

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS CHAYEI SARAH

תשפ"א

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Their Merit Should Protect Us

"במבחר קברינו קבר את מתך איש ממנו את קברו לא כלה ממך מקבר מתך" (כג)

The **Baal Haturim** writes that the word כלה is used one other time in *Tanach*, in the *passuk* (*Mishlei* 22:8): "*Veshevet evraso yichleh*."

**Harav Aryeh Leib Tzintz** offers a beautiful explanation for the connection between these two *pesukim*:

Our existence in the darkness of *galus* is through the power of the *tefillah* of our holy Avos, who do not desist from pleading on our behalf On High to this day (see *Bava Metzia* 85b). All our *tefillos* also rise On High through their burial place in Me'aras Hamachpelah (*Yalkut Reuveni* in this *parashah*, brought by the *Megaleh Amukos*). We find then, that the burial of the Avos in Me'aras Hamachpelah, purchased in the *parashah* about Efron, where it states "*Ish mimenu lo yichleh mimecha mikvor meisecha*" and the *tefillos* there on our behalf, are what protect us from the *tzaros* of the *galus*, as the *passuk* says: "*Veshevet evraso* [the staff of His wrath which He would strike with (*Metzudas Dovid*, *Mishlei* *ibid*)] *yichleh*."

Melo Ha'omer

### Tefillah "Kederech Hamevakshim": How?!

"ויאמר אחיה ואמה תשב הנערה אתנו ימים או עשור אחר תלך" (כד נה)

"*Yamim*" – a year... '*oh asor*' – ten months. If you might claim that '*yamim*' means literally "days", [I would respond] it is not the way of people who make requests to [first] ask for something insignificant, and [then] if your refuse, give us more than that." (*Rashi*)

**Harav Avraham Yitzchak Shain**, Ra"m in Yeshivas Tiferes Yerushalayim of Staten Island, adds:

Based on the words of *Rashi* that the "*derech hamevakshim*," the way of those who make requests, is to first ask for something big, we can understand why many of our *tefillos* begin with a large request and

### The Yetzer Becomes Like an "Eved"

"ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל; ויאמר אברהם אל עבדו זקן ביתו המשל בכל אשר לו שים נא ידך תחת ירכי" (כד א-ב)

The last letters of the words זקן בא בימים זקן ביתו המשל בכל אשר לו form *amen*, to teach us that answering amen lengthens a person's days, as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 47a): "Anyone who lingers on his amen, his days and years are extended." (*Tosafos Hashalem*)

**Chacham Menachem Menasheh** of Yerushalayim further explained that the *passuk* continues and says "*V'Hashem beirach es Avraham bakol*." This teaches us that in reward for being scrupulous about answering amen, a person merits abundance, blessings, success, children, happiness, wealth and all good things.

We can continue this thought through the next *passuk* as well. "And Avraham said to his servant, the elder of his home who ruled all that he had, put your hand beneath my thigh." אברהם is numerically equivalent to 248, to teach us that anyone who answers amen with all his might – meaning with all 248 of his organs, merits to submit his *yetzer hara*, which is called a "*Melech Zaken Vekesil*", and to control him like a master controls his servant. Not only that, the *yetzer* will "put his hand beneath his thigh" and will help him do the Will of his Creator easily and with alacrity.

Ahavah Chaim

then continue with a smaller request. This is the case in the *brachah* of *Shomea Tefillah*. First we ask a general request "*vekabel berachamim uveratzon es tefilloseinu*" and then we immediately add that even if our request will not be accepted in the fullest, then at least some of it should be granted – "*umilfanecha Malkeinu reikam al teshiveinu*." In the requests of *Avinu Malkeinu* as well, we precede by asking: "*Kabel berachamim*

*uveratzon es tefillaseinu*" and then we add that at the very least "*al teshiveinu reikam miLefanecha*." Similarly, in *Shema Koleinu* that we say at the end of *Selichos*, we begin with a large request: "*Hasheiveinu Hashem Eilecha venashuvah*" and we continue with a smaller request that at the very least "*al tashlicheinu miLefanecha*."

