

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



393

PARASHAS EIKEV

תשפ"א

Pearls of Emunim

Pearls of Amen and Tefillah on the Parashah

He Takes Reward for Them All

"והיה עקב תשמעון את המשפטים האלה ושמרתם ועשיתם אתם ושמר ה' אלקיך את הברית ואת החסד אשר נשבע לאבותיך" (ז יב)

The *passuk* begins in the plural tense: "Tishme'un... ushemartem v'asisem" – and concludes in the singular "Veshamar Hashem Elokecha lecha..." Why is this?

Harav Yeshayahu Shimshon Sha"ts, one of the *maggidim* of Vilna, explained:

"Vehayah eikev tishme'un" – when the *tzibbur* is unified to serve Hashem, then "veshamar Hashem Elokecha lecha..." – each one of you will receive the reward of all of them, as Chazal say (*Brachos* 47b), that one who is early to among the first ten "is given reward for all of them."

Yeshuos Shimshon, Vol. I, p. 2

Gratitude that Emerges from Lack

"ויענך וירעבך ויאכלך את המן... למען הודיעך כי לא על הלחם לבדו יחיה האדם כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם" (ח ג)

Harav Yosef Shaul Nathanson explained:

The nature of a person causes him not to realize the many good things that his Creator showers him with, and that is why he does not thank Hashem for them, until *chalilah*, he lacks one of those good things. Then, he learns to appreciate that thing, and to thank Hashem for it, even when it is restored to him. This is what the *passuk* alludes to: "And He afflicted you and He starved you and He fed you the *mann*." Hashem did not bring down the *mann* to Klal Yisrael right when they departed from Egypt (see *Shemos* Ch. 14). He only did so after they were oppressed and became hungry, and felt the lack of their food, "*lema'an hodiacha*, in order to inform you..."

Hence we can explain the reason that Chazal established that one should thank Hashem for the actual lack in the *brachah* of "Borei Nefashos," as we say "*vechesronan*." It is because this lack is a benefit for the

A Treasure of Brachos

"ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך" (י יב)

Chazal (*Menachos* 43b; *Zohar Hakadosh Raya Meheimna Korach* 179 1) learned from this *passuk* a proof of a person's obligation to recite one hundred *brachos* a day. They explain: "Do not read it *מה* but rather *מא*."

Based on the words of Chazal (*Chulin* 87a) that the value of every *brachah* is ten gold coins, the *Chasam Sofer* calculated that one who is strict for fifty seven years – from the day he becomes bar mitzvah until the age of seventy – to recite one hundred *brachos* a day, will accumulate a total of 18,105,000 gold coins.

However, some pointed out that there must have been a mistake in the words of the *Chasam Sofer*, because a careful calculation shows that one who makes one hundred *brachos* a day for fifty seven years will accumulate two million gold coins more than the number the *Chasam Sofer* noted, and will amass a total of 20,105,000 gold coins.

Toras Moshe Hashalem; Footnote 26 ibid

person, as it helps him recognize the good that was given to him and then he thanks Hashem for it.

Divrei Shaul, Third Edition

'Ein K'Elokeinu' as an Introduction to the Ketoress

"ואמרת בלבבך כחי ועצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה; וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא נתת לך כח לעשות חיל" (ח יז-יח)

The *Noda B'Yehudah* explained that in order to ward off thoughts of "*kochi v'otzem yadi*", we say each morning the *piyut* of *Ein K'Elokeinu* before the *ma'aseh haketoress*.

Chazal say (*Yoma* 26a) that the *ketoress* enriches those who engage in it. Therefore, before reciting *Parashas Haketoress*, it is fitting for a person to declare "*Ein K'Elokeinu*," so that he should remember even in a time of wealth "that He is the One Who gives you strength to succeed."

Shu"t Noda B'Yehudah, First Edition, Orach Chaim 10

One Hundred Brachos Corresponding to All the Mitzvos

"ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאזהבה אתו ולעבד את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך; לשמר את מצות ה' ואת חקתיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום לטוב לך" (י יב-יג)

From the words of the *passuk* "*ki im*" it seems that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is asking the person to do a mitzvah that is easy and does not require any effort. But immediately afterwards, the Torah details commandments that include the observance of the entire Torah. This needs to be explained.

