

Vechol Maaminim



A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

One Doesn't Say "Rubo Kekulo" at a Covenant

"אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם... כל איש ישראל" (כט)

Why did the Torah repeat "Kol ish Yisrael" after saying "kulchem" – all of you?

Harav Simchah Bunim Sofer, the Rav of Pressburg, explained this according to an answer of the Taz (Orach Chaim 582 3) to a similar question that he raised on the tefillah of Rosh Hashanah. It says "Meloch al kol ha'olam kulo bichvodecha" – here, too, the word "kulo" seems redundant after we already asked "Meloch al kol ha'olam". The Taz explains that because we have a rule that "Rubo kekulo – most is like all" (Horiyos 3b), therefore we emphasize, "Al kol ha'olom kulo" rule over the entire world – and not rubo, most of it.

Based on this, the passuk here can be explained as follows: The Torah sought to emphasize that "kol Yisrael", all of Yisrael, stood at the bris, the covenant, not only most of them; therefore, it once again emphasizes: "kol ish Yisrael."

Shaarei Simchah

Shul Is Considered "Another Land"

"ויתשם ה' מעל אדמתם באף ובחמה ובקצף גדול וישליכם אל ארץ אחרת כיום הזה" (כז)

The Gemara (Brachos 8a) says that when Rabi Yochanan was told that there were very old people in Bavel, he wondered: Wasn't the promise (Devarim 11:21) of "l'maan yirbu yemeichem viyemei beneichem", so that your days and the days of your progeny should be multiplied, given "al ha'adamah asher nishba Hashem l'avoseichem" on the land that Hashem promised to your forefathers? But when he heard that those elderly people spent a lot of time in shul, he was calmed. The Maharsha (Vol. 1 ibid) cites the Gemara (Megillah 29a) that "The batei knessios and the batei midrash in Bavel are destined to be settled in Eretz Yisrael", and explains that this means that they contain an essence

Mibe'er Emunim

Sources for the Virtue of Answering Amen

"Ashamnu"

For Not Answering Amen

"ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו ככל אשר אנכי מצוך היום..." (ל ב)

"One who does not answer amen requires tremendous teshuvah, and even if he didn't answer only once, like when he heard a brachah even on a fruit, or that his friend made a brachah on a mitzvah, how much more so in the tefillah of the sha"tz... In Viduy of Ashamnu each day a person should shed tears for those amens that he did not answer."

Ohr Hayashar [Mahara"m Papirash] 7 18-19

"Amen Aloud" to Atone for a Sin Done "Aloud"

"ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו ככל אשר אנכי מצוך היום אתה ובניך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך" (ל ב)

The Gemara (Yoma 86b) explains that in order for teshuvah to be complete, a person has to encounter that same sin again, at the same place and at the same time that he sinned, and when he overcomes and does not repeat the sin, then he knows that his teshuvah is real. When someone sinned by speaking with chutzpah and impudence in front of everyone, the rectification will be when, middah kenegged middah, measure for measure, he will daven and answer amen loud in shul, without being ashamed of those who mock him. If he does so, then his teshuvah will surely be accepted with love and willingness.

Drashos Lechem Shlomo [Rav S.Z. Ehrenreich of Shamloj] Shabbos Shuvah

of Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, those who spend time in the shuls and batei medrash live long lives, as if they are "al ha'adamah" in the land.

Harav Tzvi Yitzchak Abramowitz, the Rav of Chatzor Haglilit, further explains this passuk:

"Yayitshem Hashem mei'al admasam...el ertz achres kayom hazeh": Even after Yisrael was banished from their land, Hashem, in His great mercy, still left them the essence of "acheres" of "Eretz" Yisrael, which are the batei knesses in Bavel – and that is the secret of our existence in galus.

