

# Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



398

PARASHAS NITZAVIM

תשפ"א

## Pearls of Emunim

## Pearls of Amen and Tefillah on the Parashah

### Only You Merited to be Nitzavim

"אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל" (כט ט)  
The *Sfas Emes* explained:

Moshe said to Klal Yisrael: "*Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem*" – only you merited to be standing before Hashem, and I did not. Because you sinned with the *eigel* and merited to do complete *teshuvah* and atone for your sin, and Chazal say "In a place where *baalei teshuvah* stand, *tzaddikim gemurim* do not stand (*Brachos* 34b)."

*Sfas Emes* 5639

### Performing Mitzvos Purifies the Thoughts

"הנסתרת לה' אלקינו והגלגל לנו ולבנינו עד עולם לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת" (כט כח)

The *Yesod Ha'avodah* of Slonim said:

If you want the thoughts of your heart, which are concealed and hidden, to be pure and sanctified "*l'Hashem Elokeinu*", the way to do it is "*vehaniglos lanu ulevaneinu ad olam la'asos es kol divrei haTorah hazos*." We have to fulfill the practical *mitzvos* that the Torah commanded us to do. Observing *mitzvos* of the Torah purifies and sanctifies the thoughts of the person's heart, as we say in the *Birchos Hamitzvos*: "*Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav*..."

*Toras Avos*

### Repent for the Anguish of the Shechinah

"והשבת אל לבבך בכל הגוים אשר הדיחך ה' אלקיך שמה; ושבת עד ה' אלקיך" (ל א-ב)

**Harav Eliezer Halevi Horowitz** of Tarnograd explained:

If you return to your heart and take notice of the fact that "*bechol hagoyim asher hidichacha – Hashem Elokecha shamah*" – as Chazal says (*Megillah* 29a) "Come and see how beloved Am Yisrael are

### 100 Brachos Protects from 100 Curses

"אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם" (כט ט)  
"Why was this *parashah* written next to the *parashah* of the curses? Because when Am Yisrael heard the 100 curses less two in this *parashah*, besides the forty-nine curses stated in *Toras Kohanim*, they paled and said 'Who can withstand this?!' Immediately Moshe called them and appeased them." (*Tanchuma* 1)

The *Rokeach* (320) wrote that one who makes 100 *brachos* is spared the 100 curses, the 98 written in *Parashas Ki Savo* and two additional ones alluded to in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 28:61): "*Gam kol choli vechol makkah*."

The *Raa'vad*, **Harav Moshe Sternbuch**, said:

*Chazal* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) already revealed to us that reciting 100 *brachos* a day saves us from plague. But the words of the *Rokeach* have a *chiddush*: Reciting 100 *brachos* saves us not only from plague, but that it is a general *segulah* to be spared from all the "100 curses" in the Torah.

Rav Sternbuch related that many years ago, during a difficult period in Eretz Yisrael, he participated in an *atzeres tefillah* in Rosh Ha'ayin, attended by one of the leading Yemenite *mekubalim*, who was at the time extremely elderly. The *mekubal* said that the Jews of Yemen had a practice that at a time of trouble, they strengthened themselves by being strict to recite 100 *brachos* with *kavanah*. In this merit, they merited to see great *yeshuos*.

*Biurim Vehanhagos*

to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, that wherever they were exiled – the *Shechinah* is with them" – then your anguish over the exile of the *Shechinah* will be greater, more than the pain over your exile. Then the words "*Veshavta ad Hashem Elokecha*" will be fulfilled – you should return in complete repentance because of the pain of the *Shechinah* and not because of your own pain.

*Noam Migadim*

### The Ruach Hashem Is Present Even Among the Distant

"אם יהיה נדחך בקצה השמים משם יקבצך ה' אלקיך ומשם ירחיק" (ל ד)

**Harav Tzvi Hirsh Farber**, one of the *rabbanim* of London, once came to his *beis medrash* on Rosh Hashanah, and was moved to see it packed with many Jews who had come to pour their hearts out on the Day of Judgment. They included many who were very distant from *mitzvah* observance. He asked, "What brings those Jews who are distant from Torah and *mitzvah* observance to come to shul on the Yamim Noraim? Do the authorities mandate this? It is only because the Jewish spark in their hearts awakens, that same spark that even thousands of years into the exile, harsh wanderings and bitter suffering has not been able to extinguish."

