

# Connection Bulletin Board

By Chaim and Chaya Baila Wolf Brooklyn Teacher Center of Torah Umesorah

**Grade Level:**

Upper Elementary (6-8)

**Educational Goals/Objectives:**

Students will internalize key concepts of tefilla such as: relying only on Hashem, thanking Hashem, and forging a connection with Hashem.

**Description:**

This is a powerful, thought-provoking lesson that will transform the way your students daven. It is structured according to the seven-step lesson plan and it includes beautiful stories and parables that will convey the message of tefillah in a relevant manner.

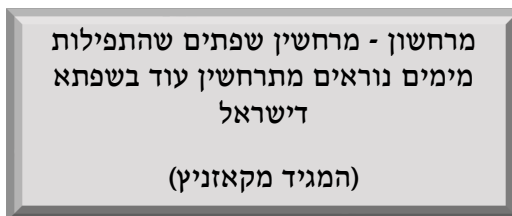
**Detailed Instructions – Classroom Use:**

**Motivation:** Mr. Klein was a hardworking businessman who devised ingenious ways of building his business. He traveled around the globe, attended shows and invested a lot of effort to bring his customers high-quality merchandise. After a particularly busy season, he was asked “Aren’t you happy with your success?”

“No, I will be happy in a month when people stop returning the merchandise. Then I will truly know how successful I was,” was his insightful reply.

The months of Elul and Tishrei conjure images of lofty connection with Hashem. The *הגדולה* composed beautiful tefillos that helped us forge a bond with our Creator. As Tishrei blends into Cheshvan, how do we know if we were successful during the yamin noraim? When we see that the relationship with Hashem continues. How can we prevent our keshet with Hashem from becoming wisps of memory? How can we take along the kedusha, the heights, and the connection that we have achieved into our daily routine?

**Aim:** How do we uphold the connection that we attained throughout the yamin noraim?



The word מרחשין is derived from the Aramaic word מרחשין which means to move. Our lips are still moving from the numerous tefillos that we davened throughout the yamim noraim. This denotes that the month of Chesvan is a time period of tefilla. During the holy months of Elul and Tishrei, we forged a close relationship with our Father in Heaven. Now we have to upkeep our relationship through talking to Him.

**This lesson focuses on three key concepts of tefillah:**

- 1) **כגמל עלי נפשי – Relying only on Hashem**
- 2) **קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו – Forging a Connection with Hashem**
- 3) **הודו לה' כי טוב – Thanking Hashem**

Why do we daven?

According to the Rambam, and those who follow his view, tefillah is a mitzvah min hatorah, a torah-based obligation derived from the words "ולעבדו בכל לבבכם", to serve Him with all your heart (דברים יא:יג). Avodah shebelev, service of the heart, refers to tefillah (Taanis 2a). Therefore, according to this view, when one daven he is fulfilling a commandment in the Torah. The details of prayer, however, - the how, what, and when to daven – are not dictated by the torah. Before the Sages composed specific texts for our tefillos, each individual had the right to select his own prayers.

What is the purpose of davening?

Our daily prayers were established by the Sages to correspond to the daily tamid sacrifice, as it is written (berachos 26a) תפילות כנגד תמידים תקנום – the prayers were instituted corresponding to the tamid offerings. Our tefillah makes it possible for a person to become close to Hashem just as a karbon – which comes from the word karov – brings a person close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

### **כגמל עלי נפשי - Relying only on Hashem**

אם לא שויתי ודוממתי נפשי כגמל עלי אמו  
כגמל עלי נפשי (תהילים קלא:ב)

A mother embracing a newborn infant takes care of him day and night. This is because the baby is totally dependent on her alone. When the baby cries in the middle of the night, she finds the strength to get up and give him whatever he needs. The baby's wailing communicates a clear message: Mommy, if you don't get up to feed me I will die of hunger! She thus takes care of him and makes sure he has what he needs. The baby's angelic face reflects calm comfort when cradled in his mother's arms. He is secure, for he knows that once he has Mommy, he has everything.

The same is true with Hashem so to speak. When a person makes himself dependent on Hashem like a newborn on its mother, when he stands in tefillah with a clear feeling that he can't do anything for himself and he is completely dependent on Hashem alone, he will never lack anything he needs. He is secure, for once he placed his trust in Hashem, the הכל יכול, he has everything.

