

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Tefillah as a Ladder and Kavanah as its Rungs

"ויחלה והנה סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה והנה מלאכי אלקים עלים וירדים בו" (כח יב)

Harav Avraham Ibn Ezra writes: "Rabi Yeshuah said that the reason for the 'sulam' the ladder – is because his tefillah rose on it, and his yeshuah, his salvation, descended from the Heavens." The *Baal Haturim* adds that "קול – that the sound of the tefillah of tzaddikim is the ladder for the angels to climb up on."

Harav Akiva Sofer, the Rav of Pressburg, added that this *passuk* teaches us a significant concept in tefillah:

Although most tefillos were instituted for us as a "sulam mutzav artzah", a ladder whose base is on the ground – as they mostly refer to material matters – nevertheless, "verosho magia hashamaymah" – even with these tefillos, it behooves us to have kavanah l'Shem Shamayim. Because through the material abundance that we will be blessed with, we will be available to serve Hashem. When we conduct ourselves this way, we are guaranteed that "the Angels of Elokim were going up and down on it" – the Heavenly Angels will descend to accept our tefillos and then present them before Hashem.

Daas Sofer

Bread – to Eat, Clothing – to Wear

"ונתן לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבש" (כח כ)

Why did Yaakov need to specify that he wanted bread "to eat" and clothes "to wear"? Is there any other purpose for bread or clothing?

Harav Mordechai Hakohen of Tzefas explained:

There are many who have merited an abundance of bread and many clothes, but because of their illness they cannot enjoy the blessings they have been granted. Therefore, Yaakov detailed his request: "bread to eat and clothing to wear" – that we should also be given the ability to enjoy the bread and the

A Short Tefillah – Shortens Ones Days

"אם יהיה אלקים עמדי ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך" (כח כ)

The Rebbe Harav Eliezer Zev of Kretchnif explained:

Chazal say (*Brachos* 13b): "When one extends his "Echad" [in *Krias Shema*] then his days and years are extended." Similarly, Chazal say (*Brachos* 47a): "When one extends his 'amen' then his days and years are extended." Consequently, we know that Chazal instituted that one who is traveling should daven a 'tefillah ketzarah' – a shortened tefillah (*Brachos* 3a), and thus, one who is traveling loses the *segulah* of *arichus yamim*, a long life, that one who prolongs his tefillah merits – with *Echad* and *amen*. The *passuk* in *Tehillim* (102:24) alludes to this: "Inah baderech kochi kitzar yamai" – the way caused me to have shortened days.

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clothing that we receive.

Based on this Harav Moshe Chaim Litsch Rosenbaum, Rav of Kleinwardein, explained the seemingly repetitive wording of the *HaRachaman* in *Birchas Hamazon*: "HaRachaman Hu yishlach lanu brachah merubah babayis hazeh..." We do not suffice with blessing being bestowed upon "this house" but rather we ask that the brachah should be "lanu" for us, that we should be able to enjoy it.

Sifsei Kohein; Lechem Rav on Siddur Hatefillah 1:250

"Hapa'am Odeh" – Constant Gratitude

"ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר הפעם אודה את ה' על כן קראה שמו יהודה" (כט לה)

Chazal say (*Brachos* 7b): 'From the day HaKadosh Baruch Hu created the world there was no one who thanked HaKadosh Baruch Hu until Leah came and did so, as it says 'hapa'am odeh es Hashem.' Many have

asked: Did the Avos not thank Hashem? Do we not have clear *pesukim* where they thanked Hashem and even brought *korbanos* for the many good things that were granted to them?

The Maharam Schick explains:

Certainly the Avos expressed gratitude for Hashem's kindness and *chessed*. But Leah was the first to institute the concept of constant gratitude. When her fourth son was born, she was able to see for herself the tremendous good that Hashem showered her with by giving her more than her relative share – one quarter of the 12 *shevatim*. "And she said," is it fitting that only "this time I will thank Hashem?" – and after that I will be distracted from the tremendous good that He granted me?! "Therefore she called his name Yehudah" so that each time she would utter his name, she would remember to thank and praise Hashem for the good He had bestowed upon her.

Maharam Schick al HaTorah

Why Did You Steal "Elokai" – In Haste?

