

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Why Is Shabbos Called Chemdas Hayamim?

"יכל אלקים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה" (ב ב)

Harav Simcha of Vitri, a talmid of Rashi, writes that the Targum Yerushalmi translates the word "vayechal" to be derived from the word "vechamed", meaning, Hashem desired this seventh day more than all the other days. With this meaning, Rashi explains this word in the pesukim: "Nichsefah vegam kalsah nafshi" (Tehillim 84:3), and "kalsah lishesuascha nafshi" (ibid 119:81).

Based on this, Rav Simcha of Vitri explained the words of tefillah on Shabbos: "Chemdas yamim oso karasa" – where do we find that Hashem desired the Shabbos? In this passuk.

Harav Binyamin Hakohen Vitali, one of the sages of Italy, offered an additional explanation, based on a chiddush that he heard in the name of the Ramak. During the time of Creation, the Ribono shel Olam wanted to make six days of 28 hours each. When the six days asked Hashem to make one of them king over all of them, Hashem said to them: Each one of you should give up four of your hours, and from these twenty-four hours I will add another day – Shabbos – and it will preside over you.

Hence, Reb Binyamin explained the description of "chemdas yamim" – that the 'days' are the ones that desired the Shabbos to rule over them.

Machzor Vitri Shabbos 2; Gvul Binyamin [Amsterdam 5487] Vol. II, Drush 5

Between "Amen" and the Rest of the Mitzvos

"ויקה ה' אלקים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה" (ב טו)

In Maseches Shabbos (119b) the Gemara says, "Reish Lakish said: Anyone who answers amen with all his might [Rashi: with all his kavanah, Tosafos: in a loud voice] the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him, as it says (Yeshayah 26:2): "Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim." Do not read it "shomer emunim" rather "she'omrim amen."

There is a question on this: Doesn't each person merit a share in Gan Eden based on his deeds? Undoubtedly, even for answering amen one can earn Gan Eden, but what is the meaning of this special promise given to someone who is strict about answering amen?

The Maharsha explains: Indeed, a person gets a share in Gan Eden for all the mitzvos in accordance with his deeds, and that is where his share is. As Chazal say (Shabbos 152a): "Each and every tzaddik is given a place to reside based on his level of honor." However, one who answers amen with all his might is an exception. To him, the gates of all the levels of Gan Eden are opened, even those that he would not have access to based on his level. This concept is reflected in the passuk: "Pischu she'arim" – in the plural, and the Gemara also says the plural – the gates of Gan Eden are opened to him. Because when one answers amen, all the gates of all the inner levels of Gan Eden are opened, not only the area that he has earned access to.

The Ben Ish Chai further explains: one who observes the mitzvos of the Torah must arrive at the gates of Gan Eden, and then the gates will open before him. By contrast, one who answers amen with all his might merits that as soon as his soul departs from his body, he sees the gates of Gan Eden open and waiting for it. This spares him from passing through the "lahat hacherev hamis'hapeches" the flame of the spinning sword that is outside the gates of Gan Eden. As the passuk in this parashah says (3:24): "Vayashken mikedem leGan Eden es haKeruvim v'es lahat hacherev hamishapeches lishmor es derech eitz hachaim, at the east of Gan Eden, He stationed the Keruvim and the flame of the rotating sword."

Harav Avraham Dovid Bloch, author of Tzitzis Hakanaf, explained: one who is strict about the mitzvah of answering amen merits to have the Gates of an Eden open to him, and he will come to his place with dignity. But someone who was not careful about answering amen, even if he has many good deeds and he has a place reserved for him in Gan Eden, will not have the gates open in his honor. He will have to wait for an auspicious time to enter and take his place in Gan Eden.