Birchas Ish

### The Difference Between "Chalak" and "Nasan"

"ולבני הפילגשים אשר לאברהם נתן אברהם מתנת וישלחם מעל יצחק בנו" (כה ו)

"*Chazal* explain (*Sanhedrin* 91a): 'He transmitted to them 'impure names.'" (*Rashi*)

We learn in the *Breisa* (*Brachos* 58a): "One who sees sages of Am Yisrael says "*Baruch Shechalak michochmaso liyereiav*." When one sees the sages of the nations of the world, he says "*Baruch Shenasan michochmaso lebasar vadam*." Many ask about the difference: Why does it say "*shechalak*" for the sages of Yisrael and "*shenasan*" for the sages of the other nations?

The *Taz* explains:

There is a difference between "*chalukah*" and "*nesinah*." The word "*chalukah*" means that the giver shares with others what he has, while "*nesinah*" symbolizes something that is taken from the giver and has no more connection to it. Therefore, the Torah was strict to write that for the children of the Pilagshim, Avraham *nasan* impure names, and thus he sent them away permanently, while Yitzchak, who cleaved to his holiness, remained at his side.

The *brachah* should be explained likewise: With the sages of Am Yisrael who cleave to Hashem, then Hashem *kaviyachol* is *cholek* His knowledge, and therefore we make the *brachah* "*Shechalak Michochmaso*." But the wisdom of the other nations is completely separate from the *chochmah* of Hashem, like those *sheimos tumah* that the children of the Pilagshim received, and therefore, we make the *brachah* on them with the words "*shenasan*."

Turei Zahav, Orach Chaim 224 1

## Answering Amen in Chazaras Hashatz Helps Tefillos Get Accepted

Dear Yid! When you answer amen in *Chazaras Hashatz*, it is guaranteed that your *tefillos* will be fulfilled and your requests at that moment will be accepted.

Rabbeinu Yona Girundi writes in *Iggeres Hateshuvah* (6):

"At the time that the *shaliach tzibbur* repeats the davening, one is obligated to answer amen to every single *brachah*. And he should concentrate on each *brachah* and know which *brachah* he is answering amen to. This gives him a double reward. It is like a person davens twice, one time after another. *Chazal* say in the *Midrash*: If you daven... and then daven again, you will be told that your *tefillah* is heard."

In honor of the yahrtzeit of Rabbeinu Yona Girundi - Sunday 28 Cheshvan





## The Brachah of Pokeach Ivrim

### The Renewed Power of Sight

After thanking HaKadosh Baruch Hu for being created as Jews whose path is illuminated by Torah and *mitzvos*, we continue to thank Him in a series of *brachos* for the many favors that He grants us each and every day of our lives.

Reciting these *brachos* casts a powerful spotlight on the countless good things and *chassadim* that Hashem bestows upon us each day anew. They help us recognize them and not take them for granted as the course of nature. Although there are things that seem to be the result of a natural string of actions that occur each morning, in reality, these abilities are renewed each day, only made possible by Hashem's great compassion and *chesed*. By reciting these *brachos* with *kavanah*, we are awakened to realize this and to thank the One Who granted us all this good.

The words of the *brachah* of *Pokeach Ivrim* are based on the *pasuk* (Tehillim 146:8): "*Hashem pokeach ivrim.*" This means that while we are sleeping, a person's sense of sight is suspended. His eyelids close and he is like a blind person who does not see. When he awakens from sleep, when he opens his eyes and his power to see is renewed, then he is like a blind person who is granted vision. He must thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu that his sight has returned. (*Avudraham, Hashkamas Haboker Ubirchos Hashachar*)

This is the place to note that in contrast to the sense of sight that is not active during sleep, the sense of hearing continues to be active, evidenced by the fact that a person is awakened by loud noise. Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explained that this is the reason that *Chazal* did not include a special *brachah* thanking Hashem for the sense of hearing, the way they did for sight. (*Halichos Shlomo Tefillah 22:97*)

### The Wonders of Sight

Harav Yitzchak Silberstein, *shlita*, related: "While I was learning in Yeshivas Slabodka, I noticed that one of my friends, a *ben aliyah*, got up early each day and left the yeshivah. He returned fifteen minutes later, and joined us in the *bais medrash* for davening. This puzzled me, until I finally learned the amazing truth: There was a factory nearby called Dubek, and in the guardhouse there, there was a blind man who was responsible for the factory's telephone system. Each morning, this bachur got up early to go and catch a glimpse of this man, and through that, to recognize the tremendous gift from Above that is the power to see. Then he returned to the *bais medrash*, where he was able to recite the *brachah* of *Pokeach Ivrim* with even more *kavanah*." (*Tuvcha Yabiu, Tazria*)

Indeed, in order to properly thank Hashem for our unbelievable power to see, it behooves us to delve a bit more into the essence of vision. Let us start with the fact that the sense of sight is the one with the broadest range of all senses. Speech, hearing and smell are limited to a relatively short distance, but the eyes can see tremendous distances.

