

Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



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PARASHAS RE'EH

תשפ"א

Pearls of Emunim

Pearls of Amen and Tefillah on the Parashah

The Feeling of 'Anochi' Is Vital to Tefillah

“ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה” (יא כו)
The *Ma'or Vashemesh* explained:

The sense of self and pride that the word ‘Anochi’ symbolizes can bring upon a person both ‘brachah’, blessing, and ‘klalah’, a curse. This depends on the purpose for which he uses it. If the person is proud of a mitzvah that he performed, or a spiritual virtue that he has acquired – then it is a curse for him, because it generates a partition that separates him from his Creator. As the Maggid of Zlotchov explained the *passuk* (*Devarim* 5:5): “*Anochi omed bein Hashem ubeineichem*,” the sense of ‘Anochi’ is what stands as a partition between Hashem and you.

On the other hand, when a person uses that sense of ‘Anochi’ against his *yetzer hara*, such as when he comes to daven and the *yetzer hara* argues with him: you are impure and distant, how do you dare pray to Hashem and cleave to Him, then on the contrary, the person must think highly of himself. This pride will bring upon him blessing because it will cause him to attribute importance to his *tefillas* and to invest his heart and soul in them.

Ma'or Vashemesh

‘To See’ the Emunah in Reward and Punishment

“ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה” (יא כו)
Many wonder about the fact that the *passuk* begins with the word ‘re’eh’. Is it possible to see with one’s eyes the reward that one receives for fulfilling the *mitzvos* of the Torah? Conversely, can one see the punishment for one who is lax about observing *mitzvos*?

The Raavad Harav Moshe Sternbuch, explained:

It is Fitting to Swear for the Mitzvah of Amen

“והיה המקום אשר יבחר... שמה תביאו... וכל מבחר נדריכם אשר תדרו לה” (יב יא)

Chazal (*Nedarim* 8a) teach us that even if a person normally refrains from taking an oath, it is fitting for him to do so in order to motivate him to do a mitzvah. As we find that Dovid Hamelech did this, as it says (*Tehillim* 119:106): “*Nishbati v’akayemah lishmor mishpetei tzidkecha*, I swore and I fulfilled, to keep the judgments of Your righteousness.” (Ran *ibid* ad.loc. *ela*)

The words אשר נדריכם are an acronym for ‘amen.’ We can explain that the Torah means to teach us that the most preferable of the oaths to perform a mitzvah is the one done in order to strengthen the answering of amen. As *Chazal* say (*Devarim Rabbah* 7:1): “There is nothing greater in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu than the amen that Yisrael answer.” Amen, as is known, is the numerical equivalent of the two Holy Names [Hava-yah and Adnus], and that is what the rest of the *passuk* alludes to: “*mivchar nidrechem asher – tidru l’Hashem*.”

Kovetz Ateres Avraham, p. 183, in the name of Rav Yosef Shteichel, one of the Rabbanim of Williamsburg

Emunah, faith, in reward and punishment is one of the 13 Principles of Faith established by the Rambam. As we declare in *Ani Ma’amin*: “I believe with all my faith that the Creator Blessed He rewards good to those who observe His *mitzvos* and punishes those that transgress the *mitzvos*.”

Knowledge of reward and punishment is

an important concept in our faith, because it is the primary knowledge through whose power a person can draw closer to his Creator and refrain from doing sin (*Mesilas Yesharim* Ch. 4). Therefore, the Torah used the term ‘re’eh’, to say, “the faith in the reward and punishment needs to be tangible, and entrenched in your heart as though you saw it with your own eyes.”

