

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS  
NITZAVIM VAYEILECH

תש"פ

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### One Hundred Brachos Protect from One Hundred Curses

"אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם" (כט ט)

"Why is this *parashah* written next to the *parashah* of the curses? Because Am Yisrael heard one hundred curses, less two, in this *parashah*, aside for the forty nine listed in *Toras Kohanim*. Immediately, they felt weak and asked: Who can withstand all this?! Right away Moshe called to them and spoke to them soothingly." (*Tanchuma* 1)

*Sefer Hamanhig* (Introduction) writes that the obligation to say one hundred *brachos* a day was established by Moshe Rabbeinu, even though *Chazal* say (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) that Dovid Hamelech established this *takanah*. The intention is that over the years the *takanah* was forgotten and Dovid Hamelech reestablished it.

Based on this, the *Chida* explains that Moshe's words of appeasement to Am Yisrael that are mentioned in the *Midrash* were 'one hundred *brachos*' that he established as a counterweight to the curses. If they would take care to recite the *brachos*, they would be spared from the *klalos*. As the *Rokeach* says (320), a person who makes one hundred *brachos* is spared the one hundred curses. Ninety-eight of those *brachos* are written in *Parashas Ki Savo*, and two others are alluded to in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 28:61) "*Gam kol choli vechol makkah*."

We can find an allusion to this in the words of Dovid Hamelech in *Tehillim* (16:9): "*Lachen samach libi vayagel kevodi, af besari yishkon labetach*, therefore, my heart rejoiced, and my soul was glad; even my flesh shall dwell in safety." In the merit of "*lachen*" [numerically equivalent to 100] *brachos*, I will be saved from the curses, and therefore, my heart will rejoice and my flesh shall dwell in safety, without blemishes or disease.

*Ruach Chaim, Drush 1; Chomas Anoch, Tehillim 16*

### Emanah and Anticipation - Both Are Obligations

"ושב ה' אלקיך את שבותך ורחמך ושב וקבצך מכל העמים" (ל ג)

### "Teshuvah Gedolah" For a Small Word

"ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקול ככל אשר אנכי מצוך היום" (ל ב)

One of the obstacles faced by someone who wishes to repent is the fact that he usually focuses on sins that in his eyes are substantial, and ignores the sins that he feels are lighter. One example of this is answering amen: Some mistakenly think that there is no need to repent for not answering amen, but the *mekbual Harav Meir Hakohein Papiras*, a *talmid* of the *Arizal*, reveals that this sin is so severe that one must do "big *teshuvah*" for it. He writes:

"It is necessary to do *teshuvah gedolah* for not answering amen – even if he didn't answer only once – meaning, when he heard a *brachah*, even on a fruit, or his friend makes a *brachah* on a mitzvah, and certainly in the *tefillah* of the *shaliach tzibbur*, and in the *viduy* of *Ashmanu* each day, he should shed tears for those amens that he did not answer."

*Ohr Hayashar* 7 18-19

The *Rambam* writes (*Melachim* 11:1): "The Melech Hamashiach is destined to stand and return the Kingdom of Bais Dovid...and he builds a Mikdash and gathers all those from Yisrael...and anyone who does not believe in him or who does not wait for his arrival... is a denier of Torah and of Moshe Rabbeinu, because the Torah says of him: '*Veshav Hashem Elokecha es shevuscha verichamecha veshav vekibetzcha mikol ha'amim*, Hashem will bring back your returnees, and will be merciful toward you; and He will return and gather you from all the peoples..."

*Harav Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik* of Brisk explained:

The *Rambam* explains that it is not enough to believe in the arrival of Mashiach. There is another obligation, and that is to anticipate his arrival, as we say in *Shemoneh Esrei*: "*Ki liyeshuascha kivinu kol hayom*."

That is why the "*Ani Ma'amin*" that addresses the arrival of Mashiach is said in the form of question and answer: "*Ani ma'amin b'emunah sheleimah bevias haMashiach, v'af al pi sheyismameah im kol zeh achakeh lo bechol yom sheyavo*." It would seem that the rest of the *Ani Ma'amins* can also be worded in this fashion, like: "*Ani ma'amin b'emunah sheleimah shehaBorei Yisbarach Shemo gomel tov leshomrei mitzvosav uma'anish l'ovrei mitzvosav, v'af al pi shematzinu*, even though we have found that '*tzadik vera lo and rasha vetov lo*' – still, I believe." Why is it particularly the one regarding the arrival of Mashiach that is formulated in this way? The reason is because, as stated, this emphasizes the additional fundamental concept of *emunah* – the anticipation for the *Geulah*. Therefore, after declaring our faith in the arrival of Mashiach, we then add that we declare our constant anticipation for his arrival.

