

Vechele Maaminim

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

The Reason We Say 'Mi She'gemalcha' In Response to 'Hagomel'

קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת אשר
עשית את עבדך (לב יא)

Chazal explain (*Shabbos* 32a) that this is what Yaakov meant to say: My merits have diminished due to the *chassadim* that You have done for me, which were beyond the course of nature. Because everyone who has a miracle performed for him, has merits deducted.

Based on this, **Harav Alexander Hakohen Kaplan**, author of *Shalmei Nedarim*, explained the reason why, after hearing *Birchas Hagomel*, we do not suffice with answering amen like the rest of the *brachos*. Rather, we add a *brachah* for the *mevarech*: "*Mi shegemalcha tov Hu yigemalcha kol tov selah*." Because this *brachah* is said by someone who was saved from a dangerous situation, therefore, we wish him that his merits should not be diminished because of the miracle that was performed for him. Rather, he should continue to be the recipient of "*kol tov*", all the good, without having anything deducted from his merits.

Shalmei Nedarim, Introduction

'V'al Hakol' We Thank that You Are 'Hashem Elokeinu'

קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת אשר
עשית את עבדך (לב יא)

Harav Baruch of Mezibuzh explained:

The Jew who serves Hashem sincerely should know that beyond the great reward that is promised to *ovdei Hashem*, the greatest reward is the very fact that the King of kings selected this person to serve Him. For this reason, in *Birchas Hamazon*, after we thank Hashem in the *brachah* of *Nodeh Lecha* for a long list of wondrous gifts that we merited from Him, material and spiritual, we add:

"*V'al hakol*" – and more than all the tremendously good things that we have thanked for, "Hashem Elokeinu – *anachnu modim Lach*" – the most generous gift of all that we thank for is the actual fact that "You are Hashem, Elokeinu."

Harav Avraham of Slonim, author of *Yesod Ha'avodah*, added that this concept was alluded to by Yaakov Avinu in this *passuk*: "*Katonti mikol hachassadim umikol ha'emes*" – all the *chessed* and favors that You have done for me are small in my eyes compared to the greatest *chessed*: "*asher asisa es avdecha*" – that You made me Your servant.

Bais Aharon, Pesach, p. 92; Nitei Eshel

'Hodu L'Hashem' Through 'Kir'u BiShemo'

וַיֹּאמֶר הַיְלִידִים אֲשֶׁר חָנָן אֱלֹקִים אֶת עַבְדְּךָ
(לג ה)

Harav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, Rosh Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov, said: Yaakov Avinu did not simply reply "They are my children." Instead he goes into detail: "The children *asher chanan Elokim*, that Hashem has gifted your servant with" – that I merited them as a gift from Above. And we need to know that Yaakov did not only do this now to teach Eisav, his heretic brother, a chapter in *emunah*. Rather, he constantly spoke this way, and attributed everything he had as a gift from Above.

A Jew who emulates Yaakov Avinu always expresses his gratitude for the fact that everything he has is a gift from Hashem, will feel emotions of gratitude to Hashem for His benevolence. As the **Gra** explained (see *Aderes Eliyahu, Divrei Hayamim* I, 16:8) the words of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 105:1): "*Hodu L'Hashem – kir'u biShemo*," that the way by which one attains gratitude to Hashem is by a person calling Hashem's Name for every good thing that he merits in his life.

Zahav Mishva

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Sing a Shir Chadash to Hashem Each Day

The time of *tefillah* is supposed to be a time of pleasure and closeness to Hashem for each one of us. But some struggle to 'connect' to *tefillah*, and as a result, instead of davening being what it is supposed to be – a time of pleasure and closeness to Hashem, it is a burden and a bother. It is therefore no wonder that they murmur the words of davening as if they are on automatic pilot, without feeling the loftiness and sweetness of each word.

One possible reason for this is that the words of *tefillah* are a fixed *nusach* that repeats itself each day, *Shacharis, Minchah* and *Maariv*. But we can change this way of thinking: a 'fixed *nusach*' doesn't have to also be 'boring' *chalilah*! Even if it was instituted for us to daven specific words, we have the ability, and the obligation, to infuse it with new meaning every day. After all, the meals that we eat each day are also fixed, yet, we still find new flavor in them each day.

We say in *Krias Shema* "*Vehayu hadevarim ha'eileh asher Anochi metzavecha hayom*." *Rashi* explains (*Devarim* 6:6): Each day, the *divrei Torah* and *mitzvos* should be like new in our eyes – as if we received them 'hayom' today. That is how we have to approach each *tefillah* anew.