Biurim Vehe’aros

Dwelling of the Shechinah Depends on Our Regularity

“כי אם אל המקום אשר יבחר ה’ אלקיכם מכל שבטיכם לשום את שמו שם לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה” (יב ה)

Harav Moshe Dovid Vali, a *talmid* of the Ramchal, explained:

The dwelling of the Shechinah in *batei knessios*, which are the “Places that Hashem chooses...to put His Name there,” depends on the strictness with which Am Yisrael visit there regularly to daven and serve Hashem. If, *chalilah*, a *tzibbur* does not visit the shul regularly, then there is anger toward them from Above. As *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 6b): “When HaKadosh Baruch Hu comes to the shul and does not find ten people there – He immediately gets angry, as it says (*Yeshayahu* 50:2): ‘Why have I come here and there is no man, I have called and there is no responder.’” Through that, the Shechinah dwells there only temporarily, not regularly.

This is what the *passuk* alludes to: “*Leshichno*” – the dwelling of the Shechinah in the shul regularly depends on “*tidreshu ubasa shamah*” – that you should seek to come to the House of Hashem to serve Him, on a daily basis.

Rav M.D. Vali

Shetechadesh
aleinu es
hachodesh
hazeh letovah
ulivrachah.
Amen.

אלו"ף
לברכה ולא לקללה אמן
לחיים ולא למות אמן
לשובע ולא לרזון אמן
(Magen Avraham [Trisker Maggid]
Parashas Vezos Habrachah)

Fellow Yid!

In the month of Rachamim and Selichos in which we all prepare ourselves for the Day of Judgement, with *tefillah* that we merit to be inscribed in the Book of Life, it is exceedingly worthy that we should be strict to answer amen, as it is a great *segulah* to arouse Heavenly Compassion and to bring an abundance of blessing down from Above.

When you come early to shul each morning to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, you will merit many more amens, which will advocate for you on the Day of Judgement.

Birchos Hashachar: Aloud, with *kavanah*, *bechavrusa*

'Gadol Ha'oneh Amen Yoser Min Hamevarech' Compilation of Explanations (3)

Chazal say (Brachos 53b): "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 previous segments we presented ten explanations from *Chazal*; this week we will cite additional explanations that explain what virtue amen has that makes it more important than the *brachah*.

10. Affirmation of the Brachah

Rabi Moshe ben Rabi Yakar Ashkenazi explained this with a parable: Someone who is tasked with conveying a certain message to an audience of listeners might harbor a worry that his words will not be heard by the listeners. This is because even if only one of them doubts his words, an atmosphere of distrust among the listeners may pervade the room. On the other hand, if one of the listeners affirms the speaker's words, in front of everyone else, that will lead to his words being accepted by the listeners without any doubts. So the affirmation is effective for acceptance more than the actual words that are said.

With the *brachah*, the *mevarech* seeks to announce that there is a Leader of the World, Who created it all, and for that we must be grateful. But the absolute acceptance of his words in the heart of the listeners depends on them affirming his *brachah* by answering amen after it. Therefore, the virtue of the one answering amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*.

Rabi Moshe brings an allusion to the virtue of answering amen: in the *tefillah* of *Yehi Kevod*, the two *pesukim* "Yehi kevod Hashem l'olam yismach Hashem bema'avav" (*Tehillim* 104:31) and "Yehi Shem Hashem mevorach mei'atah v'ad olam" (*ibid* 113:2) are placed one next to the other. This teaches us that when is there "Yismach Hashem bema'avav"? When "Yehi Shem Hashem mevorach..." – when the listeners will constitute (ידור) and fulfill the *brachah* by answering amen after it.

