

And All Believe

A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



NOACH

In the Pathways of Emunim:

Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

The Importance of Answering Ninety `Amen's Each Day

A Tzaddik

No one throughout the Torah is referred to as 'tzaddik', with one exception: Noach. The Torah testifies that "Noach was a tzaddik, wholesome in his generations" (6:9). Hashem Himself said to him, "For I have seen you a tzaddik before Me in this generation" (7:1).

Chazal have much to say about this unique title but we will dwell upon the commentary of the Divrei Yisrael of Modzitz zt"l which opens with the words of the ancients (Rabbenu Bechayei, the Kad Hakemach erch Beracha; Sefer Hagan - Derech Moshe Leyom 11; Mahrach in the introduction to "Etz Chaim") that a person is only called a tzaddik if he fulfills what is hinted at in the letters of the word צַדִּיק, that is: ninety `Amen's; four times Kedusha; ten times Kaddish and one hundred Berachos, for all these represent foundations of our emuna.

If Hashem in Person calls Noach a tzaddik, says the Divrei Yisrael, then surely Noach was careful to say those four things represented in the word -- without which, the Rishonim maintain, a man cannot be called one.

We find a hint for this from the command to Noach to "Tzei min... -- Leave the ark" (8:15). The word leave - נָצַח - adds up to the same number as `Amen', 91. Besides, if we join the two words together, we get צַדִּיק, or 90 times Amen. We can thus understand: "Hashem said to Noach - tzei - be sure to answer Amen ninety times."

Tzedaka Elevates a People

Actually, responding ninety `Amen's daily dates back to early history, as noted in the Zohar (Tikunei Zohar Tekuna Tamni 33a) which tells of the exceptional advocacy presented by the angels of mercy for Jewry at those times when prosecutors rise up against them, saying "Hashem, they wind the tefillin around their arms and heads and bring You tributes of their tzedakah, represented by the ninety `Amen's [tzaddik], four kedushos [daled], one hundred berachos [kuf] and the study of the five [hey] chumashim." Upon saying this, the good angels receive this tribute from Jews and present it to the King, who are then granted their request.

The work "Beer Lachai Roi" (by the Admor of Munkatch zy"o) notes that the Zohar refers to the `Amen's etc. as `tzedakah', for a person must perform them without expecting any reward but as a donation in order to please his Creator, in the merit of which Hashem will receive his prayers on His right side, which is called `yemin tzedek', the right side of justice/charity.

HaRav Shimon Pincus zt"l once said in stirring address: "You should know that if a person is lacking one of the necessary requisites which Chazal determined: the ninety `Amen's, four kedushos, ten kadishes and one hundred berachos - he is no longer considered a tzaddik! It is not a question of one less `Amen' but that of an entire structure dependent upon every part. If a person is missing a finger, he is not a complete person. Here, too, lacking one component, he is handicapped, imperfect ('Nefesh Shimshon' on the Siddur, p. 138).

Responding `Amen' After the Morning Blessings

Rabbenu Chaim Vital, major disciple of the Ari Hakadosh, tells that his master was very strict about saying the bircos hashachar before several people each morning, and would even interrupt the pesukei d'zimra to answer them. He did all this in order to fulfill the obligation of answering ninety `Amen's ('Psora d'Abba, Bircos Hashachar 5').

The Mishne Berura (6:13) brings the halacha of say-

ing ninety `Amen's a day as the source for reciting the bircos hashachar in partnership in shul, for by this practice a person can easily complete the required ninety `Amen's. This is spelled out in the Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Orach Chaim 6 9): "Some are accustomed that after having already said the bircos hashachar and having had others respond, all take turns doing likewise, thus completing the ninety requirements each day."

The Rema of Pano (Responsa 109) corroborates the above by saying that a `Amen' for the ninety count is only valid by responding to a blessing and not to a kaddish or in the bircas hamazon etc.

R' Moshe Zakus verifies this in his commentary on the Zohar (Vayelech 285 b): The kedushos and the kaddishes are an integral part of the prayers with a minyan [and therefore do not count], so that one must make an effort to add and hear berachos said by others, which is our practice, and a traditional custom in Eretz Yisrael from early times. This is why the passuk specifies (Yeshaya 26:2): "Goy tzaddik shomer emunim," and does not say "shomer kedushos", since it is primarily applicable by those berachos where one must be vigilant and watchful in order to accumulate those ninety `Amen's in a single day.

