

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim



## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### One Who Raises His Hands – Knows To Whom We Bless

“והיו הכרבים פרשי כנפים למעלה” (כה כ)

Chazal say (*Brachos* 48a): ‘A *katan*, a child who knows to Whom we make *brachos* – can be included as a third for a *mezuman*.’ As an example of such a child who knows to Whom we make *brachos*, the *Gemara* cites Abayei and Rava, who, as children, were asked by the Amora Rabbah: “To Whom do we make *brachos*” and they answered “To HaKadosh Baruch Hu,” and they pointed upwards. In response Rabbah said, I am sure that these two will grow up to be *talmidei chachamim*.

The **Bais Yisrael** of Ger found an allusion to this story from this *passuk*:

The *Keruvim* that were affixed to the *Aron*, where the *Luchos Habris* rested had the face of a baby, and their hands were spread above their heads (*Sukkah* 5b). From here we learn that a baby who spreads his hands upwards and who knows to Whom we make *brachos* will merit to grow and strive in Torah.

*Bais Yisrael* 5719

### The Covering of the Shulchan With the Brachah of Zaha”v

“ועשית שלחן עצי שטים...; וצפית אתו זהב טהור” (כה כג-כד)

**Rabbeinu Bechayei** explained:

The *passuk* hints to us that the table that we eat on every day should be coated with ‘*zahav*’, meaning, with *Birchas Hamazon*, as the word זהב alludes to the three first *brachos* whose obligation is from the Torah: ברכת הזן, ברכת הארץ, ברכת בונה ירושלים.

### The Contribution of “Amen” to the Bais Hamikdash

“ויקחו לי תרומה” (כה ב)

“*Li – l’Shemi*, for the sake of My Name.” (*Rashi*)

*Sefer Derech Moshe* (Day 11) brings a story about a *chassid* who wanted to know why the *galus* was taking so long. After he fasted over the issue, he was answered from Above: “How can the Redemption come if the world is not being careful to answer amen on the *brachos* in which we ask for the Geulah – *Hamachazir Shechinaso LeTzion* and *Haporess Sukkas Shalom...?*”

The words of *Rashi* here are allude to this: What is the contribution that we can give the Mishkan? “*L’Shemi*” to be careful about answering amen to the *brachos* of the Geulah, which mentions the Shem Havayah in full, both as it is written and as it read [*Ad-nai*].

*Michtam LeDovid* [Rav D. Y. Kristal] Vol. I p. 303

**Harav Moshe Mat**, a *talmid* of the Maharshal, explained that there is another allusion in the word ‘*zahav*’ to *Birchas Hamazon*. “זהב” is numerically equivalent to fourteen, which is the number of times we recite *Birchas Hamazon* during the seven days of the week – morning and evening each day. Being strict about *Birchas Hamazon* brings a tremendous abundance of blessing on a person, as the *Sefer Hachinuch* writes (*Mitzvah* 430): “Anyone who is careful about *Birchas Hamazon* will have his sustenance provided for him with dignity all his life.”

An allusion to this is brought by Rav

Moshe Mat from this *passuk*: “*Vetzipisa oso – zahav*” – if you want to cover your possessions and preserve them, in a way that the covering protects the object, then be strict about *Birchas Hamazon*, alluded to in the word ‘*zahav*.’

*Rabbeinu Bechayei; Mateh Moshe* 551

### Location of the Bimah in the Shul

“ושמת את השלחן מוחץ לפרכת ואת המנרה נכח השלחן” (כה לה)

“The *Shulchan* is in the north removed two and a half *amos* (cubits) from the northern wall. The menorah is on the south, removed two and a half *amos* from the southern wall. The *Mizbeach Hazahav* was placed opposite the space between the *Shulchan* and the Menorah” (*Rashi* based on *Yoma* 33b)

One of the well-known controversies between the Neologs and the traditionalists at the inception of the Haskalah era was about the location of the bimah in the shul. The Chasam Sofer came out very strongly against those who dared to move the *bimah* to the front of the shul, which was like the custom of the gentiles. He even cited a winning proof against them from the words of Chazal that the *Mizbeach Hazahav* stood in the middle of the Heichal opposite the space between the *Shulchan* and the *Menorah*. The *bimah* is opposite the *Mizbeach*, and it is upon it that we read the *parshiyos* of the *Korbanos* and the *Ketores*, and they circle it on *Sukkos* like the *hakafos* done around the *Mizbeach*. Therefore, just like the *Mizbeach* was not placed near the *aron kodesh*, the *bimah* should also not be placed at the front of the shul, near the *aron kodesh*.

