

Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS VAYEIRA

תשפ"א

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Tefillah That Grows More Intense

"ויען אברהם ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי לדבר אל ה' ואנכי
עפר ואפר" (יח כז)

The *Tiferes Shlomo* writes:

Before standing up to daven, it behooves a person to delve into the greatness of the Creator as compared to his own low standing, but while davening, he must strengthen himself with the thought that despite his lowliness, his *tefillah* is wanted and accepted by Hashem. This can be compared to the work of a builder: before building he needs to construct foundations deep in the earth, and only then can he build a tall structure on those foundations.

We can learn this also from the way Avraham Avinu conducted himself. After he began his *tefillah* with the declaration of "v'anochi afar v'eifer," his *tefillah* grew more powerful: "Perhaps there are lacking forty five righteous people...or perhaps forty can be found...thirty...twenty..." Until "ten."

Tiferes Shlomo, Shaar Hatefillah, beginning with Mizmor Shir

Tefillah Transforms the Evil to Tzaddikim

"ויאמר אל נא יחר לה' ואדברה אך הפעם ולי ימצאון שם
עשרה ויאמר לא אשחית בעבור העשרה" (יח לב)

A person once sinned, and then decided to seek repentance. He came to the **Trisker Maggid** and asked for a *tikkun* for his soul. But the Maggid refused to accept him, citing the words of the *Gemara (Bava Basra 4a)* that after they sin, the *reshaim* come to seek advice. **Harav Yaakov Tzvi of Porisov**, in contrast, welcomed the person happily and stressed: It is not our role to look for *tzaddikim*, but rather to pray for the sinners to repent. Likewise, we see that Avraham Avinu, who looked for 'tzaddikim' in Sodom, could not find them. In contrast, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed (*Bamidbar 14:19*): "Forgive please the sin of this nation," and Hashem acceded, as it says (*ibid 20*): "Vayomer Hashem salachti kidvarecha."

Chassidim Mesaprim, Vol. I., p. 15

Answering Amen Continues the Healing

"וירא אליו ה' באלני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל חסם
היום" (יח א)

"To visit the sick" (*Rashi, on Sotah 14a*) The **Rebbe of Brizdovitz, shlita**, says: It is known from the holy *sefarim* (see *Imrei Aharon, Beshalach*) that answering amen draws healing to a person, both physical healing and emotional healing. This is alluded by the name of the place where Hashem revealed Himself to visit Avraham Avinu when he was ill: "*Elonei Mamrei*". ממרא is numerically equivalent to amen. רפא is numerically equivalent to רפא.

Amen – A Segulah for Finding Favor

"ויאמר אנני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל
עבדך" (יח ג)

Harav Noach Gad Weintraub:

"אם נא מצאתי" is an acronym for "amen" [and the words אם נא also contain the word amen.] Thus the Torah alluded that one who is careful about amen mentions to find favor in the Eyes of Hashem, even if he sinned, *chalilah*. As *Chazal* say (*Tikkunei Zohar 40 1*): "One who answers amen with all his might has his decree of seventy years torn up."

Some explain this *passuk* as a directive for generations to come: "*Vayomer A-donai*" – when you hear a person making a *brachah* with Hashem's Name, "*im na matzasi*" – answer after him amen.

Noam Chen [Rav N. Weintraub] p. 5; Vayisyaldu Al Mishpechosam, p. 295

"One Who Davens f or His Friend" – Lechatchilah

"וה' פקד את שרה כאשר אמר ויעש ה' לשרה כאשר
דבר" (כא א)

"This *parashah* was placed here to teach you that whoever asks for mercy for his friend and he needs the same thing, is answered first." (*Rashi*)

Harav Yaakov Chaim Sofer, Rosh Yeshivas Kaf Hachaim, was asked: A person who needs a *yeshuah* on a certain matter knows that his friend also needs a similar *yeshuah*. Should he first daven for his friend so that he should be answered first, or perhaps, this rule only applies to those who do it unwittingly, similar to the *tefillah* of Avraham for Avimelech?

He replied: From the words of Rabi Akiva Eiger, it appears that even *lechatchilah* one may do this. He wrote to one of his petitioners: "And as I see from your letter that you are not in great health, and I am also [ailing], **I advise you for a refuah** if it is not a burden, to mention me in your pure *tefillos*, and then words "anyone who prays for his friend is answered first" should be fulfilled with you."

Zera Chaim 9:2; Mishpetei Rabi Akiva Eiger, p. 128

The Wholeness of the Angel Indicates the Wholeness of the Mitzvah

"ויקרא אליו מלאך ה' מן השמים...כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא
אלקים אתה ולא חשכת את בנך את יחידך ממני" (כא
יא-יב)

How did the angel say to Avraham: "*Velo chasachta...mimeni*"? Did Avraham sacrifice his son before the angel?