Maharsha Vol. I, Shabbos 119b; Ben Yehoyada, Shabbos ibid; Tzitzis Hakanaf [Vilna 5669] p. 20

Keeping Shabbos Sustains Creation

"ויברך אלקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אתו כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלקים לעשות" (ב ג)

The Ohr Hachaim explains: During the Creation of the world, HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave the creations the power to subsist for a mere six days. In His Wisdom, He created another day, Shabbos, and from the power of keeping Shabbos, the power of existence is renewed for the subsequent six days. Hence we find that keeping Shabbos is vital to sustaining the world, because without it, the world would not be able to exist. Based on this we can understand the words of Chazal (Shabbos 119b): "Anyone who davens on Erev Shabbos and says Vayechulu – is considered by the passuk to become a partner to HaKadosh Baruch Hu in Ma'aseh Bereishis." Ma'aseh Bereishis was completed thousands of years ago, but because Shabbos observance is what gives the power to the Ma'aseh Bereishis to exist for another six days, we find that one who says Vayechulu, which symbolizes Shabbos observance, becomes a partner to the Ma'aseh Bereishis. If not for this observance, the world would not be able to exist.

Thus the Yismach Moshe explains the words in the piyut of Menuchah Vesimchah that we say on Friday night: "Shomrov vezochrov heimah me'idim ki leshishah kol bru'im v'omdim." The songster wrote "leshishah" and not "beshishah" – an allusion to the fact that Shabbos observance testifies about our faith that the world was created for only six days, and Shabbos observance each week gives it the power to continue to exist.

Ohr Hachaim; Yismach Moshe Yisro

Gan Eden in This World

"ויקה ה' אלקים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן" (ב טו)

"When Chazal say (Shabbos 119b): 'When one answers amen with all his might, the gates of Gan Eden are opened to him,' they gave us something wondrous in its simplicity. If a person dedicates himself to something precious like answering amen with all his might, which is something easy to fulfill, then immediately he will merit to have the gates of Gan Eden opened before him.

Perhaps we can say that the gates of Gan Eden will be opened before him in this world as well, which is the essence of the good contained in each day, and in this merit, he will start to feel a flavor in his Avodas Hashem. Through this, he will merit to enter many gates, the gates of Tzion that are specified in halachah, which are the Gates of Gan Eden, and he will merit much good and arichus yamim."

Venichtav Besefer [Shiurim of Rav Y.M. Schechter] Vol. II p 275



Adon Olam (1)

The Source and Virtues of Adon Olam

We have a precious pearl hidden in our *Siddur Tefillah*, and that is the wondrous *piyut* of *Adon Olam*. For many generations, it has been recited each day, both at the beginning of the day before *Shacharis*, and at the end of the day in *Krias Shema she'al Hamitah*, before returning our soul to its Maker. In fact, both the time we are awake and the time that we sleep are mentioned at the end of the *piyut*: "*Bayado afkid ruchi, be'eis ishan ve'airah*," while I am sleeping and when I am awake. (*Mateh Moshe*, Vol. I, 31, and Vol. IV 302)

A renowned *talmid* of the *Maharshal*, the *Mateh Moshe* (Vol. I 31) shared special insights into this *tefillah*. He notes, "I have found it written that anyone who has *kavanah* when beginning *Adon Olam*, Rabi Yehuda Hachassid and Rav Hai Gaon and Rav Sherira Gaon wrote that I [they] am a guarantor that his *tefillah* is heard, and the Satan cannot advocate negatively for the *tefillah*, and he does not have a Satan and the *pega ra* on Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur in his *tefillah*, and his enemies fall before him, and some say that even the *yetzer hara* reconciles with him. It is of this person that Shlomo Hamelech says (*Mishlei* 16:7): "*Birtzos Hashem darchei ish gam oyvav yeshalem ito*. When Hashem accepts a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him."

It is not clear who composed *Adon Olam*. Some attribute it to the Tanna Rabi Yochanan ben Zakkai (in *Likutei Maharich, Seder Hanhagas Hatefillah*, it says that he saw this written in the ancient *Siddurim* of Ashkenaz in the name of *Sefer Hatechiyah*.) In contrast, some attribute it to Rav Hai Gaon (*Imrei Pinchas, Shaarei Hatefillah* 57) and some write that it was composed by the renowned songwriter Rabi Shlomo Ibn Gvirol (*Siddur Otzar Hatefillas, Tikkun Tefillah*, 50).

Invoking the Merit of Avraham

The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 7b) says: "Rabi Yochanan says in the name of Rasbhi: 'From the day that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the world, there was no one who called HaKadosh Baruch Hu 'Adon' until Avraham Avinu came and called Him 'Adon'," as it says (*Bereishis* 15:8): "*Vayomer Ad-onai Elokim, bemah eida ki irashenah*."

