

VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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ת.ד 102 בני ברק
פקס : 03-5055919
9139191@gmail.com

Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

Hashem Will Fight for You, Even When 'You Will Be Silent'

“ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תהרשון” (יד יד)

In the *Mechilta* (*Masechta Devihi Parashah 2*) *Chazal* explain on this *passuk*: “Not for this hour alone will He fight for you, but forever, He will fight against your enemies.”

The *Meshech Chochmah* explains the words of the *Mechilta*:

In this war, Am Yisrael claimed that it was *min hadin* that Hashem should fight for them, because He did not take them out of Mitzrayim to have them drown at sea. Therefore, *Chazal* explain that the promise of “*Hashem yilachem lachem*” was not said to Bnei Yisrael only in the context of this war, but also with regard to future wars, when “*v’atem tacharishun*” – when you will not be able to open your mouths with a claim, then He will fight for you as well.

Meshech Chochmah

‘And We Do Not Know What We Will Do’

“ויאמר ה' אל משה מה תצעק אלי דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו” (יד טז)

The *Sfas Emes* explained:

When a person in Bnei Yisrael comes to the realization that he has no way out of his troubles, and he casts his whole lot with his Creator Alone – he immediately sees salvation. This was the situation when Bnei Yisrael stood on the shores of the sea, with Egypt behind them, the sea ahead of them, and nowhere to run. Because they had no natural escape, they cast their entire lot on their Creator, and immediately, the sea split for them. This is what Hashem told Moshe: “מה - you will shout to Me” – if you scream “*mah*”, what can we do, meaning that

you see no other solution in a natural way, then you know that the time for the *yeshuah* has come, and therefore, “Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they will travel.”

Vaya’an Yosef [*Rav Y. Mandelkorn*] p. 111

‘Refa’einu’ Is Also Needed for Healthy People

“ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך והישר בעיניו תעשה והאזנת למצותיו ושמרת כל חקיו כל המחלה אשר שמתני במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך” (טו כז)

Chazal ask (*Sanhedrin 101a*) regarding the end of this *passuk*: “*Ki Ani Hashem Rofecha*,” if Hashem is promising us that He will not make us sick with the diseases from Egypt, why do we need healing?

The *Shevet Halevi* explained:

The *Yaavetz* explained (*Siddur Amudei Shamayim*, Vol. II, *Hanhagos Hamechaber* p. 26) that the request of “*Veha’aleh refuah sheleimah lechol makoseinu*” mentioned in *Refa’einu* also applies to someone who is healthy. This is because there are always hidden diseases in a person’s body, and if not for the fact that Hashem placed in the body the nature to overcome those diseases before they break out [the immune system] we would not be able to withstand them. Therefore, even a healthy person needs a *tefillah* that Hashem should give him strength in his body to continue its war against those hidden diseases.

Thus we can explain this *passuk*: If you follow the path of Torah, then “every diseases that I put in Egypt” and which by nature remain hidden in the body “I will not put on you” – I will strengthen your body so that they do not erupt within you “because I am Hashem your Healer.”

Drashos Vesichos Shevet Halevi – 5763, p. 172

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Rabbeinu Bechayei’s Revelation in This Parashah

Many times each say, we merit to utter with our lips the holy word ‘amen.’ But despite its commonness, and perhaps because of it, it seems that we do not understand its truly lofty level. That is not surprising, because how many of us have dedicated even a bit of time to delve into the meaning of this word, and understanding its deep and lofty significance, and recognizing its tremendous power and what it can effect?

We can expound endlessly, but on this platform, I would like to draw the attention of our readers to the words of Rabbeinu Bechayei in this *parashah*, on the *passuk* that we say each morning in *Shiras Hayam* (*Shemos 14:31*): “*Vayir’u ha’am es Hashem vaya’aminu b’Hashem ubeMoshe avdo*.” Rabbeinu Bechayei expounds on significance of answering amen in *halachah*, *Aggadah* and *Kabbalah*, and the secrets that it contains. He also delineates the tremendous reward for one who is careful to answer amen according to *halachah*, and the punishment of one who does not pay attention to this obligation.