As proof of this concept we find that although amen is one small word, in contrast to the lengthy words of praise and gratitude that the *mevarech* says, it is still more important than the *brachah*. We can learn from this the fact that we see that when a person cooks something, even if he works very hard on the cooking, and uses the best ingredients, the dish will not be palatable if it will be served bland. By adding a bit of salt, he makes the dish palatable. Just like adding a bit of salt makes a big dish of food palatable – even though it has the best ingredients and a lot of effort went into making it, likewise, answering amen completes the long and detailed *brachah* and makes it more important, even though it is just one word. (*Pesach Einayim* [Kushta 311] p. 7)

11. Amen - Declaration of Eternal Emunah

The *Maharal* explained: The *mevarech* testifies with his *brachah* about certain actions in creation that are done by Hashem, but this gratitude does not include testimony that Hashem is the Almighty. In contrast, one who answers amen declares his faith in Hashem that He is Almighty, and that He orchestrates everything that happens in the world. (*Nesivos Olam, Yesod Ha'avodah* Ch. 11)

12. Amen - For a Blessing, Not a Curse

The *Ramchal* explained: Indeed, the *mevarech* is the one who begins the mitzvah and who draws down great influences with his *brachah*. But sometimes, the forces of impurity manage to get a grip on these influences, and then not only does the *mevarech* not bring any benefit with his *brachah*, he even causes things to go bad. When he answers amen, the one who answers preserves the light of the *brachah*, and saves it from falling into the hands of the impure forces, and that is why his virtue is greater than the *mevarech*. (*Megillas Starim, Ha'azinu*)

13. Amen - Completes the Soul of the Angel

Rav Zusha of Anipoli explained: Despite the fact that the angels are spiritual beings, they also have a body and soul. But in contrast to a person, whose body is made from physical materials and only his soul is spiritual, the body of the angels is also created from a spiritual foundation (see *Sifri, Ha'azinu Piska* 306).

So we can explain the difference between the *mevarech* and the one who answers amen: The *mevarech* creates with his *brachah* the body of the angel, but only when amen is answers is the soul of the angel created. This gives the angel life, and therefore, "the one who answers is greater than the one who makes the *brachah*" (*Butzina Kadisha* 31).

14. Amen - Emunah in the Arrival of Mashiach

Chazal say (*Shabbos* 119b) that the three letters of the word 'amen' refer to the three words "א-מ-נ". *Rashi* explains (*ibid* ad loc. K-1) that one who answers amen "testifies of his Creator that He is a K-I Melech Ne'eman." *Tosafos* (*ibid* ad loc. *Amar* *Chazal*) extrapolates from these words of *Chazal* that one needs to concentrate on these words when answering amen.

Based on this, the *Bas Ayin* explained: *Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim* and declaring that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is 'K-I' and 'Melech' are also part of the words of the *mevarech* [*Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam*]. But the additional declaration that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is 'Ne'man' to fulfill His promise and to send Mashiach to redeem us is only found in the words of the one who answers amen. Therefore, he is greater than the *mevarech*. (*Bas Ayin, Vayakhel*)

The Kabbalah Sent the Tefillah Right Up

This story illustrates the power of *tefillah* said with *kavanah* and in a respectful fashion. *Chazal* expound (*Brachos* 8a) on the great virtue of going early to the *beis medrash* as a *segulah* for *arichus yamim* and happy, healthy lives. It took place a number of years ago in a respected community in Eretz Yisrael.

One day, the young men in the community were given the difficult news that one of their fellow *avreichim* had fallen gravely ill. Tragically, the disease had been diagnosed at a late stage, and the doctors said that his condition was extremely serious. He needed Heavenly Mercy.

The news spread like wildfire among the members of the community, stunning them. The young man was a genuine *tzaddik* and *baal chessed*, and was beloved by all. His private tribulations became a communal crisis.

A few days later, the community gathered for an emergency meeting to come up with ways for each person to help their suffering friend and his family, whose world had caved in on them. A number of energetic *avreichim* volunteered to support the family with food and technical assistance. Another one offered to exercise his connections with medical experts. Those who had cars offered to transport the patient and his family for hospital visits and appointments as needed. As one, they also all pledged to pour their hearts out in *tefillah*, along with their families, for the sick person.

But after all was said and done, it was clear to them that there was a need for a significant move in the spiritual realm. It was clear that this had been sent to them from Above in an effort to arouse them to become stronger and to improve their *middos*. So they tried to think of what needed improvement in their community that they collectively undertake to work on. At the end of the meeting, a number of suggestions were made, and the *gabbaim* wrote them all down.

