

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS SHEMINI

תשפ"א

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Studying the Laws of the *Ketoress* Protect from Plague

"ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל מועד ויצאו ויברכו את העם וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם" (ט כג)

"Why did Moshe enter with Aharon? To teach him the ritual of the *Ketoress*. Another explanation is...Moshe immediately entered with him and they begged for mercy and the Shechinah descended upon Am Yisrael." (Rashi, based on *Toras Kohanim*, *Mechilta D'Miluim* 19:30)

The *Chasam Sofer* writes that the two explanations brought by Rashi complement one another:

When the construction of the Mishkan was completed, and the time came for the Shechinah to dwell in it, Moshe and Aharon were afraid that as a result of the Shechinah dwelling there, a plague would break out and the leaders in the nation would perish (see Rashi *Shemos* 29:43). Because the *Ketoress*, which is made outside of the Mishkan, can stop a plague, as Aharon did in order to stop the plague that erupted following the act of Korach (*Bamidbar* 17:11), therefore, Moshe entered the Ohel Moed with Aharon "to teach him about the *Ketoress*" – to learn together the *Parashas Haketoress*. They asked for Heavenly Mercy that this learning should be considered as though they actually brought the incense outside, in a way that it had the power to stop the plague, so that the dwelling of the Shechinah should not cause a plague in Am Yisrael. Because one who studies *Parashas Haketoress* is considered by the *passuk* to have actually brought it (see *Menachos* 110a)

Chasam Sofer

Brachah and Amen

In *Parashas Shemini*, there are 91 *pesukim*, numerically equivalent to amen. Besides that, this *parashah* concludes with the *halachos* relating to the kashrus of foods. מאכל is numerically equivalent to amen as well – to teach us that it is not enough for us to suffice with a *brachah* on food, and rather we must always try to have someone present to answer amen to our *brachos*. We can further add: the sign that we were given for the number 91 *pesukim* in this *parashah* is "עבדיה" – meaning that one who is strict to answer amen strengthens his *emunah* and becomes an *eved* of Hashem – an עבד י-ה.

Nasi of Bnei Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein

Never Desist from Tefillah

"ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל מועד ויצאו ויברכו את העם וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם" (ט כג)

"When Aharon saw that all the *korbanos* had been sacrificed, and all the rituals had been performed, and still the Shechinah did not descend to Am Yisrael, he was pained, and thought: 'I know that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is angry with me, and it is because of me that the Shechinah has not descended'...Moshe immediately entered with him and they begged for mercy and the Shechinah descended on Am Yisrael." (Rashi, based on *Toras Kohanim Mechilta D'Miluim* 19).

We can learn from here that even someone who has made every possible effort, and yet has not seen a *yeshuah*, should not despair. Rather, he should redouble his efforts to daven and his *yeshuah* will ultimately arrive.

Ohr Torah [Rav S. Mann]

Two Ways for the *Tzaddik* to Pray

"דרש דרש משה והנה שרף" (י טו)

Harav Tzvi Yitzchak Abramowitz, the Rav of the Kiryah Hachassidit in Chatzor Haglilit, explained:

Chazal say (*Brachos* 32b) that the "*chassidim harishonim*" would dedicate nine hours each day to davening – three hours for each of the three *tefillos* of the day. Before the *tefillah*, they would spend an hour preparing, another hour was dedicated to the *tefillah* itself, and one hour was spent lingering after the *tefillah*. Chazal wondered about this: "After they spend nine hours a day on *tefillah*, how is their Torah preserved?" And they responded that it was because the *chassidim* were blessed with special *siyata diShmaya* that they did not forget what they learned.

This fact is alluded to in this *passuk*: "*Darosh darash Moshe*" – even though the *tzaddik* spends a lot of time in *tefillah* [*drishah*] is a term used for *tefillah* as it says (*Tehillim* 36:5): "*Darashti es Hashem v'anani*" (*Ramban Bereishis* 22:25)]. And yet, "*Vehinei soref*" – which are the same letters as פרש – that his Torah was מפורשת – clear and explicit to him.

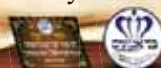
He further explained: The *Mishnah* (ibid 34b) says that Rabi Chanina ben Dosa, when davening for the sick, would say at the conclusion of his prayer: "this one lives and this one dies." He explained: "If my *tefillah* is fluent on my lips, then I know that the sick person is accepted, and if not, then I know that he is going to die." This is also alluded to in this *passuk*: *Darosh darash Moshe* – the *tzaddik* discerns between "*darosh*" and "*darash*" – between *tefillah* that is fluent in one's mouth and *tefillah* that is not fluent, and through that, "*vehinei soref*" – he explains (מפרש) if his *tefillah* was accepted or not.