Rabi Avraham Saba, author of *Tzeror Hamor*, explained:

Chazal (*Menachos* 43b; *Zohar HaKadosh Ra'aya Meheimna Korach* 179 1) explained from this *passuk* a proof of the obligation to make one hundred *brachos* each day. They explain: "*Al tikrei מה* rather *מא*." The mitzvah of *meah brachos* is indeed a mitzvah that is usually easy to fulfill, because one who davens three *tefillos* a day and recites *Birchos Hanehenin* according to *halachah* will reach this number easily. But all the *mitzvos* listed subsequently were not written in the commanding tense, and instead, the Torah is teaching us that the virtue of the mitzvah of *Meah Brachos* is so great, that when one is strict to recite one hundred *brachos* a day the *passuk* considers it as if he serves his Creator with *yirah* and *ahavah* and fulfilled all the *mitzvos* of the Torah.

Tzeror Hamor

Hameluchah Vehamemshalah LeChai Olamim

On Monday, 24 Av, is the *yahrtzeit* of Harav Ephraim Zalman Margulies, author of *Mateh Ephraim*. In his *sefer Bais Tefillah*, he dedicated an entire chapter (16) to the virtue of answering amen. He wrote:

The word amen contains deep secrets, and when a person puts his heart to answer amen according to *halachah*, he thus affirms the wholeness of the Rulership of Hashem in His world.

Answering amen: Aloud, with *kavanah*, according to *halachah*.



'Gadol Ha'oneh Amen Yoser Min Hamevarech' Compilation of Explanations (2)

Chazal say (Brachos 53b, Nazir 66b): "Rabi Yosi says: 'The one who answers amen is greater than the one making the brachah.' Many have asked: Wouldn't it seem that the mevarech is the initiator who begins the mitzvah, and without him there is no brachah and no amen? Why, if so, does Rabi Yosi say that the one answering is greater than the one making the brachah?"

In last week's segment, we presented four explanations from Chazal; this week we will cite additional explanations from the gedolim of the generations, who explain what virtue amen has that makes it more important than the brachah.

5. Amen – The Wholeness of the Rulership of Hashem

Harav Menachem Rekanati writes that amen is numerically equivalent to the words "א-ח-ד" – אלהי אחד. So one who answers amen is meyached HaKadosh Baruch Hu and declares his faith that Hashem 'hayah,' was before the Creation of the world, He created it and makes it exist in the 'hoveh,' the present, and 'yihyeh,' He will be after He restores the world to emptiness. So we find that by answering amen, there is a declaration about the completeness of the Rulership of Hashem in His world. Therefore, its virtue is greater than the brachah. (Peirush Harekanati Beshalach. See also Bais Tefillah [by the author of Mateh Ephraim] Ch. 15, where he writes that this explanation is the correct one.)

6. Amen – Arousing Heavenly Mercy

Harav Shlomo Molcho explained: When the Middas Hadin is in effect upon Am Yisrael, and because of it they are not worthy of compassion and brachah, answering amen can arouse Heavenly Mercy upon them. In its merit HaKadosh Baruch Hu treats them lifnim mishuras hadin.

Rav Shlomo added: The power of amen that arouses mercy upon Am Yisrael is noted in the Rashi on Maseches Brachos (7a) about the moving description of the Kohein Gadol, Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha: "I once entered [on Yom Kippur] to bring the ketores Lifnai velifnim... And He [HaKadosh Baruch Hu] said to me: 'Yishmael My son, bless Me.' I said to him: 'May it be the will before You that Your mercy should overcome Your anger and Your compassion should influence Your middos, and You should treat Your children with Middas Harachamim and...lifnim mishuras hadin.' And He nodded to me with His Head." Rashi there explains: "As if admitting to My brachah and answering amen."

From the fact that Rashi mentions answering amen with regard to Hashem's agreement to Rabi Yishmael's request that He should treat Am Yisrael with compassion, we can learn that answering amen arouses compassion on Am Yisrael. In truth, this is also alluded to in the word 'amen' itself, because amen in the full spelling [א-מ-נ] is numerically equivalent to 297. When we add to it three, for the three letters of amen, it totals three hundred – which is numerically equivalent to the word ברמיה. (Sefer Hamefoar p. 12b)

7. Amen – A Double Brachah

The leading poskim explain: One who hears a brachah from another and answers amen has the virtue of the brachah and the virtue of the amen. Because actually hearing the brachah is considered as though he made the brachah himself, as Chazal say (Sukkah 38 b) "shomea k'oneh." And when he answers amen after it, he has both the brachah and amen in hand. In contrast, the mevarech has only the brachah, because he cannot answer amen to his own brachah, as Chazal say (Brachos 45b): "one who answers amen after his brachos – this is reprehensible." And therefore, the one who answers is greater than the mevarech.

