

# Ve'chol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



332

SHAVUOS

תש"פ

## IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

## Insights on Birchas HaTorah

### A Brachah on the "Eisek" of Torah

"אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה" and not "lilmod Torah"?

**Rabbeinu Manoach** (on Rambam Tefillah 7 10) explained:

"And we can say that it was established to say it in this language, because Mishnah and Talmud need 'eisek' – meaning a lot of negotiations (*masa umatan*) to understand them." The **Bach** adds (*Orach Chaim* 47 beginning with 'Venuscha') that the many *brachos* that we were promised in *Parashas Bechukosai* are conditioned on 'amal baTorah', toil in Torah, as Chazal explained (*Safra Bechukosai* 2) "Im bechukosai telechu" – "lihiyos ameilim baTorah."

The **Chasam Sofer** offers another explanation:

Chazal chose the term "la'asok" because it is equal for both those who learn Torah and those who support Torah. In the business world there are those who earn money with much toil and sweat, and there are those who, with one good investment, reap tremendous profits without toil. The same is true with Torah learning: some merit to toil extensively in Torah, and that person is fortunate as he gets tremendous reward. But even someone who does not merit to toil in Torah can have an 'eisek', an endeavor in Torah, by supporting those who learn it.

The **Alter of Kelm** further explained: just like in a business endeavor, the owner is completely invested in the success of his business, and puts all his effort and every spare moment of time into it, similarly with Torah learning, one should not suffice with a set number of hours, and should invest days and nights into it.

**Harav Menashe Klein** of Ungvar offered another explanation:

### Amen on Birchas HaTorah is D'Oraisa

"ברוך אתה ה' המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל"

In *Maseches Brachos* (21a) Chazal teach us about the obligation of *Birchas HaTorah* from the *passuk* (*Devarim* 8:10): "Ki Shem Hashem ekra, havu godel l'Elokeinu." **Rashi** explained (ibid beginning with "ki") that before Moshe began *Shiras Ha'azinu* he instructed Am Yisrael: "Ki Shem Hashem ekra" – before I begin to engage in the *divrei Torah*, I will call Hashem's Name by reciting *Birchas HaTorah*, and you will fulfill "havu godel l'Elokeinu" – by answering amen after it.

The **Rishonim** differed on whether the requirement is actually *d'Oraisa* or perhaps it is only an 'asmachta', and the obligation to make *Birchas HaTorah* is *d'Rabbanan*. The **Ramban** (*Shichechas Ha'esin* Mitzvah 15) is of the opinion that *Birchas HaTorah* is a mitzvah from the Torah, and even lists it in his enumeration of the *mitzvos*. (Other **Rishonim** and *poskim* are of the same opinion, see *Mishnah Berurah* beginning of *siman* 47.) However, the **Rambam** believes that the obligation of *Birchas HaTorah* is *d'Rabbanan*. (*Ramban*, ibid)

The **Pri Megadim** wrote: According to the opinion of the **Ramban** that the commandment of "Ki Shem Hashem ekra" obligating *Birchas HaTorah* is listed in the number of *mitzvos*, we can say that the second half of the *passuk*, "Havu godel l'Elokeinu," teaching about answering amen, is also included in this commandment. We then find that just like *Birchas HaTorah* is *d'Oraisa*, the obligation of answering amen after it is likewise a Torah obligation. One who hears the *brachah* and does not answer amen is then being *mevatel* a mitzvah *d'Oraisa*. In light of this, the **Pri Megadim** rules that when someone is standing in front of two pole, and one asks to recite *Birchas HaTorah*, and the other wants to make a different *brachah* whose obligation is *d'Rabbanan*, he should prefer to hear the one making *Birchas HaTorah*, because by answering amen he will be fulfilling a mitzvah *aseh d'Oraisa*.

**Teivas Gomeh** [by the **Pri Megadim**] *Devarim* 32:3; **Pri Megadim** *Eishel Avraham* 215 6

An integral part of 'eisek haTorah' is that our conduct in every aspect of worldly affairs should be according to Torah. Therefore, we make the *brachah* using the term 'la'asok' because this term includes, besides the actual learning, the fact that all our affairs in the world should be conducted according to 'divrei Torah.'

**Pshat V'Iyun** [Harav M. Sternbuch] *Brachos* 49a; *Ohr Yechezkel Torah Vodaas* p. 49; *Mishneh Halachos* Vol. VI 13

### A Brachah on Learning that is Not "Lishmah"

"אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה"

Chazal offered a few explanations for why this *brachah* was worded with "la'asok bedivrei Torah" and not "la'asok baTorah."

**Rabi Yaakov Ben Yakar** explained that the word 'divrei' also includes the Oral Torah, which is called "*Devarim sheba'al peh*" (see *Gittin* 60b), that we include in the *brachah*.

The **Chayei Adam** explained: Because the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 47 4) that *hirhur*, thinking in Torah learning is permitted even before *Birchas HaTorah*, they established the words as 'la'asok bedivrei' meaning: Until now it was only permitted for us to think in Torah, and this *brachah* permit us also to utter the *divrei Torah* with our mouths.