The **Gra** explains: The angel speaking here to Avraham was the one formed by the mitzvah of the Akeidah. Because this mitzvah was done in a complete way, the angel that was created by it was also complete in all its virtues. It says "*mimeni*" – meaning from the fact that I was created so perfectly we can learn that you did the mitzvah with perfection.

Kol Eliyahu

Furthermore, **Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg** taught that the creation of the angel that results from saying a *brachah* is only completed if there is an amen answered to that *brachah*.

Ohel Yitzchak p. 36

**Amen
Lifnim
Mshuras
Hadin**

As we mark the *sheloshim* of the passing of the Pittsburgher Rebbe, זי"ל, we want to share an excerpt from his inspiring speech at the Bney Emunim convention that took place in Av 5776:

The tremendous virtue and power of answering amen is well known. The reason is because answering amen is *l'Shem Shamayim*, as one who answers amen has no personal benefit from it. He is testifying that the words of the one making the *brachah* are true. Such a cry evokes Heavenly mercy and brings down an abundance of gifts to the creations of the world.

Sefer Bney Emunim, p. 277

Amen. Three letters. An abundance of benefits.



Brachos and Gratitude for the Mitzvos

Three Brachos -
Three Levels

Among the *Birchos Hashchar* that were instituted for us to thank Hashem for the natural order of the world, there are three *brachos* in which we thank Hashem for the tremendous gift He has granted us – the 613 *mitzvos* that He gave us the merit to do in His great compassion. Through them, we can complete our souls and merit life in the World to Come.

Chazal wanted to institute a special expression of gratitude for each level that we merited in the obligation of *mitzvos*. Therefore, they established the *brachos* in ascending order, based on the different levels of those obligated in *mitzvos*. First “*Shelo Asani Goy*” – who is not at all obligated in *mitzvos* [aside for the Seven Noahide Laws]. Then “*Shelo Asani Aved*” – a servant, who is obliged only in a few *mitzvos*, and whose level is inferior to that of a Jew, and finally “*Shelo Asani Ishah*” – who is also not obligated in *mitzvos*. (*Tur* and *Bais Yosef*, *Orach Chaim* 46; *Avudraham Hashkamas Haboker Ubirchos Hashachar*)

Brachos in the
Negative Tense

Many have asked: Why are these *brachos* said in the negative tense: “*Shelo asani goy/aved/ishah*” and not in the positive tense, like “*She’asani Yisrael/ben chorin/ishi*”?

One explanation is that because *Chazal* say (*Eiruvin* 13b) “It would be more comfortable for a person not to be created than to have been created,” one therefore should not praise for the actual fact “*she’asani*”. Rather, after He decided to create me, He then was benevolent to me by not creating me a non-Jew. (*Drashos Mahar”i Mintz*, Second Drush)

Furthermore: If we would make the *brachah* “*She’asani Yisrael*” then we already include the meaning of the other *brachos*, because a *Yisrael* is a free man, and not a servant or a woman [as a woman is called a *Yisraelis*.] Therefore, it was instituted in a negative form, so that we can thank with a special *brachah* for each level that was added to us regarding which *mitzvos* we are obligated to do (*Bach*, *ibid*).

Another explanation: The decision of whether to be a “*Yisrael*” is in the hands of the person himself, as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 33b): “Everything is in the Hands of Shamayim, except *Yiras Shamayim*.” Therefore, we are instructed to make the *brachah* as “*Shelo asani goy*.” (*Birchei Yosef*, *ibid* 7)

Shelo Asani Goy

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha’olam Shelo Asani Goy – who is not obligated in the 613 *mitzvos*.

Amen – It is true that we must thank Hashem that we were not created like the non-Jews who are not commanded to do *mitzvos*.

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha’olam Shelo Asani Aved – a Canaanite servant, whose level is lower than that of a *Yisrael*, and he is exempt from *mitzvos asei* that are contingent on time.

Aside for the additional virtue that we thank for in the *brachah* of “*Shelo asani goy*,” that we were not created as gentiles that are not obligated in the 613 *mitzvos*, we must know that the Jew is greater than the non-Jew in his very essence. As *Harav Baruch Ber of Kaminetz* once told a *talmid*: “When I make the *brachah* of “*Shelo asani goy*” I don’t have in mind a simple street sweeper, or even a wealthy non-Jew who has many assets. I mean the most important non-Jew in the world – the president of the United States!”