"ועתה הלך הלכת כי נכסף נכספתה לבית אביך למה נגבת את אלהי" (לא ל)

It was the end of the winter *zman* in the yeshivah of Pressburg. After a long period of learning diligently in the yeshivah, the *bochurim* were finally preparing to return to their parents' homes. Before parting, they took leave of the *rosh yeshivah*, the Chasam Sofer, and then gathered together to daven *Minchah*. The carriages were already waiting outside, and the *bochur* who served as the *shaliach tzibbur*, davened quicker than usual, anxious to leave already. When the davening ended, the Chasam Sofer called him over and rebuked him with a witty remark: I understand that "nichsof nichsftah lebeis avicha," you are yearning for your father's home, but "lamah ganavta es Elokai" – why did you 'steal' the words of davening so hastily, preventing all of us from serving Hashem with tefillah b'kavanah?!

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Brachah Sheleimah Venomar Amen

Sunday, 13 Kislev, will mark one hundred years since the passing of the Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz, zy"א. He wrote the following, regarding the great virtue of answering amen:

In *Birchas Hamazon* we say: "Kein yevarech osanu... bivrachah sheleimah venomar amen." We can explain as follows: One who is careful about answering amen merits to have all the brachos and all good, and therefore, if we want to merit that HaKadosh Baruch Hu should bless us with 'brachah sheleimah' then we have to be strict about 'venomar amen.'

Divrei Yisrael, Parashas Noach

Amen. One word. Three letters. An abundance of good.



The Brachah of Matir Assurim

One Who Is Sleeping Is Like a Prisoner

The brachah of *Matir Assurim* was instituted based on the *passuk* (Tehillim 146:7): “Hashem *matir assurim*.” But its simple meaning is not gratitude that is offered by a prisoner who was set free. Rather, it is the gratitude that each and every person feels each day for being released from the bondage that is sleep. Because when one is sleeping, he does not control his limbs, and cannot move them freely, they are considered bound and imprisoned. Therefore, when one arises from his sleep, when the power to freely move his limbs is restored to him, he must thank his Creator for this.

Before sleeping, we make the brachah: “*Hamapil chevlei sheinah*” – the ropes of sleep, and accordingly, when we arise we express our gratitude by saying “*matir assurim*.” This is for the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu “untied” the “ropes” of sleep that we were constricted by as long as we were asleep. (*Peirush Hatefillas Vehabrachos LeR*” Y Ben Yakar, Vol. II, p. 12)

Likewise, the *Sefer Hachassidim* writes (155): “When you open your eyes, you should take heart...As person who emerges from prison need to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and there is no one who is more of a prisoner than one who is sleeping. We need to bless HaKadosh Baruch Hu for what we did not have the ability to do prior to this, and that is not having control over our body. And we bless Him for each and every limb that was bound, and that He has now opened so that we can do our needs with them.”

General Gratitude for Free Movement of the Limbs

The brachah of *Matir Assurim* creates an opportunity for us to introspect and to thank Hashem not only for renewing our ability to move our limbs in the morning but also for

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Matir Assurim – for releasing us from the bondage of sleep where we could not control our limbs and move them freely.
Amen – It is true that we must thank Hashem for renewing in us the control over our limbs.

The Brachah of Zokeif Kefufim

From Matir Assurim to Zokeif Kefufim

After thanking Hashem in the brachah of *Matir Assurim* for renewing in us the control over our limbs when we arise from sleep, we complete the gratitude with the brachah of *Zokeif Kefufim*. We thank Hashem for helping us stand straight, as our backs were bent while we slept (*Avudraham Hashkamas Haboker uBirchos Hashachar*).

This brachah was instituted based on the words of the *passuk* (Tehillim 146:8): “Hashem *zokeif kefufim*.” Some are of the opinion that it was instituted in keeping with the *passuk* (ibid 145:14): “*Somech Hashem lechol hanoflim vezokeif lechol hakefufim*” (*Peirushei Siddur Hatefillah l'Rokeach* 4). In this context it should be noted that early sources cite another brachah that was instituted based on this *passuk*: “*Baruch Atah...Somech Noflim*,” but this opinion was not accepted as the practical *halachah* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 46:23).