Ta'am Hatzvi

"Umodeh V'Ozev Yerucham" – One Who Admits and Abandons the Sin Will Receive Compassion

"הנסתרות לה' אלקינו והנגלת לנו ולבנינו עד עולם" (כח)

Harav Yosef Di Abila explained that this passuk alludes to the words of the holy Zohar (Balak 195 1) that when a person admits to all the sins that he remembers, then those that he forgets do not withhold his atonement. When does it happen that "Hanistaros l'Hashem Elokeimi" are not considered to our detriment? When "Vehaniglos lanu..." – we do not ignore those that are revealed to us, and we admit to them and regret having committed those sins.

Vayavo Yosef

"Me'Hashem Maaneh Lashon"

"ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו ככל אשר אנכי מצוך היום" (ל ב)

The Chasam Sofer explained:

Moshe told Bnei Yisrael: If you repent then you will receive Divine Assistance, and the right words will be given to you through which you will be able to daven and plead, as it says (Mishlei 16:1) "L'adam ma'archei lev ume'Hashem ma'aneh lashon." If "Veshavta ad Hashem Elokecha" you return to Hashem, then "Veshamata bekolo" – you will hear the Voice of Hashem speaking from your mouth, and your tefillah will be said properly, "kechol asher Anochi metzavecha hayom" – as happens with me [Moshe], when I rebuke and teach Yisrael, the Shechinah speaks from within my throat.

Chasam Sofer

תּוֹמָרָה!

Chazal say in Maseches Shabbos (119b): "What is amen? מלך נאמן" The Maharsha explained (Vol. I. ibid) that one who answers amen testifies to the "the Name K-I that Hashem is called all year and the Name Melech that He is called on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – He is Ne'emman, loyal and true."

Dear Yid! Be careful about reciting Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa during these days, and thus you will begin your day with a testimony that is especially apt for these days - that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Kel Melech Ne'emman.



Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa (1)

Forgotten and Reestablished

Upon the conclusion of the series on rising in the morning, it seems fitting to end off by expounding on a very early custom that has been practiced for many generations in Klal Yisrael and is an integral part of the *sefer hashkamas haboker*: Reciting *Birchos Hashachar* together, in shul, with one person making the *brachos* and the other answering amen, and then the other way around. This practice has been revived in recent years, as tens of thousands throughout Klal Yisrael have returned to strengthen it, and the Name of Hashem is sanctified through all the Worlds. Each morning, some time before *davening*, one can find many 'chavrusa' pairs for *Birchos Hashachar* in shuls and *batei medrash* throughout the world. Those who practice this custom before *davening* can easily be among the ten first people to arrive in shul. This helps their *tefillos* be recited with more *kavanah*, and they have a *segulah* to be accepted.

The Shevet Halevi explained in the founding letter of Bney Emunim that reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* can be categorized as something that "shechachum vechazru veyasdim" was forgotten and then reestablished. Indeed, if we delve into the roots of this custom, we will find that it has a very holy source and is mentioned often throughout the Rishonim and the Acharonim. It was a custom practiced by *gedolei Torah* and the sages of *Kabbalah*. Following is an encapsulation of some of those sources:

Ninety Amens

The holy *Zohar* (*Tikkunei Zohar* 18, 33 1 and more) states that a person should answer ninety amens each day. This *takanah* is cited in the *poskim* (*Mishneh Berurah* 6 13) and the Rishonim state that "a person is not considered a *tzaddik* if he does not fulfill it" (*Kad Hakemach* entry *Brachah*). Because this can only be fulfilled with amens answered to *brachos*, it is difficult to meet the quota without answering amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* of another person. (*Shu"t Rema MiPano* 109)

A Minhag of Our Sages

Many *gedolei Yisrael* practiced and continue to practice beginning their *tefillah* with reciting *Birchos Hashachar* in front of someone who will answer amen after them. First and foremost among these who adhered to this *takanah* in recent generations was the Arizal. His disciples testified that each day he would answer amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* of many people, sometimes even one hundred people. He would even stop to do this in the middle of *Pesukei Dezimrah* (*Shaarei Teshuvah Orach Chaim* 6 5). The Chida even said "and it is known that this custom spread in the large towns and villages." (*Birchei Yosef Orach Chaim* 677 2)