The Commentators explain the fact that Hashem hears the outcry of orphans and widows because they cry out only to Him. They have no one else to turn to, so Hashem hears them and answers them. We see this from the marvelous precision of the following verse [about orphans and widows]:

עם ענה תענה אתו כי אם צעק יצעק אלי  
שמע אשמע צעקתו (שמות כ"ב)

The verse mentions two screams. Usually a person does not cry out twice. If he screams to Hashem once, and Hashem doesn't help him, he goes looking for other ways to get what he needs. But orphans and widows don't have anyone to turn to. They cry out, and cry out again, and Hashem answers them. So it is with every person who makes himself like the orphan and the widow, as it says:

כי אבי ואמי עזבוני וה' יאספני (תהילים כז:)

He has no one to turn to other than Hashem. He doesn't cry out to Hashem and then go searching for other solutions. Rather, he cries out again and again, and Hashem answers his prayers.

This powerful story illustrates this point:

*Rav Yeshaya and his two children, Yonassen and Leah, were among many people on a boat trying to escape from a despot in their home country. Everyone knew that if they could only manage to escape to the other side of the river, their freedom was assured. The boat was overloaded with people, valises and valuables. Suddenly the boat began to capsize. Panicky people were pushing and shoving to get onto the few life rafts to get them safely to shore. Soon there were no rafts left, and people could save their lives only if they swam to the shore. Desperate to save his two children Rav Yeshaya held onto them and began swimming. The children were frightened and crying. Rav Yeshaya held onto them desperately, using every ounce of strength he had to push forward. Soon he could carry them no longer. He would have to drop one of them; otherwise, he and his children would perish. "My children," he cried, "I cannot carry both of you. Please forgive me. I have to let go of one of you so that the other one will be saved. It's written in gemara that the life of a son takes*

*precedence over the life of a daughter because he has more mitzvos to fulfill. I beg you, Leah'la, forgive me." He started releasing his grasp of his beloved daughter. "I will carry you for as long as I can, but then we must say goodbye."*

*"I understand," sobbed Leah'la.*

*He carried both children for as long as he could and then his grip loosened and the child felt herself slipping. Slowly, more of the child's body was being submerged in the vastness of sea. Suddenly, a heartrending scream erupted from the depths of the river, "Tatteh, save me!"*

*The shattering, painful cry pierced the soul of the father. He grabbed the child and fought with strength he did not know that he possessed. Somehow, he carried both of his beloved children to the safety of shore. Totally spent and exhausted he collapsed on the beachfront next to his children.*

*"Thank you, thank you, Tatteh, for saving me," Leah'la cried." I can never thank you enough."*

*"No, my child," the fatigued father replied, "It is you who saved yourself. You see, I had no strength left to carry both of you, but your piercing cry penetrated my soul and infused me with energy that I did not know I had. And that allowed me to save you. So it was you by your crying out that one more time that saved you."*

The lesson we glean from this story is clear: when we yell "Tatteh", with the knowledge that only Hashem can help us, we will be blessed with salvation.

קוה אל ה', חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה'  
(תהילים קמ"ג)

This verse is loosely translated as: place confidence in Hashem, strengthen yourself and He will give you courage; and place confidence in Hashem. Rabbi Chama bar Chanina interprets this verse as referring to the techniques of prayer." If one prays but is not answered, let him reinforce himself and pray again," he said (Berachos 32b).

How wonderful is David's prayer:

הצילני מאיבי ה' אליך כסתי (תהילים קמ"ג)

As Rashi explains, David Hamelech says that he conceals his travails from all people, in order to tell them to Hashem. Think of a person that is sick or in great debt. How does he react to his troubles? Normally, a person in pain turns to everyone; even to people who he doesn't think can help him. In his great distress, he makes his troubles known to all; maybe someone can save him. Every neighbor and cousin becomes an

advisor. But David Hamelech did the opposite: he concealed his travails, to emphasize that he doesn't need anyone, only HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

### קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו - Forging a Connection with Hashem

When one turns to Hashem in earnest prayer with the clear recognition that he has no one to rely on – not himself or others, neither completely nor partially – then Hashem will answer him, as it says:

קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו  
באמת (תהילים קמ"ה)

"Truly" means he truly needs Hashem, not that Hashem is merely another way to get what he seeks. Everything depends only on Hashem.

