

Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



365

PARASHAS VA'EIRA

תשפ"א

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

It's Important to Detail the Request

"ויצא משה והרן מעם פרעה ויצעק משה אל ה' על דבר הצפרדעים אשר שם לפרעה" (ח ח)

The *Midrash (Esiher Rabbah 7 24)* relates that a Jew was walking on his way and hurt his ankle. He raised his eyes Heavenwards and asked for a donkey to please be sent to him. It didn't take long and a Roman passed; his donkey had just given birth to a foal. When he saw the Jew he commanded him to carry the foal on his shoulders. The Jew sighed and said bitterly: My *tefillah* was accepted, but because I didn't specify that I needed a donkey to ride on, I got a donkey riding on me...

The *Ohr Hachaim* says that the source that each person should detail his request in his *tefillos* is this *passuk*:

It would have seemed enough for Moshe to daven "*al devar hatzefarde'im*," regarding the matter of the frogs. Why did the Torah then add: "*asher sam le'Pharaoh?*" It is because "from here we learn that one needs to detail his prayer." And that is what Moshe meant when he said that he was not referring to all the frogs in the world – only those that Pharaoh was afflicted with.

Ohr Hachaim

A Brachah with Concentration Brings Yiras Shamayim

"הירא את דבר ה' מעבדי פרעה הניס את עבדיו ואת מקנהו אל הבתים; ואשר לא שם לבו אל דבר ה' ויעזב את עבדיו ואת מקנהו בשדה" (ט כ-כא)

After the Torah praised the action of one who is "fearful of the Word of Hashem" it also should have condemned "*asher lo yarei*," he who does not fear. Why does it call him "*v'asher lo sam libo*," he who

Strengthening *Emunah* before Davening

"כצאתי את העיר אפרש את כפי אל ה' הקלות יחדלון והברד לא יהיה עוד" (ט כט)

"But within the city he would not pray because it was full of idols." (*Rashi* based on *Shemos Rabbah* 12:5)

The Raavad *Harav Moshe Sternbuch* learns a piercing *mussar* lesson from this: If the *avodah zarah* in the city precludes *tefillah* then how much more so does *avodah zarah* found in a person's heart preclude *tefillah*. This teaches us about the great obligation that one has to strengthen his *emunah* before davening, as it will certainly help his *tefillah* be accepted.

Ta'am Veda'as

This is also a proof of the custom in Klal Yisrael to answer amen to others' *Birchos Hashachar* before davening. As *Rabbeinu Bechaye* says (*Shemos* 14:31), answering amen was instituted in order to strengthen *emunah* in the heart of the one who answers, and as stated, this strengthening is important to do before davening.

does not concentrate?

The *Mashgaich*, *Harav Zeidel Epstein* explained:

The Torah wants to teach us that what causes a lack of *yiras Shamayim* is a lack of attention and concentration. If a person would just pay attention to the many *mitzvos* that he encounters during the day, they would sanctify him and prepare him to be a *yarei Hashem*. We say "*Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam*" many times each day, and if only we would pay attention to the words we are uttering, undoubtedly they

would infuse us with *yiras Shamayim* and elevate us. How great is the loss of one "*asher lo sam libo*," who does not pay attention.

He'aros 23

Moshe's Shul – Outside the City

"העתירו אל ה' ורב מהית קלת אלקים וברד...; ויאלמו משה כצאתי את העיר אפרש את כפי אל ה' הקלות יחדלון והברד לא יהיה עוד" (ט כח-כט)

"*Ketzeisi es ha'ir*" – but within the city he would not pray because it was full of idols." (*Rashi* based on *Shemos Rabbah* 12:5)

The question is self-understood: Did Moshe not have to leave the city until now, he davened for the other plagues to go away?

The *Ramban* explains:

Indeed, Moshe had to leave the city for all his *tefillos*, but only now did he explicitly say so, because in contrast to the previous *makkos*, which were only halted the following day, his request now was for the hail to stop immediately. As it says "*verav mihiyos kolos*, there has been enough of G-d's thunder and hail" [and as *Rashi* says there: "let it be sufficient for Him with what He has already brought down."] Therefore, Moshe told Pharaoh that he would have to wait until he left the city.