This wondrous fact is alluded to in this *passuk*: "*Im yihyeh nidachacha biktzei Hashamayim*" – even those who have become distant from fulfilling Torah and *mitzvos*, and the Will of Hashem is located at the very bottom of their list of priorities, still "*Misham yekabetzcha Hashem Elokecha umisham yikachecha*" – the *Ruach Hashem* that still exists inside them will gather them and bring them to Him to serve Him.

*Kerem Hatzvi*

## "שִׁחַר אֲנִיכְשָׁךְ צוּרִי וּמִשְׁגָּבִי"



אָבִינוּ מְלַבְּנוּ חֲמוּל עָלֵינוּ וְעַל עוֹלָלֵינוּ וּמַפְּנֵי  
Answering amen arouses *chassadim* and compassion for Klal Yisrael.

(*Sefer Hamefoar*, p. 12)



אָבִינוּ מְלַבְּנוּ תְּחִינָתֵנוּ בְּתִשְׁבּוּחַ שְׁלָמָה לְפָנֶיךָ  
One who answers amen properly has the gates of *teshuvah* opened for him.  
(*Harav Shlomo of Karlin, Bais Aharon Rosh Hashanah*)

Fellow Yid! Do you want the gates of *teshuvah* and *yeshuah* to be opened for you? Come to shul each morning early to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, and accumulate many amens, whose lofty virtues can advocate for you on the Day of Judgment, *letovah velivrachah*.





## A Compilation of Insights on the Connection Between Amen and Repentance

### 'Teshuvah Gedolah' for Not Answering Amen

One of the obstacles facing one who seeks to repent is his focus on sins that seem in his eyes to be significant, and looking away from sins that seem to him to be minor. One example is answering amen: Some mistakenly believe that there is no need to repent for not answering amen. But the *mekubal* Rabi Meir Hakohein Papirash, one of the disciples of the Arizal, related that this sin is so severe that one must do "teshuvah gedolah" for it.

He writes: "One needs *teshuvah gedolah* for not answering amen – even if he did not answer only once – such as if he heard a *brachah*, even on a fruit, or that his friend made a *brachah* on a mitzvah, and how much more so in the *tefillah* of the *sha"tz*... And in the *viduy* of *Ashamu* that we say each day he should shed tears for those amens that he did not answer."

Ohr Hayashar 7, 18-19

The *dorshei reshumos*, the record keepers, provided an allusion to the obligation to repent for the issue of answering amen, from the fact that *Birchas Hateshuvah* in *Shemoneh Esrei* begins with the words *סלו לנו אמינו*, and the numerical value of the acronym of those words is equal to the value of *אמן*.

### Amen Opens the Gates of Teshuvah

*Chazal* (*Shabbos* 119b) say, "Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened to him." Harav Shlomo of Karlin explained that "*Sha'arei Gan Eden*" are "*Sha'arei Teshuvah*." *Chazal* teach us that anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of *teshuvah* opened for him. His successor, Harav Asher of Stoln, added that from the fact that *Chazal* say "*poschin lo*" and not "*yiftechu lo*" – they open for him, and not will open – it is evident that the one who answers amen with all his might has the gates of *teshuvah* opened for him right away, without delay.

The *sefer Shomer Emunim* explained this with the *passuk* (*Hoshea* 14:3) "*Kechu imachem devarim veshuvu el Hashem*." *Kechu imachem* – gather in your packs matters of *kedushah* such as answering amen, and in this merit, the gates of *teshuvah* will be opened for you and you will merit to return to Hashem.