Based on the *Gemara*, *Harav Pinchas, the Maggog of Plotzk* explained in his *Siddur Shaar Harachamim* (in the *Maggid Tzedek* commentary) the reason why we precede *Tefillas Shacharis* with *Adon Olam*. As we find on Yom Kippur, before starting the *Avodas Hatamid* in the Bais Hamikdash, the one in charge would ask: "Has the east been illuminated until Chevron?" in order to mentioned the *zechus* of the Avos buried in Chevron (*Yoma* 3:3; *Yerushalmi* *ibid*). Likewise, they established that we should begin our *tefillas* of the day, instituted in place of the *Tamid*, by mentioning the merit of Avraham Avinu, who was the first to call HaKadosh Baruch Hu 'Adon Olam'.

When the new *Siddur* was brought before his Rebbei, the *Vilna Gaon*, the Gaon perused it, and when he saw this commentary, he remarked: "If this *Siddur* would have been published only to reveal this explanation – that would be enough!" (*Shu"t Kanfei Yona* [Vilna 5636] Introduction).

Adon Olam asher malach even *beterem kol yetzir nivra* because His Kingship is not dependent on creations. *L'eis na'asah becheftzo kol, azai Melech Shemo nikra* by the creations of the world. But even *v'acharei kichlos hakol – levado yimloch nora* because as noted, His Kingship is not dependent on creations.

Allusion to the Kavanas HaSheimos

The Ohev Yisrael of Apta revealed another reason why we say *Adon Olam* before davening: The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 5 1) rules: "When he mentions the Name of Hashem, he should concentrate when reading the Name of Adnus on the explanation that He is Adon Hakol, the Master of everything. When he writes it with a Yud and a Hei, he should concentrate that Hashem is Hayah, Hoveh Veyihyeh. When he mentions Elokim, he should have in mind that He is firm and has all the abilities and powers."

Adon Olam has an allusion to all the *kavanos* that one should have when saying the holy Names of *tefillah*. The *kavanah* of Adnus is "*Adon Olam asher malach*." For the Shem Havayah: "*Vehu Hayah, veHu Hoveh, veHu Yihyeh besifarah*." The Name Elokim: "*Bli reishis bli sachlis, veLo ha'oz vehamisrah*." Therefore, we say *Adon Olam* before davening because by doing this we declare and make it clear that because it is hard for us to remember to concentrate on each and every Name with the right *kavanah*, and we might erringly forget to concentrate when saying it, therefore, already now we declare that we are mentioning all the Names with these *kavanos* alluded to in the *piyut*. Therefore, we must at least remember to say this holy passage with the proper *kavanah* (*Taamei Haminhagim* 29).

Adon Olam Asher Malach

This *piyut* expresses the loftiness and greatness of Hashem on the one hand, and His tremendous closeness to us on the other hand, describing how He stands at our side in a time of trouble. This is also expressed in the two descriptions of Hashem at the beginning of the passage: "*Adon olam asher malach*." On the one hand, He is a great and lofty "Melech" and on the other hand He is an Adon, who strengthens the personal bond with each and every one of His subjects (*Yachel Yisrael* p. 64-65).

A flesh and blood king is not called a "Melech", a king, unless his subjects agree to submit themselves to him and to place the crown of royalty on his head. If there is no one who is subservient to him, he is not called a king because there is no king without a nation (*Rabbeinu Bechaye Bereishis* 38:1). That is not what HaKadosh Baruch Hu is like: He is called Melech because of himself, because He is King even "*beterem kol yetzir nivra*," before any creation was created. However, while before the world was created, there were no creations to recognize His Kingship, "*L'eis na'asah becheftzo kol, azai Melech Shemo nikra*." We find that *Brias Ha'Olam* did not change anything about His being a King; it just caused His creations to call Him King. Therefore, we continue and say that even "*acharei kichlos hakol*," after it is all over, "alone He Will rule with awe" (*Arvei Nachal, Balak, Drush* 3).