*Kovetz "Hane'eman" Elul-Tishrei 5720; Peninei Rabbeinu Hagritz, p. 85*

### Moshe's Tefillah Accomplished Half

"ויאמר אלהים בן מאה ועשרים שנה אנכי היום" (לא ב)

*Harav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz*, the Rav of Frankfurt, explained:

Chapter 90 of *Tehillim*, "*Tefillah L'Moshe Ish HaElokim*" was recited by Moshe Rabbeinu when he was bestowed with the description of "*Ish HaElokim*" at Mattan Torah. At that time, Moshe was eighty years old, as the chapter continues (ibid 10): "*V'im bigyuros shemonim shanah*." Thus he davened (ibid 15): "*samcheinu kiyemos inisanu shenos ra'inu ra'ah*" – give me another eighty years during which I will live with joy, to correspond to the eighty years that I lived in torture and difficulty during the bondage of Egypt.

There is a rule (*Devarim Rabbah* 8 1) that "*tefillah osech mechtzah*" – *tefillah* accomplishes half. Moshe Rabbeinu merited to live another forty years – half of eighty – and left this world at the age of 120.

*Panim Yafos, Bamidbar* 27:12

הַמֶּלֶךְ!  
HaMelech!

*Chazal* say in *Maseches Shabbos* (119b): "What is amen? 'K-I Melech Ne'eman.'" The *Maharsha* explained (Vol. I, ibid) that one who answers amen testifies "That the Name 'K-I' is the one that Hashem is called all year [*HaK-I HaKadosh*], and the Name Melech, which He is called on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur [*HaMelech HaKadosh*] – is *ne'eman*, faithful, and *amiti*, truthful."

Dear Yid! Take care to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* during these days, and this way you will begin your day with testimony that is special for these days – that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is "K-I Melech Ne'eman."





## Mah Tov (1)

### 'Ashreinu, Mah Tov Chelkeinu'

As Jews, and children of the King, we have been granted the tremendous privilege of being able to visit the Dwelling of our Merciful Father, the King of kings, each and every day, at any time we wish, especially at the three specific times of *tefillah*. During these opportunities, we can praise and exalt Him, beseech for our needs, and share our worries.

The emotion that should grip us as we enter a *beis knesses* – a *bais mikdash me'at* in every generation – cannot be less than the excitement that we would feel when standing at the threshold of a human king. Still, the power of habit takes its toll and causes us to do this by rote.

As such, it was established that we recite the *pesukim* of *Mah Tov*, so that before we arrive at the shul we should remember what a wonderful privilege and merit we have, and through that we should act accordingly. (Shelah *Maseches Chulin Derech Chaim Tochachas Mussar*, footnote 200). The *Mishnah Berurah* writes on this subject (Introduction to *siman* 46): "Before one comes to the shul, while he is still in the courtyard, he should say, 'Beveis Elokim nehalech beragesh.' And he should feel awed as he enters the shul, and should linger for a moment, and say 'V'ani berov chasdecha avo Beisecha eshtachaveh el Heichal Kodshecha beyirasecha.' Then he should enter."

### The Pesukim of Mah Tov

In the earlier *siddurim*, based on the *nusach* in the *Siddur Haraba*"n and other ancient *siddurim*, the passage of *Mah Tov* was comprised of five unique *pesukim* that should be recited before davening in order to envelop the one saying it with awe so that he should know before Who he is standing. This way, he enters the shul in a solemn state of mind, as is fitting for one coming to the dwelling of the King.

In this segment, we will try to delve into the meaning of these *pesukim*, because as noted, this can bring a person to awareness of the holiness of the shul and the great merit that he has to be able to come to the King's gates freely to pour out his needs before HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Through that, he will come to conduct himself fittingly. (Totzaos Chaim [by the Reishis Chochmah] 52).

### Mah Tov Ohalecha Yaakov

The first *passuk*, "*Mah tov ohalecha Yaakov mishkenosecha Yisrael*" (Bamidbar 24:5) is one of the *brachos* that Bilam was compelled to utter after he was sent by Balak to curse Klal Yisrael. Chazal say (Sanhedrin 105b) is that in contrast to the other *brachos* that Bilam uttered, which reverted to curses, this one remained a blessing for eternity, as we have seen throughout the generations. It describes the tremendous merit that Klal Yisrael has that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave them *batei medrash*, known as '*ohalim*' and *batei knessios*, known as '*mishkneos*' in which they learn Torah and pray.

