

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



## Pearls of Emunim

## Pearls of Amen and Tefillah on the Parashah

### Illuminate the Words of Tefillah with Kavanah

“צהר תעשה לתיבה” (ו טז)

The **Maggid of Mezeritsch** explained:

One who davens, and utters words of *tefillah* without *kavanah*, is compared to a person walking in the dark, groping around him, without knowing where he is going. Therefore, the Torah instructs one who davens: “*Tzohar ta’aseh lateivah*” – illuminate the words of *tefillah*. Say them with *kavanah* of the heart, in a way that they will emerge from your mouth illuminated and clear, and by doing so, you will be guaranteed that your *tefillah* will rise On High and will bear fruit.

The *meshpia* **Harav Shmuel Aharon Lieder**, would add a recommendation, that one who wants to have proper *kavanah* in his *tefillah* needs to be careful not to speak idle words from when he arises in the morning until he davens. The idle speech confuses his thoughts and prevent the *kavanah*. This is also alluded to in the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 88:24): “*Ubaboker tefillasi sekadmeka*” – that each morning, the words of *tefillah* should precede all speech.

*Turei Zahav; Nitei Eshel*

### Enter Into the ‘Teivah’

“ויאמר ה' לנח בא אתה וכל ביתך אל התבה” (א ז)

The **Baal Shem Tov** explained that with this *passuk*, the Torah alludes to every Jew, that when he utters the words of *tefillah* from his mouth, he must do it in a way of “*bo atah vechol beischa el hateivah*” – in a way that he puts his entire self – his body and his thoughts, in the words (תיבות) of the *tefillah*.

**Harav Moshe of Kobrin** once told this to those who came to bask in

### ‘L’Maan Nechdal M’Oshek’ of the Brachah

“ויאמר אלקים לנח קח כל בשר בא לפני כי מלאה הארץ חמס מפניהם” (ו יג)

The **Oheiv Yisrael** of Apta explained:

*Chazal* say (*Brachos* 35a): “Anyone who benefits form this world without a *brachah* – has embezzled,” because before the *brachah*, the food is considered *hekdesh*, which is forbidden for pleasure, as it says “*L’Hashem ha’aretz umeloah*” (*Tehillim* 24:1). Only after the *brachah* do they have permission to enjoy the food, as it says (*ibid* 115:16): “*Veha’aretz nasan livnei adam.*”

The people of the generation of the *mabul*, who sinned with stealing, also stole from their Creator by enjoying this world without making a *brachah* and thanking Him. Therefore “*Malah ha’aretz chamas mipneihem*” because even when they enjoyed what belonged to them, it was considered stealing, because they did not make a *brachah* and thank for it first.

**Harav Dov Lavlovitz**, the Rav of Kiskoros, explained with this the reason why we mention in *Ne’ilah* only the sin of the *oshek - lema’an nechdal m’oshek yadeinu.*” Our intention with this is to repent for the sin of enjoying this world without a *brachah*, because it is a sin that many often transgress, therefore, it is the only one *Chazal* instituted to mention in this *tefillah*.

*Maggid Tehillos; Divuvei Chen*

his presence, and one of the listeners pondered: How can a person put his entire self into such a small ‘*teivah*’? The Rebbe

replied: Indeed, I do not refer to a person who considers himself bigger than the words of *tefillah*...

*Bais Aharon, Parashas Nitzavim; Imros Tehoros*

### ‘Roka Ha’aretz Al Hamayim’ – Except During the Mabul

“בשנת שש מאות שנה לחיי נח בחדש השני בשבעה עשר יום לחדש ביום הזה נבקעו כל מעינות תהום רבה וארבת השמים נפתחו” (ז יא)

**Harav Yehoshua Buchsbaum, Hy”d**, the *Av Beis Din* of Galanta, explained:

The members of the generation of the *mabul* grasped onto the distorted belief that because the animalistic nature draws a person to sin, a person should not fight his *yetzer* and act against his nature. Rather, he should follow the whims of his heart, like an animal that is activated by internal drives and does not know the meaning of resistance or overcoming a desire.

Because the way of Hashem is to pay a sinner ‘*middah kenegged middah*’ (see *Sanhedrin* 100a), they were therefore punished that the waters of the *mabul* flooded the earth until nothing remained. The fact that the ground remains in place, flat above the surface of the water, is a complete contravention to the power of nature, and it is a constant miracle that we thank Hashem for each morning with the *brachah* of “*Roka ha’aretz al hamayim*” (see *Levush, Orach Chaim* 46 2). When the members of the generation of the *mabul* capitulated to their nature, and did not overpower the whims of their nature, then the world also reverted to its nature. The miraculous barrier that blocked the waters from inundating the land were removed, and the water flooded the entire universe.

*Ohr Pnei Yehoshua*



## The Rosh

9 Cheshvan 5088

This Friday will be the 694<sup>th</sup> yahtzeit of one of the foremost commentators and poskim of all times, Rabbeinu Osher bar Reb Yechiel, known as the Rosh, who passed away in Toledo, Spain on 9 Cheshvan 5088/1327.