The *sefer He'aras Hatefillah* (p. 4) writes that the words "*L'eis na'asah becheftzo kol azai Melech Shemo nikra*," contains a deep ethical concept: In order to coronate the Creator, it is not enough to declare "Melech Ha'olam" a hundred times a day. It behooves us to accompany that with obedience and submission to the *mitzvos* that He commanded us in the holy Torah. That is what we allude to when we say: when "*na'asah becheftzo kol*" – then "*azai Melech Shemo nikra*."

An Amen Alarm That Prevented Catastrophe

This is a story we recently received, told by one of the tens of thousands of Bney Emunim, a dear Yid who is very active in promoting the mitzvah of answering amen. He related:

Only today, decades after this occurrence, and after becoming so involved in the mitzvah of answering amen, did I become aware of the magnitude of the *Hashgachah pratit* that brought me here.

Long ago, I was a two-year-old toddler, the youngest child of my dear parents, who raised me with love and devotion. I was also the favored younger brother to my older siblings.

My parents lived on the fourth floor of an apartment building in Yerushalayim. At the time, there was little of the awareness we have today about the importance of putting bars on the windows. This was critical for me – but I'm getting ahead of myself...

My parents were very punctilious about answering amen. My mother learned this practice from her parents, and it had been passed down through many generations. She never missed an opportunity to convey it to us. Already from a young age, we were taught to answer amen to every *brachah* heard around us.

My mother enjoys telling her many grandchildren and great grandchildren, *kein yirbu*, that one of the first words that their parents learned to utter was 'amen.' I, the youngest, was also raised this way and I try to pass this tradition over to my children.

So, there I was, the youngest, a rambunctious two-year-old... My little feet would easily climb up the bars of the crib, and I would jump down to the floor...and from there, the possibilities were endless...

This 'cute' fact gave my parents a lot of angst. Apparently, my older siblings had been calmer than I was, so, as I noted, it had never been necessary to install bars on the windows. But after a few phone calls from horrified neighbors who lived in the nearby buildings, who were aghast to see my climbing up to the window and gazing at the busy street from four flights up – in addition to the times they saw this themselves – my parents were compelled to order windows bars for all the windows.

Meanwhile, until the bars were ready, they had to keep a very close eye on me. They tried to keep the windows closed whenever I was awake and at home. Each morning, after one of my older siblings took me to playgroup, the windows were thrown open and the house could be aired out.

That day when this story happened is one my mother will never forget. Even today,

decades later, she still trembles when she thinks about it. That morning, for some reason, my sisters got mixed up about who was supposed to take me to playgroup. It was one sister's turn to take me, but for some reason she mistakenly thought a different sister was supposed to take me. In addition, everyone had gotten up late that morning, so there was a mad rush to get everyone out to school. Somehow, I was left sleeping peacefully in my bed. After all my siblings went to school –having opened the windows before they left as they did each day – my mother, who of course, was not aware that I was sleeping alone in my room, also hurriedly got ready to leave.

Bechasdei Shamayim, as she was standing at the door, she suddenly felt thirsty. She retreated back into the kitchen, filled a cup with water, and began to make the *brachah* with *kavanah*: "*Baruch Atah Hashem...Shehakol Nihiyeh Bidvaro*..."

She had hardly brought the cup to her lips when she heard a thin voice from the other side of the house answering "Amen!"

Apparently I had woken up at just that moment, and when I heard my mother's *brachah*, I answered amen, just like she had trained me to do from an early age.

First, she recoiled in fear. It didn't enter her mind that I could have been left at home. Then it hit her that her little Moishele had almost been left alone at home!

She hurried to my room and picked me up and hugged me closely, tears of relief running down her face.

Just the thought of what could have happened if not...She couldn't even complete the thought in her mind. A little boy who loved to climb, and to watch the street from the window, and had been caught doing it a few times, would have remained alone for a few hours with the windows – without bars –left open. It was a recipe for a near-certain disaster, *R"l*.

We can imagine what could have happened if she would not have heard my amen. What could have happened if she would not have imbued in our home the clear *halachah* in the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 124 7): "And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a baby answers amen he has a share in Olam Haba."

The angels of amen hovering in our home all the time protected me from catastrophe, and I continued to grow up, safe and healthy, with amen flowing through my veins to this day.

Hashgachah Pratit, Re'eh