This concept that hearing a brachah itself is considered for the listener to be as if he made the brachah himself, and the amen that he answers is considered an additional virtue, already appears in the Rishonim. The Avudraham (Tikkun Hatefillos V'inyaneiham) brings in the name of Rabi Avraham ben Shushan, that one who davens Shemoneh Esrei, and later hears Chazaras Hashatz, and answers amen is considered to have davened three tefillos: 1. The quiet Shemoneh Esrei 2. Hearing Chazaras Hashatz and 3. Answering amen after the shatz. (Shu"t Mabi"t Vol. I, 117; Prishah Orach Chaim 124 7)

8. Amen – Validity of an Oath

The Prishah further explains: Chazal say (Shavuos 36a) that the word 'amen' can have three meanings, and it depends on the context in which it is answered: 1. A shevuah, an oath; the one who answers amen on an oath that another says to him it is as though he utters the oath with his own mouth. 2. A kabbalah – one who makes a condition of any kind with a friend, and the friend answers his words, has undertaken the condition and is obligated to fulfill it. 3. 'Ha'amanah' – answering amen after tefillah and a plea that another person says means that he expresses hope that the words will be fulfilled.

In light of this we find that answering amen to a brachah has the validity of an oath that affirms the words of the mevarech. This is in contrast to a brachah that is just a statement. Therefore, the one who answers amen is greater. (Prishah Orach Chaim 124 7)

9. Amen – Without a Limit

Rabi Avraham Hakohen, the grandson of the author of Matnos Kehunah, explains that the virtue of the one who answers amen is explained by the words "gadol ha'oneh yoser min hamevarech." It would seem that the word "yoser" here is unnecessary, because it would have been enough to say "gadol ha'oneh min hamevarech." Rather, this is explained as follows: "gadol ha'oneh amen." Why? Because he can answer "yoser min hamevarech." The mevarech cannot make a blessing as he pleases, and can only make the brachos he is obligated to make, because it is forbidden for him to make a "brachah she'einah tzrichah." In contrast, one who answers amen can do so as much as he wishes, because he can listen to the brachos from many other people and answer amen to them. (Ori Veyishi [Berlin 5474] Shaar Hatzedakah, Ch. 8)

The Outcome was Driven by Tefillah ...

This beautiful story was shared by Harav Aharon Taussig, shlit'a, one of the eminent mashpi'im in this generation, who said that it happened to him. He related:

Late one night, many years ago, I found myself standing in a remote place, where no one lived, in northern Tel Aviv. I had landed up there after being invited to speak at a seudas mitzvah that took place in an event hall there.

Before I agreed to come, I stipulated to the organizers that they would need to arrange transportation for me, both ways. The driver who took me there was courteous, and promised to come back an hour later to pick me up. I trusted him.

The speech ended, and a few minutes later, the seudah also came to an end. The participants benched, and bid each other good night. The lights in the hall were turned off and the doors were locked. Everyone hurried home, each one in his car, while I remained alone to wait for the taxi, which for some reason, had failed to arrive. Perhaps the driver had forgotten the fare that he was supposed to take, or he thought that one of the participants would take me home. Either way, I was there alone.

After many long minutes ticked by with no taxi in sight, I realized that I would have to try to find another way to get home. This was before the era of cellular phones. It was late at night, and the remote, isolated location meant that no taxi driver drove by in the hope of picking up a fare. The darkness was inky and thick, and because I was not familiar with the area, I didn't even know which way to start walking to find the nearest main road. Even had I known, I likely would have been afraid to attempt to walk it. So I had no choice but to offer a fervent tefillah to Hashem to get me out of my predicament. I prayed with a simple request: "Ribbono shel Olam, please, send me a taxi that will take me home."

