

# Vechele Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

### Offending Another Impedes the Acceptance of Tefillah

"ויאמר יהודה אל אחיו מה בצע כי נהרג את אחינו וכסינו את דמו" (לוי כו)

Rabbeinu Ephraim wrote that after Yehuda said to his brothers: "מה בצע" – what value is there to the three *tefillos* we offer each day at 'בוקר, צהריים, ערב' which are an acronym for בצע if "we will kill our brother?" The sin of murder will prevent those *tefillos* from being accepted, as the *passuk* says (*Yeshayahu* 1:15): "Even if you pray copiously, I do not hear you as your hands are filled with blood."

The *mekubal Rav Yitzchak Chayes*, the *av beis din* of Skolya and author of *Zera Yitzchak*, added that with the words "and we have covered his blood", Yehudah tried to warn his brothers that if they killed Yosef they may lose their power of *tefillah* for eternity. That is because the atonement for the sin of the murderer is for him to go from place to place and humiliate himself by saying, 'I am a murderer,' (*Orchos Tzaddikim, Shaar Hateshuvah*). Because they are trying to cover up their sin, they will never do this, and therefore this sin of murder will impede their *tefillos* from being accepted, forever.

Peirush Rabbeinu Ephraim al HaTorah; Sifsei Tzaddikim

There was once a person who used to lend with interest, who also used to harass those who borrowed from him. He came to the *beis medrash* of **Harav Yechiel Meir of Gustinin** and began to daven enthusiastically, like an ardent *chassid*. At the end of davening, when he came to receive a *brachah* from the

Rebbe, the Rebbe rebuked him and said, "The *passuk* says 'Mah betza ki naharog es achinu,' – what purpose is there in davening enthusiastically three times a day (which make the acronym of *betza*) if 'ki naharog es achinu,' at the same time as we are engaged in 'killing' our brothers..."

*Chassidim Mesaprim, Vol. III, p. 186*

### Three Actions Contingent on Tefillah

"וימאן ויאמר אל אשת אדניו..." (למ"ה)

There are only four times in the Torah that the *shalshelos* punctuation appears:

1. In the word *ויתמהמה*, which is written in regard to the rescue of Lot and his daughters (*Bereishis* 19:16);
2. In the word "*vayomer*" that Eliezer, the servant of Avraham began to speak, (*ibid* 24:12);
3. In the word "*וימאן*" in this *parashah*, and
4. In the word "*vayishchat*" regarding the *Korbanos Hamilu'im* (*Vayikra* 8:23).

The **Bais Avraham of Slonim** explained that these four words allude to the process through which a person can overcome the *yetzer hara* that intensifies the fire of desire in his soul:

First he must **delay** (*להתמהמה*) and push off the temptations of the *yetzer* for a later time, and when the desire in his heart calms down, then he should refuse (*ימאן*) with all his might to hear the voice of his *yetzer*, until in the end he will reach the level of **slaughtering** (*שחיטת*) the *yetzer* and completely annulling it. But we have to know that in order to succeed with this, a person must fulfill **ויאמר** – which is *tefillah*, because without *tefillah* one cannot succeed at anything.

*Be'er Hachaim, Purim p. 43*

## Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### 'All Will Answer Amen Quickly After You'

Hashem Yisbarach granted me the privilege of being a frequent visitor to the home of Harav Aharon Leib Steinman, *zy"א*, whose fourth *yahrtzeit* is this coming Sunday

As someone who merited to know him well, especially with regard to the subject that I have dedicated my life to in recent years, I saw his special fondness for the mitzvah of answering amen, as is known by anyone who merited to be in his presence. We will always remember the moving scene that took place in his home each day, when a short time after dawn, before he began davening *Shacharis k'vasikin* with a *minyan* in his house, the Rosh Yeshivah would stand to recite *Birchos Hashachar* in front of everyone present. The *brachos* were recited word by word, with great care, and everyone answered amen. Then he remained standing in his place to hear the *brachos* of those who had gathered, and to answer amen to them

