

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Gratitude – In Short, A Request – In Detail

“הצילנו נא מיד אחי מיד עשו כי ירא אנכי אתו פן יבוא והכני אם על בני” (לב יב)

Yaakov expounded in detail in his *tefillah* about who his enemy was that he was trying to escape from, and what exactly he was afraid of. Based on this, the holy *Zohar* learns (*Vayishlach* 169 1) that a person should detail his request when davening to his Creator.

Harav Yosef Shaul Nathanson explained the reason why according to his grandfather, the **Bach** (*Orach Chaim* 47), we detail in *Birchas HaTorah* “*venihiyeh anachnu vetze’etzaeinu vetze’etzaei tze’etzaeinu*” even though the description of “*tze’etzaeinu*” includes our children and grandchildren. We know this is the case from the *brachah* “*Asher kidash yedid mibiten vechok bishe’ro sam vetze’zav chasam b’os bris kodesh*”, the *Tosafos* explains (*Shabbos* 137b, beginning with *yedid*): “*Yedid*” is Avraham Avinu, “*she’ero*” is Yitzchak and “*tze’etza’av*” is **Yaakov and his children** – who are actually the children of Yitzchak as well.

However, according to the words of the *Zohar* that in *tefillah* and requests, a person should detail clearly what he is asking, this becomes clear: the *tefillah* of *Veha’arev Na* is like a request, and therefore, we need to detail “*vetze’etzaei tze’etzaeinu*”, but the *Birchas Hamilah* is *hoda’ah*, gratitude, and when we thank Hashem it is enough to mention briefly “*vetze’etza’av*.”

Yad Shaul, Yoreh Deah 265 3

A Tefillah for the Success of a Friend – With His Name

“וישראל יעקב ויאמר הגידה נא שמך ויאמר למה זה תשאל לשמי ויברך אתו שם” (לב ל)

“*Vayevarech oso sham – ubrich yasei Yaakov taman*, and Yaakov blessed him there.” (*Targum Yonasan*)

In *Maseches Brachos* (34a), *Chazal* learn from the fact that Moshe davened for his sister Miriam (*Bamidbar* 12:13) “*K-l na*

It is Worthy to Live For Even One Brachah

“ויאמר שלחני כי עלה השחר” (לב כז)

A *talmid* of **Harav Yaakov Kaminetzky** related:

As my mother aged, she suffered various ailments, her vision and hearing weakened and she almost stopped functioning. As a result, she became severely depressed and lost her will to live. I really wanted to lift her spirits, and I turned to my *Rebbi* for advice. This is what he told me:

We learn in the *parashah* that after Yaakov Avinu tussled with the angel, the angel said to him, “Send me because dawn has risen.” *Chazal* explain (*Chulin* 91b) that the angel was saying to Yaakov: “Since the day I was created, it has not yet been my turn to sing praise to Hashem until now.” This angel was surely created like the other angels, in the six days of Creation. It is remarkable to see how it was worthwhile for HaKaodsh Baruch Hu to create it and sustain it for two thousand years, for even one moment of the angel saying praise to Him!

Hence, go to your mother and tell her that if she would just understand the value of a single *brachah* or *tefillah* that she is still able to recite, she will surely choose life, if only for this merit alone!

The *talmid* then continued: After I related this to my mother, she seemed infused with new energy. She drew strength from these words and went on to live many more years, until she passed away at the ripe old age of ninety-six.

Be’mechitzas Rabbeinu, p. 181

refa na lah” without mentioning her name that when one asks for mercy for his friend [in front of him (*Magen Avraham Orach Chaim* 119 1)] there is no need to mention his name.

Rav Yechiel Michel Stern, the *Rav* of the *Ezras Torah* neighborhood, writes that we learn from the *Targum Yonasan* that Yaakov

is the one who blessed the angel, because the exemption of mentioning the name of a person in front of him is only when praying for a recovery for him. But when praying for a person’s success, his name should be mentioned, even in his presence, as we find here that Yaakov asked the angel for his name before blessing him.

Similarly, we see this in the *Gemara* (*Taanis* 28a) that when “*Eichu*” – the neighbor of *Rabi Chanina ben Dosa* – built her house and discovered suddenly that the beams for the ceiling were too short, *Rabi Chanina* blessed her: “*Eichu – nimtu keshurayich*” [the beams of your home should be lengthened]. Because in *tefillah* that is not over sickness, one should mention the name of the person being davened for, even when he is present.

Beirurei Halachah, Brachos p. 223

Gratitude In the Same Place as the Promise

“ויאמר אלקים אל יעקב קום עלה בית אל ושב שם ועשה שם מזבח לא-ל הנראה אליך בברוך מפני עשו אחיך” (לה א)

Why did HaKaodsh Baruch Hu instruct Yaakov to ascend and express gratitude specifically in *Beis El*?