*Bais Aharon Haggadah Shel Pesach* ad. loc. *Ha Lachma Anya*, for Rosh Hashanah ad. loc. *Ksiv veyashuv*; *Shomer Emunim, Ma'amar Pischu Shearim*, Ch. 15

### Amen – The Way to Repent

Harav Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich, the Rav of Shamlo,

explained:

The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 86b) explains that the *teshuvah* of a person will only be complete after he encounters the same sin in the same place at the same time that he sinned. Then, if he overcomes his inclination and does not sin, he proves that his repentance is genuine. Based on this we can say that a person who wants to repent completely must fulfill *mitzvos* with the same trait that he sinned. Therefore, someone who transgressed a sin in public, and with impunity, can rectify it when *middah kenegged middah*, he davens and answers amen out loud, in shul, without being ashamed of people mocking him. If he does so, he will prove that he has repented completely.

This is what the *passuk* alludes to (*Hoshea* 14:3): "*Kechu imachem devarim veshuvu el Hashem*" – take with you the traits with which you sinned and carry them towards the *kedushah*, and that will make your *teshuvah* complete and accepted.

*Drashos Lechem Shlomo for Shabbos Shuvah*

### Amen - More than Thousands of Fast Days

The *sefer Shomer Emunim* dedicates an entire chapter entitled "*Pischu Shearim*" that discusses the virtues of answering amen. The author writes something awesome: "If a person is careful about all the details of amen, and *Yehei Shemei Rabba*, cited in this segment, then undoubtedly he will have a *tikkun hanefesh* in a very strong way, more than several thousand fast days, without measure, and his soul will be bound to the *Shores Elyon*, and it removes the rust and the waste from his soul and his spirit."

*Shomer Emunim, Ma'amar Pischu Shearim*, Chapter 15

### Amen - Beginning of Teshuvah

The Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Aharon Kotler, related:

The beginning of *teshuvah* process has to be specifically with good deeds that we do – and do them properly. This is possible with a bit of attention, especially with things that a person is normally lax about and is scornful of, even though they are very serious. For example, answering amen. There are numerous *halachos* about this, and everyone is aware how *Chazal* were strict (*Brachos* 47a) – in a frightening way – about answering amen improperly. And it is possible to understand from this how severe is the sin of someone who completely neglects to answer amen.

*Mishnas Rabi Aharon, Ma'amarim* Vol. II p. 80

## Vechol Ma'aminim Shehu Levado Hu

*The tefillos of the Yamim Noraim in Yeshivas Chevron had, as all its alumni agreed, a special flavor that was unmatched anywhere else. It was a flavor that remained with them long after they leave the yeshiva. The lofty tefillos were a combination of a special tzibbur that included no small number of eminent elders and gaonim of Yerushalayim, along with wonderful chazzanim. The latter were talmidei chachamim who, more than pleasing the ear with their sweet voices, made hearts tremble as they poured their souls in tefillah and swept the entire crowd up with them to their lofty heights.*

*The tefillos of the Yerushalmi Maggid, Harav Shalom Schwadron, zt"l, were especially renowned, for their unique nusach which he copied from several baalei tefillah in earlier generations, and then added many of his own nuances. With his unbelievable voice, Rav Shalom was able to produce a unique tefillah that penetrated the depths of the hearts of the listeners, and also gave rise to a generation of baalei tefillah who serve in the yeshiva world to this day.*

*It's hard to describe Reb Shalom's tefillah with mere words. It is possible that anyone who wasn't present will never be able to fully grasp what it was like. Reb Shalom, with his unique brilliance, was able to meld himself with the niggun and with the words of the tefillos, until they were all one entity. Each word took on a unique significance and interpretation that was expressed in his facial expressions and the trilling of his voice as he sang the accompanying song. Thus, the words "vechil ure'adah" were said with just that—trembling and awe. The words "kol demamah dakah" were said in a quiet near whisper. The declaration of "uteshuvah uteshuvah..." were said in such a way that there was no one in the bais medrash who was not aroused to teshuvah and tefillah.*

*Reb Shalom was successful in conveying and illustrating to thousands of mispallelim who surrounded him everything that they yearned for in their tefillos—the pleasantness, the longing, the holiness, and the glory of the Kingship, and they all followed him like an army after their decorated general.*

This story took place in that year that the Chevron Yeshiva did not merit to hear Rav Shalom's extraordinary voice. That Rosh Hashanah, Reb Shalom was compelled to be in Switzerland for Yom Tov, after spending the summer months on a mission on behalf of Chinuch Atzmai.

