

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

Blessed Is Hashem for Creating Us With Uniqueness

“שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם” (א ב)
It seemingly would have been enough to write “שאו כל עדת בני ישראל” – why then did the *passuk* write “שאו את ראש...?”

Harav Shlomo Yehuda Tabak of Sighet, explained:

The Torah wants to emphasize that every single Jew has a unique purpose for which he was sent to this world, and no other person in the world was sent to fulfill this purpose before him. Therefore, the *passuk* says: “*Se’u es rosh kol Adas Bnei Yisrael,*” to teach you that every one of Bnei Yisrael is like a ‘*rosh*’ - the first one sent for this purpose that he was created, and because they were beloved for this reason, they were counted.

Thus, we can also explain the order of praises in the *tefillah* of *Modim D’Rabbanan*: “*Yotzreinu, Yotzer bereishis*”: According to the order of creation, it should have said “*Yotzer bereishis Yotzreinu*”. We explain that our intention is to praise this stated virtue that the creation of every person in Am Yisrael is “*yotzer bereishis*” – that no other person like him was ever created.

Erech Sh”ai

Fulfilling the Mitzvah of “V’ahavta” By Counting Brachos

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From the words of the *Rambam* (*Tefillah* 7 16) regarding the *takanah* of *Meah Brachos*: “*umoneh kol habrachos*, and he counts all the *brachos* until he reaches one hundred,” the *Brisker Rav* says that there is a special virtue in fulfilling this *takanah* is to actually count the *brachos*, until

‘Filling the Hands’ for Amen

“אלה שמות בני אהרן הכהנים המשחים אשר מלא ידם לכהן” (ג ג)

Harav Yaakov Leib Benjamin explained:

“מלא ידם לכהן” – the acronym of the final letter of each word is ‘amen.’ The meaning of ‘*milei yadayim*’ is *chinuch*, as *Rashi* says (*Shemos* 28:41): “Any *milui yadayim* is a term of *chinuch*.” This is an allusion to the obligation to be *mechanech* children to answer amen to every *brachah*. As the *Rema* rules (*Orach Chaim* 124 7): “And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a baby answers amen, he has a share in *Olam Haba*.”

The *Shefa Chaim* of Sanz would distribute fruits on Shabbos to young children. They would make a *brachah* in front of him and he would answer amen. This was a special *avodas kodesh* for him, and even when he was ailing and bedridden, and suffering greatly, he did not forfeit this practice. Although he was very weak, he sat for a long time and answered amen to the children who made *brachos* on his fruits.

Chelek Yaakov; Darchei Halachah [Harav Ch. Schmerler], *Hilchos Birchos Hanehenin* 25

one reaches a hundred.

Based on the words of *Rashi* in the previous *passuk*: “Because He loves them He counts them all the time,” **Harav Yitzchak Silberstein** explained the reason we count *brachos*: Like HaKaodsh Baruch Hu instructed Moshe to count Bnei Yisrael because of His love for them, likewise, counting *brachos* that we say is intended to

show our love for HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Teshuvos V’hanhagos, Vol. II, 129; *Chashukei Chemed*, Yoma 55a

The Ikkar of Tefillah – To Correspond to the Aron

“איש על דגלו באתת לבית אבתם יחנו בני ישראל מנגד סביב לאהל מועד יחנו” (ב ב)

In his commentary on this *passuk*, *Rashi* cites the *Midrash* on this *passuk* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 2 9): When he went to destroy Yericho, Yehoshua said to them: ‘You are destined to make Shabbos there, do not distance yourself more than 2000 *amah* in each direction from the *aron*. Why? To enable them to come on Shabbos to pray before the aron.

We have to understand why Yehoshua was strict that they should daven specifically in front of the Aron? If they would distance themselves, couldn’t they daven in a *minyán* wherever they were?

Harav Chaim Elazar Shapiro of Munkatch, explained:

That Shabbos when Yehoshua asked the nation to spend Shabbos near the Aron, the walls of Yericho fell (*Yerushalmi Shabbos* 1 5). The falling walls were not a physical occurrence, as is known, and it was necessary to daven for it. The *Kolbo* writes (16) that Yehoshua instituted the *tefillah* of *Aleinu L’Shabeach* at the time when he captured Yericho. Therefore, Yehoshua asked that they should camp near the Mishkan for that Shabbos, so that they could gather before the Aron and daven for the capture of Yericho. Thus, the *tefillah* would have three virtues: 1. *Mekomah* – its place, before the Aron Hashem 2. *Tzurassah* – it’s form, with the whole nation, and 3. *Moaddah* – it’s time, on Shabbos, which is a time auspicious for *tefillah* and the prayers are more accepted, as alluded to in the acronym of its name: שגורה תפילתי בפי – my *tefillah* is more fluent in my mouth.