*Shu”t Chasam Sofer Orach Chaim* 28

“קיבנו וקבלו היהודים עליהם ועל זרעם ועל כל פל הגוים עליהם ולא יעבור” (אסתר ט כז)

And this practice spread to the towns and larger cities

This Tuesday marks the *yahrtzeit* of one of *posek*, the Chida, זצ”א, who wrote in his *sefer Birchei Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* 677) regarding the widespread practice in his days of saying *Birchos Hashachar* aloud so that the other person could answer amen. He wrote:

**“The Bais Yosef writes: Some have a practice that after one recites *Birchas Hashachar* and the others answer amen, one of those who answer then makes the *brachah*, and they answer amen to him. In this order, all those who answered amen do the same...And this practice spread to the towns and larger cities, as per the words of Maran.”**



Yehi Ratzon After the Brachah of Hama'avi Sheinah (5)

Today and Every Day

Further along in the *Yehi Ratzon* we ask: "Useneinu hayom ubechol yom lechen ulechessed ulerachamim be'einecha ube'einei kol ro'einu." We do not suffice with a request for only today; we also add, "hayom ubechol yom," today and every day, in accordance with the Zohar (*Vayishlach* 169 1) that a person must clearly detail his request at the time when he prays to his Creator. (*Siddur Tefillah L'Moshe*)

But don't we make this *brachah* every day regardless? Why is it necessary to ask each morning for the coming days?

Sometimes, in order to merit that Hashem should accept our requests, it is not enough for us to daven and ask just once (see *Midrash Shmuel* 4). Therefore, we daven each day for every single day of our lives, so that each and every day, the *tefillas* of the previous days should be compounded with one another, and through their combined power Hashem should hear our pleas, and grant us "lechen ulechessed ulerachamim..." (*Kuntress "Ule'Asher Amar"* [Rav A.A. Katz, in appendix *Otzar HaShabbos*] 16)

Precede Yeshuah to Tefillah

Some have explained this according to the words of Rav Yehonasan Eibeshitz, on what Zeresh advised Haman. She told Haman to ask the king to hang Mordechai specifically in the morning, as it says (*Esiher* 5:14): "Ubaboker emor lamelech, and in the morning tell the king and they will hang Mordechai on it," because she was afraid that Mordechai might have time to recite *Krias Shema* and to say the *brachah* of "Ga'al Yisrael" followed by *Shemoneh Esrei*, at the *neitz*, sunrise, and then he would not be able to be harmed. As explained in the *Gemara*, (*Brachos* 9b), "anyone who recites *Geulah* next to *Tefillah* [with the *neitz hachamah* (*Tosafos* ibid beginning with 'kol')] is not harmed that entire day." Therefore, Zeresh advised Haman to hurry and come to the king before Mordechai would have time to daven. (*Ye'aros Dvash*, Vol. 1, *Drush* 17)

To counteract the harmful elements that want to harm us the following day, even before we have a chance to daven this *tefillah*, we ask each morning, "Useneinu hayom ubechol yom..." (*Orah Zo Torah, Megillas Esiher* p. 238)

The Meaning of the Middos of Chen, Chessed and Rachamim

Simply explained, the words "chen," "chessed" and "rachamim" are derived from the same fundamental concept – that when one finds favor in the eyes of another, that person displays feelings of compassion to him and is benevolent to him. Indeed, we find that the word "chen" is explained as both "rachamim", compassion (*Targum Onkelos Bereishis* 6:8 and in other places) and "chessed" (*Targum Mishlei* 1:9).

There are some who explain that each one of these words has a different meaning: "Chen" means that the recipient is considered in the eyes of the giver as someone who is worthy due to his deeds that he should be the recipient of benevolence, as it says (*Bereishis* 6:8) "VeNoach matza chen b'Einei Hashem." The *Ramban* explains (ibid): "That all his deeds before Him were pleasant." "Chessed" means that the giver is doing something good to the recipient out of a desire to be benevolent, without checking if the recipient is worth of the

*Useneinu hayom ubechol yom lechen* –our actions should be accepted and we should merit to find favor for them, and we should also merit *ulechessed ulerachamim* – to be treated with *chessed* and *rachamim b'einecha* and also *b'einei kol ro'einu*.

goodness or not. "Rachamim" means that the recipient is worthy of receiving a favor, but the one giving it does more than the recipient deserves." (*Siddur Tzelosa D'Avraham* p. 144)

Harav Yosef Engel explains that in the request of "Useneinu l'chen ulechessed" we do not ask that we merit both together, because the Maharil wrote (*Hilchos Purim* 18) that "there has never been a person that had both *chen* and *chessed* except Esther," as it says (*Esiher* 2:17): "Vatisa chen vechessed tefanav." We ask that in a place where we need *chen* we should merit *chen*, and in a place where we need *chessed* we should merit *chessed* (*Gilyonei HaShas Brachos* 60b, beginning with "Usitneinu.")

