

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim



IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Insights into Tefillah and Amen from the Seder Hoshanos

So the Tefillin Should Not Become Invalid

הושע נא למען פארך"

Harav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, the ultimate defender of Am Yisrael, would say:

Ribbono Shel Olam, Chazal say (*Brachos* 6a) that Your *tefillin* contains the *passuk* (*Divrei Hayamim* I 17:21): "Umi k'amcha Yisrael goy echad b'aretz." Hence, if You do not forgive their sins, then Am Yisrael will no longer be worthy of the title of "goy echad", and that will raise *kaviyachol* a question regarding the *kashrus* of Your *tefillin*...

Harav Yisrael of Ruzhin added that this is what we mean in the request of "*Hosha na lem'an pe'erach*" – forgive the sins of Am Yisrael for the sake of the *kashrus* of "pe'erach" – the *tefillin*, which are called "pe'er" as it says (*Yechezkel* 24:17): "Pe'ercha chavush alecha."

Revid Hazahav, Likutim p. 81

'When Will It Come to Fulfillment'

הושע נא נרננה אליך הושע נא ונחשבת כצאן טבחה"

Harav Shmuel of Slonim explained:

The superior virtue of Am Yisrael is not only manifested in the fact that they are ready to be *moser nefesh*, like sheep to the slaughter, to make a *Kiddush Hashem*. Rather, it is because *mesirus nefesh* is 'nechsheves' to them – they attribute great importance to it, and do not do it only because they have no other choice. They put it as a top priority. As Rabi Akiva told his students while his flesh was being combed with steel (*Brachos* 61b): "All my days I felt bad about the *passuk* 'bechol nafshecha' – even if He takes your soul, I said, 'when will it happen that I will fulfill this?'"

Birchas Avraham, Chanukah p. 85

'Lema'an Daas' At the End of Seder Hoshanos

למען דעת כל עמי הארץ כי ה' הוא האלקים אין עוד"

The *Seder Hoshanaos* concludes with the *passuk* (*Melachim* I 8:60): "L'maan daas kol amei ha'aretz ki Hashem Hu haElokim ein od, so that all the peoples of the earth may

One Hundred Brachos Completed With Amen

Harav Yosef Bloch, the Maggid of Stanov, a *talmid* of the Maggid of Mezeritch, writes that 'סכך' is numerically equivalent to 100, an allusion to the 100 *brachos*. Harav Uri Landman, the Rav of Vishnovitz, explains that he is alluding to the words of Chazal (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) that Dovid Hamelech instituted that we recite the 100 *brachos* to protect Am Yisrael during a plague that was in his time. Therefore, סכך, which is equivalent to 100, alludes to the concept that *meah brachos* protects a person as it says (*Yeshayah* 4:6): "Vesukkah tihyeh letzel yomam meichorev ulemachaseh ulemištor mizerem unimatar, and a tabernacle shall be for shade by day from the heat, and for a shelter and for a covert from stream and from rain."

Therefore, the *sechach* is on the סוכה which is equivalent to amen, because the fulfillment of the *brachah* is by answering amen to it, as Rabbeinu Bechayei writes (*Shemos* 14:31): "Because the one making the *brachah* testifies with his *brachah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the Source of all *brachah*, and the one who answers amen is the one who carries out the *shtar*, and that is the *ikar*, the main thing. There is no fulfillment of testimony with one witness, only with two, because the testimony is upheld by him, and the one who answers amen is the second witness. He needs to join with the first witness – the one making the *brachah* – because it is through him that the testimony is upheld."

Ginzei Yosef, Drush LeSuccos; Ohr Yitzhar Yamim Noraim, Introduction p. 24

know that the Hashem is Elokim: there is none else." What is the context for this *passuk* to be said here?

