

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

A Thought That Transforms a Rasha to a Tzaddik

"התודו את חטאתם אשר עשו" (ז ה)

We learn from the *Rambam (Teshuvah 1 1)* that when one repents without admitting to his sins – called *viduy* – his sins are not forgiven. Many have asked what this means, in light of the *Gemara (Kiddushin 49b)* that one who consecrates a wife on condition that he is a *tzaddik gamur*, even if he is known as an absolute *rasha*, she is still considered *mekudeshes*, because it is possible that he thought about repenting in his heart. And with one *hirhur teshuvah*, even a fleeting thought, a person can go from being a *rasha* to a *tzaddik*, even without *viduy*.

The *Minchas Chinuch* explained: The definition of a person as a *tzaddik* or a *rasha* is not contingent on the atonement of his sins, but rather his level of regret for them. Therefore, even when one's sins are not atoned because he did not say *viduy* for them, if he repents and regrets his deeds, his is no longer considered a *rasha*, and rather is deemed a *tzaddik*.

Another answer is offered by the *Tchebiner Rav*: *Chazal* say (*Yerushalmi Bikkurim 3 3*) that that one who marries a wife has all his sins atoned for, and therefore, when one is *mekadesh* a wife, the moment he thought about *teshuvah* he becomes a *tzaddik*, because together with the *kiddushin* all his sins are atoned for (as we find in the *Gemara* the concept "*gito veyado- ba'im k'echad*" [*Gittin 77b*]). But a regular person is only considered a *tzaddik* if he says *viduy* for his sins.

Minchas Chinuch 364 1; Shu"t Dovev Meisharim, Vol. I, 22

Viduy for the Sin and Its Outcomes

"התודו את חטאתם אשר עשו" (ז ה)

A Nazir Who Answers Amen - Is Greater Than the Mevarech

"כל ימי נזרו מכל אשר יעשה מגפן היין מחרצנים ועד זג לא יאכל" (ו ד)

At the end of *Maseches Nazir (66b)* the *Gemara* cites the *Breisa*: "Rabi Yosi says: The one who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*." We need to understand why this statement is connected to *Maseches Nazir*?

Harav Eliyahu Shick, the Rav of Lida, explained:

Chazal seek to reconcile a question that arises when reading the *parashah* of *Nazir*: We would think, how can a person accept upon himself *nezirus* – does he not thus lose out on so many *brachos* that he could have said on eating grapes and drinking wine? Therefore, *Chazal* say in this context that Rabi Yosi says: "the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*." Meaning: the *nazir* doesn't lose *brachos*, because he can answer amen to the *brachos* of others, and the merit of the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*.

Ein Eliyahu, Nazir 66b

It would seem that it is sufficient to say "*Vehisvadu es chatasam*." Why did the Torah add the words "*asher asu* – that they did"?

Harav Yaakov Tzvi Yalish, author of *Melo Haro'im*, explained that the Torah wants to emphasize that aside for the fact that Am Yisrael needs to say *viduy* and repent for their sins, they must also

say *viduy* for the *mitzvos* "*asher asu*" – the ones that they performed, but not properly, as Hashem commanded.

Harav Zalman Sortozkin explained: There are times when the sinner refrains from regretting his deeds, and he thinks: what are my sins compared to the sins of others? I'm considered a *tzaddik* compared to this lowly generation...It is for this kind of thought that there is a warning: "And they should admit to the sins that they did" – they and not others.

Moreover, the Raavad **Harav Moshe Sternbuch** explains that the Torah is teaching us that aside for the sinner needing to admit to his sins, he must also own up to the *mashchisim*, the destructive forces "*asher asu*" – that were created as the result of his sins. Indeed, in *Tefillas Zakkah*, said on Erev Yom Kippur, it states "woe is me, that instead of good thoughts through which I could have created holy angels that would be defenders and good advocates for me, instead I created *mashchisim*, destructive forces to harm me."

Kol Yaakov; Ozneyim LaTorah; Ta'am V'Daas

'Ko Tevarchu' – One Hundred Brachos

"כה תברכו את בני ישראל אמור להם" (ו כג)

Harav Menachem Mendel Lazar, the Rav of Strizov, explained:

The word *כה* is comprised of two letters – *kaf* – numerically equivalent to 20, and *hei* – numerically equivalent to five. So we find that there is an allusion here to the *mitzvah* of saying one hundred *brachos* a day: "כ" ה' תברכו" – each day, you must recite five times twenty *brachos* – meaning one hundred.