Harav Yitzchak Abarbanel points out a remarkable thing about Moshe's *tefillah* outside the city:

"The truth is that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had one house prepared for *tefillah* and *hisbodedus* outside of Egypt. Today, that house still exists in Egypt and it is a holy house and the Jews in all lands celebrate there. And regarding this Moshe would say, '*ketzeisi es ha'ir efros es kapai el Hashem*.'"

Ramban; Abarbanel 9:13

"Mah Ha'avodah Hazos Lachem"

Thursday, 9 Shevat, is the *yahrtzeit* of the Chushter Dayan, *Harav Yaakov Katina*, *zt"l*. In his *sefer Rachamei Ha'av*, printed in dozens of editions, he warns about the obligation of saying amen. He writes:

"Be very careful about answering amen, because what will he answer on the *Yom Pekudah* [day of remembrance i.e. after 120 years] when he will be asked: 'Why did you not answer amen – what *avodah* is it?' And that is the allusion in *Tehillim* (83:17): 'מלא פניהם קלון' – the acronym of the final letters of each word is 'amen.'"

Rachamei Av 56

Birchos Hashachar



Aloud



With *kavanah*



Bechavrusa



The Brachah of Hama'avir Sheinah

Gratitude for Lifting the Bonds of Sleep

After thanking Hashem in *Birchos Hashachar* for all the good things we have received from Him, we conclude the series of *brachos* with a unique *brachah*: "*Hama'avir sheinah me'einai usenumah me'afapai*."

The *Gemara* says (*Brachos* 60b) regarding this *brachah*: "When he washes his face, he should say: '*Baruch Hama'avir chevlei sheinah me'einai usenumah me'afapai*.'" The Rambam's *nusach* is similar (*Tefillah* 7:4). But in *Maseches Derech Eretz Rabbah* (*Perek Hayotzei* 17) the *nusach* is "*Ha'amvir sheinah*" and that is how many of the Rishonim copied it (*Seder Rav Amram Gaon Birchos Hashachar*; *Rosh Brachos* 9:23; *Tosafos Brachos* 46:1, beginning with "*kol*").

In the *brachah* of *Pokeach Ivrim* we thanked Hashem for opening our eyes when we awaken from sleep. In this *brachah*, we thank for completely lifting the veil of sleep from our eyes, which is done when the face is washed. We then rinse away the final vestiges of drowsiness. (*Avudraham Birchos Hashachar*)

The Mashgiach, Harav Yerucham Halevi Levovitz, of Mir, explained:

If a person would continue to doze throughout the day, he would not be able to do anything. How much must he thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for the fact that in the morning He lifts the veil of sleep from him completely, so that he does not even need a light nap during the toil of his day. (*Chikrei Lev* [Rav R. Melamed] p. 168)

Aside for the '*ha'avaras sheinah*,' the passing of the sleep, the Rishonim write that in this *brachah*, we also thank for the benefit that the body gets from sleep, both as rest and relaxation from the toil of the day, and for the fact that during sleep, food is better digested, so the body is healthier and stronger. (*Kolbo* 1; *Orchos Chaim*, *Din Meah Brachos* 1:9)

The Difference Between "Sheinah" and "Tenumah"

In this *brachah* we use the term "*sheinah*" for the eyes and "*tenumah*" for the *afapayim*, the eyelids – based on the language of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 132:4): "*Im etein shenas le'einai ule'afapai tenumah*." This is because a person does not awaken from his sleep at once. Rather, first his eyes open from his deep sleep, and his limbs begin to function again, until finally, by washing his face, even the slightest '*tenumah*' is washed away from his eyelids (see *Pesachim* 120b). Then he can begin the work of the day. (*Siach Yitzchak* on the *Siddur HaGra*)

Harav Yosef Chaim, in his *sefer Od Yosef Chai* (*Halachos, Vayeishev* 10) writes of an interesting custom: If a person sees when he is ready to make the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah* that he is still in a drowsy state, and his sleepiness has not yet passed, he should wait to make the *brachah* until the state passes completely. (See *Mishnah Berurah* 52:10)

Brachah on Washing the Face

As noted above, the *Gemara* explains that it was instituted to say the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah* while washing the face. Therefore, the Rambam writes (*Tefillah* 7:5) that on days when one does not wash the face, such as *Tishah B'Av* and *Yom Kippur*, one should not make this *brachah*. (However see *Ritva Taanis* 30a; *Mishnah Berurah* 554:34)

Washing the face before davening *Shacharis*

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Hama'avir Sheinah – the absolute sleep *me'einai*, *usenumah* – even the slight drowsiness *me'afapai*, as this way I am completely ready for the work of my day.