Chamishah Ma’amaros



Twenty years ago, on *Shavuus* night 5761, Harav Moshe Horowitz, one of the exceptional members of *Kollel Chazon Ish*, passed away. After his passing, he appeared in a dream to his *chavrusa* and said, “**One should be very careful about answering amen, because in Shamayim, there is a lot of anger at those who do not answer amen.**” (*Notrei Amen* Vol. II, p. 320)

“There is nothing greater to HaKadosh Baruch Hu than the amen that Am Yisrael answer.” (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1)

Yigdal (5): The Fourth Principle: Kadmus Hashem

The Creator of All That Exists

The fourth principle teaches us that Hashem preceded every single creation, and that He created all that exists from nothing. Unlike a flesh and blood being, which can only create based on existing materials, the world that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created is an entirely new entity. Before Creation, there was nothing in existence besides Hashem, and even the concepts of 'time' or 'place' did not exist. HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the "mamtzi kol hanimtz'a" – the Creator of everything in existence. (Rambam, *Peirush Hamitzvos Sanhedrin* Introduction to Chapter 10, *Yesodei HaTorah* 11)

The *ikkar* of this principle is to refute those who claim that Hashem created the world with materials that already existed. As the *Midrash* relates (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1 9), a philosopher claimed to Rabban Gamliel: "Your G-d is a great Artist, who found some good materials that helped Him: *tohu vavohu*, darkness, wind, water and depths." Rabban Gamliel rejected his words outright, and cited the *pesukim* that indicate that all the things that this philosopher listed were created by Hashem. Of the darkness it says (*Yeshayah* 45:7) "Yotzer ohr uborei choshech, Who forms light and creates darkness." Regarding the wind it says (*Amos* 4:13): "Yotzer harim ubara ruach, Who forms mountains and created the wind." And so forth, Rabban Gamliel continued to cite *pesukim* that detail that Hashem created each of the elements that the philosopher listed.

As a source for this principle, the Rambam (*Peirush Hamitzvos* *ibid*) cites the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 33:27): "Me'oneh Elokei kedem, the dwelling of the G-d that precedes all." The Name "Elokei Kedem" teaches us that Hashem preceded everything, and all creations were created by Him from nothing. As the *Seforno* explains, this Name (*ibid*): "Eloka kadmon vehol zilaso me'chudash me'Ito" – Hashem was first and everything besides Him was innovated from Him."

The Creator Preceded All Creations

This *ikkar* of *emunah* is described by the poet with the words "Kadmon lechol davar asher nivra." The term 'nivra' indicates something that is created from nothing. In contrast, the word 'notzar' indicates something crafted from an existing material – as we commonly use the term 'yatzran' – literally a manufacturer – one who takes materials and creates something from them. Therefore, in this stanza that describes the precedence of Hashem, the poet was careful to detail: "Hashem became before everything asher nivra" and not "asher notzar" [as used in the next stanza]. This teaches us that Hashem preceded all the 'nivra'im', and by extension, certainly preceded all the 'notzarim' – who are on a lesser level of creation. (*Maggid Tzedek*, in *Siddur Shaar Harachamim*)

The poet also emphasizes that the Creator is "kadmon lechol davar asher nivra" – not only does He precede the creations that were created throughout the process of Creation, but He also precedes those creations not listed in detail in the Torah. As *Rashi* writes (*Bereishis* 1:14), on the words *Yehi Me'oros*: The luminaries were created from the first day and on the fourth day, He commanded them to be suspended in the *rakia*. Similarly, all products of heaven and earth were created on the first day, and each one was firmly fixed in its place on the day that it was commanded. This is the intent of the *pasuk* (*ibid* 1:1): "Bereishis bara Elokim es Hashamayim," [that which was created] with the heavens - to include their products, "v'es ha'aretz" [and that which was created] with the earth – to include its products." Even though there are creations that are not explicitly listed, we must know

Kadmon lechol davar asher nivra framework of time, as people are used to defining things, rather He is *Rishon v'ein reishis le'reishiso* that even time is a new

that they were all created by Hashem.

