

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

The Midwives' Prayer Was Completely Accepted

"ותחיינו את הילדים...; וייטב אלקים למילדת וירב העם ויעצמו מאד" (א יח-כ)

From the words of the *passuk* it appears that the benefit for the midwives was: "Yayarev ha'am vaya'atzmu meod, and the people increased and were very mighty." How is this good for the midwives?

Harav Moshe Elpalas, the Rav of Salonika, explained:

Chazal explained the *passuk* "Vatechayena es hayeladim", (*Shemos Rabbah* 1 15) to mean that aside from refraining from complying with Pharaoh's order to kill the children, the midwives continued to give them life. How? "Some of them [the babies] who would have emerged lame or blind or bearing other blemishes...What would they do? They stood and davened to HaKadosh Baruch Hu: You know that we did not fulfill the words of Pharaoh – and we want to fulfill Your words! Ribbon HaOlam, may this baby emerge in peace, so that Am Yisrael should not find their hands [meaning that there shouldn't be a reason for Yisrael to open their mouths] and say of us: They emerged with blemishes because they [the midwives] wanted to kill them. Immediately, HaKadosh Baruch Hu heard their voices and the babies emerged whole and healthy."

Rabi Levi added: "Some of them [the children] were supposed to have died when they emerged, or to put their mothers in danger as they would have died after the birth, and they [the midwives] would stand and daven to HaKadosh Baruch Hu: Ribbono shel Olam "telei lahem," wait for them now and give them their souls so that Yisrael should not say they [the midwives] killed them. HaKadosh Baruch Hu fulfilled their request as it says, "Vatechayena es hayeladim" – vatechayena is the mothers, and the yeladim, - is the children, literally."

Thus we can understand the *passuk*: "And Hashem made it good for the

'Why Did You Hurry' to Answer Amen?!

(מדוע מהרתך בא היום" כ יב)

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 124 8) ruled that one should not answer amen before the person finishes making the *brachah* till the end, because such an amen is considered an "amen *chutfah*" and is forbidden. The *Mishnah Berurah* adds (ibid 30): "And there are people who begin to answer while the *shaliach tzibbur* is still saying the last half a word, and that is forbidden."

It is brought down that this *halachah* is alluded to in this *passuk*: "מדוע מהרתך בא היום" – the last letter of each word is the acronym for "amen". It appears as if the *passuk* is asking: Why did you hurry to answer an "amen *chutfah*" instead of waiting until the person completed the *brachah* so you could answer amen properly?!

Harav Yisrael of Modzhitz added that we allude to this in *Birchas Hamazon*: "Bivrachah sheleimah – venomar amen." Meaning, we need to wait until the *brachah* is *shalem*, said completely, and only then to answer amen.

Divrei Yisrael 58; Torah Lishmah

Amen – Kodesh Kodashim

"ויאמר משה אל האלקים הנה אנכי בא אל בני ישראל ואמרת להם אלקי אבותיכם שלחני אליכם ואמרי לי מה שמו מה אמר אלהם" (ג יג)

Chazal say (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1) that the greatness of amen stems from the fact that it is numerically equivalent to the two holy Names – Havayah and Adnus. Thus, the *Ba'al Haturim* explained the reason that Chazal say (*Brachos* 53b) that "One who answers amen is greater than the one making the *brachah*." It is because while one making the *brachah* mentions only the Name of Adnus, the one who answers amen utters both Havayah and Adnus.

Moreover, the Mekubal Harav Aharon Hazaken of Kardina, author of *Karnayim*, [who lived about 1000 years ago] writes in his *sefer Iggeres Hata'amim*: "Because all the Holy Names are all included, combined...concealed and covered... in the word amen... of which the *passuk* says (*Yeshayahu* 26:2): "Yavo goy tzadik shomer emunim." This means that just like the guardian of a treasure stands in the deepest chambers of the treasury, so, too, this pure and holy word ...[is in the deepest place]...And where is the place of amen – *kodesh kodashim*, the holiest of holies."