Aside for that, he would often speak to those who came to him about the important virtues of answering amen, and I merited to have presented his words to the public on this subject at various Bney Emunim events that he attended

I remember that at one of these events when I asked him to speak about the importance of answering amen, he said to me in surprise, with a smile, "If *Chazal* write such lofty things about answering amen, what is there to add "!!?about it

How much more so is this the case for each one of us, that if such a great person, whose time was so strictly measured, and dedicated to Torah, *avodas Hashem* and *chesed*, understood that one must pursue the mitzvah of amen, and to come to davening fifteen minutes early to recite *Birchos Hashachar* properly, with amen, !?then what can we say

Good Shabbos,

**Yaakov Dov Marmorstein**

## The Cry of the Captive Rav

This moving story takes us back to the troubled times and suffering that our nation endured during both World War I and World War II.

This story is about Harav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, *Hy"d*, the Gaavad of Pishtian, Slovakia. Like many of his brethren, he was exiled with his family from his hometown and was forced to commence a tortuous journey, throughout which he did not stop learning Torah. He even continued writing and publishing his many *chiddushim* in all areas of Torah throughout his travails.

He spent a period of time in the capital of Hungary, Budapest. It was *Shabbso Parashas Mishpatim*, Rosh Chodesh Adar I, 5703/1943. A short time after he came to Hungary, when Rav Teichtel was still using an assumed non-Jewish identity that he was compelled to take on, he was invited to speak before a large number of community members in the city. At the beginning of the speech, the Rav related the following story,



Harav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtel, *Hy"d*

which had taken place decades earlier, but whose message applied to those very days:

"It was the height of World War I. Very early on Shabbos morning, Harav Avraham Yosef Greenwald, the Av Beis Din of Chust, and the son of my Rebbe the Arugas Habosem, left the house to go immerse in the *mikveh*. He was met with a scene that was not very common at the time – a group of captive prisoners from Russia doing the degrading, humiliating job of sweeping the streets.

The miserable prisoners all appeared to be non-Jews, but the Rav noticed that for some reason, one of them was treating him with extra respect, and was

even clearing the way for him. When he returned from the *mikveh*, the scene repeated itself, and the Rav could not ignore it. He stopped walking, looked at the prisoner closely, and discovered that he had delicate and refined features.

The Rav thanked the man politely, using the local language, but to his great surprise, the man replied to him in Yiddish, staying, '*Rebbi*, I don't deserve thanks for this. It behooves every Yid to honor the *mara d'asra* of his city...'

Upon hearing this the Rav was stunned into silence, but the greater surprise was yet to come, when the captive added, his head lowered, 'How can I not act this way, when I, too, serve as the *mara d'asra* in my hometown...'

After the Rav recovered from the shock and realized the terrible situation he had happened across, he got into action. With Hashem's help, within a short time, he was able to arrange the release of the Rav.

As expected, the Rav invited the prisoner to his home, and already in the short conversation that they had, he was able to see that the prisoner was a tremendous *tzaddik* and extremely learned.

After *Shacharis*, the Rav asked the leader of the community to inform the *mispallelim* that in the afternoon, a prominent Rav and a *gadol b'Torah* who happened to be in their city after he was exiled from his homeland, would be speaking.

The news about the captive Rav quickly spread among the Jews of Chust, and at the appointed time, the shul was buzzing with the noise of hundreds of people who had come to see the captive Rav and hear his words.

On the way to the speech, the Chuster Rav whispered to his guest, who was still wearing his prisoner's clothes, that perhaps he should wear more dignified clothes as was fitting for a Rav, for the *drashah*. But the prisoner declined, and said in a trembling, but determined tone, 'No, I will speak in these cloths.'