Tefillah Is Accepted in the Merit of Answering Amen

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayelech* 285 1) explains that answering amen opens the gates to accepting *tefillah*, as it says there: "When there is a *tz'ar* for Yisrael and they *daven* before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the Voice declares in all the worlds: 'Open the gates and a *goy tzaddik shomer emunim*

will enter' – do not read it *emunim*, but rather *amenim*. Open the gates – just like Yisrael opened the gates of blessing Above, so too, now the gates should open to accept their *tefillos* to save them from their troubles." When reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* before *davening* one can accumulate lots of amens that will surely open the Gates of Heaven.

It should be noted that adhering to this practice helps the *mispallel* arrive in shul early and thus to *daven* slowly and calmly. This inevitably helps the *tefillah* to be accepted.

Bivrachah Sheleimah Venomar Amen

As is known from the *poskim* (*Rema Orach Chaim* 167 2), answering amen is part of the *brachah* and through amen the *brachah* is completed. The *Zohar* says (*Eikev* 271 1) that when the *brachah* that is answered by amen rises On High, it is welcomed by a Heavenly Entourage, and they declare: "This is a *brachah* that was recited properly and completely." They then tie *Keserim* [crowns] to it for the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

We are scrupulous to perform each *mitzvah* with as much *hiddur* as possible, and we even spend a lot of money toward this end. Here we have a *hiddur mitzvah* that is not derived from the opinion of a minority of *poskim*, but rather is one of the main *takanos* of *Chazal*. It does not require any monetary investment on our part, nor does it take too much time. It is therefore worthy that we should fulfill it with full intensity, and it will benefit us in so many ways.

Throughout our *tefillos* and requests, we ask that they should be fulfilled with completion: "*Geulah sheleimah*", "*teshuvah sheleimah*", "*refuah sheleimah*". By the same measure, it is worthy that we should offer our praise with completion, by taking care to answer amen after it. Surely it is worthy that we should say in this fashion those *brachos* that *Chazal* chose to begin the day with, the lofty *Birchos Hashachar*, in which we thank the Creator for all the good and *chessed* that He bestows upon us day after day, and through which we strengthen our *emunah* in Him.

Fulfilling the Takanah of Dovid Hamelech with Completion

The actual *Birchos Hashachar* were formulated by Dovid Hamelech in order to stop plagues and prevent catastrophes (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18 21). What is more fitting than to join to them the amen that opens all the gates, as it says (*Yeshayah* 26:2) "*Pischu shearim veyayo goy tzaddik shomer emunim [amenim]*."

We hereby issue a call to *acheinu kol Bais Yisrael*: The custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* is something so easy to do. We are given this opportunity to fulfill it each morning, to begin the day with a declaration of *emunah* like no other, to increase *emunah* in the world and to add value to our *tefillah*. Join the tens of thousands who have already strengthened themselves in this hoy custom, and you will merit tremendous reward that is reserved for those who are strict to answer amen, and may your *tefillos* be accepted before the Master of the World.

Asher Yatzar, Amen and Citizenship

This remarkable story was heard firsthand, from a close friend of Bney Emunim from New York, who prefers to remain anonymous. For many years, he was strict to answer amen, especially after *Birchos Hashachar*, together with the chairman of Bney Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, *shlita*.

For the purpose of the story we will call this person Rabbi Shulman. He is a European citizen who has lived in the United States with his family for many years. Like hundreds of thousands of other residents, he had applied to receive U.S. citizenship and waited patiently for the process to advance.

The U.S., as many people know, does not grant citizenship to anyone who wants it. Those who apply to become citizens need to go through a lot of bureaucracy and red tape that lasts years. If the person's application is finally approved, then then goes for an interview where he is asked a number of questions about American history, and then pledges his allegiance to the United States.