There is a beautiful parable that highlights the concept of utilizing the gift of tefillah.

*A king celebrated his birthday with pomp and splendor. He sent town criers to announce that everyone, from pauper to prince, from shoe shiner to lawyer will receive an audience with the king to request whatever his heart desires. The townsmen flocked to the palace with eager anticipation as they waited for the moment of glee.*

*(You can tell your students to write what they would ask for.)*

*The commendable king fulfilled the requests for wealth and prestige, jewels and land, jobs and doctors. One scholar requested a daily audience with the king. Thus, he was ensured that he will never lack anything ever again.*

Furthermore, not only Hashem allows us to talk to him whenever we want, which is such an incredible gift, He actually wants us to speak to him. He desires to hear our voices just like a benevolent Father that wants his children to talk to Him. The following gemara portrays the message that Hashem gives us the opportunity to speak to him constantly: we should seek to talk to Hashem whenever possible.

שאלו תלמידיו את רבי שמעון בן יוחאי מפני מה לא  
ירד להם לישראל מן פעם אחת בשנה אמר להם  
אמשול לכם משל למה הדבר דומה למלך בשר ודם  
שיש לו בן אחד פסק לו מזונותיו פעם אחת בשנה  
ולא היה מקביל פני אביו אלא פעם אחת בשנה עמד  
ופסק מזונותיו בכל יום והיה מקביל פני אביו כל יום  
אף ישראל מי שיש לו ארבעה וחמשה בנים היה דואג  
ואומר שמאלא ירד מן למהר ונמצאו כולן מתים  
ברעב נמצאו כולן מכוונים את לבם לאביהן  
שבשמים.

The students of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yachai asked him “Why didn’t the מן descend once a year?” Rabbi Shimon answered with a parable.

*There was once a wealthy king who had an only child. Once a year, the king showered his son with enough food, money and clothes to sustain him for a year. What happened? This day became their annual reunion. The distraught king was brokenhearted from longing to see his son. Therefore, he started giving his son a daily ration of food.*

This is the reason why the מן fell daily: Hashem wanted to hear us daven every day. Hashem wants us to turn to Him for our sustenance.

*We know clearly that this relationship with Hashem is the purpose of our lives. Yet what keeps us back from constantly pursuing this goal?*

The following Mashal explains this concept:

*A simple man received an invitation to the wedding of the wealthiest man in his town. When the big day arrived, he dressed in his best attire and went to the wedding. When he arrived, he thought he would get a back seat by the chuppa, but to his surprise his card indicated that his seat is in the front of the dais. His surprise just increased as he realized that some very influential people were brushing shoulders with simple paupers. This was so confusing. And then it hit him. People were seated according to their relationship with the host. At this wedding, success and stature weren’t the most important qualities a person had. It was the connection that mattered.*

The Nimshal is clear:

”לא בגבורת הסוס יחפץ לא בשוקי האיש ירצה  
רוצה ה' את יראיו את המיחלים לחסדו.....”  
(תהילים קמ"ז י - יא)

We live in a world that is tainted with disillusion. Sometimes it seems to us that trappings like money and honor are what matter the most. In essence, Hashem created strength and wealth. That is not what He desires. Hashem wants us to fear Him and to seek His blessings. Hashem wants us to connect to Him through tefillah.

The following gemara expands on this thought:

ר' יהושע בן לוי חלש... אמר ליה אבובא מאי  
חזית אמר ליה עולם הפוך ראיתי עליונים  
למטה ותחתונים למעלה..... (פסחים פרק  
שלישי)

It is written in gemara Pesachim that ר' יהושע בן לוי was on his deathbed when his neshama just departed from his body. His students resuscitated him and they asked him what he saw in heaven. He answered - "עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה" - Things are not the way they seem on this world. In heaven what matters most is our connection with Hashem. Contrasting to this world where people are viewed through the lens of power and prestige, wealth and ability.

What is a prerequisite for tefillah?