At the specified time, the Rav stood up to speak, and as he faced the *Aron Kodesh*, he began to sob bitterly, as his hands gripped his faded, ragged prisoner's clothes:

'*Ribbono shel Olam*, are the *talmidei chachamim* not Your beloved children, and as such, You commanded them to wear special dignified clothing, as stipulated in the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 114a) and in *Rambam* (*Dei'os* 5 9), and now, *Ribbono shel Olam*, '*Haker na, haksones bincha hie im lo*, is this Your son's coat or not' (*Bereishis* 37:32)? Is it an honor for You if I am dressed like

this?' Please, have mercy on Your nation who enduring such trying times, and save them, in Your great mercy!'

The captive Rav was not able to speak any more, and the audience did not need to hear any more. They all joined the Rav's cries, and sobbed for Am Yisrael and for their pain and troubles."

Rav Teichtel also did not need more than that to describe to the listeners in Hungary, where the war had not yet struck in full force, the terrible situation of Klal Yisrael. The words said during the *drashah* and printed in his *sefer Mishneh Sachir al HaTorah*, which was published during the war, made a great impression on his listeners, and aroused them to strengthen their davening and *teshuvah*.

About a year after that speech, the Germans invaded Budapest and Rav Teichtal had to run once again. For long months, he was able to hide from the Germans, but he was eventually caught and taken with his family to Auschwitz. A few days later, the Germans discovered that the Russian army was one the verge of capturing the area, and they began to move the Jews out of Auschwitz and further into Germany, so that the Russians should not liberate them, "*chalilah*"....

A witness who survived later described Rav Teichtel's final moments:

It was 13 Shevat 5705/1945. There were about sixty Yidden packed into the cargo train car with the Rav, as well as 20 coarse Ukrainian prisoners. One of the gentiles grabbed the bread belonging to one of the Jews, and the Rav could not remain silent at this wrong, and protested vigorously. In response, the Ukrainian and his friends beat the Rav brutally.

As he lay battered and beaten, and close to death, the Rav spoke to the Yidden who crowded around him, and these were his final words:

"Dear Yidden, very soon, this dreadful regime will be gone, and you will merit a great *yeshuah* that will illuminate the entire world. The residents of the Holy Land will especially merit this. Let us all daven for the welfare of our brethren wherever they are. I know that my time has come, and I promise you that I will daven for you that you merit a *yeshuah* and Geulah Sheleimah very soon."

When he finished speaking, his pure soul departed.

*Mishneh Sachir Al HaTorah, Parashas Vayeishev, and in the introduction*

## Birchas Ahavah

### The Source of the Brachah

The Amoraim (*Brachos* 11b) dispute whether this *brachah* should begin with the words *Ahavah Rabbah* or *Ahavas Olam*. The *poskim* are divided how to do so in practice (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 61 1), and some wrote to do both - to say *Ahavah Rabbah* in *Shacharis* and *Ahavas Olam* in *Maariv* (*Tosafos* *ibid* ad loc. *Verabbanan*.)

This *brachah* was instituted by the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah (*Reishis Chochmah, Sha'ar Ha'ahavah* Ch. 7). Some wrote that the request for *kibbutz galuyos* at the end of the *brachah* was added after the *Churban* (*Siddur Hage'onim Vehamekubalim* II, p. 449, in the name of the *Avudraham*. Before that, it does not appear.)

### The Essence of the Brachah

This *brachah* is the second of the *Birchos Krias Shema* of *Shacharis*, and it does not begin with *Baruch*, because it is *semuchah*, attached to the *brachah* of *Yotzer Ohr* (*Tur Orach Chaim* 60 1).

The Rishonim are divided as to whether one has to answer amen after the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah* said by the *shaliach tzibbur*. The *Rambam* (*Brachos* 1 17) holds that the *Birchos Krias Shema* have the same *din* as the *Birchas Hamitzvos* for the mitzvah of *Krias Shema*. Just like we do not pause between a *dvar mitzvah* and the *brachah* that precedes it, likewise we should not pause to answer amen between this *brachah* and the mitzvah of *Krias Shema*. However, the *Rema*<sup>h</sup> differs, and holds that a person is allowed to answer amen when the *sha"tz* concludes this *brachah*, because the *Birchos Krias Shema* are not a *brachah* on the mitzvah of *Krias Shema*. Rather, they are *birchos shevach*, *brachos* of praise, which stand on their own, and were instituted by *Chazal* to recite before *Krias Shema* and afterwards, and therefore, there is no reason not to stop between them and *Krias Shema* (*Tur Orach Chaim* 61).