## — Both a Brachah and Amen

“In his *sefer She’eilosav Veteshuvosav* he said of himself (*Klal* 4, 19, regarding *Birchos Krias Shema*):

“And when I get to the end of the *brachah*, I hurry to conclude my *brachos* before the *chazzan* finishes his *brachah*, and I concentrate to answer amen after the *brachah* of the *chazzan*.”



**They Gates of Gan Eden Are Opened for Him  
A Compilations of Insights**

Chazal (*Shabbos* 119b) promise remarkable and special reward to one who is careful to answer amen properly: “Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened to him.” Chazal extrapolated this reward from the words of the *passuk* (*Yeshayahu* 26:2): “*Pischu she’arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim,*” and say, do not call it “*shomer emunim*, but rather *she’omrim amen.*”

The *Maharsha* (*ibid*) explained the words of Chazal on this *passuk* in two ways:

1. The letter aleph should be added to the word “*shomer*” as if the *passuk* says “*she’omer amenim.*”
2. The *passuk* needs to be read as it is written “*shomer amenim*” and the word “*shomer*” should be explained as a term of waiting (see *Rashi Bereishis* 37:11). In other words, the Gates of Gan Eden are opened before one who waits to hear each *brachah* to the end, so that he can answer amen after it, as per *halachah*.

The words of the *Gemara* are also cited in the *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285:2): “When a person who took care to answer amen properly leaves this world, his soul rises On High and declares before him: ‘Open the gates’ just like he opened the gates of blessing each day when he was a ‘*shomer emunim.*’” From the words of the *Zohar* it emerges that the reward of opening the gates of Gan Eden to one who answers amen is measure for measure: Just like the one who answers amen opened the gates of blessing by answering amen, likewise, the gates of Gan Eden will open for him when his time comes. (See *Rabbeinu Bechayei Shemos* 14:31)

Chazal add that even the sinners who have already been thrown into Gehinnom are deserving of being taken out and entering Gan Eden in reward for answering amen. Chazal describe what will happen *l’Asid Lavo* (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Zuta* Ch. 20): “...And Dovid says [*Kaddish* of] *Aggadah* in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and the *tzaddikim* answer *Yehei Shemo HaGadol mevorach l’olam ul’olmei olamim* in Gan Eden. And the sinners of Yisrael answer amen from Gehinnom. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to the angels: Who are these who are answering amen from Gehinnom? They answered: Ribbono shel Olam! These are the sinners, that even though they are in Gehinnom, in dire straits, they strengthen and say amen for You. HaKadosh Baruch Hu says to the angels: Open for them the gates of Gan Eden and they should come and sing for Me, as it says (*Yeshayahu* 26:2): ‘*Pischu she’arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*’ – do not read it *emunim*, rather ‘*she’omer amen.*’

In this segment, we will bring a series of insights from giants through the generations regarding the essence of this reward, and its unique connection to amen.

**Amen Opens the Gates of All Levels**

The *Maharsha* (Vol. I, *Shabbos* 119b) pointed out that from the fact that the *Gemara* states “the Gates of Gan Eden are opened to him” – in the plural, it means that the gates of all the internal levels of Gan Eden are opened to him, and not only the gates of the level that he is deserving of. For all the *mitzvos* that he does, a person merits a level in Gan Eden in accordance with his deeds. As Chazal say (*Shabbos* 152a): “Each and every *tzaddik* is given a level in accordance with his honor.” But one who fulfills the *mitzvah* of answering amen with all his might is exceptional in the fact that the Gates of all the levels of Gan Eden are opened to him – even those which, according to his level, he was not deserving of.

**Tefillah Accepted on Wednesday**

This story was heard from the person it happened to, a young man who fell ill with corona during the first wave. During that time, the world was in shock and panic from the new, unknown that was ravaging entire countries. The new virus was very contagious, and was characterized by difficult symptoms and rapid deterioration. The medical establishment knew so little about it, and all treatment was experimental.

In the initial days after getting sick, this young man still had mild symptoms – in other words, no taste or smell, fever, and a bit of breathing difficulty. He was at home, a bit weak, but waiting anxiously for the quarantine to end.

The deterioration was rapid. Towards the end of the first week, he began to suddenly struggle to breathe, and within a few hours, felt the oxygen in his body waning. It is hard to describe the feelings; he lay in bed, fighting for every breath, plain and simple. When he felt he could go on no more, he asked his family to call an ambulance.

He describes:

“When the rescue service came to my house, I was gasping, literally. In the sort period of time that passed since the virus began to spread, I had already heard many difficult stories. I was sure that I, too, was going to be one of those stories...I was terrified to death, literally, and that made my condition worse. I was connected to an oximeter, and as expected, the reading was very low. I was quickly fitted with an oxygen mask and we sped to the hospital.