It is worthy to praise and extol these *ohalim* and *mishkenos* with the words "*mah tov*", because the good that comes through them is not only bestowed upon those who merit to come into them. It is also extended to the rest of the denizens of the world who do not have this merit. (Sefer Bamidbar 24:5)

The *Sfas Emes* notes that this *passuk* was selected because reciting it is also

the fulfillment of a special mitzvah – remembering the act of Bilam. As the Navi states (Michah 6:5): "*Ami zechar na mah ya'atz Balak*, My people, remember now what Balak king of Moav planned, and what Bilam the son of Beor answered him. From Shittim to Gilgal, may you recognize the righteous deeds of Hashem." As the *Gemara* says (*Brachos* 12b): "Rabi Abahu ben Zutrasai said in the name of Rabi Yehuda bar Zeveida: they wanted to insert the *parashah* of Balak in *Krias Shema*. Why was it not included? Because of the *tirchah*, the exertion, to the public [that it would entail]." (Likutei Yehudah Balak)

It should be noted that the *Maharshal* (*Shu"t*, 64, and the *Yaavetz* says similarly in his *Siddur*) said of himself that he did not recite this *passuk* because Bilam said it as a curse.

### V'ani Berov Chasdecha

In the *passuk* (Tehillim 5:8): "*V'ani berov chasdecha avo beisecha eshtachaveh el Heichal Kodshecha beyirasecha*" Dovid Hamelech testifies that he came to the House of Hashem with awe and submission in order to thank Him for the many *chassadim* that Hashem granted him (*Rashi* and *Malbim* *ibid*). We can also learn from this *passuk* about the purpose of our arrival to the shul, and the way that we must conduct ourselves inside it – *beyirasecha*, in fear of You.

Some explain that the words "*berov chasdecha – avo beisecha*" describe the tremendous *chesed* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu did for us with the very fact that He gave us permission to stand before Him in prayer each and every day. This is despite the fact that we are mired in sins and transgressions, and are hardly worthy of coming into a shul to daven. (*Iyun Tefillah*)

Harav Yechezkel Abramsky would say during his *mussar shmuessen*:

You may think in your heart – I just got out of my warm bed on a cold winter day after I went to bed late last night. Now I am making my way in the rain and cold and coming to shul. My dedication to my Creator is surely admirable... However, take note of what Dovid Hamelech said when he came to the House of Hashem: "*V'ani berov chasdecha avo beisecha*" – You, Ribbono Shel Olam, are the One that has bestowed so much good upon me by giving me the merit to come to the shul to daven to You.

We all know how many true *Yirei Shamayim* are lying in hospitals and cannot even get up from their beds. How much they would pay just to be able to get up once to go to the shul to daven one *tefillah*. We, *bechasei Shamayim*, merit to stand before Hashem in prayer three times a day, healthy and hale – and it is therefore very worthy for us to thank Hashem for that from the bottom of our heart. (*Peninei Rabbeinu Yechezkel*, Vol. I, p. 28)

It is interesting to note what is cited in *Sefer Ha'itiim*, by Rav Y. Albertzeloni (end of *siman* 174) in the name of the Gaonim: The recital of this *passuk* began with a *minhag*. Because it is forbidden to count Bnei Yisrael, when the *mispallelim* would gather in the shul, they would say the ten words of this *passuk*, one after another. The first person said "*V'ani*", the second "*berov*" and so forth. When they completed the *passuk* they knew that there was a *minyan* in the *beis knesses*. And since then, it has been recited regularly upon entering the shul.

## Bringing Back the Lost Ones of Am Yisrael With Amen

The New York rain began to pound at Reb Shlomo's face, taking him by surprise. The dignified *avreich* is a resident of one of Israel's northern cities, and the onslaught brought him back to reality. He had just gotten off a plane that had taken him from Israel to America. It wasn't his first time in New York, but this time, he would have been glad to forego this trip that was being made under unfortunate circumstances.

Walking next to him weakly was Reb Shabtai, a friend and neighbor, whose face was a picture of worry and uncertainty. Just a few days ago, he had received a difficult diagnosis that there was a tumor metastasizing in his brain stem, and threatening his life. A quick consultation with medical *askanim* made it clear that he had to travel urgently to New York, to a Manhattan hospital, where there was a doctor who specialized in this disease. *B'ezras Hashem*, this doctor might save his life.