This change is not easy, and requires effort, but it is not for naught that Chazal call *tefillah* "*avodas halev*" (*Taanis* 2a), because it takes effort and investment. We have to arouse our hearts to think about the *chassadim* of Hashem, to recognize our obligation to thank Him, and to internalize how much we need His help every single step of the way. By thinking this, our *tefillos* will look different. *Tefillah* is not merely a *mitzvah*, it is what gives us the merit to exist in this world, because with our nature as human beings, we are constantly susceptible to the dangers of the times, so how can we not plead for our lives?!

Good Shabbos,

Yaakov Dov Marmorstein

A 'Kallah' In the Merit of an Easy Improvement

This is a remarkable story that illustrates and teaches us the tremendous value of taking on something that needs improvement – even if it is something small – and especially with regard to coming early to davening. Doing so has many well-known *segulos* and *yeshuos*. This story was related by the Rav of Ramat Elchanan, Harav Yitzchak Silberstein, *shlita*, who heard it firsthand.

Reb Moshe was a scholarly *talmid chacham*, but there was always a sad expression on his face. It was justified, because his life was clouded by a struggle that causes many parents in our generation to lose sleep.

Reb Moshe had a successful daughter with many talents and virtues, yet, by Heavenly decree had not merited to find her match yet. Even after all the other girls in her class had established their own homes, and had become mothers to three and four children, she, one of the most popular and successful girls, was still 'stuck.'

The girl's parents and siblings were



partners to her pain and anguish. They poured out copious *tefillos* on her behalf, but the long-awaited *shidduch* did not happen.

The father related:

"One day, after a certain incident that occurred, I felt that things were getting to a breaking point. I couldn't look at my daughter's pain and loneliness anymore, and I resolved to visit one of the *tzaddikim* of the generation to find out once and for all what I had to do in order to tip the balance in her favor.

That very evening, I went to the home of the one of the *gedolei hador*. I used the waiting time to strengthen my *emunas chachamim* in my heart. I firmly decided that I would carry out

whatever the Rav instructed me to do, even if it was very difficult.

Having made this decision, I was then summoned to the Rav's room. The Rav listened to me patiently, and his eyes showed that he was commiserating with my pain and suffering. When I finished unloading my burden, he smiled kindly and said:

'It is very possible that the key to your daughter's *yeshuah* is in your hands – the hands of the parents. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the '*Ohev amo Yisrael*' does not send a person a *tzarah* in order to make him suffer, *chalilah*. The objective is to jolt him out of his regular, familiar place, and to motivate him to choose a new, better way. HaKadosh Baruch Hu is waiting for you to make a serious commitment to improving something that needs *chizuk*, and I'm sure that when you do that, your daughter will find her *zivug* that is destined for her from Above.'

The clear words from the Rav made my heart flutter with emotion and embarrassment at once. One the one hand, I was ready to do anything to see my daughter finally walk down to the *chuppah*, but on the other hand, I have so many things that need to be improved, and I didn't know what to choose.

'What hour do you usually daven *Shacharis* each morning?' the Rav asked when he saw my discomfort. I replied – with barely concealed pride – that I regularly daven at a seven o'clock *minyan*.

'If so,' the Rav said, 'I would suggest that you start coming to shul each day five minutes before the start of davening, meaning at five to seven. I'm sure that the merit of this *chizuk* in *tefillah* you will merit that your many *tefillos* for your daughter's *yeshuah* will breach the Gates of Heaven, and very soon you will merit to see tremendous *siyata diShmaya*.'

I was stunned by the Rav's simple words: 'Is that all?!' I reacted with surprise. But the Rav just smiled kindly again and didn't say a word.

I emerged from the Rav's house in a very thoughtful mood. The message from the Rav's words was clear: '*Lo bashamayim hie...*' HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not expect us to rise to the Heavens to bring the *yeshuah*

to our home...He just wants us to awaken and move a bit out of our regular comfort zone that we have become so accustomed to living in. To make a small step, but a significant and decisive one. HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants to bring us the *yeshuah*, but to do that we need to take a small – but invaluable – step on our part.

As I left, I felt my heart lift with joy; the despair that had filled my heart until then was replaced with new hope. I was filled with drive to fulfill my part in the 'deal' and the very next morning, I started implementing the Rav's advice.

I began to get up earlier, and believe it or not, I was able to get to shul about ten minutes before davening. What can I tell you...A new world was revealed to me. There are a number of *mispallelim* who I always envied for their seeming lofty *tefillos*, and now, I became privy to their secret. Fifteen minutes separated me from them... They simply came earlier to shul, put on *tefillin*, and recited *Birchos Hashachar* slowly and properly, and by doing this, their *tefillos* took on a totally different appearance...

Two weeks passed. One day, as I returned home after *Shacharis*, I mused that I had already gained my first 'profit' from the deal. New gates in the world of *tefillah* opened before me. I was able to sense in a deeper way that Someone On High was listening to me.