Amen – It is true that we must thank Hashem for refreshing the strength of a person each day when he arises from sleep.

is a mitzvah, as the Rambam writes (ibid 4:3): "*Shacharis*, in the morning he should wash his face and hands and feet and then he should daven." His source is the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 50b): "a person washes his face and hands and feet each day, as it says (*Mishlei* 16:4): '*Kol pa'al Hashem lemana'ehu*.' Hashem made everything for His praise."

Harav Shmuel Segal Landau of Prague (*Shu"t Noda B'Yehudah, Tanyana Orach Chaim* 140) explained that this *halachah* was instituted based on the words of the *passuk* (*Amos* 4:12): "*Hikon likras Elokecha Yisrael*." We learn from this that a person has to prepare himself each morning at *Shacharis* to serve his Creator. Just like a person who stands before the king does not do so while dirty with mud and sweat, how much more so when he stands before Hashem. Therefore, a person is commanded to wash his hands and face before davening. But the custom of washing one's feet is not practiced today, because we do not walk barefoot as was common in the past.

One can learn about the virtue of washing one's face in the morning from the words of the Amora, Shmuel (*Shabbos* 108b, *Rashi* ibid) that a '*tipas tzonen*', a drop of cold water with which one washes his eyes in the morning is better for him than all the remedies in the world.

We Answer Amen on "Hama'avir Sheinah Latzaddikim"

The Rishonim differ on whether the "*Yehi Ratzon*" recited after the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah* is a request in its own right or if it is a continuation of the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah*. Some say it is one long *brachah* that begins with *Hama'avir Sheinah* and concludes with "*Hagomel Chassadim Tovim*." In their view, one should not answer amen after *Hama'avir Sheinah*, until the one making the *brachah* completes the entire *brachah*. (*Tosafos Brachos* ibid, and the *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 46:1)

Yet, there are those who differ and believe that the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah* is a *brachah* in its own right, and therefore, amen should be answered after it, before the recital of *Yehi Ratzon* (*Rokeach* 320, and the *Gra* – *Imrei Noam Brachos* 46a). Some are of the opinion that in order to remove all doubt, it is better to recite the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah* in a whisper so that those listening should not be obligated to answer amen. However, anyone who hears a person making this *brachah* out loud should not answer amen, as ruled by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Mishmeres Shalom* 8:4).

The Yid Hakadosh of Peshischa explained the reason that the *brachah* of *Hama'avir Sheinah* is connected to the *Yehi Ratzon* that follows, based on the words of *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 71b): "Sleep for the evil is a pleasure for them [as they do not sin] and a pleasure for the world [as they cannot do bad to others], and for *tzaddikim* it is bad for them [as they are not learning Torah] and bad for the world [as their Torah protects their generation]."

When a person rises from his sleep and thanks his Creator for passing the drowsiness from his eyes, we do not know if he is a *tzaddik*, for which rising from sleep is a good thing that he should make a *brachah* for. However, when he continues to ask "*Yehi ratzon...shetargileinu beTorasecha vedabkeinu bemitzvosecha*..." then that is a clear testimony that he is a *tzaddik* who wants to cleave to Torah and mitzvos. For such a person, rising from sleep is considered a benefit that he should make a *brachah* over, and we can answer amen after it. (*Niflaos Hayehudi*, p. 21:2)

Every Trip Has an Address

A person does not always merit to see the *Hashgachah pratis* with which Hashem runs the world, and that *tefillah* has the power to bring about a *yeshuah*, in such an open way, as happened in this story. The incident took place about twenty years ago, began in two separate locations and ended with a moving encounter.

Yaakov's story:

I am a truck driver for a large, multi-branched organization. My contract states that my official work hours are between twelve p.m. and nine at night. But I have to be available at all hours of the day for exceptional cases when they might need me urgently.

My employer is a fair, honest person, and he demands that his workers conduct themselves with fairness and honesty as well. Usually, my work hours are within the twelve to nine framework of my contract. The odd occasion when I had to work during other hours were indeed, few and far between, and even when it happened there was a very justified reason.