### הודו לה' כי טוב - Thanking Hashem

לעולם יסדר האדם שבחו של הקב"ה ואח"כ  
יתפלל (ברכות דף ל"ב)

A person should always set forth Hashem's praises and afterward, pray. The Rambam seems to imply that someone who does not set forth Hashem's praise at the beginning of his prayers has not fulfilled the Torah-ordained mitzvah of tefillah: ...the obligation of the mitzvah is as follows: a person should beseech Hashem and pray every day. He should recount Hashem's praise, and afterward ask for the things he needs, with pleading and begging, and afterward he should give praise and thanks to Hashem for the goodness that He has bestowed upon him – each person according to his ability. (Mishnah Torah, Hilchos Tefillah 1:1-2)

The following anecdote paints the concept of thanking Hashem in vivid hues:

*Imagine a man who, at thirty five, becomes blind. For ten years, he struggles to create a productive life for himself and succeeds – to a degree. One day, his doctor informs him of an experimental procedure that, if successful, would enable him to see again. He is both frightened and exuberant. If it worked, he regains his sight. If it fails, he might die.*

*He gathers his family to discuss his options, and after much debate he announces, "I am going ahead with it." The operation is scheduled and the long awaited day arrives. Paralyzed with dread, he is wheeled into the operating room. Given sedatives, he sleeps through the entire ten – hour operation.*

*When he wakes up, his first thought is to open his eyes. He prepares himself for the moment. He will now find out how he will spend the rest of his life. He gets ready, musters up his courage, and flexes his eyelids. They don't move! In a panic he cries out, "NURSE!"*

*The nurse calmly explains that his bandages won't come off for at least three more days. So he waits. Each moment like a decade, each hour a lifetime. Finally it is time. With his family gathered around, with the doctors and nurses at*

*his side, the surgeon begins removing the gauze. The first bandage is off, now the second. The surgeon says "open your eyes." He does. And he sees!*

*For the first time in ten years, he looks out and experiences the sights of this world – and he is struck by it all. Struck by the brilliance of colors and shapes. Moved by the beauty and magnificence of all that is in front of him. He looks out the window and sees a meadow covered with beautiful, green grass. He sees flowers in full bloom. He looks up and sees a clear, blue sky. He sees people – the faces of loved ones that have been only images in his mind, the sight of his own children that he hasn't seen in ten years. Tears well up in his eyes as he says, "Doctor, what can I ever do to repay you for what you have given me? This magnificent gift of sight! Thank you!"*

We are that man. we open our eyes and we see. Every day we enjoy the remarkable gift of vision. And, we can experience the same feeling of elation that he felt on a daily basis..... If we train ourselves to feel it. Sight is a precious, unparalleled gift that we are supposed to stop and think about. Not once a lifetime. Not even once a year. Every day. We have to start appreciating the tremendous bounty that Hashem gives us. If we take every gift that we have and savor its blessings, we will be happier people.

Before we start requesting from Hashem to give us more, we should thank him for the bounty that he so lovingly bestows upon us.

In Conclusion: Said R' Meir: what is a source in the torah for the Resurrection of the dead? It says, "Then Moshe and the Children of Yisrael will sing this song to Hashem." It does not say, "Sang," but rather, "will sing." This is a source in the Torah for techiyas hameisim. In other words, he who sings the praise of Hashem will merit singing it in the future when Mashiach comes. Then our avodah will truly be complete and our bond with Hashem will be eternal.

### **Application:**

This lesson comes with a clear worksheet that synthesizes the information through questions, graphic organizers and activities.

1. Relying only on Hashem - כגמל עלי נפשי . They can write how they can rely only on Hashem in the following situations: when you miss a bus, while you're taking a test, when you're afraid, when you have tons of work, when you're looking for your homework etc.
2. Forging a Connection with Hashem- קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו . Your students can fill out a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the three parables.
3. Thanking Hashem - הודו לה' כי טוב - Tell your students to jot down things that they thank Hashem for. Give them two minutes to write and then the girl that has the most can read it to the class. If anyone has anything that she wrote she crosses it off. Repeat this activity until everyone had a chance to read their answers.



**Summary and Homework:** Tell your students to write how this lesson will iy"h change the way they daven.

**Sefarim / Books used for preparation:**

- שערים בתפילה – ר' שמשון פינקוס
- Rav Schwab on Prayer
- Maggid Series – Rabbi Pesach Krohn
- Stop Surviving Start Living – Rabbi Benzion Shaffier