The virtue of a Jew over a non-Jew is not only manifested in the fact that he engages in Torah and *mitzvos*, compared to the non-Jew who is busy with idle matters. Rather, his very essence makes him greater than the non-Jew, and he is an entirely different creation, as it states (*Yeshayahu* 43:21): “*Am zu yatzarti Li tehilasi yesaperu*, this people I formed for Myself; they shall recite My praise.” (*Daas Shraga*, *Chinuch* p. 122)

The *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (*Orach Chaim* 46 5) states: “And one must give gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu that He did not put the person’s lot *k’m’aulah shebahem*, like the best of them, and rather he merited to serve Hashem and to be closer to Him than all the others.”

Those close to the Chozeh of Lublin once noticed that he skipped the *brachah* of “*Shelo asani goy*” in *Shacharis*. After davening, when they expressed their surprise, he explained: “When I awoke this morning, I was suddenly overcome with such a sense of emotional weakness that I could not get out of bed. My heart broke inside me at my low level and my dearth of actions, but then suddenly I remembered that at least I am a Jew, and therefore surely my virtue is greater than that of a non-Jew. This fact caused me to jump out of bed with joy and to enthusiastically recite the *brachah* of “*Shelo asani goy*,” and therefore, I skipped the *brachah* now.” (*Niflaos HaRebbe*, 355)

Shelo Asani Aved

An “*Eved Canaani*” is a servant from the nations of the world that is sold to a Jew and then converts. All these servants are called *Canaanim*, as the *passuk* states (*Bereishis* 9:25): “*Arur Cana’an eved avadim yihyeh l’achiv*, cursed is Canaan, a slave of slaves he shall be to his brothers.” (*Rashi Kiddushin* 22b, beginning with *sadeh*). Even though after his conversion, the *Eved Canaani* is obligated in *mitzvos* the way a woman is, *Chazal* instituted that we make two separate *brachos*

– “*Shelo asani aved*” and “*Shelo asani ishah*” because the level of the servant is lower than that of a woman who is free, and closer to the non-Jew, because he does not have *zechus avos* and he must not marry a *bas Yisrael* (*Avudraham*).

Some explained that this *brachah* does not apply specifically to an *Eved Cana’ani*, and is also for a Jewish servant [an *Eved Ivri*], because he also cannot fulfill *mitzvos* properly, as he is subservient to his master (*Peirush Hatefillos Vehabrachos* by *Rav Y. Ben Yakar*). They further wrote that this *brachah* comes to allude to us that a person should not be a slave to his nature and his desires (*Sefer Habatim Mitzvah* 13). And *sefer Olas Tamid* (Chapter 9) writes that it is worthy to have in mind to thank Hashem in this *brachah* for saving us from the slavery and bondage in the impurity of *Mitzrayim*.

She’asani Kirtzono

In the *brachah* of *Shelo Asani Ishah*, we thank Hashem for giving us the merit to fulfill the *mitzvos* that are dependent on time [*Mitzvas Asei Shehazman Grama*], which a woman is not obligated to keep. Besides that, He also gave us the *mitzvah* of learning the holy Torah (*Avudraham*; *Yesod Veshoreh Ha’avodah*, *Shaar Ha’ashmores* ch. 4).

But we must know that a woman has a very important and special role in the world. Therefore, just like men make a *brachah* to thank Hashem for the virtues that they merited, women must also thank for their virtues. They have the virtue of being the determining factor in the identity of their children, as someone born to a Jewish mother and gentile father is considered a Jew, while one born to a gentile mother and Jewish father is considered a gentile. Therefore, *Chazal* established a special *brachah* “*She’asani kirtzono*” (*Taz*, *ibid* 4; *Nefesh Shimshon* on *Siddur Hatefillah*).

Some explain the words of the *brachah* “*She’asani kirtzono*” as follows: The *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 8 3) explains that before HaKadosh Baruch Hu created man, he consulted with the Ministering Angels, as it says (*Bereishis* 1:26): “*Na’aseh adam*”, let us make man. But the woman was created only by His will, and therefore, the woman says “*She’asani kirtzono*,” as per His will, the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu Alone, who did not consult the angels (*Yeshuos Yaakov Orach Chaim* 46 6).

Amen – It is true that we must thank Hashem for not being created like *Avadim Canaanim*, whose level is lower than that of a *Yisrael*, and they are not obligated in all the *mitzvos* like a Jew is.

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha’olam Shelo Asani Ishah – as a woman is exempt from all *mitzvos* that are contingent on time.

Amen – It is true that we must thank Hashem for not creating us like women who are not obligated in all the *mitzvos* like a *Yisrael*.

The Gas Finished and We Escaped

Kalman Der Freilicher, Kalman the happy person, is what the hero of our story was known as. Kalman was a youth, just sixteen years old, when darkness descended on Hungarian Jewry towards the end of the Holocaust. Within a few months, hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Yidden were deported to torture in the camps or death.

