

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

### One Becomes a 'New Creation' Through Tefillah

"ויפתח את פי האתון" (כב כח)

"She was given the power to speak, in the essence of 'Hashem sefasai tiftach' (Tehillim 51:17)...because Hashem gives the tongue the power to answer even for one who is not ready." (Seforno)

The Mashgiach, **Harav Yercuhem Levovitz**, explained:

The comparison between the tefillah of Dovid Hamelech to Hashem to open his lips and give him the wisdom to say Hashem's praises, and the tremendous miracle of opening the donkey's mouth – which was a special creation made in the Six Days of Creation – teaches us that opening the mouth to praise the Creator properly alters a person, until he becomes a 'new creation' literally. That is the type of change made to Bilam's donkey when Hashem opened it mouth, and thus elevated it from a 'chai', a living creature, to a 'medaber,' one that speaks.

Daas Chochmah Umussar, Vol. III, p. 147

### 'Venihiyeh Anachnu' and Through That 'Tze'etzaeinu

"תמת נפשי מות ישרים ותהי אחריתי כמהו" (כג י)  
"That my end and that of my offspring should be like Yisrael, because a person's children, and his progeny are call his *acharis* – his end..." (Seforno)

**Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus** said:

Bilam made a ridiculous request: He wanted to live like a lowly gentile, while his progeny should live like lofty people and offspring of Am Yisrael. This reality contravenes the nature of creation, because the nature of children is to follow in the ways of their fathers. The only way to merit good children is to be

### Tearing Up the Decree in the Merit of Answering Amen

"נאם שמע אמרי א-ל אשר מחזה ש-ד יחזה"

(כד ד)

**Harav Yaakov Moshe of Komarna** explained that this *passuk* alludes to the promise made by Chazal (Tikkunei Zohar 40 1): "Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the decree of seventy years torn up," as follows:

"נאם" has the letters of amen; one who answers amen all the time is a "*shomea imrei Kel*" – as HaKaodsh Baruch Hu is praised and elevated with the *brachah* – and that person will merit to have the words "*machazeh Shakai yechezeh*" fulfilled. This means that his decree will be torn up, as Chazal say (Tanchuma Mikeitz 10) that the Name "ש-ד" alludes to tearing of a decree, and as they said "The One who said to the Heaven and the earth *dai* [enough, during Creation] should tell my suffering 'enough'."

Shalesheles Komarna, p. 374

a role model. When children see their parents following the path of Torah and *mitzvos*, they are likely to follow that path. That is the reason we bind the request in *Birchas HaTorah* for ourselves and our children into one – "*Venihiyeh anachnu vetze'etzaeinu...yodei Shemecha velomdei Torasecha.*" To teach us that in order to merit good children, as we aspire to do, we must try ourselves to be "*yodei Shemecha velomdei Torasecha.*"

Tiferes Shimshon

### Some Rise Like an 'Ari' And Others Rise Like a 'Lavi'

"הן עם כלביא יקום וכארי יתנשא" (כג כד)

"When they rise from their slumber in the morning, they are as vigorous as the young lion and the lion, to snatch the *mitzvos* wearing a *tallis*, reading the *Shema* and putting on *tefillin*." (Rashi)

Why did the *passuk* have to compare those who rise in the morning to both an 'ari' and a 'lavi' [which is a small lion cub (Ramban)]? Isn't it the case that if "*k'ari yisnasa*" then how much more so is it "*kelavi yakum*"?

**Harav Shaul Brach**, the Rav of Kashau, explained:

The *passuk* alludes to two levels of people who rise in the morning: some rise up like a lion, by getting up early enough, and they can recite *Krias Shema* in time, within the order of *tefillah*, while wearing *tefillin*. As Chazal warn (*Brachos* 14b): "Anyone who recites *Krias Shema* without *tefillin* – is like he is falsely testifying of himself." But on the other hand, there are those who struggle to rise like an 'ari', and they get up late, 'kelavi' very close to the end of the *zman Krias Shema*. As such, they need to recite *Krias Shema* before davening, without *tefillin*, and not in the order of davening, and only afterwards can they recite all of davening in order.