There is hardly a more awe-inspiring creation than the stars arrayed over our heads. If we gaze Heavenward while we are in a dark place, we can see tens of thousands of tiny stars. That is besides those that are not visible to the eye, and others that we cannot yet see because they are so far away. The stars look small because they are light years away from us, but there is no one today who doubts the fact that they are really entire worlds unto themselves.

If we delve further into the words of Rabbeinu Bechayei, we will see that amen is exactly the same. To our eyes, it looks small and unimpressive, but in the Heavens it is truly great and lofty, and entire worlds depend on it. Delving into his words leads a person to conclude that if we heed the words of *Chazal*, and answer many amens, we will see good all our lives.

With a call of ‘*uneromemah Shemo yachdav*,’
And wishing you a good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

An Innocent Request That Saved a Life

It was at the end of 5774/2014, during Operation Protective Edge which began after Gaza terror organizations kept firing a steady rain of missiles and mortars on the Gaza Envelope region.

It was late at night. The brigade of elite soldiers, who were specially trained and equipped, made its way in the thick blackness of Gaza City. Their hearts pounded with prayer, as they focused on the mission they had been sent to, to help defend the residents of Eretz Yisrael, and especially those in the southern region, from the murderers who were targeting them.

Under cover of tick darkness, the brigade advanced carefully into the lion's den that is Gaza; the soldiers maintained absolute silence.

When they reached their interim stop, they each took up their positions, making sure to maintain a distance between them and to camouflage any unusual movement. They knew that on any corner not far from them, terrorists were lying in wait, with deadly weapons; these murderers just wanted their blood.



The border fence in the Gaza Strip.

The soldiers carefully scanned the area for any movement. Shrieks of mortar shells sliced through the air constantly, and the atmosphere was tense and fearful. After two sleepless nights, the soldiers were tired, but none of them could even dream of catching any sleep at the height of the fighting.

The exhaustion did not have a good solution at the time, but it was even harder for them to overcome the gnawing hunger. They hadn't eaten a thing in hours. As long as they were in the middle of battle, they did not pay

attention to it, but now, as they were in a resting state, the hunger began to gnaw at them.

It was the glory hour of those small candies and sweets that the fighters had stuck into their pockets before going out to battle. These sweets had been sent to them by children on the home front who wanted to provide some encouragement. They were small candies, but they were big enough to warm the heart and to silence the hunger for a time.

Like the rest of his friends, Shai, one of the soldiers, stuck his hand into his pocket and pulled out a chocolate coated wafer. The wrapper was wrinkled and the wafer was crumbly, but at the time, it was as precious as gold...

Shai tore open the wrapper and was about to swallow the wafer, when he suddenly noticed a small note that had been taped to it. His curiosity overpowered his hunger, and forced him to peek. The note was adorned with childish drawings, and stated, "Dear Soldier, Enjoy this and good luck. Please don't forget to make a *brachah*."

Shai looked at the note and felt a tear rolling down his cheek. The innocent note reminded him of home, and triggered a storm of emotions. The thought of the anonymous little boy living out there, who had chosen to send a small wafer with these heartfelt words to a person who he did not know, touched him deeply. But the contents of the note also confounded him.

On the one hand, he was very hungry, it was just a simple wafer and a little boy. But on the other hand, in the eyes of this little boy, the wafer was like a precious treasure that he had generously given to Shai, and his innocent request was so easy to carry out...

Shai would have been happy to make a *brachah*, but being a *tinok shenishbah*, he had no idea how to do it. He tried to think hard but could not

remember what he was supposed to say.

For a moment, he thought of skipping it, assuming that the boy would forgive him. But he quickly quashed the errant thought and decided that no! He would not eat this wafer until he found out what *brachah* to make on it.

He looked at the other soldiers sitting around them, hoping one of them could help him. Suddenly he noticed Moshe, the only religious soldier in the brigade, sitting a few meters away. Moshe surely knew what *brachah* to make, but how could he ask him? He couldn't call to him; any unnecessary noise could bring calamity upon them. He also couldn't wait because he was very hungry and who knew how much time they had left here to wait.