Harav Ovadia Seforno explains: When Yaakov fled to Charan from his brother Eisav, HaKaodsh Baruch Hu revealed Himself to him in *Beis El* and promised him (*Bereishis* 29:15): “And here I am with you and I will protect you wherever you go and I will return you to this land...” Therefore, now that the promise was fulfilled, Hashem instructed him: “Rise and ascend to *Beis El* and make **there** a *mizbeach*...” In other words, the gratitude for miracles that were performed for you should be in the place where Hashem bestowed upon you good, and promised you regarding this. *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 54a) that one who passes by a place where he experienced a miracle must thank Hashem with the *brachah*: “*Baruch she’asah li ness bamakom hazeh*.”

Seforno

“כְּתוּר יִתְנוּ לָךְ... מְלֵאכִים הַמוֹנִי מַעֲלָה עִם עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל קְבוּצֵי מִטָּה”

In his *sefer Kav Hayashar*, in the chapter regarding the *mitzvah* of lighting the Chanukah candles (96), the *mekubal* *Harav Tziv Hirsch Kaidanover*, wrote:

“With every single *mitzvah* a person does, holy angels are born and created. The angels created by each *mitzvah* are called the *machaneh*, the camp of that *mitzvah*. It is simple that with every *mitzvah* that we make a *brachah* on, those angels gather around the one making the *brachah*, and they hear the *brachah* and answer amen. An allusion to this: “מלאך” is numerically equivalent to “amen.” Therefore, when Am Yisrael answer with a *brachah* or with *Kiddush*, and they say amen, they should have in mind that those angels should answer amen.”

אָמוֹן. לְעִמְתָם מְשֻׁבָּחִים וְאוֹמְרִים!



The Brachah of Roka Ha'aretz Al Hamayim

'Roka' In the Present Tense

At the beginning of Creation, the waters covered the entire earth, until the third day, when they were commanded (*Bereishis* 1:9): "Yikavu hamayim mitachas hashamayim el makom echad vesera'eh hayabashah, let the waters beneath the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dryness be seen." Thus, the expanse of the earth was divided into sea and dry ground. Most of the area was covered with water and oceans, and a lesser part became the dry land upon which we live.

From then to this day, although the dry land is surrounded by water on all sides, the Heavenly Decree stops the perpetually stormy waves of the sea from inundating the land, which is its natural state. It is only because of this Decree that the dry land remains habitable, and allows people to tend to fields and orchards that are necessary to sustain life. We recall this tremendous *chesed* each morning, when we step onto terra firma, and the brachah of Roka Ha'aretz Al Hamayim was instituted so that we can properly thank Hashem for this. The brachah is based on the words of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 136:6): "Leroka ha'aretz al hamayim ki l'olam chasdo."

Although the decree of "yikavu hamayim" was given during the Six Days of Creation, we do not say "sheraka", in the past tense. Rather, we say "roka", the present tense, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu renews creation each and every day, to this day, as we say in *tefillah*, "Hamechadesh betuvo bechol yom tamid ma'aseh bereishis, He renews in His Goodness each day the Act of Creation."

Each morning, when we arise from bed and step onto firm, dry ground, it behooves us to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for flattening and smoothing the land over the sea, and for decreeing that the water should not inundate the dry land, as was the case before Creation. As the *passuk* says (*Yirmiyahu* 5:22): "Ha'osi lo siru'u, Will you not fear Me? says Hashem, or, do you not quake from before Me, for I made sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting ordinance, which it cannot pass, and [its waves] toss themselves, yet they cannot prevail; and its waves roar, but they do not pass it." (*Avudraham, Hashkamas Haboker; Radak Tehillim* 136:6; *Malbim* *ibid*)

A Brachah That Denies Regularity

Some explain that we thank Hashem in this brachah for giving us the firm, dry land over the water that lies beneath it. Because the land upon which we live is all situated above water, as stated in *Tehillim* (24:2): "Ki hu al yamim yesadah v'al neharos yechonehah, for He founded it upon seas and established it upon rivers." *Chazal* say (*Midrash Tehillim* 93): "The land is beaten on the water like a ship that floats at sea."

According to the natural laws of gravity, the land should have sunk into the water from its weight alone, even before it is weighed down by the weight of billions of human beings, with all that they live with. In this brachah we thank Hashem for stabilizing the land in such a strong fashion over the depths that lie beneath it, and that it does not collapse and sink into those waters. (*Levush* 46 2; *Aruch Hashulchan* *ibid* 4)

The *Siach Yitzchak* writes (printed in *Siddur HaGra*): "When he places his foot on the ground, he should take to heart: it is true that we have become used to walking on the land as though it is a firm wall, but is this existence self-understood? Is it not the nature of dirt and sand to sink into the water... Only Hashem in His great *chesed* is a 'Roka ha'aretz al hamayim.'"