Aside for that, the power of sight is very broad. Within a few seconds, a person can see countless items, and even if he could describe them it would take him a very long time. In order to imagine this, let us think how much time it would take us to describe in detail the scene that spreads out before our eyes when we gaze down from a tall building. (*Nefesh Shimshon, Siddur Hatefillah*)

The eye itself is crafted with utmost brilliance, and even the greatest researchers have not yet

been able to study all its facets. As the *Chazon Ish* writes at the beginning of his *sefer Emunah Ubitachon*: "How much wisdom there is in the eye, no eye will satiate from seeing it and the ear from hearing it, and generation after generation, wise men will continue to learn and understand the troves of wisdom that are contained in the creation of the eye, and yet they will not reach its complete essence."

The *Yesod Veshoreish Ha'avodah* writes that "and in the *brachah* of *Pokeach Ivrim*, he should open his eyes at the end of the *brachah*. Even if a person says all the *brachos* with his eyes closed, when he completes this *brachah* he should open his eyes, and have *kavanah* to display the greatness of Hashem in the creation of the eyes, which can close when a person wants and open when he wants. That is a tremendous wisdom in this organ, aside for the inordinate power of the eyes..."

### Everyone Is Considered Blind

The *Midrash* states (*Bereishis Rabbah 53:14*): "Rabi Binyamin said everyone is considered blind until HaKadosh Baruch Hu illuminates their eyes." The *Chiddushei Harim* learned from this that the wondrous world that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created contains everything we need to live, but we do not notice it until Hashem opens our eyes. (*Sfas Emes Chukas 5659*)

The *sefer Seder Hayom (Seder Birchos Hashachar)* writes that one should have *kavanah* in this *brachah* and to ask that we should merit to have our eyes opened to see only good and worthy things, and to be prevented from having to see forbidden sights.

The *Sichos Hachofetz Chaim* (p. 115) also says that because when we make the *brachah* of *Pokeach Ivrim*, we declare that HaKadosh Baruch Hu alone opens our eyes, this declaration obligates us to act accordingly – to use our eyes only for *mitzvos* and not to peruse something that can lead to sin. As we have been cautioned (*Bamidbar 15:39*): "*Velo sasuru acharei levavchem v'acharei eineichem.*"

### Does a Blind Person Make This Brachah?

The *Rishonim* disagree on the definition of the *Birchos Hashachar*. According to the *Rambam* (*Tefillah 7, 7-9*), the *brachos* were instituted in gratitude for the pleasure derived by the person making the *brachah*. Hence, someone who does not benefit from the subject of the *brachah* cannot make that *brachah*. However, the *Ramban* (*Pesachim 7b*, beginning with "Vehi") disagrees, and believes that they were established to thank for the enjoyment of creations at large. Therefore, even someone who does not benefit from a specific subject of a *brachah* may recite that *brachah*.

The *Acharonim* say that there is a practical difference in the application of the *halachah* of a blind person reciting *Pokeach Ivrim* that arises from this disagreement. According to the *Rambam* that the *brachah* was instituted to thank for the benefit derived by the person making it, the blind person cannot make the *brachah*, because he does not enjoy vision. But according to the *Ramban*, who says this is a general *brachah*, then a blind person can make the *brachah*. (*Levush 46:8; Eliyah Zuta ibid 6*. Regarding the *halachah* see *Mishnah Berurah*, *ibid 25*)

**Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'Olam Pokeach Ivrim** – for opening my eyes that were like blind while I slept.

**Amen** – it is true that we must thank Hashem for opening our eyes when we awaken from our sleep.

## The Fire in Kfar Oranim

This beautiful story was heard from the person it happened to, Rabbi R. of Modiin Illit. Rabbi R. established a special *kollel* in the neighboring city of Modiin, and engages in outreach of youth who learn in religious high schools. He pairs them with *chavrusos* who teach them Torah, and expands the number of hours that these schools dedicate to Torah learning. He has been very successful in his efforts, evidenced by the healthy, close relationships forged between the *avreichim* and the students. These ties have a positive effect on the future of the students and their families.