The sages said that a person must not walk entirely upright as “*melo kol ha'aretz Kevodo*” (*Yeshayah* 6:3), and one who walks completely erect looks like he is pushing away the Shechinah (*Kiddushin* 31a; *Rashi* ibid beginning with ‘*malei*’; *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 2 6). Nevertheless, it was instituted that we recite “*Zokeif Kefufim*” because HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave us the ability to stand completely erect, but we refrain from doing so out of deference to Him (*Ohel Moshe* [Rav Moshe Donat], 44).

Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'olam Zokeif Kefufim – that You have helped me stand straight after I was bent while sleeping.
Amen – it is true that we have to thank Hashem for enabling us to stand straight upon arising from our sleep.

giving us the power to move our limbs at any given time. If we think about it, there are so many people who, tragically, do not have this wonderful ability. Even when they arise from sleep they remain imprisoned, unable to move a limb (*Nefesh Shimshon* on the *Siddur Hatefillah*, p. 122)

Harav Moshe Cordovero (*Tomer Devorah* 1) further clarified an important point on this subject: Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu renews in the person each and every moment the power to move his limbs, when someone, *chalilah*, uses this power to rebel against Him and sin – this is most shameful and offensive! We see the Hashem’s tremendous *middah* of kindness and humility, as He tolerates our sins and continues to give life to our limbs even while we sin. He does not treat us the way He treated Yeravam ben Navat when he sought to harm a Navi sent by Hashem to prophesize about the punishment about the *Kohanei Beheimos* – where his hand dried up (see *Melachim* I, 13:4).

The author of *Seder Hayom* (*Birchos Hashachar*) explains that this brachah also refers to the person’s spiritual state. Therefore, a person must have *kavanah* in this request to ask that Hashem should take him out of the trap of the *yetzer hara*, who constantly wants to make him stumble and mire him in the desires of this world. As Dovid Hamelech asked (*Tehillim* 142:8): “*Hotziah memasger nafshi lehodos es Shemecha*, take me out of the prison of my heart to praise Your Name.” (See *Toras Haminchah, Shemini Atzeres Drashah* 86)

This is the place to mention the renowned song of Rabi Yehudah Halevi: “*Avdei hazman avdei avadim heim*, those who are slaves of times are slaves of slaves, while the Eved Hashem alone is free, and therefore, when every human asks for his share, *chelki Hashem amrah nafshi*, my soul has asked for my part to be with Hashem.”

A Person Walks With a Straight Back

Some explain this brachah of *Zokeif Kefufim* to be gratitude for the special virtue that man has over other creatures:

At the beginning of *Chumash Bereishis* (1:26), the *passuk* states that before man was created, HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to the Angels: ‘Let us make man in our image and in our form.’ Indeed, the creation of man is different to other living creatures, in that man walks erect, like the Heavenly Angels (see *Chagigah* 16a). In contrast, other animals walk on all fours. The reason is because man has a loftier soul, whose source is beneath the *Kisei Hakavod*. Therefore, it always strives to elevate the body that tends towards the ground, from where it was taken. The nature is for a creature to be attracted to its source (*Sefer Hayashar*, Rabbeinu Tam 1; *Tzofnas Pa'aneach* [Maharima”t] *Bereishis*).

We than Hashem in *Zokeif Kefufim* for this tremendous *chesed* that is renewed each day when we arise from our sleep, that Hashem has elevated us above all other creatures, and created us to stand upright (*Yafeh Lalev*, 46:10).

The Piasieczne Rebbe added: “When reciting the brachah of *Zokeif Kefufim*, one can also have in mind to request: ‘*Ribbono shel Olam*, I am bound, both in matters of my body and in matters of the soul, under the yoke of physicality and the *sitra achara*. You are the *Zokeif Kefufim* – straighten me up and put me on my feet!’” (*Derech Hamelech Parashas Beshalach*)

And Its Leaves Will Not Dry Up

Each day, we ask in the brachah of *Veha'arev Na* for our children and grandchildren and descendants through the generations to be *Yrei Hashem*, and to love Torah and those who learn it. We pray that they continue the golden chain that has been conveyed to us from our forebears through the generations.

This beautiful story can teach us about the power of *tefillah* to influence generations to come, to prevent descendants from falling stray. It clearly shows how *Hashgachah* can bring a Jew, even if he is very far away from his source, back to the fold and the right path.