Before Saying `Shemoneh Esrei'

One opinion holds that one must complete the required ninety before one reaches shemoneh esrei, based on the Zohar Chadash (Tikunim Vol. 3, 84a) which says that whoever has not completed his required ninety `Amen's, must concentrate on the fifteen `vav's of "Ames v'yatziv" etc. which add up to ninety. From here we infer that one must complete his ninety `Amen's before shemoneh esrei ('Bnei Abba' on 'Psora d'Abba' in the name of `Ateres Tzvi' of Zhidichov).

Completing the Full Ninety `Amen's

Someone who cannot, for some reason, complete ninety `Amen's, can concentrate on the fifteen vav's of "Veyatziv venachon..." whose numerical value of the first letters together with the alef of "Emes" add up to ninety-one [6x15+1], just like `Amen' (Zohar Chadash Tikunim Vol. II, p. 83b).

The Ben Ish Chai brings another way of completing the quota taken from the `Keser Malchus' manuscript: A good custom is for a person to say each day "Baruch Hashem l'olam amen v'amen" (Tehillim 89:92) forty-five times, which can come instead of the ninety required `Amen's if he has no recourse, as is the case when he is housebound and alone.

The Ben Ish Chai adds, "I also am accustomed to saying this passuk according the required number each day after the blessing of kohanim which we say after the morning blessings. I do it so as not to forget to say them, once I have set a special time for it ("Ben Ish Chai" Shana A, Parshas Vayeshev Os 15l).

Some learn from the words of the poskim that under difficult circumstances, one can complete the required number by concentrating on the initial letters of "Ain k'Elokeinu... Mi K'Elokeinu... Nodeh l'Elokeinu... which spell out `Amen' ('Notrei Amen' Vol. II p. 158).

Saying Ninety `Amen's Protects and Saves

The Zohar (Zohar Chadash 83a) brings that if one is very careful to keep the four things represented by `TzeDaKaH', Hashem has mercy over His creations and protects them from suffering and danger as is written in Mishlei (14:34), "Tzedakah elevates a nation." Also, in Yeshaya (59:17), "...donning tzedakah as armor."

In "Midbar Kedumos" (Maaracha A, Os 33), the Ben Ish Chai brings a story found in "Toldos Adam" by Rabbenu Yoel Baal Shem Tov about a woman named Brusha belonging to the cult of demons who was sent to claim the life of an infant while sleeping alongside her mother.

This evil spirit returned empty-handed, reporting that she had been helpless against the mother who had responded `Amen' ninety times that day. This story became public because the mother woke up suddenly and heard the conversation between the demon and her superiors.

Some sages have advised this protective safeguard on the basis of the pasuk (Tehillim 91:7) "A thousand will fall from your side and ten thousand from your right hand." In the merit of your `TZaD', your ninety `Amen's and four kedushos you will overcome ninety evil-doers and ten thousand from your right hand ('Olelos Yehuda' Tehillim ibid).

The pasuk `Kaf achas asara zahav melaiah with incense..." (Bamidbar 7:11) incorporates a count of ninety [zahav melaiah], signifying that by saying ninety `Amen's daily, one will be protected just like from the incense, which was very powerful in saving from trouble and injury (see `Toldos Yitzchak - Elef Hamagen p 50).

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein shlita, Av Beis Din of Ramat Elchanan, said that the one hundred berachos were instituted in order to deflect the one hundred curses written in the Tochacha. If so, we can add that the ninety `Amen's are designed to save one from the ninety imperfections which invalidate a Kohen from service, as enumerated by the Rambam (Hilchos Bias HaMikdash 8a). Some support this from the word `hamum - the blemish' which adds up to ninety-one, like `Amen' (Kovetz Shu"s at the end of `Oleinu Leshabeiach' Vol. III, 78; Meoros Hadaf Hayomi Bechoros 43a).

One Is Rewarded with Olam Haba

Our Sages wrote that in the future world, a person will be asked if he was a tzaddik, that is, if he observed the daily four requirements of TZaDIK: the ninety `Amen's etc. ('Sefer Hagan' Derech Moshe 11th Day).

The sefer `V'Imru Amen' (Part II, 28) quotes an ancient work: "Therefore one should make an effort to pray in a shul together with a congregation, for this guarantees him the required ninety `Amen's and he will be able to fulfill "tzaddik b'emunaso yichye" - that is, literally, in the merit of the ninety `Amen's he will be rewarded with a good, long life in this world and the Next; he will sit in Olam Haba together with the tzaddikim who, even in death, are considered alive, and will enjoy eternal life.