It was not for naught that Kalman had earned this moniker; he had been blessed with a special trait: the smile never left his face. He began smiling when he was a young child, and his expression remained cheerful through his formative years, to when he began to diligently learn, and throughout that rapid and exhausting journey that he made from his warm, sheltered home in Hungary to the valley of death in Auschwitz. Kalman could not stand the ominous atmosphere that enveloped the cattle cars on which they were packed with hundreds of other Jews being taken to Auschwitz. He did everything he could to make things more pleasant. He had a sweet voice, and he sang along with friends who were with him; they chose uplifting, happy tunes, as well as poignant, touching melodies. In between songs he would speak pleasantly and soothingly to anyone who needed to hear a good word.

Kalman’s singing was halted by the screeching of the train’s brakes. “We’ve arrived at Auschwitz,” the news rippled throughout the cars. The screaming of the guards and the barking dogs that they heard behind the closed door explained to anyone who had not yet grasped it that the worst of all was still ahead of them.

A few moments passed and they heard the rattling of chains before the doors were flung open. “Schnell, schnell!” the German guards prodded them to get out, ignoring the fact that they had been crammed into the cattle cars for a few days already with hardly a chance to move a limb. “Get off and leave all your bundles on the side of the road,” they ordered.

There was a stench of death hanging in the air. The horrific scene of human skeletons wearing striped uniforms who had been summoned to handle the packages of the ‘new shipment’ stunned the train’s passengers. The rumors turned out to be well founded – Auschwitz was going to be their final stop on this earth.

The Nazis hurried the stunned Jews to a large plaza at the center of the camp. Kalman walked with a jaunty step, as if these were normal days and he was striding through the paths of his tranquil town on a spring day. He was singing in *tefillah*, and still offering words of *chizuk* to those around him. The Nazis arranged the Jews in rows, all facing a low stage in the center of the plaza. They waited for the fiend, Dr. Mengele, ym’s, who was going to select those who were capable of working, and then send the rest to the crematoria.

The tension was dreadful. The rumors spreading among the youths said that Dr. Mengele looked at height as a significant factor in evaluating their physical abilities. Each of the young men tried to make themselves appear taller. Some even stuck stones into their shoes to give them a few

added inches of height.

Then it was Kalman’s turn. He stood before the *rasha* emanating confidence. When he was asked his age, he replied, “Eighteen.” Mengele looked at him skeptically, and instructed him to walk under a stick that he held in his hand. Kalman tried as best he could to stretch himself as high as he could, but the result was not satisfactory for the Nazi beast.

Kalman was directed to the left, to the path of no return, joining the elderly, the sick and the children who had been sent there before him.

Still, his spirit did not flag. He smiled at the dejected expression that surrounded him, and reminded them of the words of *Chazal*: “Even if a sharp sword is resting on a person’s neck he should not despair of compassion.”

“Let us daven together to nullify this decree,” he suggested. And without waiting for a response, he began to sing the familiar chapters of *Tehillim* quietly: “*Shir hamaalos mim’a’amakim...*” “*Shir lama’alos esa einai el heharim...*” and others. By the time the Nazis began to march them to the gas chambers, others had joined his *tefillah*, a gleam of hope in their eyes. The march started and stopped intermittently, as per the instructions howled by the guards, but the *tefillah* did not pause for even a moment. Again and again, Kalman and his friends repeated the chapters of *Tehillim* until they were facing the opening of the large hall. The signs at the entrance were a lie; no one was convinced that they were actually going to be deloused and cleaned in this place.

Death hovered over their heads; their fates had been sealed, but they did not lose their hope and continue to daven. When a few long moments passed and they had not yet entered the ‘delousing hall’ – and the guards grew more restless and angry, the Jews realized that something had gone wrong. All around them, officers walked around, barking angry orders in every direction. Soon enough the reason for the delay became clear.

The astonished Jews learned that the gas delivery that was meant to be used to destroy them had been unexpectedly held up. The Nazis had no choice but to suspend the operation of the death machines for a few hours until a new delivery arrived.

The unbelievable had happened. Black trucks pulled up and transferred the hundreds of Jews that had been standing at death’s door to a temporary camp a bit of a distance away from Auschwitz. By the time their turn came to be sent to death yet again, the Red Army had already arrived at the camp and liberated them.

Kalman merited to make *Aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael, where he established a beautiful family. Until the end of his life, he never stopped thanking Hashem for the remarkable miracle that he had merited because of his *Tehillim*. As he said wittily: “*Shir Hama’alos* saved me at the last minute *mima’akim*.”

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