Ta'am Hatzvi

This Tuesday, 1 Iyar, is the *yahrtzeit* of
Harav Shmuel Shmelke of Nikolsburg, zy"u.

Harav Tzvi Yechezkel Michelson, the Rav of Plonsk, wrote (in a letter printed in *sefer Ohel Yitzchak*, p. 35) that he had a reliable testimony that Rav Shmelke said of himself before his passing that his practice was to make sure not to say a *brachah* unless there was someone who heard the *brachah* and answered amen after it. That is because the angel that is created by the recital of the *brachah* is not complete unless the *brachah* is answered by amen.

Bnei Emunim – amen to every *brachah*.



Yehi Ratzon After Birchos Hashachar (4)

The Satan Destroys the Person

The *Rokeach* explains the request to be spared from the “*Satan Hamashchis*” (*Peirushei Siddur Hatefillah L’Rokeach* Vol. I, p. 16):

When HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants to do good to a person, the Satan stands before Him and says: “Ribbono shel Olam, will You grant him good without testing to see if he is worthy of it?” When he receives permission to test the person, the Satan takes the keys of *ta’avah*, of desire, and tries to tempt the person to corrupt his ways. Therefore, we ask here that Hashem should save us so that the Satan should not succeed in tempting us to become corrupt.

This request is also explained according to how *Chazal* describe the way the Satan works (*Bava Basra* 16a): “He descends and leads the person astray, and then ascends and arouses the *Midas Hadin*, he takes permission to bring death to the sinner, and then takes the soul.” At first, we asked to be saved from the *yetzer hara* – that he not incite us to sin, and now we are asking that even if the *yetzer hara* tempted us to sin, *challilah*, we should be spared from his *kitrug* so that he should not take our lives. (*Ma’on Habrachos*, *Brachos* 16b)

Yet others explained the additional request to be saved from the “*Satan Hamashchis*,” that even after we ask to be spared from the *yetzer hara*, we need to allocate a specific request to be spared from the “*Satan Hamashchis*,” because *Chazal* say (*Bava Kama* 60a): “When permission is granted for the *Mashchis*, he does not discern between *tzaddikim* and *resha'im*; not only that, but he begins with the *tzaddikim*.” Therefore, we ask that we not be harmed from that Satan who descends to the world in order to destroy the *resha'im*. (*Ha’er Eineinu*, *Brachos* ibid)

Yet there are those who explain that in the request of “*UmiSatan Hamashchis*,” we do not mean the *yetzer hara*, but rather a person with corrupt *middos*, whose way is to always cause damage. Such a person is called “*satan*” in the Torah, as it says (*Melachim* I, 11:14): “*Vayakem Hashem satan l’Shlomo, es Haddad Ha’adomi mizera hamelech hu b’edom*.” We ask Hashem to save us from the damage that such a person causes. (*Siddur Tzelosa d’Avraham*, p. 64)

The Satan Who Destroyed His Way

Some explain the word “*Mashchis*” to be part of the term used for the Satan – *Satan Hamashchis*. They wonder why we call him so, because was it not his purpose in this world to pose challenges to a person?

However, as the Baal Shem Tov said regarding the *Tosafos* on the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 75a) that a *shochet* is *chayav*, is guilty, of *tzovea*, of coloring: “*ashochet d’alma ka’i*.” The Baal Shem Tov explains that *Tosafos* is referring to the *yetzer hara*, which is called “*shochet d’alma*,” because he is the *shochet* of people of the world. The *Gemara* is asking – why will the *yetzer hara* be deserving of slaughter when *Mashiach* comes if he did his job? The *Gemara* answers, “*mishum tzovea*.” He is being punished because beyond carrying out his mission to tempt a person to sin, he also added, and “colored” the sins so that they should appear to be *mitzvos*, and the *mitzvos* so that they should look like sins, and thus, he was engaged in causing the person to sin more than he was commanded.

According to this explanation, we can say that this is why we call him the “*mashchis*,” because he corrupted and destroyed his own way. Instead of carrying out his mission as he was commanded, he added to it, and deceived the person into doing *mitzvos* that are actually sins. (*Chiddushei Binyan Tzvi* p. 35)

Umisatan hamashchis – from the satan that seeks to tempt us and corrupt our ways, *midin kasheh* – that there should not be harsh litigation between me and other people, which causes excess work for the *beis din*, that they cannot properly judge it, *umiba’al din kasheh* – an obstinate person who does not comply with the words of the *dayanim*, *bein she-* whether this litigator *hu ben bris* – is a Jew, *ubein she’eino ben bris* – he is a non-Jew. *Umi-* from every sin that might cause us to be guilty and deserving of *dinah shel Gehinnom*.

