

# And All Believe

## A Weekly Leaflet from the House of "Bnei Emunim"



PAR' VAYECHI

### In the Pathways of Emunim:

### Amen and Prayer in this Parsha

#### א-ל מלך נאמן

#### The Demise of Yaakov Avinu

Chazal (Pesachim 56a) describe the moving moments which preceded Yaakov Avinu's death, during which, as told in our parasha (Bereishis 49:1), he gathered all of his children and sought to reveal to them the end of days. And so they all assembled around him and expectantly anticipated the fateful announcement regarding the destiny of the entire Jewish nation, when the Shechina slipped away from their father.

They were alarmed to hear their father saying painfully: My sons, can it be that there is among you one who does not believe in Hashem?! And they declared unanimously: "Shema Yisrael, Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d! Hashem is One! -- Dear Father! Know that just as in your heart Hashem is One, so, too, in our hearts Hashem is One!" These words reassured Yaakov and he thanked Hashem: "... ברוך שם...".

R' Yehuda ben Yakar, one of the outstanding commentators on tefilla who was also the Rebbe of the Ramban, elaborates on the words of the gemara and says that before they declared "Shema Yisrael," realizing that they were not destined to hear the prophecy of the end of days, they said: "א-ל", "א-ל meaning to say that" even if cannot know the future, we are convinced and do believe with our whole hearts that Hashem is trustworthy to keep His promise and will redeem us at the time He feels is proper and good" ("Peirush HaTefilos v'Habrachos p. 9).

#### TO COMPLETE 248 WORDS

'K-el Melech Ne'eman!' From that day onward and to this very day, this eternal declaration reverberates from the mouths of millions of Jews who proclaim with their whole hearts their faith in Hashem and His promise to redeem them from the darkness of the exile. Let us therefore dwell a bit on the source and significance of this marvelous phrase of praise.

The Medrash Tanchuma (Kedoshim 6) brings: "R' Mani said: Let not the Shema be held lightly in your eyes, because it contains 248 words corresponding to the organs of a person." Upon counting these words, we find that nine are missing. We therefore add the six words "Baruch Shem...", while the three missing words are completed by the chazzan who says "Hashem Elokeichem Emess". When praying alone, a person precedes the Shema with the three words, 'K-el Melech Ne'eman' (Rokeiach, Berachos; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 61 3).

The Baalei Hatosfos ("Daas Zekeinim" Devarim 6 4) writes that there is a special significance to completing 248 words in the Shema, because whoever utters these 248 words of the Shema is assured that Hashem will watch over his 248 organs, as is written (Mishlei 4:4): "Heed My mitzvos and live." Chazal interpreted this as follows: Hashem said: Guard My 248 and I will guard your 248 organs.

The Ben Ish Chai writes in Parashas Va'eyra that the 248 words of the Shema are like a 'romach - spear' in one's hands to defend a person from his enemies. Chazal also said regarding Pinchas (Bamidbar 25:7), "And he took a 'romach' in his hand." Through his deeds, through his re-

citing the 248 words of Shema, he was able to perform his zealous deed. We find this hinted at as well in the words (Shemos 8:19), "And I shall place a separation between My people and between yours tomorrow - 'Iemachar". In the merit of the "MaChar", 248 words of the Shema, Hashem will assure the protection and demarcation of the Jewish people.

#### FAITHFUL TO KEEP HIS PROMISE

This praise describes Hashem through the two words: "K-el" and "Melech", as the Maharsha explains (Vol. 1 Shabbos 119b): Throughout the year we refer to Hashem as "K-el - A-mighty." During the Yamim Noraim, we refer to Hashem as "Melech - King", as we see that we conclude the beracha of "HaK-el Hakadosh" with "HaMelech Hakadosh." Therefore, when we declare our conviction that Hashem will keep His promise by saying "K-el Melech Ne'eman", we use both titles. Only One Who is both A-mighty and also King is capable of keeping His word, which is not true of a human king whose power is limited, and surely not of a false god or power, El, which can do nothing.

