

Vechele Maaminim

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Elevation in the Merit of Rising Early

“ומושה עלה אל האלקים ויקרא אליו ה' מן ההר לאמר כה תאמר לבית
יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל” (יט ג)

With regard to the time of Moshe Rabbeinu's ascent, *Rashi* writes (according to *Shabbos* 86a): “And all his ascents were early in the morning, as it says (*Shemos* 34:4) and Moshe arose in the morning [and went up Har Sinai].” The **Chelkas Yehoshua** of Biala said that the words of *Rashi* “And all his ascents (*aliyos*) were *b'hashkamah*, early in the morning” serve as a hint that anyone who wants to ascend in *avodas Hashem* should be strict about “*hashkamas beis hamedrash*,” rising early to go to shul.

Kedushas Chelkas Yehoshua

The Virtue of Am Yisrael Is More Elevated than Any Language

“ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה הדברים אשר תדבר אל בני
ישראל” (יט ו)

The *birchas hayom* in *Shemoneh Esreh* for the *Shalosh Regalim* begins with the words “*Atah bachartanu mikol ha'amim... veromamtanu mikol haleshonos*.” It would seem that the meaning of “You have chosen us from all the nations” is the same as the meaning “and elevated us above all the languages.” Why do we repeat this concept twice?

Harav Bunim of Peshischa explained:

When one wants to express the virtue of a certain thing, he can do so in any language. Even if there is something whose virtues are hard to define in a certain language, there will always be another language through which one can express it perfectly.

There is one thing whose deep virtues cannot be defined in any language, and that is “Am Yisrael.” That is what we mean when we say “*veromamtanu mikol haleshonos*” – the loftiness of Am Yisrael is so great that there is no language that has the suitable words to properly define it.

Kol Simchah, Likutim

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

We Will Answer and We Will Listen – *Brachos* and Amen

This Shabbos, the Shabbos of *Kabbalas HaTorah*, we read about the *ma'amad* at Har Sinai, at which we were all present, and whose impressions were etched in our souls to this very day. In the first of the Ten *Dibros*, “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*,” we are commanded to believe that there is a Creator and Leader in the world. This mitzvah is one of the six constant *mitzvos*, which, in contrast to most *mitzvos* that are structured by time, place or other elements, is *temidis*, constant. Whenever a person thinks about the Metzius Hashem, he fulfills the mitzvah.

It was not instituted for us to recite a specific *brachah* before fulfilling this mitzvah, but we received the greatest gift instead – and that is the gift of amen. Yes! The whole point of the mitzvah of answering amen after *brachos* and *tefillos* was instituted in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *emunah*. As the *Megaleh Amukos* wrote (*Parashas Ha'azinu*): “Because the *ikkar* of *emunah* depends on answering amen.”

Every ‘amen’ that we answer elevates us to another level of *emunah* and connects us to a chain of *emnuah* that has been sustaining Am Yisrael throughout the generations until now. If we want the fire of *emunah* to burn in our hearts day and night, like it burned in the hearts of those in previous generations, we must make sure to answer amen the way they were strict to do it. It is possible that one reflects on the other - the decline of the generation and the decline in the appreciation for answering amen have occurred simultaneously.

Rabi Yehuda ben Yakar, the Rav of the Ramban, wrote that “amen” is an acronym for *אז מסיני נצטוו* (from the Shabbos Supplement). This fact can teach thus that already at Har Sinai – as we said that the first of the Ten *Dibros* – we are commanded to answer amen, through which we can fulfill the mitzvah of amen properly.

This Shabbos, when we read about the declaration of our forebears at Har Sinai, “*na'aseh venishma*” it is so fitting that we should also declare “*na'aneh venishma*...” Let us be strict about hearing *brachos* and answering amen properly, and strengthening the foundations of *emunah*, and thus we shall be redeemed very soon.