Bnei Brak, the city of Torah and *chassidus*, is located in the heart of Israel’s Dan Region. It is surrounded by secular cities, like a rose among the thorns. The residents of the outskirts of Bnei Brak live on the seam line with other cities, and they can clearly sense the deep significance of the brachah of “*Hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol, bein ohr l'choshech*.”

One such resident was Reb Moshe, a well-liked, distinguished young man, who chose to live on one of these streets in a building whose residents were not Torah observant. Reb Moshe, who was blessed with a warm heart and jovial nature, felt a sense of mission in this place, and he tried to be friendly to all his neighbors. From time to time, when he was able, he even shared a Jewish thought with them.

Reb Moshe was generally treated with respect and admiration by his neighbors – with the exception of Yoram. While appearing to be a pleasant and intelligent person, when it came to all matters of religion, he suddenly became hostile and aloof. He considered himself “cultured” so he maintained a civil demeanor and did not actually harass Reb Moshe. But his cool responses made it very clear how disdainful he was of Reb Moshe’s lifestyle and message.

At first, Reb Moshe tried to practice the dictum of “words that emerge from the heart penetrate the heart,” but it hardly seemed effective with Yoram. The man chose to ignore every single remark that had even a trace of Judaism involved.

This being the case, it’s easy to imagine how stunned Reb Moshe was when Yoram reached out to him one fine day and asked if he could start teaching him *halachah*. Reb Moshe rubbed his eyes in disbelief, but Yoram was not yet finished: “I have decided to be *chozer b'teshuvah*,” he dropped the bombshell calmly. “I’ll come over this evening and tell you everything,” he promised.

That evening, Yoram knocked at Reb Moshe’s door, and told him this unbelievable story:

About two weeks ago, I traveled to Europe, on a trip to trace my roots. I wanted to research more into my mother’s roots, as she had left her whole family behind in blood-soaked Poland. I contacted a certain organization that had advertised that it was organizing such a trip, and signed on to join.

We arrived at the town where my

mother was born. My heart became overwhelmed with emotions. I thought at first it was natural to feel this way as a grandson going to ‘meet’ the world where his mother’s family grew up. But I did not know at that moment what was waiting for me. I walked with the rest of the group through the city, and suddenly, I spotted an old building with a Magen David etched above the entrance, making it clear that this was a shul. We entered, and walked around the main sanctuary. We touched the old furniture and leafed through the ancient *sefarim*.

At one point, without knowing why, I broke off from the group and went up the wooden steps that led to the women’s gallery. I explored for a few moments, and then looked down on the main sanctuary with a different vantage point; it had clearly been a grand place. When I turned around to retrace my steps, I noticed a small ladder that led to the attic.

I climbed carefully into the attic, and was surprised to see that it held all the *sefarim* that could no longer be used. Although it was very out of character for me, I found myself sifting through the pile of ancient *sefarim*, and from time to time I opened one of them and looked for something of interest.

I continued searching through the piles, and suddenly I picked up an old, heavy siddur. It was very faded and unusable, but something drove me to leaf through it over and over. I separated the cover page from the binding, and squinted to read the ancient writing. Suddenly, I let out a cry...

On the upper part of the title page there was the name of my grandfather, my mother’s father, who had lived in this town until his passing.

I thought I would faint. My mother mentioned her father’s name almost every day. She never stopped describing his piety and the way he conducted himself. He passed away before the war, and my mother did not even have a photo of him.

At that moment, all those stories came flooding into my memory. In my heart I began to feel a yearning for something that I could not define. I continued to finger the siddur wistfully, and when I got to the *tefillah* of *Mussaf* of *Shalosh Regalim*, my heart skipped a beat. On the page where *Mussaf* began was a green leaf, apparently from a *hadass*, that looked as though it had just dropped off from my grandfather’s *lulav* as he performed the *mitzvah*.

I was transfixed. I suddenly realized how observing Torah and *mitzvos* was inexorably bound to my being a Jew, a direct descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Suddenly, all those things that you tried to speak to me about penetrated my soul... All the sparks of light that had passed by me over the years joined together into a blinding flash of lightning that illuminated my heart and caused me to leave it all and return to my heritage.

A small myrtle leaf that fell off a *lulav* of a grandfather, into the *Siddur* in which he prayed tearfully for his children not to break away from their roots, was planted into my heart and brought me home.

Likras Shabbos, Succos 5781