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Roka – for flattening *ha'aretz*, the dry ground *al hamayim* so that the waves of the sea should not return to cover the land as was the case during Creation, and thus allowing life to exist on the land.

Amen – It is true that we must thank Hashem for allowing the dry ground to exist and not

Walking on "Yabashah" As Though

It Is "Besoch Hayam"

This fact that the land is flat over the water, while a tremendous miracle, has been accepted as a fact of nature, and we hardly sense this miracle in our daily lives. *Sefer Alei Derech* (p. 162) offers an idea that can intensify our feelings of gratitude when we make this brachah: "When you make the brachah of Roka Ha'aretz Al Hamayim, imagine the world inundated with sea water; mud covering the entire land, and passage from place to place only possible with a boat. And then, the land dries up and one can walk on it. The former scenario is the true state of the world if not for the constant assistance that Hashem provides in being 'Roka ha'aretz al hamayim.'"

Anyone who has experienced a long sea voyage or air flight, with all the turbulence involved, can easily understand this miracle and the tremendous benefit we have in that *bechasdei Hashem*, in our routine life, we step onto firm, solid land. If one thinks about this while making the brachah, he will surely be able to thank Hashem for this miracle with the fitting *kavanah*.

The author of the *Noam Elimelech* (*Likutei Shoshanah*, beginning with 'hafach yom') writes on this subject:

The *passuk* says (*Shemos* 14:29): "UBnei Yisrael halchu bayabashah besoch hayam" – and Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the sea." We can explain this to mean that after the splitting of the Yam Suf, when Bnei Yisrael saw the tremendous miracles that Hashem performed for them, they attained such a deep understanding of the *Hashgachah* of Hashem on our world, that from that point on, they were walking on dry land as though it was in the sea. They understood that the fact that a person walks on *yabashah*, on dry ground, is in the merit of the miracle that Hashem solidified the land over the water. And that this is a wonder and miracle that is no smaller than Bnei Yisrael walking *besoch hayam*, in the sea. (*Likutei Shoshanah* [printed at the end of *Noam Elimelech*] according to *Divrei Aviv, Vayeira*)

Overpowering Nature

We can learn a powerful lesson from this remarkable miracle of solidifying the ground over the water. HaKadosh Baruch Hu instilled in us the power to overcome the physical body and its desires, just like He restrained the waters of the sea with the directive of "yikavu hamayim" and since then, the water restrains its nature to inundate everything in its path. Through this, our land remains intact, and is not flooded by the water or does not collapse into the depths. The same is true with us: we can overpower our physical nature that drags us after desires, and channel all our efforts into doing the Will of Hashem.

That is the reason that the generation of the *Mabul* was punished specifically by being flooded with the waters. It was *middah knegged middah*, measure for measure because they capitulated to their nature and did not control their *yetzer*. Therefore, the water returned to its natural state and inundated the entire world, as it would be if not for the commandment of Hashem. (*Zichron Moshe* [Rav Moshe Tarashchansky of Kremenczug] p. 87; *Ohr Pnei Yehoshua, Parashas Noach*)

allowing the water to cover it. This makes it possible for life to exist on the land.

Blessing Hashem Brings Riches

It was a hot afternoon at the end of the summer. Reb Nachum was sitting in his air conditioned office in one of Manhattan's skyscrapers, busy with something technical that did not require too much thinking. At the same time, his mind was in a much loftier realm.

Reb Nachum is a distinguished Yid, and tries to utilize every spare moment in the most productive way possible. Whenever his mind is available, he tries to listen to *shurim*. In the technological world that we live in, it is easy to access huge databases with thousands of *shurim*, and Reb Nachum utilizes this possibility to make strides in his *avodas Hashem*.

It was towards the end of Elul, and the *maspica* that Reb Nachum chose to hear that day was exhorting his listeners to undertake a special *kabbalah* ahead of the new year.

"There is no need for a major *kabbalah*," the speaker cried. "It is enough to undertake something small, as long as we keep it persistently – summer, winter, Shabbos and weekday...Such a firm *kabbalah* can transform a person entirely, and strengthen the bond between him and his Creator..."

Reb Nachum listened, and the passionate words penetrated his soul. On the spur of the moment, he stopped listening to the *shur*, and pondered what he had heard...

"What kind of small *kabbalah* can I undertake for the long term?" he asked himself. As he thought, he remembered a different *shur* he had heard a while before, and whose message had touched him as well. The *shur* was about the *segulos* and virtues of reciting *Birchas Hamazon* with *kavanah*, from the text, and Reb Nachum decided that this was the *kabbalah* that best suited him.