Time Was Created During Brias Ha'olam

As explained, the dimension of 'time' was created during the six days of Creation. We can derive this also from the fact that when the Torah commands us to keep Shabbos, it states (*Shemos* 20:11): "Ki sheshes yamim asah Hashem" and not "ki besheshes yamim asah Hashem." This teaches us that the concept of 'yamim,' days, of Shabbos and the whole concept of time are part of the Creation (*Pri Tzaddik* Vol. 1, *Kedushas Shabbos*, 2). This concept is also alluded to in the first *passuk* of the Torah: "Bereishis" – the framework of time that enables a person to discern between the past and the future and between beginning and end – "bara Elokim", was created by Hashem. (*Yalkut Kisvei Kodesh* p. 152, in the name of Harav Moshe Tzvi of Savran)

The meaning of the concept "kadmon" for mortals is the precedence of a specific detail in relative comparison to another detail, within the framework of time that we can grasp from the beginning of creation to date. But as noted, HaKadosh Baruch Hu preceded the dimension of time as well, and therefore, His precedence is not like the precedence of the other creations, about which we say were first, as compared to other creations that came subsequently. Rather, "Rishon v'ein reishis le'reishiso," the precedence and being first of Hashem is unlimited and unfathomable to us, because it is 'beyond the perception of time' and we cannot attribute to Hashem the dimension of time that humans can understand – because they are subservient to the rule of time. (*Siddur Haya'avetz; Derech Mitzvoesecha* [Tzemach Tzedek] *Ha'amanas Elokus* 11)

The *Kedushas Levi* (*Mishpatim*) says that this principle of *emunah* is the explanation of the fact that the thoughts of a person cannot grasp what G-diness is, and he writes: "Because it is impossible for the thought to grasp it, because thought is something new, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu preceded everything." Thought is a new creation created by Hashem, along with every other creation. It can decipher things that it has a common factor with, but it is impossible for thoughts to fathom the essence of the Creator. The thought of a person is limited not only because it is dependent on the limited powers of the body, but because it is itself a relatively new creation, like all other created things.

Bitachon in the One Who Created Something from Nothing

A person who internalizes this concept will put his faith in Hashem, and will not fret over the events occurring around him. Even if something troubling befalls him, and is closing him in on all sides, and he sees no way out, he should now and remember that the same Creator Who created all of creations from nothing can stand at his side and create salvation for him.

Therefore, *Chazal* say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 68 2) said that when Yaakov departed from Be'er Sheva, after Eisav took all his money and left him with nothing, he said Chapter 121 of *Tehillim*, which begins with the words: "Shir lama'alos esa einai el beharim, I lift my eyes to the mountains, from whence will my help arrive." The Mashgiach, Harav Eliyahu Lopian, explained: When Yaakov saw that he was left empty-handed, he strengthened his *middah* of *bitachon* and said "מִצַּרְיָו יְבוֹא עֲזָרָתִי" – specifically from the "ayin", from the nothing, I am sure that my help will come, because "Ezri, my help comes from Hashem, Who created Heaven and earth" – and those were both created *yesh mei'ayin*, something from nothing. (*Lev Eliyahu, Bereishis* p. 9)

the intention is not first in the existing defining things, rather He is *Rishon v'ein reishis le'reishiso* that even time is a new

A Tefillah That Came Full Circle

This inspiring story was heard firsthand from the person it happened to, Reb Yaakov, R., a longtime *melamed* in Yerushalayim. It is a powerful story that can drive home the message that *tefillah* offered from the depths of the heart is always answered – even if it is decades later.

It was not Reb Yaakov's first visit to the place from where the Shechinah never moves, the Kosel. He visits a number of times each year, but the purpose of this visit, on this particular day, is the most emotional one of his visits to the Kosel each year.

As a *melamed* of innocent children, he is always inspired by their excitement and anticipation as they near the conclusion of the study of the *Chamishah Chumshei Torah* and the *siyum* marking the achievement.

Each year, on the day before the festive *siyum* was held, when the boys' excitement was at a fevered pitch, Reb Yaakov did not go home when *cheder* was over. He would channel his emotions to the right place – to *tefillah*.

He had a regular practice, which began when he was still a young *rebbei* decades earlier, to visit the Kosel the night before the *siyum*. He would give free reign to his emotions of gratitude and beseeching that overwhelmed him. He thanked Hashem for the tremendous merit he had to help children learn the holy Written Torah. His *tefillos* were also pleas for the future, that Hashem should allow the light and joy of Torah that flooded the young hearts to continue to guide them as they grew into G-d fearing adults following the right path.

Reb Yaakov maintained this practice for decades. But one year, there was a special surprise waiting for him. When he finished davening, he turned to the roofed plaza near the Kosel, where he wanted to sit and rest for a few minutes. He walked towards the bookcase on the edge of the area, and began to scan the *seforim*. Suddenly, a tall, husky young man with a small yarmulke perched on his mop of curls, looked into his eyes, and began to scream: "Oy, Rebbi! I don't believe it!" And then he burst into tears.