He had only one option remaining – crawling. Shai began to crawl slowly and quietly towards Moshe, and when he reached his destination, he whispered the story of the wafer and the note, and asked him to help him fulfill the child's will.

"Sure," Moshe said. "Say after me, '*Baruch Atah Hashem...Melech Ha'olam Borei Minei Mezonos*.'"

Shai said the *brachah* and Moshe answered amen with *kavanah*. At that moment they heard a huge explosion, much closer than Shai had ever experienced in his life.

It turned out that a terrorist cell had suspected that the soldiers were there and decided to check it out by firing a mortar. Within a few seconds, the cell was eliminated, and the fighters got the order to scan the area to make sure there were no casualties.

Shai also looked around where he was, and when he realized how great the miracle was, he emitted a cry of surprise. Apparently the mortar had fallen exactly where he had been taking cover a moment or two earlier. Shai could not think of what would have happened if he would have capitulated to his hunger and given up on the *brachah*.

Tefillas Shemoneh Esreh – The Brachah of Avos

Source of the Practice

The Anshei Knesses Hagedolah instituted for Klal Yisrael to daven three times a day with a fixed *nusach tefillah* of eighteen *brachos* (*Megillah* 17b). Even though another *brachah* was later added – *Birchas Haminim* – Chazal call this *tefillah* ‘*Shemoneh Esreh*’, for the number of *brachos* in its original *nusach* (*Brachos* 28b; *Bach, Orach Chaim* 118). The *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh* were instituted to correspond to the eighteen mentions of the Name of Hashem that Dovid Hamelech said in the 29th chapter of *Tehillim*, which begins with “*Mizmor leDovid havu l’Hashem bnei eilim.*” (*Brachos* 28b)

The *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh* are divided into three types: 1. Three *brachos* of *shevach*, praise 2. 13 *brachos* of *bakashah*, requests, and 3. Three *brachos* of *hoda’ah*, gratitude. Chazal compared this to a servant who comes to make a request of his master. First he praises his master, then he makes his requests, and ultimately, he thanks him and then departs. (*Brachos* 34a)

Structure of the Brachah

This *brachah* is the only one of the *brachos* in *Shemoneh Esreh* that begins with ‘*Baruch*’ because it is the first of the order of *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh*, and the *brachos* that follow are considered a *brachah semuchah lechavertah*, a *brachah* located right near another one, which do not begin with “*baruch.*” (*Tur Orach Chaim* 119)

Tosafos writes (*Brachos* 40b, ad loc. *Amar*) that despite the fact that the *brachah* begins with *Baruch*, it was not instituted to say *Melech Ha’olam* the way all other *brachos* that begin with *Baruch* are formulated. This is because the words *Elokei Avraham* already include the concept of Kingship, as Avraham Avinu declared and was *mamlich* HaKadosh Baruch Hu King over the whole world. Rabi Yehuda Bar Yakar explained further (*Peirush Hatefillos Vehabrachos* Vol. I, p. 35) that this *brachah* does not begin with *Malchus* because it is right next to the *brachah* of *Ga’al Yisrael*. In fact, it was fitting that it should not begin with *Baruch* at all, the way all *brachos* *hasemuchos lechavertan* do not begin with *Baruch*. However, because there are times that it is not *semuchah*, like in *Minchah*, then it is formed as ‘*semuchah v’ainah semuchah,*’ and it was instituted to begin with the mention of Hashem’s Name without *Malchus*.