It was the morning of Hoshana Rabbah – Erev Simchas Torah in Modiin Illit. Due to coronavirus restrictions, people were largely ensconced in their homes with their families. Many sensed that this was why the joy of Yom Tov was special this year, and was more influenced by the hearts outwards than the other way around.

Many who daven *vasikin* on this day were already home. Their *lulavim* were loose from the rings, and their *aravos* had been duly beaten. Their eyes glowed with lofty joy and the simchah of having completed a *mitzvah*. They entered their sukkah for a cup of coffee but...were assailed by a strong, acrid smell.

A glance at the hilltops on the horizon towards the south explained it all. Oranges flames were shooting towards the sky, hungrily licking at the thick brush that covered the hilltops. After a number of very hot days, the plants were all dry and combustible. The flames were also fueled by a strong easterly wind, and they climbed rapidly up the slopes, consuming everything in their path.

Located on the hill opposite Modiin Illit is the town of Kfar Oranim and dozens of homes on the first row of houses were threatened by the fire. People began to call the fire department, and were told that forces were at the scene. But it didn't take a professional to realize that this was an event that was on the verge of raging out of control.

Over the next two hours, the fire spread rapidly over the entire row of hilltops, consuming dozens of dunams of natural land. The air was thick with smoke, but the firefighters were focusing their efforts on defending the homes of Kfar Oranim. The problem was that as long as the wind was blowing strongly, their efforts were hardly effective. From afar, the residents of Modiin Illit heard a guttural voice calling into a megaphone for the residents of Kfar Oranim to evacuate their homes because of the fire and smoke. They were told that they would be taken to a shelter that had been prepared for them in nearby Modiin. One can only imagine the fear that they felt at the prospect of their homes becoming a firetrap in a matter of moments.

Rabbi R. Picks up the story:

From my home, I watched the flames drawing rapidly closer to the homes in Kfar Oranim. Suddenly, I remembered Yossi. He is one of the high school students who learns *bechavrusa* with one of the *avreichim* of the *kollel*, and his family lives in one of the homes on the eastern side of Kfar Oranim, which were now threatened by the fire. I was very worried about him and his house.

I looked from the window of my

home at the flames that began to lick at the homes, and at the six firefighting planes flying back and forth, dumping tons of fire retardant on the surrounding hilltops in a desperate effort to prevent the fire from spreading to the homes. I took out my phone to call Yossi.

I needed to dial a few times until I got a hold of him. He sounded quite panicked. "Rabbi," he said to me, as he raised his voice to try to speak above the ruckus that surrounded him. "We've just been evacuated to Modiin. We left everything behind. Rumors say that the houses near us are already burning. Who knows if we'll have where to go back to..."

I groped for the words to try and calm him, but I didn't find any. Suddenly, in a flash of inspiration, I said to him: "Yossi, if we sit and talk about this, the things you are most afraid of might happen...It's a waste of every second. I'm hanging up so I can start to say *Tehillim*, together with my children. I suggest you just drop everything else, and just daven..."

I hung up with a warm wish that his fears should be unfounded and nothing should happen to his family and their home. Then I sat down to daven with my children. We recited *perek* after *perek*, with *kavanah*. Through the window we could see the intensive efforts of the firefighters from the air and by land. We continued to daven, even when a thick veil of smoke blocked our field of vision, and we could no longer see the houses of the *yishuv*.

Only later in the afternoon did the forces manage to bring the fire under control. It had already consumed a huge area. The green scenery that we had gotten so used to was replaced by black, charred terrain. We were happy to hear that *baruch Hashem* no one had been injured, but there were rumors that a number of Kfar Oranim's homes had gone up in flames. This deeply concerned us.

I was desperate to know what had happened to Yossi's house, but I had to wait impatiently until his family could return home to assess the damage.

Some more time passed, and then I saw Yossi's phone number on an incoming call. I answered quickly to hear him sounding very excited: "Rabbi, it's unbelievable! It's for sure only because of the *tefillos*..."

I was overcome with emotion at what was clearly a miracle. Apparently, while I was saying *Tehillim* at home with my children, Yossi had done the same in the place where he had been evacuated to. He sat with his family and davened that their home should be spared.

And the *tefillos* were answered. While the houses on the left and right side of Yossi's house had been badly damaged or completely burned down, their home had not been touched. It was as if it was enveloped by a special protection that prevented the fire from touching the house.

We both knew the secret that had protected the house from the fire. It was the *tefillah* said just at the right minute which created that protective shield.