After making herculean efforts, the dedicated *askanim* were able to arrange an appointment at the doctor's clinic, a passport, visas and everything else he needed. Reservations were made on the flight, and all that was needed was a suitable escort who could be with Reb Shabtai during the time he would need to spend abroad. The rav of their community felt that Reb Shlomo was a fitting candidate, and Reb Shlomo could not refuse.

The operation was scheduled for Monday afternoon. Four days earlier, on Friday, the patient had to report to the hospital for tests and pre-op procedures. The first test was invasive and painful, and afterwards, the patient was wheeled to his room on the fifth floor. Reb Shlomo was told that for the next twenty-four hours, the patient was not allowed to move at all. Moving could endanger his life.

Reb Shlomo went over to his friend and whispered: "Shabtai, for the next twenty four hours, you mustn't move at all... But don't worry, I am right here next to you. I won't go out to davening or to the Shabbos meals. I'm here for you! But I ask you just one thing. Shabbos is coming. I will go out just to buy some things we need for Shabbos in the kosher store nearby, and I'll be right back. Meanwhile, don't move!"

After the patient agreed, Reb Shlomo left the hospital, purchased some rolls, a jar of fish, grape juice and plastic cups. He then hurried back to the hospital.

Shabbos began. The patient and his companion davened together, sang *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishes Chayil*, and Reb Shlomo poured the grape juice into a cup and fervently made *Kiddush*. He had just sipped the grape juice when the door burst open.

Two burly black men stood there, holding a medical document stating that they had to take the patient for an x-ray. Reb Shlomo tried to protest in his broken English that they would be putting the patient's life at risk – he was not allowed to move. But they rebuffed him sharply – "get out of the way and don't bother us!" – and moved the patience to a stretcher and wheeled him out. Reb Shlomo had no choice but to follow them. They entered an elevator and he ran after them. The elevator descended quickly to the basement level, where the x-ray department was. Reb Shlomo looked at the many patients waiting for their turn, and realized that they had a long wait

ahead. Another stretcher was brought to the room. An old lady was laying on it breathing heavily. From her pale, wrinkled face, it appeared that her days were numbered. In contrast to the other patients, no one was accompanying her. To his surprise, she raised her hand to Shlomo and motioned for him to come closer.

"Gut Shabbos!" she said, to his utter surprise.

"Shabtai," Reb Shlomo whispered to his friend, "there is a Jewish patient here, and she even knows it's Shabbos..."

He was surprised to hear his friend's response: "Shlomo, go up to the room, bring some grape juice and a cup, and make Kiddush for her. She probably hasn't heard Kiddush yet..."

"Go up to the room" mean to climb eighteen flights of stairs by foot, through the emergency stairs. But Reb Shlomo grasped the magnitude of the moment and was not lazy. Aside for the many stairs, he would be faced by a number of electric doors, and he'd have to wait until someone passing by opened them up. It took quite some time for him to dash breathlessly to the room – only to discover that it was locked...

*I've gotten this far, Reb Shlomo thought. I can't give up now!* All he could do was daven from the bottom of his heart that a miracle would happen and the door would be opened one way or another. His *tefillah* was accepted, and a miracle did occur – one of the non-Jewish workers became confused and opened the door by mistake. When he realized his mistake, he wanted to lock it again, but Reb Shlomo leaped up and prevented him from doing it.

When he entered the room, he sank into the armchair, drained. He rested for just a minute or two, and then took the grape juice and cup and turned to go back. Going down was easier than going up, but he still had those same electronic doors to contend with. Finally, he arrived back at the waiting room. He hurried over to the ill woman and told her that he had come to make *Kiddush* for her. Tears of emotion glistened in her eyes as Reb Shlomo recited *Kiddush*. When he concluded with "*Baruch Atah Hashem Mekadesh HaShabbos*," he was surprised to hear the sick woman answer 'amen' in a loud clear voice.

Reb Shlomo didn't understand how a woman who looked to be at death's door was able to speak so loudly. Suddenly, he heard the woman's voice, weak again, telling him:

"I grew up in a religious family, but I haven't heard *Kiddush* for fifty years! When the Germans came to our town and murdered my family, I was able to escape in an unbelievable way. I came to America alone, with no one, and all I wanted to do was forget my horrific past. For fifty years I did not hear *Kiddush* or answer amen, until you came and gave me the merit to do so..."

The woman finished speaking and her eyes closed weakly. Reb Shlomo was overcome with emotion.

His emotion only mounted when, a short time later, he found out that the woman had passed away in the exam room. He had to come twelve thousand kilometers in order to give the merit to one Jewish woman to answer amen for the last time in her life – after she hadn't done so for fifty years.

Emunah Sheleimah, Acharei Mos