It took Reb Yaakov less than a minute to remember Nachman, a student from one of his early years of teaching. Nachman came from a difficult family background, and he had dropped out of school at a rather young age; Reb Yaakov had no idea what had happened to him after that.

Initially, Reb Yaakov recoiled at the appearance of the young man, which reflected his weak spiritual state, but he quickly recovered. He realized that the boy was in a heightened emotional state, and he offered to walk with him in the fresh Yerushalayim night, and to hear his story.

The two walked out to the plaza, and Nachman began to speak:

"The Rav certainly remembers when I left *cheder*. It was after a long period during which I did not make life easy for the *melamdim*. I did not have a supportive family, and it wasn't long until I landed up on the streets. From that point on, and until today, no one has taken an interest in me. For a long time, I wandered the streets, like a lone, abandoned dog, until I decided to get a hold of myself.

I began to work at random jobs, and I garnered experience in contracting and renovations. Over the years, I've become successful; I earned a reputation as being reliable and professional, and today I'm a contractor that employs dozens of workers.

I have everything, but I have nothing. I'm alone, with no teachers or friends or family. Worst of all, my connection to Hashem is very weak. I barely daven, I hardly ever open a *sefer*. Over the years, I've lived an empty, solitary life. Until the turnabout came, in a very surprising way.

This past year on Erev Pesach I found myself with a few empty days, with no work. I decided to make some order in my house.

I came across a closed carton, and when I opened it, I realized it was a collection of cassette tapes from my childhood. I began to look through them – one had a sticker that said "Siyum on Chamishah Chumshei Torah – Sivan 5762". It was the tape from that exciting party that I'd experienced as a child, and whose impression remained to this day.

I decided to listen to it, and as I heard the notes, my emotions began to stir. All at once, I was swept back into the long ago days, when I was such an innocent and sensitive child. My emotions reached a peak when you – the Rebbi – began to speak to the young children about the importance of learning Torah and the *zechus* that we – the children – have as we make a *siyum* on all five *Chumashim*.

The warm words that you said suddenly tore the veil of apathy and unrecipitiveness that had enveloped me for so many years. When the tape came to an end, I found myself sobbing uncontrollably.

When I calmed down a bit, I looked at the tape, and the word *Siyum* seemed to glow brightly in front of my eyes. My stony heart softened, a voice inside me called on me to take advantage of this sublime moment. Like a blind man, I groped my way to the nearby shul, took out the first *Gemara* that I saw – it was a *Maseches Beitza* – and began to learn, with the goal of finishing.

I struggled with the learning, and thought of giving up dozens of times. But the Rebbi's warm words still resonated in my ears and gave me the strength to continue, with gritted teeth. Thus, over half a year, with herculean efforts, page by page, I studied the *Gemara* until I finished.

I wanted to throw a huge, festive *siyum*, but I'm alone in the world, and I couldn't find anyone to celebrate with, besides HaKadosh Baruch Hu. I came here today with some refreshments in hand, and sat down in a corner to learn the final passage of the *masechta*. As I learned, my thoughts flashed back to my childhood. To those pure and innocent days when I felt like the luckiest child in the world, a child who had merited to finish the five *Chumashim* of Torah, and in the background, I heard your voice, Rebbi, giving me *chizuk*...

Here I was, meriting to finish, for the first time in my life, an entire *masechta* in *Talmud Bavli*...

These thoughts were flashing through my mind, and I raised my eyes. And through the veil of tears I noticed you, of all people, my beloved Rebbi Yankev, in whose merit I got here.

It took me a few seconds to realize that I was not hallucinating. Yes. This was the Rebbi, in the flesh. Hashem had sent me a sign, to show me that my offering had been accepted!

I am coming back to Torah, with joy!"

Arm in arm, *rebbei* and *talmid* walked back to the place where it had all began, to the Kosel, to celebrate the full circle, and to celebrate a *siyum* – an end to a life of suffering and solitude, and the beginning of a life rich with content, with Torah and *Yiras Shamayim*.

The seeds planted in the soul of young Nachman during that warm *tefillah* of a *rebbei* for the souls of his young *talmidim* that long ago night, sprouted slowly for so many years, until its glorious fruits were ready to be reaped, on the same night that the Rav returned to his regular *tefillah* to daven for the souls of his current young students.

Enveloped in deep emotions, the two parted one from the other. But they have kept in touch. Nachman has finished a number of *masechtos* since then. He has also married and established a home. The flame of the *tefillah* is still illuminating his path.