What Is “Din Kasheh” and Who Is a “Baal Din Kasheh”

The *Seder Hayom* (*Birchos Hashachar*) explained that we ask to be spared from “*din kasheh*”, meaning there should not be between us and others a judgement that is hard for the *beis din* to properly adjudicate. “*Umiba’al din kasheh*” – an obstinate litigator who does not comply with the words of the *dayanim* [as *Rashi* explains (*Sanhedrin* 6b, beginning with ‘*kasheh*’) as such a person is ‘a contentious person who is *matriach* the *dayanim*.’] However, some explain that the requests to be spared from “*din kasheh umiba’al din kasheh*” were established as a *tefillah* for the *dayanim* to say, so that such a judgment or such a litigator should not come before them. Rabi Yehuda Hanassi, who composed this *tefillah*, was the Nasi of Yisrael and many came before him to deal with their disagreements. (*Peirushei Iyun Tefillah in Siddur Otzar Hatefillos*)

If, *challilah*, this *tefillah* of ours is not accepted, we might come to the point of stealing – if the fellow litigator is a ‘*ben bris*’ or to a *chillul Hashem* – if the litigator is “*eino ben bris*.” The *Eitz Yosef* (*Siddur Otzar Hatefillos*) explains that even with a person who is not a *ben bris*, one should worry about stealing, because one must not steal even from a non-Jew, as per the *Rambam* (*Geneivah* 7:8).

Some further explained that with the request of “*midin kasheh*”, we do not mean a hearing that takes place in a *beis din*, but rather personal doubts and difficult decisions, that even after we make a decision, the heart still wonders if it was the right decision. “*Umiba’al din kasheh*” – from conducting a conversation with a person who is not clear minded and his heart is filled with doubts. This applies both to the doubts of a “*ben bris*” – on matters of *emunah* and deep thoughts, and doubts of “*she’eino ben bris*” – that he denies the existence of Torah. (*Peirushei Siach Yitzchak in Siddur HaGra*).

The *Olas Tamid* (Chapter 10) wrote that one should have in mind in this request the “*din kasheh*” that arises each day between us and our *yetzer*. We ask that we should successfully prevail over the *yetzer* by conducting ourselves according to Torah, and through that, we will be spared from *din Shamayim*.

To Be Spared from Judgement of Gehinnom

The *Seder Hayom* (*Seder Birchos Hashachar*) explained that the intention here is not to be spared from *Gehinnom* itself, but from the sins whose punishment is *Gehinnom*. He concluded: “The message from all our requests, each morning, is to ask Hashem: Do not allow our legs to stray from the straight and good path, but rather allow us to do Your Will all our lives, in our land, and that nothing bad or no mishap should come through us.”

However, the *Shu”t Torah Lishmah* (416) understood that we are asking to be saved from the *Gehinnom* itself, and therefore he asks: How is it possible that in a *Yehi Ratzon* composed regarding on day to day encounters [as the request says ‘save us today and every day’], we include a request to be saved from the judgement of *Gehinnom*, which only occurs after one’s passing?

He explained: The sinner, while still alive, causes parts of his soul to be sentenced to *Gehinnom* because of his sins. Therefore, we ask that He should save us from *dinah shel Gehinnom*, that no part of our souls should go to *Gehinnom* still in our lifetime.

With Those Close to Me, I Will Be Sanctified

It was the time of sunset on an Erev Shabbos in 5681-1921. The holy Shabbos was about to spread its wings over the homes of the Holy City, both within the walls and beyond. The red roofs were colored brilliant orange, and the horizon was beginning to darken.

A figure was visible through the metal shutter that served as the window of a narrow house in the heart of the Mishkenos Yisrael neighborhood, one of the first to be built outside the walls of the Old City. It was noble and refined Rebbeztzin Tziporah Chana, wife of the renowned Yerushalmi *tzaddik* Harav Aryeh Levin. She covered her face with her hands, and let her tears flow unchecked.

Each Shabbos, the members of her family would marvel at their righteous mother. It was said that anyone who had not seen her daven – especially when lighting candles – did not know what *tefillah* really is. But this time, her *tefillah* was even more fervent than usual. This Shabbos, her requests and pleas were focused on her son, Avraham Binyamin. The child lay in the cradle in the corner of the room, his body gaunt and his face pale and listless.