The biggest surprise waited for me when I returned home, and my wife greeted me with the news that a *shadchan* had just called with a very interesting suggestion. He was an excellent boy who, for some unexplained reason, like my daughter, had not yet found his *zivug*. After a long time of hearing so many unsuitable suggestions for our daughter, this one was like cool water on a searing hot day.

The *shidduch* advanced very quickly, and just two weeks after that, we were celebrating my daughter's engagement to her *zivug* for whom she had waited so many years.

And it was all because of a minor improvement. She became a *kallah* from a *chizuk kal* – a minor improvement.

The Brachah of Yotzer Ohr

The Source of the Brachah

The *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr* is one of the seven *Birchos Kiras Shema* instituted by *Chazal* to recite before and after *Krias Shema*. As we learn (*Brachos* 11a): “In the morning one recites two before [*Krias Shema*] and one after it, and in the evening, two before and two after.” *Chazal* (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 1 5) based this *takanah* on the words of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 119:164): “*Sheva bayom hilallticha al mishpetei tzidkecha*, seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous judgments.” *Mishpetei tzidkecha* is the *parashah* of *Krias Shema*, which is one of the *mishpetei haTorah*. (*Rashi* *ibid*)

Even though these *brachos* are defined as *Birchos Krias Shema*, they are not like the other *birchos hamitzvos*, which were instituted for the actual mitzvah. These were instituted to be recited on their own, as *brachos* of praise and gratitude. After they were instituted, *Chazal* placed them next to *Krias Shema* (*Shu”t Harashba* 1 49), which is why we are exempt from reciting before *Krias Shema* a *brachah* of “*Asher kidshanu... likro es Shema*” (*Me’iri Brachos* *ibid*). The *Ramban* (*Brachos* 11b) explained that *Chazal* established that we recite *Yotzer Ohr* before *Krias Shema* because the *zman* of *Krias Shema* of morning and evening depends on the rising sun and the setting sun.

Structure of the Brachah

The *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr* begins with praise for the creation of light, and then continues with a description of the creation of the Heavenly galaxies, and how they each praise and glorify their Creator. It concludes similar to the opening, “*Yotzer Hame’oros*.” The *Rishonim* write that towards the end of the *brachah*, we ask for the future Redemption by saying, “*Ohr chadash al Tzion ta’ir venizkeh kulanu bimeheirah l’oro*.” (See *Tur*, *Orach Chaim* 59)

The *Avudraham* (*Birchos Krias Shema*) explains that it was instituted to say *Kedushah* in *Yotzer Ohr* in order to remove it from the minds of the heretics who say that Hashem has left the land, and given over His World to the heavenly constellations who lead the world as they please. Reciting *Kedushah* proves that HaKadosh Baurech Hu is the Almighty, and none of the Heavenly constellations can do anything that is not His commandment, because all the Heavenly Armies sanctify Hashem, and He Alone created it all and rules everything.

The Essence of the Brachah

The *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr* is the first of the *Birchos Krias Shema* recited in the morning. In this *brachah*, we thank Hashem for creating light, and because the light is renewed each day, we thank Him for it each day anew.

Although the light was created for the benefit of the creations, which derive much pleasure from it, this *brachah* is not considered a *birchas hanehenin*, which we are only obligated to recite on a pleasure that we take into our body. (*Ramban Brachos* beginning of Chapter 8)

Praise in the Order of the Aleph-Beis

This *brachah* has one segment that is arranged in alphabetical order: “א-ל ברך גדול דעה...” It should be noted that while in the *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr* during the week, we dedicate one word to each letter, on Shabbos, we dedicate an entire line to each letter, in *K-L Adon*, which is also in alphabetical order. (See *Zohar HaKadosh Vaykhel* 205 2, which explains the reason for this.)

The *Avudraham* (*ibid*) explains that the reason it was instituted to mention the order of the *aleph-beis* in *Yotzer Ohr* is to announce that the existence of the world is for Torah which was written with 22 letters, as it says (*Yirmiyahu* 33:25): “*Im lo brisi yomam valaylah chukos shamayim v’aretz lo samti*, if not My covenant with the day and the night, the statutes of heaven and earth I did not place.”

In the *Siddur* compiled by the early *mekubal* Harav Hertz Shatz, he cites the *Midrash* that when Rabi Eliezer Haklir wanted to write his poetry, he rose On High by uttering one of the Holy Names, and there, he asked Michael, the Angel, what the songs of the angels is based on. Michael replied that their songs were based on the order of the *aleph-beis* and thus, Rabi Eliezer wrote his *piyutim* on this order as well.

The Meaning of Amen

It is true that we must thank Hashem for creating the *me’oros*, the great lights, and may we merit to have a new light illuminate Tzion with the arrival of the Geulah.

”וכאשר תקום מן הספר, תחפש באשר למדת אם יש בו דבר אשר תוכל לקיימו.”