The ancient siddur, *Seder Nehora Hashalem*, cites the early sages that indeed, when answering amen, one should have in mind to combine the Names of Havayah and Adnus, which are numerically equivalent to amen. He explains that this is alluded to in the *passuk* that we say each morning in *Hodu* (*Divrei Hayamim* I, 16:36): "Vayomru kol ha'am amen v'hallel l'Hashem" – each person must concentrate when saying amen. On what? "V'hallel l'Hashem," to combine the Name of Adnus, which is numerically equivalent to "hallel" with "l'Hashem" - the Shem Havayah, and this combination is numerically equivalent to amen.

Baal Haturim *Devarim* 24:2; *Iggeres Hata'amim* p. 12-14; *Seder Nehora Hashalem* beginning of Ch. 15, footnotes

midwives" by accepting their *tefillos* in their entirety. How? "Yayirev ba'am" – they became many, because not a single soul from Am Yisrael was cut down – neither mother or baby – and moreover, no children were born with blemishes or disabilities. On the contrary: "Yava'atzmu me'od" – the babies were strong and healthy in all their senses and organs.

Vayakhel Moshe [Venice 5357] *Drush* 4

One Sha'avah Is Better than a Thousand Za'akos

"ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ותעל שועתם אל האלקים מן העבדה (שם)

The *Ohr Hachaim* explains:

The Torah emphasized that despite the fact that Yisrael's sighing was "min ha'avodah" – from the pain of the bondage, and not as a long *tefillah* before Hashem. Still, it was willingly accepted, "Vata'al shavasam el haElokim."

Harav Eliezer Yitzchak Fried, one of the *roshei yeshivah* of Volozhin, explained the reason why we ask in *Shemoneh Esrei* "Shema Koleinu", and we aren't more specific, saying, "Shema teflaseinu ubakashasheinu". When a father hears his son screaming, even if the scream is not directed at him, he certainly will not remain indifferent to the cries, and will immediately turn to the son to find out why he is screaming, so, too we ask our Father in heaven: "Shema Koleinu" – listen to the cries like a merciful father hears his sons, and even when our cries come from hardship and pain, and are not directed specifically to You, listen to them and save us.

In contrast, Harav Azarya Figi learned the opposite message from this *passuk*: As long as "And Bnei Yisrael sighed from the work" – they were not answered. Only when "vata'al shavasam el haElokim" was their *tefillah* accepted and one cry that was directed to Hashem was more effective than all the other moaning and sighing that was "min ha'avodah", from the work.

Ohr Hachaim; *Binah L'Itan* 62; *Nitei Eitan* Vol. VII, p. 18

Amen. At the right minute.

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 124 8): "When answering amen one must wait until the *mevarech* finishes, and one who hurries to answer amen before the *mevarech* concludes the final word of the *brachah* makes an 'amen *chutfah*.'

The *Mishnah Berurah* adds (ibid 30): "And there are people who begin to answer while the *shaliach tzibbur* is still saying the last half a word, and this is forbidden."



Bnei Emunim answer amen according to halachah, only once the brachah is completed.



Give Merits to the Public by Answering Amen (3)

**The Brachos that Complete
"Meah Brachos"**

In continuation of the series regarding the virtues of being *mezakeh harabbim* by answering amen, we would like to touch on another important point relating to the essence of *Birchos Hashachar*, in which we thank Hashem for the order of the world that He established with the appearance of nature. These are called "*Meah Brachos*" by the early sages (see *Pesikta Parashas Shelach; Teshuvos Rav Natronai Gaon, Orach Chaim 9* and other early *sefarim*). This is significant, because aside for their essence as a series of *brachos* that express gratitude for all the good things Hashem has granted us, they were established following the *takanah* of Dovid Hamalech to say 100 *brachos* each day. This was also revealed from Heaven to Rav Yaakov of Marvish, one of the Baalei HaTosafos (*Shu"t Min Hashamayim 12*) and the Tur also ruled this way (*Orach Chaim 46*).