R' Nota of Shinova said that whoever answers Amen combines the two main Names of Hashem together, whose added numerical value is the same as `Amen'. He is thereby also asking Hashem to fulfill His promise of gathering in the exiles and testifying to his faith in all of Hashem's commandments. He thus adds light to his neshama from the two holy Names hinted at in the word `Amen' and will merit responding `Amen' in the World to Come. Seeing how great is the reward, one should be very careful in relating to this mitzvah - in this world, so that his years be extended, and in the Next World, that he will be enabled to understand the Written and Oral Torah ('Hanhogas Tzaddikim' I, p 271).

We cannot finish this piece without quoting the rousing words of R' Eliyahu Mani zt"l, Av Beis Din of Chevron: "Let not the response of `Amen' be taken lightly for a person is not called a tzaddik unless he answers ninety `Amen's. Who, then, cannot hear this and not be moved to have his hair stand on end, and he should stand vigil like a lion not to miss out on even one `Amen' ('Siach Yitzchak' p 279).

Tales of Emunim:

A story about Amen and Prayer



"Chai Chai Yoducha -- the Living Shall Acknowledge You



The story we are about to tell is a first person account told to R' Zusha Horowitz, Rav of the Kehillos Chassidim in Elad and related at an assembly for the coordinators of Bnei Emunim in Yeshivos in Menachem Av, 5774:

The condition of the town where our story takes place was no better than that of the surrounding area in the pre-Holocaust period. Jews were shaking off their heritage throughout Europe and many were the homes where Torah-true parents, living under the same roof as secular sons and grandchildren, were helpless to do anything.

But the red lines became blurred when the Nazis rose to power and made no distinction between religious and secular Jews, hunting them down and persecuting them equally. Millions of Jews fled their homes for unknown destinations but were rounded up and killed brutally nonetheless. During these terrible times, many wayward Jews returned to their faith and died martyrs' deaths in penitence and purity.

Five years into the war, one could no longer recognize what had once been thriving Jewish strongholds, with only handfuls of communities remaining from the hundreds of vibrantly Jewish cities and towns. The small numbers of survivors tried to build their lives anew and returned to their home towns, only to despair of their countries which had soaked up so much Jewish blood and were unwilling to take them back... Frequent pogroms served to emphasize this realization and people sought less hostile havens abroad - either in America, Eretz Yisrael or wherever they were admitted.

It was no different in the town where our story takes place and from a Jewish population of hundreds, all that remained were thirty-six survivors, all from one family. The very fact of their survival was an unsolved mystery for many years.

It was finally revealed through one woman, a small girl during the Holocaust, who found her way to a secular kibbutz. Before her marriage, she insisted that a chareidi rabbi officiate at the ceremony. Upon this occasion, she revealed the secret of her survival.

"As a child, I visited my grandmother, who was religious. I noticed a small, yellowed note on a book shelf and was curious to see what it was all about. I read the two sentences, which was a message to me and to all the members of the family:

"To my dear children and grandchildren: I want you to know that if you wish to be spared from danger and troubles, you must make the effort to say your morning berachos and make sure that someone is present to answer `Amen'."

This, then was the private secret of the family's survival. "Our entire family was saved," the bride revealed. Not all the members were Torah-observant, but those who were not, nevertheless kept this counsel and were all spared, just like my grandmother promised." She was even able to substantiate it.

"We are thirty-six sur-

vivors, which is the combined number of the eighteen bircos hashachar and the eighteen `Amen's in response."

מה טובו אהליך יעקב...

About the Admor of Seret Vizhnitz, the Baal **Mekor Baruch** zy"o
Whose yahrzeit falls on this coming Sunday:

It is told that the Admor was accustomed to daven the morning Shabbos prayers in a different shul each week in the city of Seret where he officiated. Upon entering one of these shuls one time and realizing that they had already said the bircos hashachar, he picked himself up and left. Naturally, the gabboim ran after him, begging him to return. "Once the Rebbe has entered, it is not seemly that he should leave," they said, but he was firm. "Eisav entered after the berachos," he explained, "and I am from the seed of Yaakov".

(Noam Haberacha p 84)

**LET US ALSO
MAKE SURE TO
COME IN TIME
TO RECITE THE
BIRCOS HA-
SHACHAR
WITH A PART-
NER IN THE
TENTS OF
.YAAKOV**