The Maharsha writes in Sanhedrin 110b that the meaning of "K-el Melech Ne'eman" is that Hashem is the Power in this world, K-el, and the King, Melech, in the world to come, when all of mankind will be judged on the final Judgment Day, and additionally, "Ne'eman", Trustworthy to reward and punish each person according to his just desert. The Maggid of Vilkomir, R' Chaim Yitzchak Rappaport zt"l, explained this differently and said that "K-el" denotes Hashem's attribute of compassion, as is written in Tehillim 52:3, "מלך מושפט יעמיד ארץ", "whereas" Melech" denotes the attribute of justice, as is written in Mishlei 29:4, "מלך משפט יעמיד ארץ". Thus when we say "K-el Melech Ne'eman", we declare that whether Hashem deals with us through chessed or through din. He is always trustworthy, we know that whatever He does is for our good ("Einei Yitzchak, Shabbos ibid).

The Pnei Menachem of Ger said the following along similar lines (Vayeichi 5756, Hamalach): The initial letters of "K-el Melech Ne'eman" spell out "AMeN" and also spell

"Efraim MeNashe." We know that Efraim denotes the attribute of chessed and Menashe - the attribute of justice (see RM'D Volei Bereishis 48:15), to teach us that whether He relates to us through chessed or through compassion, we must always believe, accept and justify whatever He does.

#### AMEN - "K-EL MELECH NE'EMAN"

Having learned the importance and advantage of this form of praise, "K-el Melech Ne'eman", we must stop and examine the special connection between this and the mitzvah of 'Amen' which is anchored in the well known words of the gemara in Shabbos 119b: "Reish Lakish said: Whoever answers 'Amen' with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him, as is written, 'Open the gates and admit - שומר אמונים - do not read it thus but - שאומרים אמן.' What is 'Amen'? R' Chanina said: 'K-el Melech Ne'eman.'"

Aside from the simple and obvious meaning of the word 'Amen' as confirmation of the blessing said

And when you arise from your study ask yourself how to implement what you learned (Letter of the Rambam)

Study is Not the Primary Goal - Deeds Are (Avos 1:17) Preach Well and Practice Well (Chagiga 14b)

by another, there is the additional significance in the initials of the three words for which it stands, as Rashi notes (ibid and in Sanhedrin 111A): One who responds with `Amen' testifies that his Creator is a Trustworthy A-mighty King and thus assumes the yoke of Heaven with his whole heart.

Tosofos there explain that when answering `Amen', one should bear in mind the words `K-el Melech Ne'eman'. The Ohr Zarua (Hilchos Seuda 193) adds that when Chazal said (Berachos 47a) that "Whoever extends his `Amen' has his days and years extended", they wished to establish that one should extend it for the length of these three words.

Saying 'Amen', which represents the initials of `K-el Melech Ne'eman', constitutes a clear declaration that we acknowledge the Providence of Hashem over us and that we rely upon Him absolutely. R' Yehuda bar Yakar states this in his commentary to tefilla as follows: "Amen' is the initials of `K-el Melech Ne'eman', that is, one should not question what Hashem promised to do and did not yet fulfill, for He is a trustworthy King to keep His world, as is written, "K-el is not a man who will disappoint or a human who will have regrets." The Rishonim added that `Ne'eman' is a description of something mighty, fixed in its place like a solid wooden peg which cannot be easily uprooted (see Rashbam Bamidbar 12:7).

We can also add what the Rishonim wrote (Rab"n on Berachos 184; Meiri Berachos 45b and others) that saying `K-el Melech Ne'eman' before Kriyas Shema is similar to answering `Amen' after the beracha of `Ahava Rabba'.

### ONE WORD WITH THREE MEANINGS

'Amen' is different than other abbreviated words, where the long

form is the real meaning and the letters only indicate the phrase intended. The word `Amen' is much more significant in its representation of those three words which allude to three basic concepts. `K-el' refers to the attribute of chessed, one of the three pillars upon which the world stands. `Melech' stands for awe, fear and the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. `Ne'eman' refers to emuna, faith, which is the foundation of everything.

This is why Chazal said that answering `Amen' is greater than making a beracha, for a blessing itself only incorporates chessed (Hashem) and malchus (Melech), whereas the response of `Amen' adds on the fundamental principle of trust, ne'eman, and faith in eternal life (`Bas Ayin' Vayechi).

### ONE, ONLY AND TRUSTWORTHY

`Korban Asher' brings an excellent parable illustrating the connection between `K-el Melech Ne'eman' and Shema Yisrael (p. 28): It is generally true that what two people say is believed more readily than the word of only one person, as we see that a valid testimony requires two people. When a person wishes to lend money to a friend, he asks the borrower to bring a guarantor. But if the borrower is an esteemed figure, he is trusted even if he comes unaccompanied since he is well known and dependable enough that he will not go back on his word or deny the loan under any circumstances.