Sova Semachos

This Tuesday will mark 200 years since the passing of the 'father of the yeshivos' Harav Chaim of Volozhin, author of *Nefesh Hachaim*, who passed away on 14 Sivan 5581. He was very strict all his life not to utter a *brachah* if there wasn't someone to answer amen after it. Once, while learning in the middle of the night, he wanted to drink, and there was no one to answer amen. An Angel from Above was sent to answer amen to his *brachah*.

She'al Avicha Veyagedcha, Vol. I, p. 87

Bney Emunim: Amen to every *brachah*.



Yigdal (6): The Fifth Principle – It Is Worth to Serve Only Hashem

‘Ki Lecha Levadcha Eineinu Teluyos’

The fifth principle of the 13 Principles obligates us to believe that it is only worthy to serve Hashem, and to praise Him and adhere to His *mitzvos* and it is not fitting to serve any other creation. That is because He alone is the Ruler over all of creation, and no other creation has the power and ability to decide and to act on any detail of creation. As such, a person must not serve any other creation, even with the thought that it will be a medium to connect between him and Hashem. (Rambam, *Peirush Hamitzvos Sanhedrin* Introduction to Chapter 10, *Teshuvah* 3 7)

We were commanded about this *ikkar* in the *passuk* (Shemos 20:3): “*Lo yihyeh lecha elohim acheirim al Panai.*” This forbids us to believe that any one of the creations was given the power or control of any kind of creation (Rambam *Yesodei HaTorah* 1, 1-6). The *navi Yirmiyahu* warns Bnei Yisrael not to believe in any powers of the heavenly constellations, as it says (Yirmiyahu 10:5-6): “*Al tir'u meiheim ki lo yare'u, fear them not for they will do no harm, neither is it in them to do good. There is none like You, Hashem; You are great, and Your name is great with might.*”

As such, a person must not turn in prayer to any other authority other than Hashem Yisbarach. As we express this principle in the words of *Ani Ma'amin*: “*ShehaBorei Yisbarach Shemo Lo levado ra'uy lehisparallel ve'ein ra'uy lehisparallel lezulaso*” (*Sefer Ha'ikrim, Ma'amar Sheini* Chapter 28). Chazal say (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 9a): “*Rabi Yudin said... a human being has a patron [that loves and protects him.] If a time of trouble comes upon him, he does not enter to him suddenly, rather he comes and stands at the entrance to his patron, and calls to his servant or a family member, and that servant or relative says [to the patron]: ‘So and so is standing at the entrance to your courtyard’ – he may admit him in and he might leave him [outside, without listening to his request.] But HaKadosh Baruch Hu is not such; if a person is in trouble, he should not cry to Michael or Gavriel, he should cry to Me and I will answer him immediately, as it says (Yael 3:5): ‘Kol asher yikra beShem Hashem yemalet, whoever should call in the Name of Hashem will be delivered.’*”

An Appeal to the Angels to Allow Our Tefillos to Enter

Despite the above concept, from the wording of several *tefillos* and *piyutim*, it appears as if we are appealing to the Heavenly Angels with a request that they allow our *tefillos* to enter. One is the famed “*Machnisei rachamim, hachnitsu rachameinu lifnei Baal Harachamim,*” which we say during the days of *Selichos*. Some write that indeed, these *piyutim* contradict this *ikkar* that obligates us to daven only to Hashem, and that they should not be said (*Korban Nesanel, Rosh Hashanah*, end of Chapter 1). But some explain that the prohibition is specifically to turn to the angels and make a request of them. But when the *tefillah* itself is directed at HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and at its conclusion we ask the Angels to serve as emissaries to convey it – that is permissible. (*Peirush Hatefillos Vehabrachos* [Rav Y. Ben Yakar] Vol. I, p. 142. See *Shu"t Shevivei Eish*, Vol. IV, 25)

There are others who explain that despite the fact that this appeal appears to be directed at the Heavenly Angel in truth, our intention is only HaKadosh Baruch Hu. This is similar to a servant who is embarrassed to approach the king and express his request, and therefore, he addresses the advisors of the king, in the hope that the king will hear him and accede to his request. Likewise,

