

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



381

PARASHAS  
BEHAR - BECHUKOSAI

תשפ"א

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### Save Whatever Part of the Tefillah You Can

"והיו לך ימי שבע שבתות השנים תשע וארבעים שנה" (כה ח)

"This tells you that even if you did not declare *shemittos*, declare a *yovel* at the end of 49 years." (Rashi, according to *Toras Kohanim* 25:14)

The Chofetz Chaim explained:

Sometimes, a person davens, and his lips move of their own accord, as his mind wanders in other worlds...Until suddenly, he shakes himself out of his thoughts and is alarmed to discover that he has already said most of the *tefillah* without any *kavanah*. It is only natural for him to despair and tell himself: In any case, I said most of the *tefillah* without *kavanah*; what point is there if I have *kavanah* from this point on?! He has to know that this is the *yetzer hara* giving him advice, and only a fool would willingly hand over his final pennies to someone who stole his entire money bag from him. On the contrary, he should make the effort to daven the rest of the *tefillah* with *kavanah*, even if it is only one *brachah*. He should grab it from the hands of the *yetzer* and have *kavanah* while saying it.

As he often did, the Chofetz Chaim drove the point home with a beautiful parable:

A woman stood in the market selling fruits. Suddenly, someone dashed over to her, and began to grab fruits from her basket. Tearful and helpless she stood and watched as her fruits were being stolen, until a wise man who was observing what was happening shouted at her: "How long will you stand there crying without doing anything? Will you wait until that evil person steals all your fruits?! Get a hold of yourself and grab as many fruits from your basket as you can and flee with them to safety, so at least you will have a bit left for yourself!"

Chofetz Chaim B'Nesivos Hatefillah, p. 29

### Vetzivisi Es Birchasi – Amen!

"וצוית את ברכתי לכם" (כה כא)

Harav Yaakov Chaim, the only son and successor of the Ben Ish Chai:

The word לכם [with the *kollel*] is numerically equivalent to 'amen.' We can thus explain the *passuk* as follows: "Vetzivisi, and I will command: *es birchasi lachem*" – HaKadosh Baruch Hu commands that whenever you hear a *brachah*, you should answer amen after it. As the Rambam rules (*Brachos* 1 73): "Anyone who hears another Jew make a *brachah*, any *brachah*, even if he did not hear the entire *brachah* from beginning to end, and even if he is not obligated in that *brachah*, is obligated to answer amen."

Tzitzim Uperachim

### The Brachos of Shabbos Subdue All the Harmful Forces

"ורדפו מכם חמשה מאה ומאה מכם רבבה ירדפו ונפלו איביכם לפניכם לחרב" (כו ח)

Harav Yaakov Reischer, author of *Shvus Yaakov*, explained:

Chazal instituted that we make one hundred *brachos* each day so that through them, the tens of thousands of *mekatregim* that are at our right side should be removed, as it says (*Tehillim* 91:7): "Yipol mitzidcha elef *urevavah m'yeminecha eilecha lo yigash*, a thousand will be stationed at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not approach you." When these tens of thousands of *mekatregim*, prosecuting elements, the Shechinah will be able to dwell upon us, as the place where the Shechinah dwells is on the right of the person, as it says (*ibid* 16:8) "Shivisi Hashem l'negdi samid ki *m'yemini bal emot*, I have placed Hashem before me constantly; because [He

is] at my right hand, I will not falter." Thus, the *passuk* here alludes: "umeah mikem, and one hundred of yours" – the one hundred *brachos* that you make each day "revavah yirdofu, should pursue the ten thousand" – they will pursue and subdue the ten thousand *mekatregim* at your right.

Harav Aharon Weintraub added that we can similarly explain the words of the holy Zohar (*Terumah* 135 20) that some say before *Maariv* on Friday night: "When Shabbos enters...*vechol*, and all the *dinim*, judgements, pass from it."

As noted, the one hundred *brachos* that we say each day banish the ten thousand harmful forces. During the week, we can easily reach one hundred *brachos*, but on Shabbos, we fall short seventeen *brachos*, and therefore, the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 284 3) that we can complete them by answering amen to the *brachos* of those who are *oleh* to the Torah.