The Meaning of Amen

“It is true that we have to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for protecting and sending salvation to the entire world, and for protecting Avraham Avinu.” (*Siddur Nehora Hashalem, Shemoneh Esreh*)

Some are of the opinion that we should also have *kavanah* that Hashem should perform *chassadim* *tovim* with us and hasten to redeem us. (See the *Kavanah* of Amen on the *Brachos Rishonos*)

Essence of the Brachah

In the first *brachah* in *Shemoneh Esreh* – *Birchas Avos* – we declare that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is our Elokim, and the Elokim of the three Avos. We praise Hashem for creating the world and leading it with *chesed*, and for protecting Avraham Avinu through all the events he experienced – that the fire did not consume him in Ur Kasdim, and his enemies did not harm him in the war with the four kings, and the other miracles done to him. (*Yesod Veshores Ha’avodah* 5 3; *Shem Olam*, Vol. II in the deletions)

Chazal learn from the *passuk* that we need to mention the three Avos in *tefillah*. They explain the promise of HaKadosh Baruch Hu to Avraham (*Bereishes* 12:2): “*Ve’escha legoy gadol*” – corresponds to the words “*Elokei Avraham,*” “*V’avorechecha*” – to “*Elokei Yitzchak,*” and “*v’agadlah Shemecha*” to “*Elokei Yaakov.*” We could have concluded [this *brachah*] with all of them? The *passuk* says “*Veheyey brachah*” – *becha chosmin* – with you we do not conclude [with the words “*Magen Avraham:*], and we do not conclude with all of them.” The *Rokeach* (*Peirushei Siddur Hatefillah L’Rokeach* 45) adds that we mention the Avos in *tefillah* because they instituted the *tefillos*. (*Brachos* 26a)

This *brachah* is placed at the beginning of all the *brachos* following the order of Chapter 29 in *Tehillim* [which all of *Shemoneh Esreh* corresponds to]. Chapter 29 begins with the words “*Havu l’Hashem beni eilim.*” It means, mention to Me, My sons, the *eilim* [the strong ones] in the land, which are the three Avos, upon whom the world stands and in whose merit it exists. (*Megillah* 17b, *Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggados, Rosh Hashanah* 11 1; 32 1)

Kavanah of Amen to the Brachos Rishonos

As is known, when a *brachah* contains only *shevach*, then one should have in mind that the words of the *mevarech* are true, while with a *brachah* that contains both *shevach* and *bakashah*, one should have in mind that the words of the *mevarech* are true, and *halevai* that his request should be fulfilled. In light of this, the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (*Orach Chaim* 124 9) rules that with the first three *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh*, which are *brachos* of *shevach* without *bakashah*, one should have in mind when answering amen only that the words of the *mevarech* are true.

But the *Mishnah Berurah* (*Biur Halachah* *ibid* ad loc. *Ubechavanah*) wrote that from the words of the *Magen Avraham* (*ibid* 10) it appears that for *Birchas Ha’avos* and *Birchas Mechayeh Hameisim* one should concentrate when answering amen, that ‘*emes,*’ it is true, and ‘*yehi ratzon*’ may it be fulfilled. This is because these *brachos* also allude to requests. In the *Birchas Avos* – the request is that Hashem should perform good *chassadim* for us, and remember the *chassadim* of the Avos and hasten to redeem us; in the *brachah* of *Mechayeh Hameisim* we ask that we merit this resurrection very speedily. But with regard to *HaKel HaKadosh*, there is consensus that the right *kavanah* is only *emes*, that this *brachah* is true, because there is no *bakashah* in this *brachah*.

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

Mei'Otzros Emunim

The Segulah of Answering Amen

In the Merit of Amen We Are Saved from Enemies

Chazal explain (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah* 10) on the *passuk* (*Shoftim* 5:2): “*Bifroa pera’os b’Yisrael behisnadev am barchu Hashem*” – “Through whom does HaKadosh Baruch Hu take revenge for Am Yisrael from the nations of the world? With people who go early in the morning and in the evening to the shul or the *beis medrash* and answer amen...”