Hino alone *Adon Olam* and the almighty *lechol notzar* even one who is not worthy, *yoreh gedulaso umalchuso* by allowing him to exist and providing for his needs. Therefore, it is only Hashem that we must serve, and only to Him that we pray.

we turn to the Heavenly Angels with humility and submission, even though we are actually hoping that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will listen and hear our pleas. (*Shu"t Mahar"i Bruna*, 275)

They further explained that because it is the job of the *malachim* to bring the *tefillos* of Klal Yisrael before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, it is not a *tefillah* and a request to the angels, but rather a commandment that they fulfill their roles and bring our *tefillos* before Hashem. (*Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Ha'avodah*, Chapter 12, first explanation)

How Is the Fifth Principle Expressed in the Piyut

In the *piyut* of *Yigdal*, whose 13 stanzas correspond to the 13 *Ani Maamin* statements printed in *Siddurim*, the fifth principle obligating us to distance any iota of *avodah zarah* from our hearts and to believe only in Hashem and to serve Him exclusively is said: “*Hino Adon Olam lechol notzar, yoreh gedulaso umalchuso.*” The question is asked: How do these words express this principle?

In order to reconcile with words of the poet, Harav Pinchas of Plotzk explained the words of the *piyut* as follows: Hashem Yisbarach alone is “the Adon Olam” Who controls everything, and in His *chessed* he shows “*lechol notzar*, every creation” – even those who are not worthy of it, His power and His greatness in giving life to and leading creation with compassion and *chessed*, and as the King of the world Who sustains and provides all the needs of every creation in the universe, even those who are not worthy of it by their deeds. When one believes that Hashem alone controls and leads all of creation, and that all of our lives and futures are solely in His Hands – and that He has mercy on “*kol notzar*” – even one who is not worthy of mercy, it is clear to him that it is only Hashem that he can trust and serve, and only to Him that he can pray. (*Maggid Tzedek* commentary in *Siddur Sha'ar Harachamim*)

Others explain that the words of the poet are explicitly about davening. This explanation says that the words “*Adon Olam – lechol notzar*” mean that all of the creations praise Him and turn to Him in prayer with the term “Adon Olam” (*Siddur Ohr Chachamah*). There are others who cite the *Gemara* (ibid): “*Amar Rav Chiya Bar Ashi Amar Rav: one whose mind is not calm – should not pray, as it says ‘batzar al yoreh’*” (see *Rashi* *ibid* beginning with *batzar*, that there is no such *passuk*). The term “*Yoreh*” also means *tefillah*, and it is possible that this is what the poet meant when he said “*Yoreh gedulaso umalchoso*”, that one must pray only to Him and praise His greatness and the glory of His kingship. (*Emes L'Yaakov* [Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky] *Eiruvin* 65a, in the *Tosafos Divrei Hamaschil batzar*)

Some say that because of this question, they believe the *nusach* is as found in ancient *siddurim*: “*Hino Adon Olam, vechol notzar yodeh gedulaso umalchuso.*” In other words: He alone is the Master of the World, and all the creations of the world will admit (*yodu*) that only Hashem Yisbarach has the greatness and glory, and it is only Him that we should serve. (See *Iyun Tefillah* in *Siddur Otzar Hatefillos*)

Five Amens = Fifty Gold Coins

The city of Baghdad was the center of Torah in the Babylonian Diaspora, and it was known as a city filled with scholars and scribes. The glorious Jewish community that settled there for a period of about one thousand years, was a beacon for all the communities in the Eastern countries, and it turned out tremendous *gedolei Torah* and wise scholars. Many of them became famed throughout Am Yisrael as brilliant scholars who illuminated the world with their Torah. The most famed among the *batei medrash* in the city was *Medrash Beit Zilcha*. It was a beautiful structure built at the initiative of Harav Abdallah Somech, ז"ל, who also led it and taught many of the rabbanim of Babylonian Jewry. He was succeeded by his disciple, the renowned Harav Yosef Chaim, the Ben Ish Chai.

This story took place about 120 years ago, when the Ben Ish Chai served as the Rav of the Jewish community and the *av bais din* of Baghdad. At the time, the city had many “*alte zachen*” businesses, secondhand dealers. People bought old clothing and other objects from those who no longer needed them, and then resold them for a fair price.