These were the years following World War One, and the entire world was licking the wounds of the war as they tried to resurrect the ruins of war and restore the destroyed economies. The neighborhoods of Yerushalayim – which had never seen plenty in the first place – were being slammed by hunger and plagues. Many children perished from various diseases, which resulted from the poor sanitary conditions at the time. Disease spread rapidly from house to house, and one of them had struck young Avraham Binyamin.

Her mother’s heart went out to her son; already at his young age, he had displayed exceptional intelligence. Yet, there was little she could do to help him. The doctor they had summoned just before Shabbos had determined that his condition was critical, and that there was nothing he could do to help. All his parents could do now was pray. His mother was well experienced in praying, and now, at this auspicious hour when the Shabbos Queen arrived at their home, she pleaded tearfully: “Please Hashem, send a *refuah sheleimah* to my son, Avraham Binyamin ben Tziporah Chana.”

That Friday night, she did not put down her *Sefer Tehillim*. From time to time, she went over to his bed, and tried to feed him a bit of goat’s milk that she had purchased with her last few pennies. But he just seemed to get sicker, and as dawn broke on Shabbos morning, the child returned his soul to its Maker.

The Rebbeztzin stood near the cradle of her beloved child and bit her lips. “It is Shabbos Kodesh today!” a voice cried inside her. On Shabbos, it was forbidden to cry, she knew, and with superhuman efforts, she pressed her lips together and stopped the sobs from coming. If that was not enough, she did everything she could to strengthen the other members of the family, to console them and encourage them. She reminded them every so often, in a pleasant tone, that “It’s Shabbos today!” When neighbors knocked at the door to ask how the child was doing, she did not tell them anything. It was Shabbos today, and she did not want to cause anyone distress on this day.

That Shabbos, *zemiro*s were heard through the windows of the Levin home, as they were every other Shabbos. Only

after Shabbos ended did the Rebbeztzin allow herself to burst into bitter tears, and to mourn the passing of her beloved son.

It was not the only child that Rav Aryeh and his wife lost. They lost three other children to disease and hunger that ravaged Yerushalayim during those First World War years. But they accepted the *din* with remarkable strength, and declared, “Hashem gave and Hashem took, may Hashem’s Name be blessed.” They consoled themselves and their family, even when they sustained blow after blow.

But now, when Avraham Binyamin passed away at the age of one and a half, it was very hard for them to be consoled. He was a wunderkind, and everyone had predicted greatness for him. As soon as he was born, the whole house was filled with light. When he was just a few months old, he began to speak, and when he grew a bit older, he had the understanding of a child many years his senior. As a nine-month old baby, he was already making the *brachah* of *Shehakol* on his food. His father said all this about him in the *hesped* for his son. They had a tremendous treasure, and it had now been taken from them so suddenly.

For the week following the tragic passing, the house was filled with people coming to comfort the mourners. One day of the *shivah*, two women, new immigrants from Russia, entered the house. The Levin family had been very instrumental in helping their families settle in Yerushalayim, and they had come to console the Rebbeztzin. But to their surprise, they realized that the Rebbeztzin didn’t even notice their arrival. She was in the middle of davening *Minchah*; her expression was calm and peaceful, as if it was a normal day, and she was pouring her heart out with great emotion to her Creator.

The two women sat down on the bench in the room, and could not take their eyes off the image of the Rebbeztzin, immersed in her *tefillah*. “I never saw such a special davening,” one of them marveled to the other.

“That’s right!” her friend agreed. And then she whispered, in Russian, “Tell me, does she look all there in her mind?! How can she be so calm and daven like that during the *shivah* for her baby son?” Meanwhile, the Rebbeztzin finished davening, and the woman could not help but agree to her friend’s words with a nod, as if to say, Indeed, it appears that the terrible suffering that the Rebbeztzin has experienced has caused her to lose her mind...

They both did not know that the Rebbeztzin was very fluent in Russian, as she had been born in Kovno. During the *tefillah* of *Elokai Netzor*, she heard the offensive whisper, and now she turned her pale face towards her visitors, and whispered, “I’m completely sane, dear women, and it is because of that I accept the decree with love. If I would have merited it, my son, the wonder that he was, would have illuminated the eyes of the world in the Yeshivah Shel Matah. As I was not *zocheh*, he will learn with the holy Seraphim in the Yeshivah Shel Ma’alah.”

The women bowed their heads in shame. They had always heard about the Rebbeztzin’s greatness, but only now did they internalize her true spiritual stature. They had never encountered such greatness in their lives.

Ohel Moshe, Shemini