Already on the way to the hospital, I felt some relief as the oxygen poured into my lungs, making it easier for me to breathe. It also assuaged my fear a bit. I won’t describe the tribulations I endured until I was finally admitted to a facility; how the driver had to go from one hospital to the other until a place was found for me in a hospital far from my city of residence. The overcrowding was far beyond the capacity of the hospital and the staff, and the patients could do nothing but dream of more humane treatment. Even after the ambulance finally emptied its human cargo – me – my journey was not over. I lay in the emergency room for hours until someone became available to transfer me to the corona ward.

After many hours of being connected to oxygen, I thought, innocently, that my condition had improved and I’d be home in a day or two. I certainly didn’t dream that the biggest trouble of all lay ahead.

Chazal say (*Avos* 2:5): “In a place where there are no people, try to be a man.” I used my extra time to do *chessed* with the other people in the packed ward, who were bedridden. Some were in worse condition, and no one was even looking at them. I helped serve food, tighten oxygen masks that had fallen, and communicated between the patient and the staff. I also unfortunately was on hand to recite *Krias Shema* and say *Viduy* with a number of patients as the doctors got ready to intubate them, and they were afraid – justifiably so – that they would not awaken, *R”l*.

Throughout that time, I felt the satisfaction of doing. I focused on the difficult conditions of my fellow patients, and through that, did not notice my own personal condition at all. Only at night, when I lay down on the bed, exhausted, did I begin to struggle to breathe again, and I remembered that I was not a staff member here, I was a patient like all the others...

The labored breathing grew worse, and it took a long time until one of the staff members was able to connect me to oxygen again. But in contrast to the day before, the oxygen did not improve my condition, as expected. I continued to wheeze and choke, and the battle for every breath drained me completely, until I could hardly utter a sound. I yearned to fall asleep but couldn’t. In the middle of the night, the doctor checked me, and he recommended intubating and ventilating me immediately.

‘The body needs every ounce of energy to fight

for breath,’ he explained what I already knew. ‘Sedation and ventilation will help you focus all your energy on winning this battle for your life. Don’t worry, you are young and with G-d’s help you’ll get out of it...’ he tried to reassure me. But I firmly objected. In my weakened state I managed to express my firm objection with the waggle of a finger from right to left.

The doctor tried to persuade me, but I refused to listen. Honestly, in my view at the time, I had good reason to refuse. In the short time I had been in the hospital, I saw with my own eyes a few people who were alert in the morning and had even conversed with me, and then a few hours after being intubated, their hearts stopped. There were also many who recovered, but based on the doctors’ whispering, I understood that I had good reason to be afraid of the worst case scenario.

‘We’ll give you until tomorrow morning,’ the doctor relented. ‘During this time, try not to exert yourself even a tiny drop. Don’t forget to pray, but do it in your heart, without uttering a sound.’ Who knows, maybe a miracle will happen...’

I had no problem fulfilling the doctor’s instructions, because I had not an ounce of energy. Like Chizkiyahu Hamelech during his illness, I turned my face to the wall, burst into tears, and emitted a silent cry from the depths of my soul to the Kisei Hakavod. For many long moments, I prayed in my heart. Suddenly, like in a dream, I heard myself crying one sentence: “Mommy, Mommy, tomorrow is Wednesday, do everything to make sure they don’t sedate me...”

Today, after I have recovered *baruch Hashem*, I can understand what was behind that sentence.

My mother, *a”h*, was sickly for most of her life. Since I was a child, throughout the years, my sisters, brothers and I tried to care for her with devotion. Even after I got married, when I moved to a faraway city, my wife and I decided that every Wednesday, no matter what, I would travel to my hometown to care for my sick mother.

In the twenty years between my marriage and my mother’s passing, I went through all kinds of events, but I can say that I did not miss my Wednesday visit - ever. Each Wednesday after breakfast, I would board a bus, which after a long trip, brought me to my parents’ home. I spent the entire day with my mother, taking care of her needs, and returned home in the evening. My mother appreciated my devotion. With her refined nature, she made sure throughout the day to remind me how much my presence contributed to her life. Before I returned home, she would shower me with *brachos*. Regularly, when I was outside the door she would remind me the clear *brachah* in the Torah: “*lema’an ya’arichun yamecha.*”

It was a few years since my mother’s passing, but now, as I lay so ill, under the sword of the Angel of Death, I remembered those words that my mother parted from me with every Wednesday “*lema’an ya’arichun yamecha.*” This memory led me to cry that sentence out in my *tefillah*.

Remarkably, as soon as I finished the prayer, I fell asleep, and woke up the next morning. It was Wednesday and I felt like a new person. For the first time in a week, my breathing was steady. But I tried to keep myself in a resting state, and waited for the doctors’ rounds.

About half an hour later, the doctor came to my bed, dragging a heavy ventilator behind him. He had no doubt that it would be needed. I could not suppress my smile when his eyes grew round with surprise when he saw me sitting and waiting for him patiently.

‘You’ve merited a new lease on life – plain and simple,’ the doctor told me that evening, before I was discharged. ‘You had a real miracle. I have no medical explanation for it.’ But I had no questions. Deep down, I understood it all.

*Hodu l’Hashem ki tov ki l’olam chasdo.*”