This type of business entailed many dangers. Many objects that the dealers purchased could not be sold further, and they lost the money they had invested in buying them. But on the other hand, there was sometimes a profit boost, when an object of real value turned up. It was sold to the dealer without anyone being aware of its real value, but then emerged as being far more valuable than it appeared, whether because of historic value, or because the owners did not estimate its true worth. Such opportunities were the main reason a lot of people engaged in this kind of work, and such items were their primary source of profits.

Sasson and Moshe were two longtime friends who had a thriving “*alte zachen*” business. One morning, they made their way down the alley that led out of the Jewish Quarter of the city, heading for one of the non-Jewish neighborhoods.

Sasson and Moshe were known among the secondhand dealers peddlers in Baghdad. Over the many years that had been in the business, they had developed a sixth sense for identifying profitable opportunities. They had many contacts in non-Jewish neighborhoods who, for a percentage of the profits, reported to them when people around them were looking to get rid of various objects from their homes.

When they received such information, Sasson and Moshe would first discuss with each other whether the deal seemed attractive, and then their sharp sense told them that it was, they would hurry to the place in order to compete with other secondhand dealers over the objects being sold. One morning, they received word that a wealthy Arab family was going to be moving to a different land, and they were selling all the contents of their home to the highest bidder. Such an opportunity, the two men new, was very rare. Many other dealers would surely be heading for the place, and the earlier they would come, the bigger a chance they had of finding something of value.

Early in the morning, they headed out of the Jewish Quarter toward the address they had been given. But before they were able to leave the Quarter, they had to stop.

A youth with a pleading expression stopped them and begged, “Please,

fellow Jews, we need a tenth man for a *minyán* urgently. My father is sitting *shivah* for his father, and he must say *Kaddish*. We only have nine people. Could you join us so that my father can say *Kaddish*?”

Sasson and Moshe stopped. This was a real test for them. On the one hand, a Jew needed their help. On the other hand, this was a one-time opportunity for a real profit. After deliberating a bit, Sasson decided to follow the rule of “*chayeicha kodmin,*” your life comes first, and to continue on to his destination. Moshe chose to adhere to the rule of “if a mitzvah comes your way don’t miss the opportunity” and to follow the youth to his home, even though he was taking the chance of missing out on a large profit.

When Moshe followed the boy into the house, he discovered that there were only eight people besides him, and that they had to find yet another person to complete the *minyán*. Many long moments passed until they found a tenth man. When the tenth man was found, the mourner said *Kaddish*, and Moshe set out, with the feeble hope that perhaps something was left in the house for him. When he arrived he discovered, as expected, that many others, including his friend, had preceded him. There was hardly anything left for him except some old, faded clothes. In order not to return empty handed, Moshe bought the rags for a few pennies and turned to go home. At home, when he examined the rags he’d bought, he found a surprise. Underneath the pile was an old, faded pillow. When he unraveled the stitches of it, in order to use the feathers inside, he found a gorgeous gemstone. With the stone in his hand, he rushed to the market and asked one of the jewelry merchants to appraise its value. He was stunned when the jeweler appraised it for fifty gold coins. Moreover, the jeweler paid that sum, in cash, on the spot, and purchased the stone.

Very pleased, and with pockets bulging with gold coins, Moshe returned home to relate the wondrous story. But his wife chilled his enthusiasm, and said that based on his description, it seemed that the money he had gotten for the stone was much less than its real value, and that he should return and demand to cancel the deal.

Having no choice, Moshe headed back out to the jewelry merchant. As he walked, mulling over what he would tell the merchant to persuade him to cancel the deal, he passed by the big *Medrash Beit Zilcha* beis medrash, and remembered that he had never made any significant decision in life without consulting with the Ben Ish Chai. Why was now any different?

He went into the beis medrash, where he found the Ben Ish Chai sitting in the corner. Moshe recounted the whole story, to the detail, and asked if he should listen to his wife and demand that the deal be nullified.

The Rav listened and then replied with his trademark wisdom:

According to *Chazal* (see *Chulin* 87a), the reward for every amen is ten gold coins, then there is no question here. You came late to the place because you agreed to answer amen for *Kaddish*. You answered amen five times in *Kaddish* – and therefore, from Above, there was a Will to pay your reward – fifty gold coins for five amens, and the *keren kayemes l'Olam Haba*. So why nullify the deal?!

Ahavas Chaim, Parashas Chayei Sara