From that day on, Reb Nachum became diligent about washing his hands for bread each day, and then reciting *Birchas Hamazon* slowly and with *kavanah*, from the text.

This was clearly a good choice, because *baruch Hashem*, he has been able to adhere to this practice for more than ten years.

But that's not the end of the story.

A few years later, Reb Nachum hit hard times, financially, and it reached the point that his living expenses far exceeded his income. He needed to find a new source of income immediately.

In distress, he turned to his friend, a young man who was financially comfortable and who also had a sharp business acumen, and explained his predicament.

"It is from Shamayim that you came to me today," the friend replied in surprise. Then he continued: "Just today, I was offered an unusual business opportunity – to purchase a thriving medical equipment company that is being offered for a very cheap price – but I had to turn it down because I do not have enough time to manage it."

"I think you are the right man to fit together the pieces of the puzzle: I'm ready to invest half the sum needed to buy this company. You raise the other half, and then manage the company, and together, *b'ezeras Hashem*, we'll be successful..."

Because Reb Nachum was very familiar with the industry, it was clear to him that this was a golden opportunity Heaven-sent directly to him, and he gratefully accepted the offer. He hurried to take loans to be able to put up his share of the money, and within a few days, he became a partner to the company. In exchange for managing the operations, he earned a large share of the profits. *Baruch Hashem*, success smiled on him, and within two years, he was able to repay his debts. When he finished doing so, he offered his friend and partner to buy him out, and the partner agreed. Reb Nachum again borrowed the necessary funds, paid his friend his share, and became the sole owner of the company.

About half a year after that, as he worked to pay the loans for the second half, he received an email that stunned

him completely. The message, from the manager of a factory in China that produced merchandise for him, stated that one million boxes of disposable gloves that he had ordered were ready, and he needed to make the payment so that the order could be shipped. Reb Nachum rubbed his eyes in disbelief: "A million boxes?! I ordered 100,000 boxes!" He hurried to send a message back to the manager with the mistake, but the manager insisted that the order had been for one million boxes. Reb Nachum checked his sent items and discovered that indeed, he had mistakenly sent an order for 1,000,000 boxes of gloves instead of 100,000 boxes!

The Chinese manager was a very straightforward and compliant type of person: if the order said a million, he produced a million. Reb Nachum had no choice but to take a huge loan to pay for the order. Then he was left to grapple with the question: "What am I going to do with one million boxes of gloves?" The question gave him no peace.

We will not tire you with the description of the many disappointing failures Reb Nachum experienced in an effort to sell the gloves. Even when he lowered the price to below cost, he could not find a buyer. The debts were staggering, and in addition, he had to pay a fortune each month to store the huge inventory.

Reb Nachum yearned to get rid of the merchandise, but nothing seemed to be working out.

Throughout that time, Reb Nachum continued to practice his *kabbalah* of reciting *Birchas Hamazon* from the text. At one point he decided to reinforce this practice by washing for bread for the evening meal as well, so that he could recite *Birchas Hamazon* another time each day, and thus to expand the *segulah*.

In the middle of the winter of 2020, rumors began to spread about a new, mysterious virus that had struck China. Reb Nachum, busy with his efforts to sell his shipment of gloves, did not think for a moment that these rumors had anything to do with him.

It didn't take long until reports emerged that the virus had spread to the United States. Health authorities around the world were worried, and they began to institute measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

Slowly, it began to dawn in America as well that this was a dangerous virus whose spread needed to be mitigated. The government issued directives regarding strict hygiene in the public sphere. At the time, they thought the coronavirus spread mostly through contact, and therefore, they required the wearing of gloves in many public areas.

One night, Reb Nachum received a phone call in the middle of the night from a dealer he had pleaded with a few months before to buy the gloves at rockbottom price, pleading with Reb Nachum to sell him the gloves. Only then did he realize that he was sitting on a veritable treasure. China had shut down its production factories due to the virus, and there was a global shortage of a product that had become so necessary – disposable gloves.

The phone calls soon came in a torrent. One by one, all the dealers he had been in contact with the previous few months called and pleaded to buy the shipment of gloves. Reb Nachum bided his time, and when he was made a very high offer, he agreed to sell the shipment.

The price that he got was ten times as much as he had paid for the gloves. It was more than enough for him to cover all his debts, and still take home a huge profit.

If you ask Reb Nachum, he is sure that the *siyata diShmaya* he experienced was in the merit of *Birchas Hamazon*, and all that remains for us to do is answer amen to his words.

Al Hamazon, Tishrei 5781