According to this we can say that we first declare in the Shema that Hashem is One and Only, through our `K-el Melech Ne'eman'. His `only-ness' is no contradiction to His trustworthiness. On the contrary, it enables us to believe in Him with our whole heart and to rely on Him with all our might.

## Tales of Emunim:

## A story about Amen and Prayer

### AN ANGEL IN EVERY HOME

The outgoing call from the Bnei Emunim Organization seemed altogether routine. It was answered by the mother of one of the children who won a prize in the last raffle which had been organized. She, like the mother of the call before her, was happy to hear about the nice prize for her son.

Calls like the above often take place as much as twice daily and the secretaries have become used to hearing the exulted cries on the other end of the line, following by exuberant thanks and blessings from the winner. This time, too, the call should have ended quickly and made way for the next call on the list, but this time, the excited mother wished to share her story with the representative of the organization.

"On one of the cold and rainy nights last month, my ten-year-old son decided on his own to connect a Shabbos clock to a small heater near his bed so that it would go on at six the next morning and make getting out from under the warm covers much easier.

"He probably thought of the idea the night before, when he asked me for the Shabbos clock, explaining why he needed it. I was busy at the time and didn't really pay attention to his words. I let him have the clock and forgot about the matter.

"I usually wake up at seven in the morning but this morning, for some strange reason, I awoke earlier than usual - at six. I asked myself if it was worth going back to sleep for another hour or to begin my day already then. Suddenly, I smelled an acrid odor. It took a moment for me to register the smell of smoke. Fire!

"I jumped out of bed in alarm and followed my nose to locate the source of the smell. The first place I thought of was the kitchen but everything was clean and peaceful, just like I had left it the night before. The girls' room was also alright. When I got to the boys' room, I gave a scream.

"The sight that met my eyes was unbelievable. My ten-year-old son was fast asleep in bed but the heater by the side of his bed was on fire! Flames were already licking at the pillow under Moishy's head. Another moment and... My shouts woke up the whole household and soon the fire was put out and life resumed its regular routine.

"After everyone had left for their daily schedule, I was able to sit down and reconstruct the whole event. Then I began to realize what a great miracle had taken place.

"That afternoon, I asked my children, 'Does anyone have an idea why we were so lucky to have this miracle take place? What was the special merit that saved our Moishy?'

"They suggested many ideas when suddenly, someone rushed over to the refrigerator and pulled off a colored paper fastened by a magnet. 'This paper is what saved Moishy!' exclaimed his brother. It was a paper circulated by your wonderful organization, Bnei Emunim, announcing the project of `Amen' in Every Home. This project has become very popular, especially with my ten-year-old, who decided to join the campaign and whenever someone in the family said `Amen', he went over to mark it down on the paper. We all are certain that this project is what caused the wonderful miracle and saved Moishy's life.

"My son, the hero of this story, turned to me and said, 'Let's change the name of the project.'

"Why?" we all asked him.

"Because we know that `Amen' has the same gematriya as `Malach - angel', and we feel as if we've seen a real angel. Instead of `Amen' in Every Home, we can call it `A Malach in Every Home.' We all

agreed that it was a wonderful idea and from then on, we have been ever so careful in answering `Amen' properly, in the best way possible. And you can be sure that we will continue to be careful with this mitzvah, after having experienced the power of `Amen' so marvelously!"

העוד לא שבבה חמתו לנצח  
על מה עשה ככה ומה חרי...  
(מתוך סליחות לעשרה בטבת)

**FOR A SPEEDY GEULA, AND LET US SAY `AMEN'**

"A certain chassid fasted in order to have the secret of the length of the galus revealed to him. He dreamt as follows: 'How can the geula arrive so long as the world is not careful in answering `Amen' after the blessing of geula?' [The beracha of `Hamachazir Shechinaso leZion' -- because the congregation has always already begun `Modim d'Rabbanan', and the blessing of `Ufros oleinu' on Friday night -- when the congregation has already begun saying `Veshamru']

And now, through our many sins, even after the beracha of `Mechayei Hameisim' they are not alert in answering `Amen' but immediately begin reciting Kedusha. These are, after all, the three most significant `Amen's upon the very geula depends. Therefore, everyone is urged to be especially vigilant in this."

(Derech Moshe' Day 11)

**Bnei Emunim**  
The World of Faith

**AMEN, BECAUSE I ALSO BELIEVE**