One night, when I was awakened at two o'clock by the phone, and I heard the voice of my employer, I realized that this was one of those times that I would have to meet my contractual obligations and report to work at this hour.

You can imagine how surprised I was when I heard the reason I would have to part from my warm bed at that unearthly hour to travel to the city of Kiryat Ono, about ten miles from my house: Yosef, another truck driver who was supposed to start his work shift now, could not find another way to get from his home to his workplace – except for getting a ride in my truck.

Initially, I was stunned. Is this what I was hauled out of bed for? Was there no other way for Yosef to find a way to work besides my truck?

But I knew that the organization that I worked was not the kind of place you asked questions. The boss was a fair person, but he also expected absolute commitment from his workers to their obligations. According to my contract, I had to take calls at any hour, and that's what I had to do now.

I quickly got myself together and went out into the chilly night feeling bitter and defeated. I made momentary decision to travel in my private car, and not with my truck. Why do I need a truck just to pick up one person? I thought to myself.

As a believing Jew, despite the unpleasant feeling I had about this ride, I strengthened myself with the knowledge that this is surely the Will of Hashem, and that only He knows the true purpose for why I was forced to get up at this hour. I didn't dream how quickly I would understand everything.

Shalom's Story:

I work as a *kashrus mashgiach* in a food factory in the center of the country. In the capacity of my job, I have to be at the factory and oversee the production process until the end. Usually, my work begins and ends at specific hours when the production line is active, but sometimes, there are malfunctions...

That's what happened that winter evening. An unexpected glitch in the midst of the production process on one of the machines stopped the whole process in the middle. Repairing the glitch took a long time, and because it was in the middle of the production process, postponing the work for the next day would have meant a big loss.

As a result, I was compelled to stay at the factory until midnight.

Because I do not own a car, I usually travel home by bus. I hurried to the nearest bus stop, hoping to catch the last bus. But I quickly realized that the last bus had passed already, which meant I'd have to try to hitch a ride home. The fact that there was no direct road from where I was standing to my home city made this a much more complicated attempt. This story took place at a time when cellular phones were a rare commodity, so the option of ordering a taxi was non-existent.

Having no choice, I put out my hand and tried my luck. It wasn't a very main road, and at that late hour, there were few cars driving on it. None of them stopped for me.

I stood for nearly two hours like that, trembling with cold, with no salvation in sight. Not a single car stopped for me. I was on the verge of giving up when a thought flashed into my mind: "Wait, how can I give up if I haven't yet davened for a *yeshuah*!?"

I sat down in the empty bus stop and began to daven fervently to Hashem to please get me home to my family quickly, as they were surely very worried about me.

As I finished my *tefillah*, I was overcome with a sense of calm. I stood up again to wait for cars. Just a few minutes passed and I saw the lights of a car approaching. I vigorously waved my hand.

Yaakov continues the story:

As I was on the way to Kiryat Ono, I drove towards the exit of the city and suddenly noticed a Yid who looked like a *ben Torah* standing near the bus stop and waving at me.

As a truck driver, I usually cannot stop to pick up passengers, and company law prohibits me from doing so also. I was happy that I had decided to take my private car, so that I could help this passerby.

I stopped next to him and he climbed into my car with an audible sigh of relief. "Thank you! I have no words!" he said. It was only then that I asked him where he was headed.

"I live in Kiryat Ono, but I'll be happy to go with you to wherever you can get me closest to there," he replied. He was thrilled to hear that I was also headed to Kiryat Ono.

"Can you direct me to the street that I need to get to?" I asked.

"Sure!" he replied. "That's exactly where I live!"

"Unbelievable!" we could not suppress our astonishment. "After two hours of waiting desperately, I davened and I was answered right away!" he exclaimed.

When we came to the man's home, he said goodbye and thanked me effusively. Then he directed me to the home of the other driver, Yosef, which was just a few buildings down from his.

I got to Yosef's house only to find out that he had decided, for personal reasons, not to wait for me, and had managed to find another way to get to work.

Had the turnout been different, I surely would have been bristled with indignation. But now I understood everything. I was simply an emissary from Above to take a fellow Yid home after he had davened fervently for that to happen.

Ta'isi Keshah Oved p. 209