Why Do We Add "Ub'einei kol ro'einu"

The words of the *brachah* "be'einecha ub'einei kol ro'einu" is based on the *passuk* (*Mishlei* 3:4): "Umatza chen vesechel tov be'Einei Elokim v'adam." Chazal also say (*Tanchuma Vayeishev* 8) that when Yosef Hatzaddik was in the house of Potifar, "He went in to serve him and he would whisper: 'Ribon Ha'olam, You are my Security, You are my Patron, give me *chen* and *chessed* and *rachamim* in Your Eyes and in the eyes of all who see me and in the eyes of my master Potifar.'" (*Peirush Hatefillas Vehabrachos* [Rav Y. Ben Yakar] Vol. II, p. 15)

Why do we even strive to be seen with *chen*, *chessed* and *rachamim* in the eyes of people?

The *Siddur HaShelah* explains that the words "Ube'einei kol ro'einu" are not directed only at people, but also at all of Creation, including spiritual creations. We ask that we find favor in their eyes that they should not prosecute against us in *Din Shamayim*.

*Sefer Olas Tamid* (chapter 9) explains that indeed, we do not need to take actions in order to find favor in the eyes of others, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu leads the entire world, and all the actions of the others toward us are ordained from Above, as stated in *Sefer Chovos Halevavos* (*Shaar Habitachon* Chapter 3): "And all compassion and mercy that will be from another person to him, are all from the compassion of Hashem and His mercy." But specifically in order to imbue in us this concept, we ask Hashem to give us "lechen ulechessed ulerachamim be'einecha ub'einei kol ro'einu." Because this way we show our complete *emunah* that all *nesias chen* and *chessed* in the eyes of others and every good thing that comes to us through other people is all from Hashem.

The *Mashgiach*, Harav Yechezkel Levinstein, explained that we are not asking here that we find favor in the eyes of others so that they should do good for us. Rather, the right way is to be wanted by *Shamayim* and pleasant to other people, as the *passuk* said of Shmuel HaNavi (*Shmuel* I, 2:26): "Yehana'ar Shmuel holech vegadel vetov gam in Hashem vegam im anashim, and the youth Shmuel was growing up and bettering himself both with Hashem and with other people." Therefore, we ask that we merit that we find favor and we be wanted in all our ways both in the Eyes of Hashem and in the eyes of all who see us. (*Ohr Yechezkel, Michtavim* 208. See also *Peirush Hatefillas Vehabrachos* ibid)

All Because of an Infection

Rabbi Yehuda G. is a veteran, experienced *mohel* who thought he'd seen it all in the capacity of his work...In the many years he has been involved in bringing babies and adults into the covenant of Avraham Avinu, he has encountered almost every possible problem, and with *siyata diShmaya* has been able to handle the challenges successfully.

Rabbi G. was very aware that without the *siyata diShmaya* it was impossible to do anything, and therefore, he was careful to offer up an emotional *tefillah* before every *bris* he was invited to. He davened that nothing bad should happen through him, *chalilah*.

Reb Yehuda has a remarkable story that can explain this practice every well, and he relates it on occasion:

A number of years ago, I was invited to spend Shabbos in a far-off town to serve as the *mohel* for a baby born to a secular family. The baby had been born on Shabbos, and thus the *bris* was scheduled to be on Shabbos. This was not the first time I had been invited to such an event, and over the years, I have become accustomed to dedicating myself to this tremendous mitzvah.

Yet, spending Shabbos in a strange place was never something easy for me. I had to prepare to spend an entire Shabbos in a distant location, which was, in a certain sense, *mestirus nefesh* for me and my family.

On the Wednesday before the *bris*, I traveled especially to the town where the family lived in order to check the baby. *Baruch Hashem*, everything looked fine. Before I departed, I davened, as I always did, that no mishap should come through me; I sensed that this time, this *tefillah* was especially needed. I would be spending an entire Shabbos in a place where I was not comfortable and which was very far removed from my way of life.