**Harav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin** explains further: The wording 'la'asok baTorah' means Torah in the literal sense, meaning to learn Torah 'lishmah.' But by saying 'divrei Torah' we also include that learning which is not *lishmah*, which is called "*petatya d'Oraisa*" (see *Yerushalmi Brachos* 9 5). Therefore, we use this language for the *brachah*, because who can guarantee that indeed we merit to learn 'lishmah.'

**Peirush Hatefillos Vehabrachos** Rav Y. Ben Yakar *Birchos Hashachar* p. 22; *Nishmas Adam* 1 9 4; *Tzidkas Hatzaddik* 59

Dear Yid!

The first mitzvah that we are commanded in the *Aseres Hadibros* is the mitzvah of *emunah*, which is, as we know, a 'mitzvah temidis,' a constant mitzvah. Answering amen was established in order to ingrain this mitzvah in one's heart throughout the day, without pause. (**Rabbeinu Bechayei Beshalach 14:31) Each time that you answer amen with *kavanah*, you are fulfilling the mitzvah of *emunah*, which is a fundamental of the entire Torah, as Chazal said (*Makkos* 23b): "Taryag mitzvos were said to Moshe...*Chavakuk* came and encapsulated them all into one, as it says (*Chavakuk* 2:4): 'Vetzaddik b'emunaso yichyeh.'"**

In order to firmly ingrain *emunah* in us, we will take care to answer amen with *kavanah*:

With answering amen on the *Birchos Hashevach*, we have in mind: 'The words of the *mevarech* are true and I believe them.'

When answering amen to requests, we have in mind: 'Halevai, that the request of the one making the blessing should be fulfilled.'

In *brachos* that have both praise and a request, we combine both *kavanas*: It is truth, and may it be fulfilled.

(*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 124 6, *Mishnah Berurah*, ibid 25)

Bnei Emunim – Answer amen with *kavanah*.





## Taaneh Emunim

Insights into the Virtues of  
Hashkamas Bais Hamedrash

### The Brachah of Al Netilas Yadayim

#### Like the Avodas Hamikdash

The Torah commanded the Kohanim to wash their hands and feet in water before performing the *avodas hakodesh*, as it says (*Shemos* 30:20): “*Bevo’am el Ohel Moed yirchatzu mayim velo yamusu*, when they come to the *Ohel Moed* they should wash with water and they will not die.” *Onkelos* explained “*yirchatzu*” as “*yekadshun*” meaning that through the washing with the waters of the *Kiyor*, the Kohein sanctifies his hands for the *avodah*.

From the *mitzvah* of *kiddush yadayim veraglayim* practiced during the time of the *avodas hamikdash*, *Chazal* learn about the *mitzvah* of washing one’s hands in the morning before *davening*. Upon rising, a person is like a new creation and he has to thank Hashem and praise Him for being created. Therefore, it is incumbent on the person to sanctify himself by washing his hands from a *kli*, like a Kohein who sanctified his hands from the *Kiyor* before his *avodah*. (*Rashba, Shu”t* Vol. 1, 191)

#### Birchas Al Netilas Yadayim

A servant of a flesh and blood king, who serves his king, expects that the king should express gratitude for all that the servant does. He certainly will not praise the king for every action that he, the servant, does by order of the king. That is not the case with a Jew – who every time he merits to fulfill a *mitzvah* of Hashem, takes care to bless and thank the Creator for it. Thus, he declares that he does not fulfill the *mitzvos* because the Creator needs them, *chailah*, but because of the recognition and understanding that the observance of the *mitzvos* is a benefit for him to elevate him and sanctify him. “That is why we say ‘*Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav*’ meaning that it is for us a holiness and

**Baruch**, the Source of all blessing, **Atah Hashem**, Master of everything, **Elokeinu**, Who is *takif* and almighty, and Master of all powers, **Melech Ha’Olam asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu** to listen to the words of *Chazal* who instructed us **Al Netilas Yadayim** from a vessel.

**Amen** – it is true that we have to thank Hashem for sanctifying us with His *mitzvos* and commanding us to wash our hands in the morning.

## Michtavei Emunim

Letters from our Loyal Readers

### To the Vechol Ma’aminim editors,

While learning *Daf Yomi*, I studied the *Mishnah* that details the 39 *avos melachos* (*Shabbos* 73a), and thought that the *melachah* of ‘*makeh bepatish*’ is the accurate definition of the action of answering amen. The bang of the hammer is not a *melachah* in and of itself, but the act of doing so completes the vessel. Similarly, amen does not have significance in its own right, but when it affirms a *brachah* or a request, it is the ‘hammer bang’ that completes the *brachah*. At the same time, it is also like a hammer knocking at the gates of Gan Eden.

Sincerely,  
M.R. - Lakewood, New Jersey

## Maaseh Emunim

Pearls and Insights on  
Birchas Hamazon

### A Shavuus Deluge

It was the morning of Erev Shavuus. The reverent figure of the eminent *posek* of Galicia and the Rav of Brezhan, Harav Shalom Mordechai Hakohen Schwadron, *zt”l*, known as the Maharsham of Brezhan, was a distinct contrast to the coarse atmosphere of the military base near Brezhan. What was he looking in this place on the eve of the holy day?