If we calculate the *brachos* of those who have *aliyos* [two *brachos* for each one of the ten people who have *aliyos* during *Shacharis* and *Minchah*] with the addition of five *brachos* of the *Haftarah*, we will reach twenty seven *brachos*. So we find that on Shabbos we recite one hundred and ten *brachos*. Hence, if one hundred *brachos* can subdue ten thousand harmful elements alluded to in the *passuk* "urevavah m'yeminecha" then the extra ten *brachos* will also subdue the one thousand harmful elements alluded to in the *passuk* "yipol mitzidcha elef." Therefore it says: "When Shabbos comes and all the judgement passed from this day" – during the week, only ten thousand harmful elements fall from the right, but on Shabbos, even the one thousand on the left fall away.

Iyun Yaakov, *Menachos* 43b (and see *Ohr Hachaim* *Vayikra* 26:11); *Dvir Aharon*, *Eikev*

"משכני אהריך  
נרוצה הביאני  
המלך חדריו"



This Thursday, 2 Sivan, is the *yahrtzeit* of the Minchas Elazar of Mukatch, zy"u. In his *sefer Divrei Torah* (Edition 9 18) he wrote about the virtue of answering amen:

Answering amen after the *brachah* awakens and draws the heart of a person to serving his Creator, more than saying the *brachah*. Therefore, Chazal said (*Brachos* 53b): "Gadol ha'oneh amen yoser min hamevarech." This is also alluded to in the *passuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 1:4): "משכני אהריך נרוצה" whose acronym is 'amen.'

*Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa* - merit to daven k'halachah



## The Piyut of Yigdal (4) The Third Principle: Eino Guf

'Adamcha, Achancha  
Velo Yedaticha'

After declaring our faith that Hashem is Singular and Meyuchad, we continue to declare the third *ikar* of *emunah*, the principle of faith, that Hashem is not a body, and He has no form of a body, and no form or picture should be attributed as being His, and therefore, any physical action or concept is not associated with Him. (Rambam, *Peirush Hamishnah*, Introduction to Chapter 11 of *Maseches Sanhedrin*, *Yesodei HaTorah* 1:8-12)

Although there are many *pesukim* that use physical concepts to describe the ways of Hashem, such as (*Shemos* 9:3): "Behold, the Hand of Hashem will be upon your livestock that is in the field"; (*Shemos* 24:10) "And they perceived the G-d of Israel, and beneath His feet was like the forming of a sapphire brick"; and (*Shemos* 31:18) "He gave Moshe the two *luchos* written with the Finger of G-d," but *Chazal* have told us (*Brachos* 31b): "The Torah speaks in a language that is understandable to humans."

These physical descriptions in the *pesukim* are written only to make it easier for us to understand them, and are only stated as a parable (*Rambam* *ibid*).

Besides not attributing any physical description to Hashem, one should also not relate Him to the image of any spiritual beings, such as the Heavenly Angels, because He does not have any image or description. That is what the poet here meant when he wrote "*ein Lo demus haguf v'eino guf*." One should not use the image of a physical body to describe HaKadosh Baruch Hu, nor the image of "*eino guf*", a spiritual creation. Because the *metzius* of Hashem is loftier than what a human being can comprehend and we have no way to fathom its essence, as the *passuk* says (*Yeshayah* 40:18): "*V'el mi tedamyun K-L, umah demus ta'archu Lo*, and to whom do you compare Hashem, and what likeness do you arrange for Him?" (*Siddur Hashelach*)

## The Source of This Principle

We were commanded about this *ikar* in *emunah* in the Torah in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 4:15): "*Venishmartem me'od lenafshoseichem ki lo re'isem kol temunah beyom diber Hashem aleichem beChorev mitoch ha'eish*, and you shall watch yourselves very well, for you did not see any image on the day that Hashem spoke to you at Chorev from the midst of the fire." Moshe Rabbeinu warns Bnei Yisrael after they heard the Voice of Hashem speaking to them from Har Sinai, that they should not erroneously think that there is a body from which the Voice emerged. Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not a body and He has no image of a body. (*Rambam* *ibid*; *Ramban* *Devarim* 4:15)

As such, in the commandment (*Shemos*

20:4): "*Lo sa'aseh lecha pesel vehol temunah*, you should not make for yourself any graven image or a likeness" does not include only the prohibition of making an idol to serve *avodah zarah*. All idols are forbidden, even one that is meant to be a symbol and memory of the Creator Himself. HaKadosh Baruch Hu has no body or the image of a body, and therefore, one must not make a physical image to depict Him, even when the objective is to remind us of Him. (Rav Y. Bechor Shor, *Shemos* 20:4)