In order to resolve all doubt, the *Mishnah Berurah* (59 25) wrote that it is preferable to conclude this *brachah* together with the *sha"tz*, and then by all opinions he should not answer amen after the *brachah* of the *sha"tz*, because a person does not answer amen after his own *brachah*.

### The Structure of the Brachah

The *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah* begins and ends with the description of the great love that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has for Klal Yisrael, as it says (*Malachi* 1:1): "*Ahavti eschem amar Hashem*." In the body of the *brachah* we ask that Hashem should open our hearts with His Torah, and give us the merit to learn it and teach it, and through that to uphold what the Torah has commanded us in the first *parashah* of *Krias Shema*: "*Vedibarta bam...veshinantam levanecha*." (*Siddur Chassidei Ashkenaz* p. 89)

Towards the end of the *brachah*, we ask that Hashem gather us in from the exiles, "and lead us standing tall to our land." This request is a continuation of the request that we merit to learn and teach Torah, because *Chazal* say (*Chaggigah* 5b): "When Am Yisrael were exiled from their place, there is no greater *bittul Torah* than this." (*Olas Tamid*, 19)

The *Siddur Lev Sameach* (p. 82) explains that we conclude this *brachah* with a request for the *Geulah*, because a *tzaddik* had a dream in which it was revealed to him that the *Geulah* is being delayed because we do not have the right *kavanah* in *Ahavah Rabbah*. Therefore, the conclusion of this *brachah*, with *kavanah*, is a suitable time to ask for the *Geulah*.

### Ahavas Olam Between Am Yisrael and Their Father in Heaven

The *Siddur Chassidei Ashkenaz* (*ibid*) explained that *Chazal* arranged that we recite this *brachah* before *Krias Shema*, which contains the commandment to love Hashem, so that we should remember that just like we love Hashem, Hashem loves us.

Harav Akiva Eiger adds that Hashem's love for us is the basis for the fulfillment of the commandment to love Hashem and therefore, that is how we conclude this *brachah*: "*Habocheh B'amo Yisrael B'ahavah*." Shlomo Hamelech teaches us (*Mishlei* 27:19): "*Kamayim hapanim lapanim kein lev ha'adam la'adam*." Just like the water reflects the one who looks into it, so, too, the hearts of people reflect one another. Therefore, if we precede our recital of *Krias Shema* by stating the fact that Hashem loves us, then inevitably our love for Hashem will be aroused in our hearts when we recite it." (*Milin Chadetin, V'eschanan*)

### The Meaning of Amen

It is true that HaKadosh Baruch Hu loves us, and may it be that He should give us the understanding and wisdom of the *divrei Torah*, and that He return Am Yisrael to their borders.

"וכאשר תקום מן הספר, תחפש באשר למדת אם יש בו דבר אשר תוכל לקיימו."

## Ein K'Elokeinu Instituted Instead of Answering Amen

It is known that the *tefillah* of *Ein K'Elokeinu* is arranged in the order of the letters of amen: "אין כאלוקינו...מי כאלוקינו...גודה לאלוקינו" (see *Peirush Hatefillas Vehabrachos* [Rav Y. ben Yakar] Vol. I, p. 125). Mahar"i Tzalach, one of the leading sages of Yemen, brings in his commentary *Eitz Chaim* on the *siddur*, that there is an ancient tradition accepted among the sages of Yemen as to why this *tefillah* was instituted in the order of the letters of amen: "Once, the evil regime cast a decree that Am Yisrael was not allowed to answer amen. What did they do? They established that it should be said in an allusion, as an acronym: 'Ein...mi...nodeh...' so that the authorities would not understand. Even though the decree was later nullified, this *takanah* was not lifted." (*Eitz Chaim, Tefillas Ein K'Elokeinu*)