Harav Shalom Mordechai, as rav of the nearby city, had taken upon himself to worry for those Jewish soldiers serving in the military camp. He came each Erev Yom Tov to meet the general in charge of the regional brigade, and asked him to give the Jewish soldiers an exemption from service and participating in exercises on the two days of the Yom Tov. Rav Shalom Mordechai always brought with him a royal order issued a few years earlier by the Russian Tsar himself, granting vacation to Jewish soldiers in all military camps. For some reason, the commanders did not make an effort to uphold this order, and almost always needed to be ‘reminded’ by the Rav. Usually, they acceded, but this time, something went wrong.

Even before the Maharsham could express his request, the general’s expression was one of stubborn refusal. “This time, Rabbini, it is not possible! We are beginning a long, comprehensive exercise tomorrow that will require absolute participation by all the soldiers, and we cannot allow a single one to be off,” the general declared firmly. The Maharsham tried to wave the copy of the Tsar’s royal order, but the general was unmoved: “This time, this order contravenes military laws,” he said, and refused to discuss it further.

First, the Maharsham tried to appeal to the commander with heartfelt words, but the latter brushed him off with coarse words. At one point, he began to rant and rave against Hashem, *R”l*.

Hearing this, the Maharsham could no longer remain silent. He put on a somber expression and said to the commander: “You should know that Hashem commanded us to rest on the holidays. The Heavens and Earth are His, and if He wants us to rest for the coming two days, He can bring down such a torrent of rain, you will have no choice but to put off the planned exercise.

When the commander heard this, he began to laugh. He looked at the clear skies and jeered, “My friend, it’s a waste of your time and mine. The sun is beating down – and it is my witness that there is nothing to your words. Who can bring down rain at such a time...?”

“Hashem has proven His abilities to alter nature countless times,” the Maharsham tried to respond. He cited proof from *Krias Yam Suf*, from the sun that stood still in the skies for Yehoshua, and other times over the generations. But the stubborn general did not even bother responding. He just rose from his place and said, “This meeting is over.”

When the Maharsham departed the camp, dejected and heartbroken, he said to his companion: “We have done our best, and now we can only rely on our Father in Heaven, Who can surely sanctify His Name so that all those in the land will see that He is the Master, and they will fear Him.”

The sun beat down the rest of that day, and on Shavuus night, the sky was clear

and star studded. Some even thought that the Maharsham had resigned himself to the decree. But late that night, after reciting the *Tikkun*, the Rav stood up in the *Mizrach* of the shul, and took out a bottle of whisky, and poured a drink for all those in his *chaburah*. Then he asked them to redouble their efforts to *daven* fervently to ask Hashem that His Name be sanctified and the decree annulled.

The members of the *chaburah*, who had just finished the entire *Sefer Tehillim*, quickly obeyed their Rav, and tearfully pleaded to Hashem to sanctify His Name, and to ordain that the Jewish soldiers should not have to work on the holy day.

Dawn broke, but to the dismay of the *chaburah*, the sky was clear as it had been all night and the day before. The Maharsham went to immerse himself in the *mikveh*. When he saw the sadness on the faces of his students, he reassured them and said, “You will see that our *tefillos* will be accepted. It is surely not the Will of Hashem that His Name should be disgraced by this evil man.”

At that very moment, just a few kilometers away, the proud general mounted his horse and began riding confidently towards the camp. From time to time, he gazed triumphantly up at the clear skies. When he arrived at the soldiers’ quarters, he blew on his bugle, signaling to the soldiers to report immediately to the departure point.

A few moments later, the plaza was teeming with soldiers who were ready for battle. The trumpet call for departure had been issued. But suddenly, the unbelievable occurred.

Seemingly out of nowhere, a strong wind began to blow and the skies became covered in clouds. Loud thunder rumbled and flashes of lightning streaked across the sky. A few moments later, strong rain began to fall; the soldiers had never seen such a downpour. Their clothes became drenched, their weapons were unusable, and they trembled from cold. At first, the obstinate commander tried to prevent the soldiers from fleeing to shelter, and announced that there was no change in the plans... But he quickly realized that if he did not capitalize quickly, they might vent their fury on him. So he ordered them all to return to their tents.

The general did not need any more hints. The rain continued to fall, and fearing for his soldiers, who lived in leaky tents, the general raced his horse to the shul where the Maharsham *davened*. When he arrived, he asked to enter to see the “Heavenly Angel” – as he said, and to ask forgiveness for his impudence.

“Please, Rabbi, forgive me,” the commander said submissively. “I now see that indeed, there is no G-d like the G-d of Israel and His Angels, who fulfill His commands. I promise that from now on, I will fulfill every request that you make of me. There is no need for you to make the effort to come to me, because I promise to answer even requests that are made by your emissaries.”

From that day on, the commander became an ardent “*chassid*” of the Maharsham. When the *tzaddik* passed away, he even marched at the head of a brigade of soldiers at the *levayah* to pay his last respects, with tears rolling down his weathered cheeks.

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