Good Shabbos,

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Blessing for the Merit to Recite 'Shelo Asani Goy'

This story is not the type of story that you read and just move on. It is the type of story that leaves readers with a stirring message. It is the moving story of the righteous convert, Mrs. Y.A., a senior diplomat at one of the foreign missions in Israel. Some time ago, the desire began to burn within her to join the Chosen People, but until she merited to do so, she endured a long journey, replete with overwhelming *Hashgachah pratis*. Decades passed until she was able to realize her dream and be reborn as a kosher Jewess in the Holy Land. This is her story, as she told it:

I was born in a Latin American nation to a gentile family. When I was fourteen, the school I attended instructed us to do a project on our family's roots.

When I went to my paternal grandmother's house to interview her about our family's roots, I was surprised to see her nearly panic. "There are details in your lineage that will forever remain secret," she told me, without noticing that this sentence is what triggered my curiosity.

As part of the project, we learned about a number of religions, including the Jewish religion. We were taught that Jews separate milk and meat, light candles and cover their hair. When I saw my grandmother's alarmed

One day, I purchased a *Siddur* with a Spanish translation, called *Birkat Shlomo*. I walked with it to the local Orthodox shul. But they rejected me firmly, and for understandable reasons – in that country where we lived, the law prohibited conversions or proselytizing.

At this point, I should have ostensibly pulled out of the race so to speak, but the desire inside me did not desist. I purchased more books, and I learned about Shabbos and kashrus from there. As each day went by, I added another mitzvah and then another. At one point, I had to leave our home and my daughter and I lived alone.

In my own little house, I practiced Jewish customs to the best of my knowledge. My daughter grew up as a Jewess, and all she had to do was convert...

I knew that in order to complete this goal of converting, I would have to travel to Israel, but I had no money for a ticket. I decided to start saving up, penny by penny. Two years later, I came across an advertisement from the foreign ministry offering to fund a full scholarship in Israel on a certain social welfare project for those who met the criteria.

I felt like this opportunity was Heaven-sent for me. I had the right background, and I submitted an application, praying it should be accepted. One morning, I woke up from a dream in which I was informed that I had been accepted. Indeed, a few hours later I received notification that I had been accepted to the study program.

Because the scholarship did not cover travel costs, I called a travel agency

to find out how much a ticket to Israel cost. I was told the cost is \$1698 – a huge sum in local terms. When I called my bank to see how much I had and saw that the balance was exactly \$1698! I saw this as clear *Hashgachah pratis*.

I traveled to Israel to participate in the program, which was supposed to last about two months. My first stop was the Kosel. I spent hours in prayer at the ancient stones. I asked Hashem for three things: that I merit to convert, that I would merit to build a Jewish home, and that I would merit to live in Eretz Yisrael permanently. Today I can say with satisfaction that all three of my requests were fulfilled.

I returned to my homeland after completing the study course and earning top grades. Some time later I began to work on a social-welfare project that was related to what I had studied. With *chasdei Shamayim*, I was successful and my reputation reached the ears of senior officials at the local foreign ministry. Not long after, I was offered to travel again to Israel, this time to serve as a senior diplomat in my country's embassy to Israel, a position I maintain to this day.

I made aliyah to Israel with my daughter, to settle permanently. As soon as we arrived, we went to one of the well-known *batei din* in Bnei Brak to begin the conversion process.

I cannot help but point out the miracles that Hashem performed for me. Upon my arrival in Israel, a serious medical issue arose when I was diagnosed with a blood problem. I was referred to a specialist in the field and he told me to be under strict medical supervision, which included blood tests every three weeks. For a long while, the situation did not improve at all.

When we completed the conversion process, I literally felt like I had been reborn. It's a very powerful sensation that I cannot describe in words. A few days later, I did my regular blood tests, this time as a full Jewess. When I returned to the doctor to consult him about the tests, he was absolutely stunned – to the point of speechlessness. "Your blood has changed," he said. "I have no other words to explain this. Your disease has disappeared completely."