The *Bnei Yissaschar* explains: When we take the *arba minim* and encircle the *bimah* in the

shul with great love – and some even kiss the *minim* – it might appear that we are giving honor to one of the creations, *chalilah*. As the *Rambam* writes (*Avodah Zarah* 1 1) that the beginning of *avodah zarah* was honoring creations out of the mistaken thought that this was the will of Hashem. In order to clarify that we are acting with respect to the *arba minim* only because we use them to fulfill the *mitzvah* of Hashem, and not because we are giving respect to His creations, *chalilah*, as soon as we put them down, we quickly declare "L'maan daas kol amei ha'aretz ki Hashem Hu ha'Elokim ein od."

The *Darhei Teshuvah* of Munkatch expounds further: Each plant has a *sar*, a heavenly minister, that is appointed over it, as Chazal say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 10:6): "You don't have a piece of grass that does not have *mazal* Above that strikes it and says grow." But the four *minim* that we take on Succos were not assigned a *sar* or agent by Hashem. Rather, they grow with *Hashgachah pratis* from HaKadosh Baruch Hu (*Seder Hayom, Seder Chag HaSuccos*). When taking these *minim*, we declare that just like these *minim* grow with special *Hashgachah pratis*, so, too, is the world managed: Even creations that have a *sar* are led with *Hashgachah pratis* by Hashem. Therefore, we even shout "*Hosha na*" while we hold onto these *minim*, because they are testimony that He alone leads everything and it is only in His hands to redeem us. Therefore, we also conclude the *Seder Hoshanos* with a declaration that these *minim* come to teach us: "*Hashem Hu HaElokim ein od*." He alone rules with *Hashgachah pratis* on all of creation.

Additionally, the *Pardes Yosef* explained: A total of 70 cows were sacrificed on Succos, to atone for the 70 nations of the world (*Sukkah* 55b). Therefore, we turn to them at the end of the *tefillah* and say: *L'maan daas kol amei ha'aretz ki Hashem Hu HaElokim ein od*."

Bnei Yissaschar Mamarei Tishrei Maamar 11 15; Tiferes Banim LeSuccos; Pardes Yosef Emor



Beautify Yourself for Him... With Brachos

On Succos, when we all perform the *mitzvos* of the Yom Tov with *hiddur*. Chazal instruct (*Shabbos* 133b) "*Zeh Keli v'anveihu*" (*Shemos* 15:2) – beautify yourself for Him with *mitzvos*: make for Him a beautiful *sukkah*, take a *lulav*... Let us undertake to make the *brachos* with *hiddur*, in front of someone who will answer amen after them.

Sukkah = amen Sechach = 100
 an allusion to *meah brachos*. Just like the *sechach* leans on the walls of the *sukkah*, so, too, the *brachah* is only fulfilled in the merit of it being answered by amen.

(Ohr Yitzhar, Yamim Noraim, Introduction p. 24)

The Seven Ushpizin And the Secret of Amen

Ahavti Me'on Beisecha

Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, author of *Aruch Laner*, begins his *sefer*, *Bikkurei Yaakov*, on the *halachos* of sukkah and lulav with these words: "The righteous should rejoice...on this holy festival called Yom Simchaseinu, and their joy is twofold. They should be very careful to fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah whose number [numerical equivalence] is 91, like the numerical equivalence of the two Holy Names that amount to 'amen.' and its holiness is twofold and one who fulfills it according to *halachah* will get a double reward from Above."

Much has been written about the connection between sukkah – called in the holy *Zohar* (*Emor* 103 1) "tzila demeheimnusa" and the mitzvah of answering amen. We have compiled a handful of the holy words of the luminaries through the generations about the *sod*, the secrets of the holy *Ushpizin* who join us in the shelter of *emunah*, in our holy sukkah, as they relate to saying *brachos* and answering amen.