The *takanah* of Dovid Hamalech to recite 100 *brachos* each day came following a series of tragedies that befell Am Yisrael, when a violet plague raged, killing one hundred people each day. Am Yisrael did not know why the plague had struck, until Dovid Hamalech, with his *Ruach Hakodesh*, realized what he needed to do. He gave the Sanhedrin the secret of the *Meah Brachos*, so they could establish them in a way they saw fit, and they established the *Birchos Hashachar* that Am Yisrael should say in order to reach *Meah Brachos* a day. When they did this, the plague stopped. (*Bamidbar Rabbah 18 21; Tur Orach Chaim 46; Prishah ibid*)

**100 Brachos Saves
from Plagues**

The author of the *Rokeach* (*Dinei Brachos*) writes that the secret of the *segulah* of 100 *brachos* is in the fact that they counteract the 100 curses written in *Parashas Ki Savo* – 98 delineated in the Torah and two more alluded to in the *passuk* (*Devarim 28:31*): "*Gam kol choli vechol makah.*"

Harav Elimelech of Lizhensk explains the connection between 100 *brachos* and being spared from plagues according to his explanation on the *passuk* (*Bereishis 26:12*): "*vayizra Yitzchak b'aretz hahi vayimtza bashanah hahi meah shearim.*" "And he planted" – he planted in people fear of Hashem and holiness. "And he found that year one hundred gates" – to teach us that a person is obligated to make 100 *brachos* each day (*Menachos 43b*). And they were established to correspond to the 100 people

who died each day, and Dovid Hamalech establish the *Meah Brachos* to counteract them."

Harav Elimelech then explains: "And this *tzaddik* who plants holiness and fear in the hearts of people is considered to have revived them, and through this he causes a *tikkun* for the well-known *Meah Shearim*, because each and every person has a special gate that is for him, and one who revives him is *metaken* [rectifies] that special gate for him...Through each *brachah* that he makes, he opens one gate of the 100 Upper Gates, which are called *Meah Brachos* – meaning *breichos elyonim*, Heavenly pools..." (*Noam Elimelech, Toldos*)

**100 Perfect Guardians
Against Troubles**

We've touched only a bit on the loftiness of the *takanah* of *Meah Brachos*, but this segment would not be complete without a vitally important reminder: that answering amen completes the *brachah* (*Zohar HaKadosh Eikev 271 1*), that amen is part of the *brachah*, and that because of the amen, the *brachah* becomes more important (*Rema, Orach Chaim 167 2; Mishnah Berurah ibid 20*). Amen is the signoff of the *brachah*, and just like a note [of a debt] that does not have a signature is not valid, so, too, answering amen signs off on the *brachah* and validates it. (*Rabbeinu Bechayei Shemos 14:31*)

We learn that the power of *Meah Brachos*, and especially *Birchos Hashachar*, can protect from troubles, so we can imagine how much more their *segulah* be multiplied when they are recited perfectly – signed off by being answered with amen.

Parenthetically, this is a good place to cite the Chida, in *sefer Midbar Kedmos* (Amen) who says that even answering ninety amens, as Chazal established (*Tikkunei Zohar 18*) has a special *segulah* for protection. He relates a story about woman; harmful forces tried to hurt her and she was saved only because she adhered that day to the *takanah* of 90 amens.

Dear Yid!

When you give your friend the merit of reciting *Birchos Hashachar* properly, in gratitude to the King of the world, remember that a *brachah* without amen is like a verdict that is not signed, and by facilitating a complete *brachah* you give him life and protection.

Remember that a perfect *brachah* is a perfect *segulah* for perfect protection!

From Death to Life With the Power of *Tefillah*

This story was taken from the remarkable book by Holocaust survivor Rabbi Yaakov Marocco, *zi"l*. The chapters recount his miraculous survival, and include many lessons in *emunah* and *Hashgachah*; notably, they also describe the many *tefillos* that he offered from the valley of death, some of which he saw miraculously answered, as in the following story:

Towards the end of the war, Rav Yaakov was taken out of the death camp of Maidanek. He was in a deathly ill state, and his friends carried him as part of a group of thousands of workers being sent to staff the German weapons' factory on the outskirts of Chenstochow. The factory was working at top capacity, churning out bullets for tens of thousands of troops in the German army, which despite being in the advanced stages of defeat, were still fighting full force.