In Eretz Yisrael, many were disappointed to hear that they would not merit to hear Reb Shalom davening that year, but on the other hand, the Swiss community was overcome with anticipation. Reb Shalom, the renowned *maggid* and legendary *baal tefillah* was going to daven in the yeshiva in the city where he was staying. Those in that yeshiva who had merited to hear Rav Shalom in their youth enthused to their friends with superlative descriptions. Many of them chose to spend Yom Kippur with Reb Shalom, in the yeshiva, with the hope that he would daven for the *amud*, and inspire the Swiss community with his *tefillos*.

Yom Kippur night. When Reb Shalom's dignified form appeared at the entrance to the yeshiva, hundreds of pairs of curious eyes followed him as he walked slowly between the aisles. His face was somber and the *mispallelim* turned towards him and the awe of the Yom Hadin was evident on his entire being.

*Maariv* began with "*Barchu*", sung in the

traditional *niggun* and Reb Shalom was quickly swept up in his thoughts of that poignant *niggun* that accompanied the first *Barchu* of Rosh Hashanah, far away in Eretz Yisrael. The memory triggered a burst of emotions but Rav Shalom suppressed it and focused solely on the words of the *tefillah*: "*Ki heim chayeinu...v'ahavascha al tasir mimenu l'olamim...*"

Rav Shalom davened *Shacharis vasikin*, as was his habit for many years, and each tune reminded him over and over again of the *tefillah* in Yerushalayim, which could not possibly be duplicated; in his heart he felt the intensity of the exile and its travails.

During the short break between *Shacharis* and *Mussaf*, the *roshei yeshiva* approached Rav Shalom and pleaded with him to honor them by davening *Mussaf* before the *amud*. Reb Shalom vacillated but ultimately agreed, and a thrum of excitement rippled through the crowd. This was no small thing for them, to participate in the *tefillos* of such an eminent and remarkable *baal tefillah*. The *chazzan* announced "*Ashrei*" and everyone, laymen alongside the youth and the yeshiva students, were swept up after him with holy emotions. Reb Shalom decided not to forego even one note of his regular *nusach* of *tefillah*, and the *tzibbur*, despite not being used to such a long davening, did not rue for one moment the passing time.

Reb Shalom began *Chazaras Hashatz* in a low voice that slowly grew louder, until it reached a crescendo as he neared *Kedushah*. When he began reciting *Kedushah*, he was able to literally make the room tremble, and just like in Chevron, the entire *tzibbur*, young and old, responded thunderously: "*Kadosh, Kadosh Kadosh...Baruch Kevod Hashem mimkomo.*"

The *kehillah* became so drawn into Reb Shalom's davening that the non-Jewish cook in a nearby building wondered what had happened to the members of the community.

Reb Shalom continued his fiery *tefillah*: "*Elokeinu v'Elokei Avoseinu heyey im... ha'omdim levakesh tefillah vesachanunim...*" when suddenly, he recoiled and stepped back.

The sound of bells—a foreign sound to him—suddenly resonated through the windows of the shul. These were notes of impurity coming from the nearby church, and they disturbed Reb Shalom's pure *tefillah*. His tremendous heart shattered inside him and he could not continue.

The crowd looked at him in surprise. The *mispallelim* had long become inured to the sound, and hardly even heard it, but Reb Shalom's ears were very sensitive. He could hardly suppress the storm in his heart. When he was finally able to continue, the words "*gashim mul aron hakodesh b'eimah, leshakech ka'as vecheimah*" the words burst out of his mouth in a new tone, which combined placidity with fear, awe and kingship.

In time, when Rav Shalom returned to Yerushalayim, he integrated this tune into the *piyut* of *Vechol Maaminim*. He felt it to be a *teshuvah hamishkal* for that jarring disturbance he had experienced during *Mussaf* in a foreign land. Against the backdrop of the tolling of heresy, Rav Shalom sang a song of pure faith in Hashem: "*Vechol ma'aminim shehu levado Hu...*"

*Siach Shmuel, Uvdos Vehanhagos*, p. 526