Avraham Uzhpizi Ila'i

Avraham Avinu, a "h, the first of all believers, was commanded by Hashem (*Bereishis* 12:2): "Veheyehi brachah" – wherever he went, he should teach people to recognize their Creator and to bless Him. Indeed, he did so, as it states (*ibid* 8): "Vayikra beShem Hashem" (*Daas Zekeimim MiBaalei Hatosafos* *ibid*). In the *Bris Bein Habesarim*, the *passuk* says of Avraham (*ibid* 15:6): "Vehe'emin b'Hashem" – he'emin is in the *hif'il* tense, meaning that he conveyed to future generations the mitzvah of answering amen after *brachos*. (*Bais Avraham Lech Lecha*)

Yitzchak Uzhpizi Ila'i

Regarding Yitzchak Avinu it says (*Bereishis* 25:21): "Vaye'etar Yitzchak l'Hashem lenochach ishto ki akarah hie, Yitzchak prayed to Hashem on behalf of his wife for she was barren." *Chazal* explain (*Bereishis Rabbah* 63 5): "He stood in one corner and davened and she stood in another corner and davened." Because Rivka put her faith in the *tefillah* of Yitzchak, she did not daven herself; rather she stood in the corner of the room, listened to his *tefillah*, and answered amen after him. This was considered as though she davened herself. An allusion to this can be derived from the fact that the acronym of the words *אשרי כי עקרה* is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the value of amen. (*Divrei Yisrael, Toldos*)

Yaakov Uzhpizi Ila'i

The *passuk* says about Yaakov's birth (*ibid* 25:26): "And then his brother came out and his hand was grasping the heel of Eisav, and he was named Yaakov." The commentaries explain that this was a sign that Yaakov would grasp and be strict about doing the *mitzvos* that a person tends to grind with his heel [i.e. be lax about] (*Kli Yakar* *ibid*). When he slept on Har Hamoriah, the secret of answering amen was revealed to Yaakov. Therefore, when he awoke from his sleep, he said (*ibid* 28:17): "Vezeh Shaar Hashamayim," as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 119b) "When one answers amen with all his might, the gates of Gan Eden are opened to him" (*Megaleh Amukos Vayeishev*). His name also proves this: "Yaakov is numerically equivalent to twice amen, and sometimes, it is written עיקרב with the *vav*, which is numerically equivalent to 'amen v'amen' (*Asarah Maamaros, Chikur Din* 2 15).

Even when he davened to HaKadosh Baruch Hu to save him from his brother Eisav, he evoked the merit of answering amen, and was answered in that merit, as it says (*Bereishis* 32:12): "Hatzileini na miyad achi miyad Eisav, please save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav." The words *נא מיד אחי* are an acronym

for amen (*Megaleh Amukos Vayishlach*). All of Yaakov's conduct was done in the framework of the *sod* of answering amen (*Maor Vashemesh Vayigash*), and this is alluded to in the *passuk* (*ibid* 33:17): "ויעקב ויסע סכרה" – Yaakov traveled to Sukkos, and sukkah is numerically equivalent to amen. (*Sukkah Na'ah, Sukkah* 38b)

Yosef Uzhpizi Ila'i

Yaakov Avinu revealed to Yosef Hatzaddik the *sod*, the secret of amen, as alluded to in an acronym of the final letters of the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 37:3): "בן זקנים הוא". Therefore, Yaakov was 91 when Yosef was born. Yosef Hatzaddik was put in charge of the gates of Gan Eden, as *Chazal* reveal (*Shabbos* 119b) that they are opened to one who answers amen (*Megaleh Amukos Vayeishev*).

Moshe Uzhpizi Ila'i

From the words of the *passuk* (*Devarim* 33:1): "וזאת הברכה אשר ברך משה איש האלקים" – that the three last words are an acronym for "meah" – 100, Harav Yaakov Baal Hataturim explains that the *takanah* of *meah brachos* was established by Moshe Rabbeinu. Over the generations it was forgotten and it was reinstated by Dovid Hamelech (see *Bamidbar Rabbah* 18 21; *Kad Hakemach, Brachah*). Moshe Rabbeinu also cautioned us regarding answering amen, as *Chazal* explain the *passuk* (*ibid* 33:3): "Ki Shem Hashem ekra havu godel l'Elokeinu" (*Yalkut Shimoni, Haazinu*, 942). Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael: When I call the Name of Hashem to bless Him, you, the listeners should "havu godel l'Elokeinu" – by answering amen. The acronym of the final letters of the spelled out letters that make up Moshe's name משה are amen (*Chessed L'Avraham Tetzaveh*).