Life in Chenstochow was not idyllic, but in contrast to the constant danger of death that hovered over him in Maidanek, at least here, Reb Yaaov could hope that as long as he was a needed cog in the German war machine, he would not be killed for no reason.

The forced laborers in Chenstochow needed to work at a pace that exceeded human capability, and which could hardly be fueled by the tiny food ration that the workers received in order to survive. But knowing that their lives depended on their output, they did everything they could to keep up.

Reb Yaakov, who miraculously regained his strength, was assigned to be the technician for the massive machinery that produced the bullets. The Germans could not manage with even a short pause in the factory's work, and responsibility for that was placed on his narrow shoulders. When there was a malfunction in the machine, he had to fix it in the shortest time possible, and if not, he would be brutally whipped by the S.S. officers.

It happened that one of the machines suffered a series of malfunctions due to the negligence of one of the workers, a sick, weak Jew who sometimes fell asleep on the job. Reb Yaakov refused to reveal to the factory manager who had caused the malfunction, and thus he absorbed the horrific beatings instead of the other man. When this happened a number of times, the manager decided to punish him even more severely.

The German army's string of defeats continued to mount, and the prisoners were aware of it; this information was enough to infuse them with the strength to withstand the horrific work conditions. They knew that an end to their suffering was nigh. The factory manager knew this as well, and seeking to punish the errant employee, he informed him that when the day came that the factory would be moved into Germany, behind the front lines, he would make sure that Reb Yaakov would be taken along to the new factory location. As he spoke, the manager wrote down Reb Yaakov's name and placed it prominently on his desk, as a reminder of his pledge.

The surprising announcement took Reb Yaakov by surprise. Rumor had it that the Russian army forces were on the verge

of invading Chenstochow. Even within the factory walls, it was already evident that Germany's withdrawal was in the advanced stages, and while his friends were dreaming of liberating, he now had to deal with the knowledge that whatever happened, he would not be liberated, as he would be taken along with the factory to the unknown.

Reb Yaakov, who already knew the brutal manager quite well, was aware that he kept his promises. All he could do was *daven*, and as always, he did so with all his heart. He walked away from the manager's desk to a side room, where, for quite some time, he poured his heart out in *tefillah* to Hashem that the evil designs of this fiend should not be realized, and that he should soon be liberated to the land of the living.

A few days later, the workers at the factory could hear the cannon fire of the Red Army. The front was getting closer to the factory and the German managers hastened to implement their escape plan. The machines were quickly dismantled and loaded onto massive trucks, and a large group was selected from the thousands of slave laborers and placed in one of the production halls to wait to be dispatched to Germany, where the factory would be reestablished.

The factory manager did not forget his promise. Reb Yaakov was among the hundreds of workers crowded into the production hall. The atmosphere was one of disappointment and despair. The workers knew that by being sent to Germany, they were almost certainly being sentenced to death and they wept quietly over their bitter fate. But Reb Yaakov focused on the words of Chazal "Even if a sharp sword is resting on a person's neck he should not withhold himself from Compassion [give up hope]." His lips moved constantly in prayer.

The rumble of motors of the trucks that would be taking them to Germany grew louder, and still, Reb Yaakov did not give up. He knew that there was only one way out of this – *tefillah* – and he did not desist for a minute.

Meanwhile, the prisoners could hear the sounds of a loud argument from the next room. It was the commander of the labor camp arguing with the factory manager, claiming that such a large group of workers would just be a hindrance to the retreating German army.

Ultimately, a compromise was reached: the door to the hall was opened, a brigade of soldiers entered and randomly chose a large group from those who were there and sent them back to the camp. The rest of the prisoners were loaded onto trucks and sent to Germany.

Reb Yaakov, who was at the top of the list of those to be dispatched, now miraculously returned to the land of the living.

At the last minute, Reb Yaakov was once again saved from near certain death through the power of *tefillah*.

A short time later, the Russian Army entered the camp, and the prisoners – Reb Yaakov among them – were liberated.