We Have No Concept of the  
Holiness of the Creator

The words "*lo na'aroch Eilav Kedushaso*" are explained in the *Be'er Chaim* commentary as follows: Let us not mistakenly think that just like Bnei Yisrael are called *kedoshim*, holy, as compared to the nations of the world, the Creator is called holy as compared to us. Not at all! The Creator is the Source of all holiness and we have no way to estimate His holiness. In order to imbue us with this understanding, the poet says: "*Lo na'aroch eilav* [to the body] *Kedushaso*", do not measure the holiness of the Creator as compared to the holiness of bodies, because the holiness of the Creator is far beyond what we can fathom. We have no way to comprehend it or to quantify it as compared to any other concept of holiness familiar to us.

That is what *Chazal* mean when they explain (*Bereishis Rabbah* 90:2): "Speak to the nation of Bnei Yisrael and say to them *kedoshim thiyu*" (*Vayikra* 19:2). Could it be like me? The *passuk* says: "*Ki kadosh Ani Hashem Elokeichem*" – My holiness is above yours. Do not think that the holiness of the Creator is similar to yours, but on a higher level, rather "My Holiness is higher than your holiness" and you have no comprehension of it.

The Principles That Are Alluded  
to in the Name אדם

Harav Yehoshua Babad, the Rav of Tarnopol, offers a beautiful insight with regard to the first three principles:

If we pay attention, we find that the first three *ikrim*, which relate to the difference between HaKadosh Baruch Hu and His creations – אחדות, נציאות, דמיון – are an acronym for אדם. This comes to emphasize that although *adam*, man, was created with a Tzelem Elokim, there is no way to compare, *chalilah*, between a person and his Creator.

For this reason, we say three times in *Kedushah* – "*Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh*" – because '*kadosh*' means '*muvdal umufrash*' separate (*Rashi* *Vayikra* 19:2). With these three words we declare that Hashem is separate from us in the three main principles: In that He is a Creator and Leader, in being Singular, and in the fact that He has no bodily form. (*Shu"t Sefer Yehoshua*, Introduction)

*Ein lo demus haguf* of any one of the physical creations, nor the image of *v'eino guf* – a spiritual creation. *Lo na'aroch* we do not estimate or attribute *eilav* – to the holiness that is accepted in the concept of a body, *Kedushaso* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who is the Source of Holiness, and we cannot fathom it.

## Dogs That Led to Repentance

The *teshuvah* world has seen tremendous growth in recent years, as tens of thousands of people born into families who did not know better, merited to be redeemed from the bonds of their *yetzer hara* and to return to the path of their forbears after years of estrangement. It is a world full of wonders and mysteries. One who observes the thousands of families that have been established on the foundations of *teshuvah*, and today are part and parcel of the *chareidi* world, would be hard pressed to understand how it all began. How is it that a person just abandons a glittering, unfettered world, and submits himself, willingly, to the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*, sometimes even with the agreement to live a life of poverty, yet one that is steeped in Torah?!

Every *teshuvah* story involves tremendous *Hashgachah pratit*, and often, it begins with a random and surprising encounter that leads to interest and searching for a path, like this remarkable story, heard firsthand from the person it happened to:

"I grew up in a home that was completely cut off from Torah and mitzvah observance," the man begins. "In the rat race that was my life, I often worked in close proximity to those who observed Torah and *mitzvos*. I never took too much of an interest in their lifestyle, but one thing always caught my attention and impressed me:

I was always amazed to see how before putting anything in their mouths, Jews stopped to make a *brachah*, and only then did they sate their hunger. I admired these people very much for doing this. Whenever I took something to eat, my only thought was about the food in my hand and my hunger. The ability of a human being to halt his desires for a moment, to introspect and recognize Who created the food in his hand, and to thank Him for it with a *brachah* before eating, was for me the manifestation of spirituality prevailing over materialism – the triumph of humanity over the animalistic nature.

Only someone who can live a life in this fashion, with spirituality prevailing over materialism, can honestly earn the description of '*adam*', a human, I told myself. But despite all this, I could not take this step and at least try to learn to understand the fuller picture. I was afraid of the commitment that I would feel as the result of such an understanding...