Aharon Uzhpizi Ila'i

Aharon and his sons were commanded to bless Am Yisrael each day (*Bamidbar* 6:23) and we are commanded to answer amen after their *brachah*. An insightful allusion to answering amen is found in one of the garments of the Kohein Gadol, the *Eifod*. אפוד is numerically equivalent to amen. On top of the *Eifod* was the "Cheshev Eifod" to hint that one should answer amen with *kavanah*, meaning with *machshavah*, thought (*Divrei Shmuel* [Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg] *Tetzaveh*).

Dovid Uzhpizi Ila'i

The *passuk* says (*Shmuel* II 26:1): "Ve'eleh divrei Dovid ha'acharonim ne'um Dovid ben Yishai une'um ha'Gever hukam al." ער is numerically equivalent to 100, and we learn from this: In the days of Dovid Hamelech there was a plague in which 100 people died each day. In his *Ruach Hakodesh*, Dovid instituted that Am Yisrael should recite one hundred *brachos* each day, and the plague stopped (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21). *Birchos Hashachar* were instituted at that time in order to make it possible to accrue the one hundred *brachos* each day (*Tur, Orach Chaim* 46). In *sefer Tehillim*, the *passuk* says (31:24): "Emunim notzer Hashem umeshalem al yeser oseh ga'avah." Dovid says that when is careful about answering amen, HaKadosh Baruch Hu protects him. When someone is lax, and in his pride, is lax about answering amen, HaKadosh Baruch Hu punishes him for this (*Zohar Vayeilech* 266 2).

In addition, the *pesukim* of *Tehillim* contain many allusions to the virtue of answering amen (see special section in *sefer Bney Emunim*). Furthermore, *Sefer Tehillim* is divided into five separate *seforim*. Each one, except the fifth, concludes with the word "amen." (*Tosafos, Kiddushin* 33a, beginning with "sheini").

In Time, You Will Find It...

This remarkable story is another gem related by the renowned speaker Rabbi Yoel Gold of Los Angeles. He heard it and clarified the details from the person to whom it happened, Reb Stuart [Yisrael Eliezer] Mintz.

Stuart Mintz was born in 1950 to a Jewish family in Cleveland, Ohio. Regrettably, Stuart did not receive a Jewish education, so for the first thirty five years of his life, aside for his bar mitzvah celebration, he felt virtually no connection to his Jewish heritage. As far as he was concerned, he was the quintessential American citizen.

The turnabout in his life happened in 1988, when Stuart and his friends were offered a subsidized trip to Israel by an organization, and they decided to take advantage of the opportunity to go. They landed in Israel on Friday morning, and by the time they had gotten themselves together and settled into their hotel, it was already Shabbos in Yerushalayim. Stuart and his friends were exhausted from the flight, so they ate their dinner, and had an early night.

Shabbos dawned in the Holy City. Stuart opened his eyes quite early and gazed at the scenery from the window of his room. The sun was rising on the east, coloring the city in rich golden hues. Everything was quiet and still, and Stuart realized that besides for gazing at the scenery, there really was not much to do on this day...

In Yerushalayim during those years, everything was closed. There was no taxi to order, nor were buses active. All leisure establishments were closed. Stuart and his six friends, all *tinokos shemishbu*, felt imprisoned in their hotel rooms.

They wanted to start their long awaited trip already, but did not know how to go about it. Suddenly, one of the friends stood up and suggested: "Why don't we do a 'synagogue tour'?! The synagogues are open today... Let's go out, visit a few, we'll breathe the air a bit and come back..."

Stuart was indignant: "Go to a synagogue? Why on earth? We go to synagogue on Yom Kippur, maybe on Rosh Hashanah. Who goes to a synagogue on a regular Saturday?" But his friends decided to go, so Stuart followed.

They walked out of the hotel and began to roam the streets. For about an hour they walked, passing by dozens of shuls, but they didn't dare enter. Suddenly, they arrived at a building with a bright white facade. It was the Great Synagogue. Its windows were open and the sounds of *tefillos* wafted outside.