Over the years, Rabbi Shulman submitted requests to the American immigration authorities, waited for answers, filled out the necessary forms and obtained all the relevant documents. He signed papers, submitted wage slips, and went through endless bureaucracy, until his finally received an appointment at the immigration office for his interview and final citizenship process.

Friends with whom he consulted advised him to hire a lawyer to accompany the process, but for some reason, he opted not to do so.

On the day of the interview, Rabbi Shulman rose early, recited *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, as he usually did, *davened Shacharis* and set out for the immigration office.

As noted, Rabbi Shulman decided not to hire a lawyer. After doing some homework on the subject, he felt confident enough in the success of the process. The roads were heavy with traffic when he set out, and after a drive of about an hour, he found himself at the office, a short time before his appointment.

While he waited, he checked again the file of documents he had with him. Everything was there, organized, with the photos, the passport... Wait. Where was the passport???

To Rabbi Shulman's horror, his European passport had been forgotten at home.

Traveling back home and back to the office to get the passport was out of the question; it was a one-time appointment, and if the person does not show up, he misses the long awaited opportunity. Going home would take him too long and he would not make it back before the office closed.

Rabbi Shulman was confused and overwhelmed. He didn't have a lawyer to consult; he looked around, but aside for a few dozen immigrants from various nations, he didn't see anyone who he could ask.

Desperate, he almost made his second mistake of the day – going into the interview without the passport. He felt that it would be better to do that than miss the interview totally...

Meanwhile, the need arose, and as he

made the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, he remembered its *segulos* for a *shemirah* and success. In another time and place, he would have tried to find someone to answer amen after his *brachah*, so that it could be a complete one. But now, due to the circumstances, he sufficed with reciting the *brachah* aloud and with *kavanah*.

He finished the *brachah*, concentrating especially on the words "*umafli la'asos*" when he suddenly heard a voice beside him clearly say "amen." He looked behind him and to his surprise, noticed a well-dressed Yid, who was also getting ready to make the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*.

"Can you answer amen to my *brachah*?" the man asked. Rabbi Shulman was happy to oblige. The man made the *brachah* and Rabbi Shulman answered amen.

"What are you doing here?" the man asked in a friendly tone. Rabbi Shulman briefly responded, with a grimace: "I came for an interview that I've been waiting for so long to get, and I was horrified to discover that I left my passport..."

"What do you plan to do?" the man asked.

"I have no other choice so I guess I'll go to the interview without it and may Hashem help me..." Rabbi Shulman replied, his eyes a mixture of worry and hope.

"Nice to meet you, my name is Jacob Stein and I'm a lawyer who specializes in citizenship and immigration," the man introduced himself, and then continued in a firm voice: "Listen to me, my friend. Whatever you do, don't go to the interview without your passport. From many years' experience in the field I can tell you that if you do that, your application will be denied on the spot, and there's no knowing when you'll be allowed to file another one!"

"What should I do now?" Rabbi Shulman asked.

"I don't know. Perhaps you can ask someone at home to send you the passport with a courier. There are three hours left until the office closes. If you get a courier quickly, you might still get your approval today," the lawyer replied. Then he added kindly, "In any case, I have to stay here today until the office closes; I'll be happy to help you with whatever I can."

Rabbi Shulman didn't delay and hurried to call a courier service he knew. He asked if he could get a courier immediately and was told that he could.

He called his house and within a few minutes, he got a call back that the courier had departed with the passport. About an hour later, he was holding the passport, and he quickly went over to the Jewish lawyer who was waiting patiently for him. He showed him the passport, and the lawyer helpfully shepherded him through the whole process until his application was approved.

Today, Rabbi Shulman is an American citizen, but more than anything, he is a "*tzaddik shomer emunim*" with redoubled effort and commitment, especially after he merited, like so many others, to experience an open miracle in the merit of answering amen.