We know that tefillah is not turned away; a few moments later, a taxi stopped next to me. The driver, whose external appearance clearly indicated that he was one of our errant brethren who did not merit to be mitzvah observant, called to me, "Rabbi, do you need to Bnei Brak?" He didn't need to be a genius to figure that out...

"Yes!" I replied happily and climbed into the taxi with a sigh of relief. As soon as I settled in, I warmly greeted the driver, as was my habit. "Good evening, sir!" I was surprised that before answering my greeting, he raised his eyes Heavenward and called, "Baruch Shomea Tefillah!"

While I thought that I had davened to find a taxi, this driver had apparently prayed to get a fare that would augment his daily income, but I quickly learned that I was mistaken. The driver began to drive; it was clear that he was very tired, and he kept declaring "Thank You Hashem..." The third time I heard these words, I realized that something was getting him very excited and I asked about it gently.

"Honored Rabbi, look at the clock," he said in lieu of an answer. It was nearly two in the morning. I didn't understand what he meant and he continued: "I've been working straight today from eight in the morning until now."

"So why are you still driving?" I gasped, and he answered, "Because from eight in the morning until you got into the taxi, no one said hello or greeted me," the driver replied. He continued, his voice breaking, "From eight until now I had dozens of fares. People got in and out and not a single one took an interest in me. All I heard was 'how much is it?' 'So expensive?' 'Can you drive faster?' and that kind of thing."

"Honestly, I was offended. Am I transparent?"

I thought to myself bitterly. I decided that I was not going home before I drove a mentch, someone who would ask about me, or at least smile to me. But the hours ticked by and not a single mentch entered my taxi. All kinds of people got in and out, but none of them did what I was wishing for.

I have always been the stubborn type. If I've decided something, I take it to the end. But late at night I realized that if I didn't do something, I'd have to fall asleep at the wheel instead of in my bed...with all the consequences.

"I had no one to turn to besides HaKadosh Baruch Hu. I prayed with words straight from my heart: 'Hashem, let me go to sleep tonight. Send me someone who will greet me.' A few minutes later I saw you and realized that my tefillah had been accepted. So thank you, Rabbi, for being Hashem's messenger!"

Rav Taussig continued:

Because I was very afraid of the driver's tired state, I decided to engage him in conversation. In the few minutes we had left to get to my home in Bnei Brak, I spoke to him about anything that could keep his mind engaged. Life, parnassah, driving a taxi, and more...He stopped near my house, and I handed him a fifty shekel note. The trip should have cost a few shekels less, but I added generously: "I enjoyed the ride, there's no need to give me change!"

"What?" he replied, and refused to take the note. "I had no intention of taking money from you," he said. "There's nothing to talk about," I protested. "I don't ride for free." When he saw that I was also stubborn, he capitulated and took the money.

We said goodbye, but not before he asked me for my phone number. "We'll be in touch," he promised. And he drove off. But a second letter, he went into reverse and called to me:

"Rabbi," he said, with tears in his eyes, "for years, the tefillah that I got for my bar mitzvah have been sitting in my house untouched. From tomorrow, I'm going to put them on again, and I will do so every morning."

"Good for you!" I complimented him warmly. But I didn't realize why that had anything to do with the ride.

"The Rabbi was a mentch," he explained to me. "The Rabbi was so kind to me, wished me a good evening and asked how I was. I wanted to pay him back by not charging him for the ride, but he refused. I thought to myself: how could I do him a favor. Suddenly I had the idea. I'll put on tefillin, that will surely make him happy..."

Upon hearing this, I could not contain my emotions. I took his hands in mine, and blessed him from the bottom of my heart. Then he drove off a gain.

This story took place on 7 Adar. A few weeks later, on Motzaei Yom Tov Rishon of Pesach, the phone rang. I heard a familiar husky voice, sounding very excited.

"Rabbi do you remember me?" he asked. Sure I did.

"Good evening, my friend!" I replied.

"Rabbi I wanted to share the good news that besides being able to keep to my kabbalah of putting on tefillin each morning, this year, for the first time in my years, I made a Seder night, with all the laws. And I also invited my mother and my neighbor's family, who also haven't had a kosher Seder in many years."

"All in the merit of your good evening, Rabbi," the driver concluded. He promised to continue being in touch.

Baruch Shomea Tefillah!

Haggadah Shel Pesach Mekarvan LaTorah, p. 117