Thus, **Harav Chaim Katz**, the grandson of the *Sema*, explained the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (12:2): “*Hoshiah Hashem ki gamar chassid ki pasu emunim mibnei adam*.” “*Hoshiah Hashem*” – send us salvation, even though “*ki gamar chassid ki pasu emunim*” – we do not have among us people who are careful and see answering amen as precious, as in their merit we were promised to be saved from our enemies. (*Eretz Hachaim Tehillim* *ibid*)

The Rebbe **Harav Moshe Yechiel of Ozherov** added that upon closer examination of the words of *Chazal* we see that the main protection that answering amen gives a person is when it is answered to *brachos* that he did not have an obligation to hear. Like those “people who rise early...to the *beis medrash*” in order to answer amen after those who make *brachos*. This is even evident in the *passuk* “*Behisnadev am barchu Hashem*” – when a person volunteers (*misnadev*) to bless Hashem with ‘amen’ even when he is not obligated to do so. (*Be’er Moshe, Shoftim* p. 165)

Amen Tears Up the Decree

It is brought in *Maseches Shabbos* (119b): “Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Anyone who answers *Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabba mevorach* with all his strength – his decree is torn up.” But in the *Zohar Hakadosh* the tearing of the decree is promised to anyone who answers amen, not necessary one who answers “*Amen Yehei Shemei Rabba*.” It states (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1) “One who answers amen with all his might has the decree of seventy years torn up.” (*Shomer Emunim, Ma’amar Pischu Shearim* Ch. 1)

Harav Menachem Mendel of Visheva brought a beautiful allusion from the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 116:3-4): “*Tzarah veyagon emtza...ana Hashem maltah nafshi*.” אנה מלטה נפשי is an acronym for amen, that through answering amen a person spares his life from the difficult decrees. (*She’eres Menachem Tehillim* *ibid*)

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

To those who carry the banner of answering amen, the editors of Vechol Ma’aminim,

Thank you for your rich and varied pamphlet; it is not really a pamphlet, in fact it is a treasure trove on the subject of *avodas halev*, service of the heart.

You recently wrote a comprehensive segment about the words of *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 119b) “Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him,” in which you clarified in many different ways that answering amen is the ‘key’ to Gan Eden. I had a thought, that amen is the acronym of אנני נותן מפתח, I give the key, meaning that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gives each Yid the possibility of obtaining the key to Gan Eden through amen.

This gave me a lot of *chizuk* to overcome the natural shyness that I feel when I go over to a person and ask him to answer amen after my *brachos*. I have internalized that I am actually doing him a favor by giving him the possibility of obtaining the key to open the gates of Gan Eden, as well as other gates.

May you merit many *brachos* and amens in Am Yisrael,
S.M. - Elad

Letters can be sent to fax number 08-9746102 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



Rabi Chaim Palagi

17 Shevat 5628

Rabi Chaim Palagi was born in Izmir, Turkey on 19 Cheshvan 5547 to his father Reb Yaakov. When he was

25 years old, he earned *semichah* for the Rabbanus, and in the subsequent years, served in various Torah roles in Izmir until in 5615 he was appointed Chief Rabbi of the city [Chacham Bashi].

The Rav authored around 80 *seforim* on all subjects of Torah. He began writing his *seforim* when he was just 16 years old, and did not desist until his final days. His last *sefer*, *Birchas Moadecha L’Chaim*, was completed a day before his passing. He passed away on 17 Shevat 5628 and was buried with great respect in the ancient cemetery of Izmir. Along the route of his *levayah*, the members of his community surrounded his *aron*, carrying his *seforim* in their hands.

They would Recite *Birchos Hashachar* Before Him

Each morning, the Rav would invite his children and grandchildren to recite *Birchos Hashachar* so that he could answer ‘*Baruch Hu ubaruch Shemo*’ and amen after them. (*Tzava’ah MeChaim, Hanhagos Hamechaber* 4)

Meah Brachos Grant Life

Dovid Hamelech instituted to recite *meah brachos* in order to stem a plague that raged in his times (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21). This is because the *brachos* continue life for a person. Therefore, one who is strict to recite *meah brachos* merits to live a long life. This is what Dovid Hamelech alluded to when he said (*Tehillim* 66, 8-9): “*Baruch amim Elokeinu vehashmiu kol tehillaso – hasam nafesheinu bechaim...*” (*Hakasuv Lechaim, Tehillim* 66:9)