later became the chief rabbi of Mexico. Rav Avraham Mordechai was an erudite scholar, and he was also a man of action with expansive ties to heads of state and prominent personalities.

The year was 1979, when the Islamic revolution broke out after the Persian Shah was deposed and replaced by the notorious Ayatollah Khomeini, *ym”s*, a rabid hater of Israel. Until that point, ties between Iran and the West were cordial. After the revolution, however, all those ties were cut off at once.

There was an American consulate in Teheran at the time. When the revolution broke out, demonstrators sent by the new government, which hated the West - especially America - stormed the American consulate and took everyone inside hostage. They then presented a list of demands to the American government as a condition for their release. Exhausting negotiations dragged on for a year and a half between representatives of the American government and of the Iranian regime. In the meantime, more than fifty captives were living in the consulate compound, among them Jews, under deplorable conditions. As the negotiation continued, with no end in sight, the captives were suffering. During that time, the Americans managed to arrange for a delegation of four neutral clergymen to enter Iran, and to visit the captives in the consulate to provide them with some encouragement.

Three prominent priests were chosen for the mission, along with Rav Avraham Mordechai Hirschberg, *zt”l*, for the Jewish captives.

It was Chanukah when Rav Hirschberg arrived at the consulate. He lit the Chanukah candles with the captives, offered them effusive *chizuk* and spoke about the story of Chanukah - how a handful of Jews prevailed over masses of non-Jews in battle. His message infused them with hope and encouragement, and some even grew closer to their heritage as a result.

As Rav Hirschberg’s visit drew to a close and he was preparing to return home with the rest of the delegation, they were surprised to discover that they were not being

allowed to leave just yet. The evil Khomeini, seeking to humiliate the Americans and promote himself, demanded their public attendance at a mass Muslim event that was scheduled to take place in Teheran’s central square. Millions were expected to be in attendance.

The center point of the ceremony was a high dais on which senior regime officials - including Khomeini - were seated. Alongside them were the four American representatives, Rav Hirschberg among them.

When the sign was given, the masses began their prayers, in their language; throughout it, they bowed and prostrated themselves, as is their custom.

It’s hard to describe the scene. Millions filled the streets, and when the sign was given, the religious figures on the stage bowed on their knees - including the Christian priests. After them, at once, all the millions of people also bowed.

Like Chananya, Misha’el and Azariah in their time, of all the millions, one man remained standing tall - Rav Hirschberg, *zt”l*. He did not move, standing out among the masses.

The Ayatollah Khomeini sensed something, and flew into a rage. He immediately summoned Rav Avraham Mordechai to him, and through a translator, asked him why he had not bowed, while his three American friends had?

Rav Avraham Mordechai - despite being overcome with fear and sure he was going to be sent to his death - did display any of his inner angst. He gently turned to the translator and asked him to explain to the ruler that our Torah states that one must not bow in idol worship, and because he did not understand Persian, he did not understand to whom they were bowing. As such, he was forbidden from joining them. It is possible that the priests who did bow were familiar with the Persian language and knew to whom they were bowing. But because he did not know, he was compelled to remain standing.

His innocent words of truth took the evil ruler by surprise, and also found favor in his eyes. Instead of killing him or otherwise punishing him, he instructed the interpreter to tell the rabbi that he liked his answer. He was impressed by the fact that he was not a flatterer like the other priests in the delegation were.

This was a truly remarkable turn of events. Khomeini was known for his burning hatred of Jews, and yet, he respected and admired the Jewish rabbi

for adhering to his religion.

When Reb Avraham Mordechai understood from the translator how much of an impression his words had made on the Ayatollah, he decided to utilize the opportunity to help his Jewish brethren in Iran. He asked to set up a meeting to discuss their plight with him.

The Ayatollah told him when to come, and at the appointed hour, Reb Avraham Mordechai arrived at the Ayatollah’s residence. When the audience began, the Rav said with tears in his eyes: “I want to plead for my Jewish brethren who live here. I have learned that the remaining Jewish residents are suffering terribly at the hand of their neighbors and enemies. Perhaps the ruler in his compassion can save them and help prevent this persecution.”

The ruler first tried to argue that the Jews were collaborating with his enemies. But Rav Hirschberg, with his humble nature, was able to persuade him and prove to him that they had no hatred for the ruler and the revolution at all. On the contrary, they hoped and yearned for the new government to protect them from their harassers.

Surprisingly, the ruler agreed to the request and Rav Avraham Mordechai decided to make one more request relating to something he had become aware of during his conversations with members of the community:

When the revolution broke out, a curfew was imposed throughout Iran, each night, until the early morning hours. This was very difficult for many Jews, who were used to going to daven in shul at dawn so they could then go to work. Now, due to the curfew, they could not fulfill their religious practices.

Siyata diShmaya continued to accompany him in this request as well. The Ayatollah agreed to issue an order to the Iranian police commander that from that day on, if they saw a person during the curfew carrying a *tallis* and *tefillin* case, that is a sign that he is not an enemy of the revolution, but rather a Jew performing his religious duty and rising early to pray.

This remarkable accomplishment made waves, and generated tremendous *chizuk*, as everyone was able to see how a Jew who fulfills the *mitzvos* of his religion proudly and is not afraid of scoffers and those who threaten him ultimately merited to find such special favor in the most unexpected place.

Mipikudecha Asichah, Vol. II p. 214