### The First Tactic of the Greeks

The Shefa Chaim of Sanz said that the first tactic that the Greeks implemented to "make them forget Your Torah" was to prevent Am Yisrael from davening properly. Because if the *tefillah* was not done well, it was impossible to learn Torah, because only through proper *tefillah* can one be a *ben Torah*. "But if the *tefillah* is not the way it should be, **and even if only one amen is missing**, then that already prevents one from meriting to learn Torah." Therefore, when the Chashmonaim prevailed over the Greeks they "established these eight days of Chanukah to praise and glorify You Great Name", because the first thing the Greeks stopped was *tefillah*, therefore, when they were defeated, it was established that we should strengthen our *tefillah* and *hoda'ah*. (*Shefa Chaim, Rava D'Ravin, Vol. I, Parashas Toldos, 2:5*)

Dear Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*, Director of Bney Emunim,

I would like to express some of my feelings towards this holy enterprise that is so aptly named Bney Emunim, because through the extensive involvement with answering amen, surely one becomes connected to amen like a father is connection to his son.

*Baruch Hashem*, I have the merit to be very strict about *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* each day, and many in our *beis medrash* have adopted the practice. Aside for the virtue of answering amen, this custom has a special advantage in that it obligates us to come early before davening in order to have enough time to say *Birchos Hashachar* and to hear the *brachos* from others. *Ashreichem!*

אמת מה נהדר is the scene in our *beis medrash* each morning, when, before *Shacharis*, the *mispallelim* face one another and say *Birchos Hashachar* aloud, and the amen resonates loudly. May more people see this and follow suit.

Once again, *ashreichem!*

With greatest appreciation,  
A.M., Yerushalayim

Letters can be sent to  
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or emailed to the Vechol Ma'aminim  
email address. 9139191@gmail.com

## Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



### The Ayeles Hashachar

24 Kislev  
5778/2018

Harav Aharon

Yehuda Leib Steinman was born to his father, Rav Noach Tzvi, a resident of Brisk, in 5675/1915. Due to a draft call-up, he fled to Switzerland, and from there, he came to Eretz Yisrael in 1945. Already as a young man, he was *marbitz Torah* and served as a *maggid shiur* in various *yeshivos*. In 5715/1955, he began to serve as the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh Letze'irim, and in 5758/1998, he established Yeshivas Orchos Torah. He supported and encouraged the work of Bney Emunim and attended a number of the *chizuk* gatherings that were organized to strengthen the answering of amen.

He passed away on 24 Kislev 5778. Hundreds of thousands accompanied him to his final resting place at the Ponevezh Cemetery in Bnei Brak. His *divrei Torah* were printed in a series of *seforim* entitled *Ayeles Hashachar*.

### Amen Without a Number

Once, after a *shiur* that took place in his home very early in the morning, before the daily *vasikin minyan*, Rav Steinman suddenly said: Let us take upon ourselves from now on that a quarter of an hour before davening, each one will stand and say *Birchos Hashachar*, and the rest of us will answer amen after him. Just like a businessman does not suffice with a bit of money, and seeks to expand his fortune, we, whose business is the work of Shamayim, will not suffice with a few amens, and instead we will seek to accumulate more and more amens.

He added: When we are in this world, we do not understand the importance of answering amen. But in Olam Haba, a person sees that every amen helps him, and he

feels the lack of every amen that he did not say. A person must know that even one amen can save him. (*Notrei Amen*, beginning of 5)

### The Greatest Virtue of All

At one of the Bney Emunim gatherings that he graced with his participation, he said: "The mitzvah of answering amen has a tremendous virtue: it is so simple and easy that there is nothing to even brag about! This is another virtue of answering amen; it is such a lofty mitzvah and a person can receive all good things through it – yet at the same time, fulfilling it does not entail an ounce of pride or boastfulness. He then added: And it seems that this is the greatest virtue of them all – that one can do a good thing without it involving even a shred of *ga'avah*, pride! (*Sefer Bney Emunim*, p. 229)