One Who Arrives Early to Shul Lives Long

Chazal say in *Maseches Avos* (3:10): “*Sheinah shel shacharis...sleeping in the morning removes a person from the world.*” On the other hand, we find that one who gets up early to daven lives a long life. The *Gemara* relates (*Brachos* 8a) when Rabi Yochanan was told that there were elderly people in Bavel, he wondered about this, because the Torah’s promise of (*Devarim* 11:21) “*Lema’an yirbu yemeichem*” was said only “*al ha’adamah asher nishba Hashem l’avoseichem*” – in Eretz Yisrael. But when he was told that these elderly people are strict to rise early to go to shul, and go in the evening as well, he was calmed, and said they merited long life because of these practices.

Proof That Rising Early to Shul Gives Life

The *Yalkut Shmioni* (*Eikev* 871) brings a story on this subject:

“There was a story of a woman who aged a lot, and she came to Rabi Yosi ben Chalafta, and said to him, ‘Rebbi I have become too old and from now, it is a life of deterioration. I do not taste food or drink, and I want to leave this world.’ He said to her, ‘What mitzvah do you regularly do each day?’ She told him, ‘I have a practice that even if I have something that I love, I put it aside and make sure to rise early to go to shul each day.’ He told her, ‘Refrain from going to shul three days in a row.’ She complied and on the third day she fell ill and died.”

Rabi Eliyahu Hakohein Ha’itamari noted that even though, according to *halachah*, Rabi Yosi ben Chalafta was not allowed to give this woman advice that would hasten her death, he did so in order that those in the generation would clearly see how rising to go to shul early grants a person long life. Through that, they would strengthen their observance of this mitzvah. As *Chazal* teach us (*Brachos* 54a) that when necessary, a person may do something that is prohibited for the sake of Kavod Shamayim, as it says (*Tehillim* 119:126): “*Eis la’asos l’Hashem heferu Torasecha.*” (*Midrash Talpiyos, Beis Haknesses*)

Dear *Vechol Ma’aminim*,

As your pamphlet serves as a welcome platform to strengthen the answering of amen, and many improve their observance of this mitzvah in the merit of the pamphlet, myself among them, I feel privileged to tell you about a great miracle that our family merited to see as the result of strengthening the observance of this mitzvah.

My younger brother fell ill with a terrible illness, and his life was in danger. As a regular reader of this pamphlet, I had seen in past years that in *Parashas Chayei Sarah* you expounded on the words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 47a) “And anyone who prolongs his amen – his days and years are lengthened.” You also brought an allusion from the *Tosafos* that the acronym of the last words of the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 24:1) “זָקֵן וְבָא בַיָּמִים” is “amen.” So I decided to work on my observance of this mitzvah, especially after *Birchos Hashachar*, where we thank Hashem for life and for health.

Bechasdei Shamayim, after about half a year, my brother recovered completely. During the *seudas hoda’ah* that we held in celebration of his recovery, we sang the well-known song on the *passuk* (*Mishlei* 3:5) “*Ki orech yamim ushenos chaim yosifu lach.*” [We had added the name Chaim to my brother during his illness.] As we sang, I found myself realizing that the acronym of the *passuk* is numerically equivalent to exactly 91 – or amen!!

I have no words to thank you for your work. I am sure that Am Yisrael owes you many *yeshuos* and recoveries, and remarkable things in the merit of answering amen.

May you see much success,

B.L., Netivot

Letters can be sent to fax number 08-9746102 or emailed to the *Vechol Ma’aminim* email address.

Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



Harav Yitzchak Hutner

20 Kislev 5781

Harav Yitzchak ben Reb Chaim Yoel Hutner, *zt”l*, was born in Warsaw, Poland in 5666. In 5695, he moved to Brooklyn, New York, where he served as Rosh Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin. He was known for his masterful *shiurim* where he conveyed the lessons of the Maharal of Prague, and which were published in the series of *sefarim Pachad Yitzchak*.

In 5730/1970, on a return trip from Eretz Yisrael with his wife, daughter and son-in-law, their plane was hijacked by terrorists. They were held captive for nearly three weeks in Amman, Jordan. In 1979, he moved to Eretz Yisrael, and passed away on 20 Kislev 5741. He is buried on Har Hazeisim.

Listen to a *Brachah* to Answer Amen According to *Halachah*

He would raise awareness to the fact that amen has a few meanings, and the *kavanah* of amen for a *brachah* of praise is not the same as an amen for a *brachah* with a request. Therefore, one must listen carefully to the *brachos* in order to know which to answer. He added that this is what *Chazal* alluded to when they say (*Sanhedrin* 92a): “*Gedolah deah shenitnah betechilas brachah*” – when one concentrates to listen from the beginning of the *brachah*, then one can answer amen properly to it. (*Kesser Meluchah* p. 272)