On Erev Shabbos I arrived at the town and was welcomed with great respect. After I finished my preparations for Shabbos, I came again to the baby's house to make sure that it would be possible to have the *bris* the next day after *Shacharis*. But then, to my dismay, I discovered a distinct redness in one of the baby's eyes.

As is accepted, I tried to clean the baby's eye, but within a minute, the eye filled with infected pus. Even after it was cleaned, it again spread and covered the eyeball.

I was surprised at the intensity of the infection, and according to halachah, I had to regretfully inform the baby's parents that I would not be able to perform the *bris* the next day. It was halachah and I had no way to deviate from it one iota.

The father, who was stunned by the surprising announcement, began to grumble angrily. Many guests had come to their town for this event, and they had invested a lot of money in renting a hall, and hiring a caterer for a meal with more than one hundred invited guests. Would it all be for naught?!

But this could not affect my decision. I made it clear to the father in a pleasant, but firm voice, that I had no way of making the *bris* in the current situation. He had to know that everything was in the Hands of Heaven, and that he needed to accept the situation with understanding.

I will not deny that the intensity of the father's objections surprised me. This was not the first time that I had to give a similar verdict to parents of a baby, but I had never seen such vehemence. Still, I hoped that by the next morning the father would accept the ruling understandingly.

On Shabbos morning, after *Shacharis*, the shul filled up with many people. Out of the corner of my eye, I noted a family member abashedly explaining to people that it was possible the *bris* would not take place on time, and the news began to spread quickly.

They could not come to terms with the surprising change of plans, and many tried to offer "advice" about how to resolve the issue. Of course, none of their suggestions were relevant.

I stood at the side and waited for what would

come next. In my heart, I had prepared a detailed speech in the event I would have to explain to the people in detail why the *bris* could not be performed. But then, the baby's father came over to me and in a commanding voice declared, "For the past few hours, the baby's eye has been completely clear of any infection. We can begin the *bris*!"

I was unmoved by what he said and explained pleasantly but firmly that yesterday the baby had been suffering from an eye infection, and therefore, today as well, the *bris* could not be performed, and a few days had to elapse until he was completely healed.

The "understanding" father continued to claim that there was no reason to postpone the *bris*, and even added a veiled threat that this was not why they had invited me to them for Shabbos...

Suddenly one of the family members had a "brilliant" idea and called loudly: "If the *mohel* doesn't want to do the *bris*, no problem! I can bring a different *mohel* from the next town over! I know a *mohel* who lives there and he won't make any problems..."

The crowd agreed with vigorous nods, as I stood there, the proverbial lone lamb amidst the wolves, and replied on the spot: "I cannot prevent you from doing what you want, but you should know that it is my obligation to inform the *mohel* about the infection that I saw yesterday and I will do that."

When they realized that I planned to torpedo their plan, they decided to come to terms with the situation and to sit down for the meal. At least they could have an enjoyable party.

I didn't eat with them, for course, but decided to wait on the side, in the event that the family would attempt to carry out their "threat." I was full of very hard feelings: "This is not what believing Jews behave like," I thought to myself sorrowfully.

Then something happened that upended the whole story. One of the guests, a relative of the baby's mother, stood up to speak. He spoke in a foreign language, and then began to sing loudly, and the rest of his family joined him.

I heard the song and began to tremble. I was very familiar with the song. I wracked my brains trying to understand what the source was and then remembered: As a youth, I had lived for a while in a foreign country. I lived very close to a church, and unfortunately, I was sometimes able to hear their music.

Now I had no doubt. I went over to one of the invited guests who was standing outside the hall, and who looked like a reasonable person. "Tell me," I said to him. "Do you know details about the origins of the baby's mother?"

"Sure," the man replied innocently. "She's from abroad. She was born a non-Jew and she converted before she got married."

"Who converted her?" I asked with mounting horror.

"If I'm not mistaken, she was converted by a Reform rabbi in accordance with the law," the man replied. He clearly did not understand the magnitude of the problem that he had just raised with his innocent sentence.

When I heard this, I fled from the scene in horror. I was deeply shaken at the thought that I had almost performed a *bris* on Shabbos for a non-Jewish child, with a *brachah levatalah* and everything else involved.

On Motzaei Shabbos, before I left the town, I tried to speak to the father and explained to him the severity of the matter. I told him that as long as the mother had not been halachically converted, it meant that his children were not Jewish. But he angrily sent me away.

I parted from him very distraught. I realized how important that practice I had undertaken – to say a *tefillah* before every action – was. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, in His great compassion, had orchestrated a rare infection, which disappeared within a short time, so that I would not transgress Shabbos and say a *brachah levatalah*.