Without knowing why, Stuart turned to his friends and suggested: "Let's go into this synagogue and look at it from inside." They didn't dare step into the sanctuary itself, sure that their mode of dress would arouse negative attention. So they went up to the women's gallery. It was the first time in their lives they had stepped into an Orthodox shul. They went upstairs. The women's gallery was empty and Stuart looked down into the busy shul below. The scene that met his eyes left an indelible impression on his heart for the rest of his life.

For the first time in his life he saw people standing around a *bimah*, wearing *talleisim*; most of them had white beards, and they were reading from the Torah scroll.

Stuart was overcome by the scene. "Wooowww..." he breathed slowly. "I'm sure that if I could go back two thousand years in time, I would see exactly the same thing: Elderly Jews reading those same words, from the same *Sefer Torah*... Could that be the reason that we, as Jews, still exist today?!"

His question did not get an answer, but in actuality, that was the turning point in his life. Suddenly he realized how little he knew of his heritage. A fire of curiosity began to burn inside him, and he felt a strong urge

to learn more – much more – about his heritage, and to connect to it...

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Ten years later, Stuart, who was already observing Torah and *mitzvos*, was seated at the Shabbos table with his parents, who were visiting that week. The light of the Shabbos candles illuminated their souls, and apparently, generated a feeling of openness...

Stuart's father suddenly turned to him and said, "Stuart, I don't think I ever told you the story that happened with your grandmother, when you were in the hospital just after your birth." He then related:

For a few weeks after you were born you were hospitalized, after it was discovered that you had a rare blood condition that endangered your life. During that time, your grandmother was at home in Cleveland when she heard a gentle knock at the door. There was a young rabbi at the door who introduced himself as Menachem Mendel Taub – the Kaliver Rebbe. After surviving the Holocaust, including unspeakable torture at Auschwitz, he emigrated to the United States and settled in Cleveland.

With his characteristic energy, he set about establishing a shul, and all he lacked was a *Sefer Torah*. He wanted to buy one, but being a penniless refugee, he couldn't dream of procuring such a sum of money. Still, he did not give up.

As a first step towards his goal, he decided to visit the homes of Cleveland's Jews, those close to observance and those further away. That's how he arrived at your grandmother's house. When she heard this she asked, "How much does a *Sefer Torah* cost?" The Rebbe replied, "Three thousand five hundred dollars." At the time this was a colossal sum of money.

Grandma, who came from a traditional Jewish home, told him, "If you promise me that the first Shabbos that you read in the Torah you will make a *Mi Shebeirach* for my sick grandson, then I'll give you the whole sum you need."

The Rebbe agreed, and Grandma wrote a check for \$3,500 and gave it to the stunned Rebbe.

There is no doubt that the Rebbe made that *Mi Shebeirach* for you more than once, and now you are here, almost fifty years later, healthy as can be."

Stuart's father concluded the story, and the pieces began to click into place in Stuart's mind. "Dad, maybe you know where that *Sefer Torah* is today?" Stuart asked.

"Sure, I know," his father replied. "A few years later, the Rebbe made aliyah to Israel, with a few of the members of our community. After asking our permission, he took the *Sefer Torah*, and everything else from the shul, with him."

Stuart was stunned, and began to wonder: Ten years ago, there was a *Sefer Torah* in Eretz Yisrael that changed my life. Now I hear about a *Sefer Torah* that saved my life. Is it possible that the same *Sefer Torah* that started my *teshuvah* process is the one my grandmother donated?

Stuart decided to look into it, and the what he learned was the unbelievable – it indeed seems to have been that same *Sefer Torah*...

The *Sefer Torah* that his grandmother bought with her savings saved his life in his infancy, and saved his spiritual life as a young man. The *passuk* "Eitz chaim hie lamachazikim bah vesomcheha me'ushar" took on a new meaning for him. Many years ago, his grandmother paid \$3,500 to the Kaliver Rebbe so he could buy a *Sefer Torah* for his shul and make a *Mi Shebeirach* for her grandson's recovery. At the time, she had no idea that this action would save Stuart's life twice, once physically and once spiritually.