Rashi alludes to this, as he writes "*likro es Shema*" and only afterwards says "and to put on *tefillin*," even though it is preferable to put on *tefillin* before reciting *Krias Shema*, so that the person should not be perceived as falsely testifying. Rashi wanted to allude even to those whose level is lower, like a 'lavi', and says that they also merit to recite *Krias Shema* in time each morning.

Kehayom Tematzun

## How Will the Geulah Come?

"A *chassid* once fasted over the prolonged *galus*, and it was revealed to him in a dream: How can the Geulah come if the world is not careful to answer amen for the *brachos* in which we ask for the Geulah?"

Derech Moshe [Rav Moshe Kahana, Av Beis Din of Gibitsch, Amsterdam, 5451] for Day 11

Bney Emunim. Answering amen to every *brachah*.



**Yigdal (11): The Tenth Principle – Hashgachah**

**Hashgachah Pratis for All a Person's Actions**

The tenth principle obligates us to believe that the Creator knows all a person's actions and thoughts. This is in contrast to the view of early heretics, who believed that after Creation, HaKadosh Baruch Hu abandoned His world to the rule of nature, or handed over its supervision to His emissaries. We declare in this principle that HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself knows and supervises every action of every person, and their thoughts, as it says (*Yirmiyahu* 32:19): "Gedol ha'etzah, Who is great in counsel and mighty in carrying it out, for Your eyes are open to all the ways of mankind..." (*Peirush Hamishnayos L'Rambam Sanhedrin Hakdamah* to Chapter 10). This principle is an introduction to the next one, which states that HaKadosh Baruch Hu rewards those who observe His mitzvos and punishes those who transgress His words.

Hashem wanted to convey this principle when he revealed Himself to us at Har Sinai during *Matan Torah* (*Shemos* 20:2) and said: "Anochi Hashem Elokecha asher hotzeischa me'Eretz Mitzrayim mi'beis avadim." He did not say "Anochi Hashem Elokecha asher asisi shamayim v'aretz." Rather "Who took you out of Mitzrayim." Because the *emunah* in *Yetzias Mitzrayim* is a necessary complement to the *emunah* in the *Metzius Hashem*. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and the great miracles that occurred then revealed to all that HaKadosh Baruch Hu, who created all of creation, did not leave its management for one moment; at every single moment, He supervises and controls every single detail that occurs, and He knows the thoughts and ways of every single person. (*Orchos Chaim [Rosh] Day 1*)

**Who Understands All Their Deeds – Revealed and Hidden**

In *Yigdal*, the poet divided *Hashgachah* into two parts: "tzofeh" – that HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows the deeds of people and "yodea sisreinu" – that He knows the thoughts in our hearts. (*Iyun Tefillah in Siddur Otzar Hatefillos*)

The *passuk* (*Mishlei* 15:11) "She'ol v'avadon neged Hashem af ki libos bnei adam, the grave and destruction are opposite Hashem, surely people's hearts," is explained by the Gra as follows: A person should not think that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is pure and does not gaze at a place of impurity, and therefore, He will not watch a person when he hides to do a sin and sully his soul. Because even "sha'ul v'avadon" which are the essence of impurity, are "neged Hashem" – so how much more so is that the case for "libos bnei adam." Therefore, we declare that Hashem "tzofeh veyodea sisreinu" – that He sees and knows of even in the worst sins that we transgress in secret. (*Siddur Be'er Chaim*)

Aside for our recognition of the knowledge and *Hashgachah* of Hashem on all deeds – even those that are hidden, we also declare that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is "mabit lesaf davar bekadmuso" – that He sees the future, and all the actions and incidents since beginning of Creation until its end are revealed to Him from the start. That is because all of Creation unfolds from beginning to end in a way that He ordained from the start, and Hashem is the Cause and the Reason for each and every thing that happens. That is the meaning of "Mabit lesaf davar – bekadmuso" – because He is the "Kadmon lechol davar asher nivra" – and

it is from Him that all the deeds unfold and He is their Cause and Reason. (*Iyun Tefillah in Siddur Otzar Hatefillos*)

**The Question of Knowledge and Bechirah**

It is regarding this principle that the Rambam asks the famous question (*Teshuvah* 5 5) of "hayediah vehabechirah": If HaKadosh Baruch Hu knows all the deeds of a person from the start, how can it be said that one acts out of choice? Moreover, one is even prosecuted if they choose bad, as we declare in the next principle that Hashem pays reward and punishment.