I continued with my life, and from time to time, felt some pangs of guilt as to why I was not practicing what I preached, so to speak. But the time had apparently not yet come...

The turnaround occurred, as always, through a surprising story. One day, I had to visit a large farm as part of my job. Only when I got to the facility did I discover that the owner was a childhood friend who in recent years had begun to observe *mitzvos*. We were happy to meet one another, and chatted in a friendly manner. Before I left, my friend offered to show me something very interesting.

I agreed, and my friend led me to the goat pen on the edge of the farm. At the entrance to the pen there were five large dogs, that had been placed there to protect the goats from being stolen, which is something that regrettably, occurs very often, and destroys the livelihoods of many farmers.

The dogs looked rather hungry, and my friend took out some pieces of meat from a bag he was holding and tossed them at the dogs. I expected the dogs to grab at the food, but I was surprised when they did not touch the fresh meat that had been thrown to them. They stood up, and came over to the food; their tongues dripped with saliva but they did not dare touch the meat.

Then my friend took a small bottle of water out of his pocket, made a *brachah* out loud, with *kavanah*: "*Baruch Atah... shehakol nihiyeh bidvaro*." The minute he finished the *brachah*, before I could answer 'amen',

the dogs attacked the food and within a minute nothing remained.

I was stunned. Until then, I had seen religious people who did not eat without a *brachah*; suddenly I had discovered that there were also 'religious' dogs who were strict not to eat without a *brachah*... I was rather confused at this discovery, and my friend helped me by explaining the strange phenomenon:

'As you surely realize, these dogs are not here as pets,' he explained. 'They are here to protect the animals from being stolen.' I nodded in agreement. Yes, of course that was clear.

'This past year, I had a very unfortunate incident, when a few of my neighbors...' His voice cracked, and he looked at the nearby Arab village with tears in his eyes, 'lowly thieves came in the middle of the night and stole dozens of sheep and goats that were worth more than NIS 150,000.

'The next morning, as soon as I approached the farm, I sensed the unusual quiet, and tensed. When I got close to the pen and realized what had happened, I went to see how the dogs were doing, and how come they had not done their job. I was surprised and quickly realized it all. The thieves had tossed them pieces of food that had been heavily poisoned, and the dogs died within seconds. That's how these evil thieves managed to strip me of my assets in a short time.

"After I calmed down somewhat from this catastrophe, I took some loans and bought a new herd of goats, I also purchased five new watchdogs. I tried to think of an idea to make sure the same type of incident would not recur, and Hashem gave me an idea.

'With the aid of an expert dog trainer, I was able to train the new dogs not to touch any food placed before them without hearing the *brachah* of '*Shehakol nihiyeh bidvaro*' first. After I trained them, I knew that from now on, their mouths were locked with a lock with a secret code, which potential thieves would never be able to decipher.

'From that point on, *bechasdei Shamayim*, I am calm. The 'lock' turned out to be so effective that when, a short time ago, I had to travel for a few days, and I asked one of my friends to tend to the farm, he called me after two days and related that the dogs were going to die of hunger... In response I smiled to myself, and asked him to activate the speaker phone. After I made the *brachah* *Shehakol* out loud, the dogs ate immediately and asked for more...

At this point, my friend and I said goodbye and I left to go home. I was stunned by this unbelievable revelation. My life could have returned to routine if not for the fact that from the moment I left the farm, I began to feel tremendous pangs of conscience that did not leave me for a moment. 'Even dogs don't eat without a *brachah*' – I thought to myself? And what are you?! Are you worse than they are??'

I was especially touched by how my friend described the situation, as if the dogs' mouths were locked with a secret code, and as long as he did not utter the code the dogs would not eat. I reflected on the fact that my mouth was supposed to be locked with a similar lock that was supposed to prevent me from eating without a *brachah*, and how could I allow myself to eat without a *brachah*.

When I reached the recognition of the importance of the *brachah*, I began to think about Who we make the *brachah* to. I had many questions, and decided to attend a seminar organized one of the *kiruv* organizations, to clarify them. From there, it was only a short path for me to completely undertake the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*. And I thank Hashem for bringing me closer to serving Him."

Kol Beramah, Nissan 5781