The meeting dispersed without a decision. The assembled decided to consult with one of the *gedolei hador*, and to ask him to suggest a good *kabbalah* that they should undertake at this difficult hour.

One of the *avreichim* volunteered to present the question to a *gadol hador*. After perusing the options, this *gadol* chose one of the suggestions made by the *avreichim*: to arrive to davening on time, and to be in shul from the beginning of *tefillah* until the end, and not to speak about mundane matters during davening at all.

The Rav warmly recommended to the petitioner to urge all the members of the community to strengthen themselves on this matter. He even wrote a special letter to the community providing them with encouragement and *chizuk* on this matter, along with a *brachah* for a full recovery for their sick friend in the merit of the *kabbalah*.

The Rav also spoke to the young man about the importance of this issue. "aside for the importance of coming early to *tefillah*, which prevents Divine Wrath, *chalilah*, you are davening from the depths of your heart for the recovery of your friend. In order for the *tefillah* to be accept we must show that we value them and deem them important, and certainly, *chalilah*, that we do not make light of them.

"Anyone who is careful to come on time

to davening and not to leave until it is over shows that *tefillah* is important to him, and as a result Hashem will also deem it important and will willingly accept it."

The words of the Rav were most apropos, because the issue of coming early to davening was something that needed strengthening in this community even without the crisis that they were going through. Many of the *avreichim* were pained by the fact that each morning, when it came time for *Shacharis*, there was not yet a *minyan* in shul. Many of the people would come between *Baruch She'amar* and *Yishtabach*, put on *tefillin* hastily and then rapidly filled in the davening or skipped *Pesukei Dezimrah*. As a result, the *chazan* would hold off beginning *Yishtabach* and then had to wait before *Shemoneh Esreh* for there to be a *minyan* of people beginning with him. Because the beginning of davening was delayed, so was the end, which meant that some people who were in a hurry had to leave shul before davening was over. This was besides the fact that many members of the community decided to daven elsewhere, as it was more orderly.

The *chizuk* letter from the Rav, in addition to his powerful words, were publicized among the community members. When they heard the clear directives, they all pledged from that day on to be scrupulous about coming to davening on time, and to be in shul from *Birchos Hashachar*. One of the *mispallelim* even volunteered to daven *Birchos Hashachar* until *Yishtabach* before the *amud* each morning, so that the *tefillah* should be given the form it was deserving of.

The *kabbalah* gave them all a sense of mission and of carrying the burden together. The friends felt that they had taken a big step for their suffering friend, and they were sure that Hashem would help them and compassionately accept their *tefillah* for their ailing friend.

The next day, the new *kabbalah* was already evident. When davening started, the shul was full. Even those of his friends who had chosen to daven elsewhere until then expressed their confidence in the *kabbalah* and came back to daven in the community's shul. The *tefillah* began on time, and was conducted in perfect order. It ended on time, and right afterwards, they said two *perakim* of *Tehillim*. The *mispallelim* all felt the tremendous difference between this *tefillah* and the davening that had been done in this shul until then, and were sure the *yeshuah* was at hand.

As the days passed, they kept up their *kabbalah*. The *mispallelim* felt like it was a new shul. Wonder of wonders, at the same time as they grew stronger, there was good news from the patient. His numbers, which had indicated a steady deterioration, began to stabilize. The treatment that had seemed to just compound his suffering, began to show their positive effects in the tests.

As they grew stronger in *tefillah*, the illness receded more and more. A month after they began, the patient smiled when the doctors told him that miraculously there had been significant recession in the growth, and the tumors were shrinking. A few months later, he was functioning fully, and had returned to his life, in good health. Of course, he also joined his community in their *kabbalah*.

Mei'Hashem Yatza Hadavar, p. 510