One of the answers to this question is the explanation of Harav Moshe Almoshino (*Pirkei Moshe, Avos* 3:19) in the explanation of the words of the Rambam (*ibid*):

All concepts of time are only human; the mind of a person was created in a way that he cannot grasp any event unless it is limited to a specific time point, in the past, present or future. So we find that concepts such as 'past, present and future' are human concepts, while for the Creator, all times are equal.

This is something beyond our comprehension, and our minds cannot grasp a concept that is not bound by time or place. As *Yeshayahu* (55:8-9) says regarding this: "Ki lo machshevotai, for My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says Hashem. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts [higher] than your thoughts."

Yet, we must not know that the *Yedias Hashem* does not at all diminish the power of *bechirah*, of choice, that is given to a person, because the fact that Hashem can see the past, present and future as one, does not force a person living within the boundary of time to make his choice. For example: when a person observes from afar how his friend runs, to the observer his friend's running is forced and unchangeable, but the runner certainly has a choice of whether to run or not. The Creator, who is above the concept of time, sees beforehand what we will do in the future, but because for Him there is no concept of future, and the future is to Him like present and past, that is why we who are bound by the concept of time that we live in have the choice whether to do it or not.

This concept is what the Tanna (*Avos* *ibid*) had in mind when saying "hakol tzafuy vехаreshus nesunah." "Hakol tzafuy" – in the past. And yet, this fact does not contradict the power of *bechirah*. Rather "hareshus nesunah" – permission is given to every creation to choose good or bad.

The poet, in *Yigdal*, alludes to this concept: Even though HaKadosh Baruch Hu "tzofeh veyodea sisreinu" from the start, even before the deed is done, His Knowledge does not disturb the power of our *bechirah* because He is "mabit lesaf davar bekadmuso" – that the future is for Him like the past. Because knowing the past does not affect a person's power to choose, the knowledge of the future does not either – in the case of Hashem. (*Maggid Tzedek in Siddur Shaar Harachamim*.)

HaKadosh Baruch Hu tzofeh on our deeds veyodea sisreinu - the thoughts in our heart mabit lesaf davar bekadmuso – from the beginning of Creation.

**Tefillah, Nisayon and Yeshuah**

It was late at night. Reb Eliyakim, a refined Yerushalmi *avreich*, was standing in his regular corner in the shul, his lips moving in silent prayer. Reb Eliyakim had long been davening in this spot, at the eleven o'clock *Maariv minyan*, after he finished his evening *kollel*.

*Chazal* teach that it is a *segulah* to establish a place for *tefillah*, noting "when one establishes a place for his prayer, the G-d of Avraham assists him." That is only one of hundreds of *segulos* that Reb Eliyakim and his wife had tried in an attempt to finally see their deepest desire fulfilled, but it was decreed that their *yeshuah* was not yet at hand.

Reb Eliyakim and his wife had been married for more than ten years, and their home had not yet been blessed with children. The doctors were ready to give up, but the couple pinned their hopes on the Healer of all flesh, and refused to despair. They tried every *segulah* suggested to them, but time after time, they were disappointed.

The *segulah* that they continued without letup throughout their obstacle-ridden journey, was *tefillah*. Despite all their disappointments, they did not desist from davening, and were confident that the day would come when their *tefillos* would be answered.

That night was a symbolic date for the couple - their eleventh anniversary. Each year, this date was a milestone that starkly illustrated the fact that they were still childless, and it galvanized them to redouble their efforts in *tefillah* and good deeds.

In the few minutes that remained until *Maariv* began, Reb Eliyakim wondered what he could strengthen himself with this time. He remembered something he had read recently about the tremendous virtue of those who merit to withstand a *nisayon*. He resolved that the next time he would be faced with a *nisayon* – no matter how difficult – he would withstand it with strength, hope and *tefillah* that the merit would advocate for him and his wife to finally see a *yeshuah*.

Naturally, Reb Eliyakim's *tefillah* took longer than usual on that evening. As he davened *Shema Koleinu*, all their pain rose in his mind, and a heartfelt, tearful *tefillah* emerged from deep inside him:

"Ribbono shel Olam, I know and believe with all my heart that this difficult *nisayon* You have given us is for the best, and we accept Your decree with love. It is known before You that all we desire is to be blessed with children, so that we can raise them to Torah and *Yiras Shamayim*. I ask of You to please hasten our *yeshuah*, and I pledge that the next *nisayon* that You present me with, I will withstand with strength. But please, Ribbono shel Olam, don't make it too difficult a test for me to withstand..."

When he finished davening, Reb Eliyakim emerged from the shul feeling uplifted and hopeful at the same time. As a serious person, he knew that the *kabbalah* he had undertaken to withstand the next *nisayon* that he would encounter had been made with a clear mind, and he was obligated to fulfill it. But in his heart, he wondered which kind of test it would be, and hoped it would be something that was easy to withstand.

When Reb Eliyakim came to the building, he was met with an unpleasant surprise. Pasted to the wall of the elevator was a letter full of harsh rhetoric regarding a burning issue that had been disturbing the residents of his building for some time. The letter was signed by 'One of the Neighbors' and it was not hard for Reb Eliyakim to figure out who the anonymous signer was.

Despite Reb Eliyakim's name not being

explicitly mentioned in the letter, it was easy to understand that the primary culprits of the unpleasant situation that the residents were facing were none other than Reb Eliyakim and his wife.

Needless to say, the contents of the letter had no basis in reality. Reb Eliyakim was an extremely refined person, and very pleasant-natured; he was as far from discord or strife as one could imagine. Perhaps the other neighbor was motivated by envy when he wrote what he did, but whatever the story, the harsh words in the letter, which had been posted for all in the building to see, felt like a knife in the heart to Reb Eliyakim and he struggled to come to terms with it.

Deeply hurt, he quickly tugged the letter off the elevator wall, and came into the house in a turmoil of emotions. The offensive incident, combined with the typical exhaustion at the end of a long day, made Reb Eliyakim forget about the *kabbalah* he had just made. In his deep pain, he sat down at the table, took a piece of paper and a black marker, and began to write a response.

Reb Eliyakim possessed a sharp and witty pen, and his response letter was a masterpiece. It was both an extremely sharp response, as well as a clarification once and for all about who was really responsible for the situation.

Writing the letter calmed his stormy emotions somewhat, and he went to sleep feeling much better. Tomorrow he would hang the letter, and thus would silence all claims against him.

The next morning, he awoke at his usual early hour. On his way out to davening, he noticed the letter on the table in the dining room and froze in place. He suddenly remembered the *kabbalah* that he had undertaken just the night before, as he davened, and he gasped in alarm. "How could I have not realized?!" he thought to himself. "My *tefillah* was accepted from Above, and I was given a *nisayon* that I have the power to withstand, and I am about to lose it all..."

As he said these words, he took the letter from the table, and tore it into small pieces; he then tossed the whole pile into the garbage.

Reb Eliyakim strode to shul with a spring in his step. His heart filled with gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for reminding him of the pledge before he had taken irreversible action.

He davened *Shacharis* with a special feeling of loftiness that is preserved for those who merit to withstand a *nisayon*. Now, too, he davened at length, pleading with Hashem to accept his sacrifice of shame with love, and to send him a *yeshuah*. When he finished davening, he felt an unfamiliar tranquility spread through his entire being. He felt sure that this time the *yeshuah* was at hand.

Over the coming days, he had to continue facing the *nisayon*. His lack of response was interpreted by some of the neighbors as tacit assent to what had been written in the letter, even though he had what to answer. The *nisayon* was a difficult one, but it was clear to him that Hashem would not give him a *nisayon* that he could not withstand, and he adhered to his *kabbalah* and chose not to respond at all.

As expected, the storm that was raging in their building slowly passed, but at the same time, the sun of salvation began to rise in Reb Eliyakim's home. Less than a year later, they were blessed with a healthy baby boy...

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