I was filled with gratitude to Hashem, but I wasn't so shell-shocked. After all, a convert that has converted is like a newly born baby.

Ms. Y.A. concludes her words with a powerful message that she wishes to convey:

One of the *Birchos Hashachar* is "*Baruch...Shelo Asani Goy*," and many people say almost it without noticing its meaning. A few years before converting, I began to recite *Birchos Hashachar*, but I could not say this one. Throughout those years, I yearned and hoped that the time would come when I would be able to make this *brachah*, while you merit to say it each morning.

Let us remember that this wondrous gift – to be born into the Chosen Nation – is the most significant gift we have received from the Creator, and we must remember to thank Him for it each morning, with *kavanah*.



The Jewish Center in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica.

expression, I remembered that she practiced these very customs, and suddenly, I understood why she was so nervous.

I mustered up my courage and asked, "Are you Jewish?" She lowered her head and said, "We don't like to talk about it..." And from that moment on, the subject was taboo in our house. I realized that I had Jewish roots, and as the days went on, it became harder for me to continue living as a non-Jew.

On the outside, my life continued as it has. At the age of twenty, I was married off to a local boy, and we had a daughter. But deep inside, opposition and a strong will simmered constantly.

The Brachah of Gevuros

Source of the Brachah

The second *brachah* in *Shemoneh Esreh* is called (*Megillah* 17b) *Birchas Gevuros*. *Chazal* (ibid) learn that this *brachah* should be recited after *Birchas Avos* from the *passuk* that begins Chapter 29 in *Tehillim* [as *Shemoneh Esreh* corresponds to it (*Brahcos* 28a)]: “*Mizmor leDovid havu l’Hashem bnei eilim – havu l’Hashem kavod va’oz.*” In other words, first we mention before Hashem in the *tefillah* the *eilei* [the strong ones] *ha’aretz*, who are the Avos, and right after that, we mention His strength and might.

The Tzelach explained the reason that these two *brachos* are said next to one another (*Brachos* 30b). The *brachah* of *Avos* expresses the humility of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, first, at the opening of the *brachah* when we say that the Creator was *meyached* His Name upon the holy Avos – as if His Honor was contingent on this, and when we say at the end of the *brachah*: “*Umeivi Goel livnei beneihem lema’an Shemo*” – that ostensibly the Holiness of His Name depends on our redemption. Therefore, it is fitting to place the *brachah* expressing the *gevurah* of Hashem next to it, so that we should not be distracted from the greatness of the Creator. As *Chazal* said (*Megillah* 31a): “In whichever place you find the *gevurah* of Hashem – you find His humility.”

Structure of the Brachah

The concept of *techiyas hameisim*, resurrection of the dead, is mentioned three times in this *brachah*: “*Mechayeh Meisim Atah rav lehoshia,*” “*Mechalkel chaim bechessed mechayeh meisim berachamim rabbim,*” and “*vene’eman Atah lehachayos mesim.*” The *Avudraham* explains (ibid) that three “*techiyos*” are being alluded to here. The first – the return of the soul to the body each morning, the second – bringing down the rains that bring life to the world, and the third – the resurrection of the dead that will happen *l’asid lavo*. It is regarding this latter one that we conclude the *brachah*: “*Baruch Atah Hashem Mechayeh Hameisim.*”

The Ra’aban explained (*Brachos* 204) that the wording of the *brachah* of *Gevuros* is based on the words of *Chazal* (*Taanis* 2a) that there are three “keys” that are contingent on the *gevuros* of Hashem and were not given to an emissary: “The key to rains, the key to life [birth], and the key to *techiyas hameisim.*” The words “*mechayeh meisim Atah*” corresponds to the key of *techiyas hameisim*. “*Mashiv haruach umorid hageshem*” corresponds to the key of rains, and “*mechayeh meisim berachamim rabbim*” – referring to the babies in their mothers’ wombs, corresponds to the key of life.

The Kavanah of Amen

It is true that we must thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for the revival of the dead *l’asid lavo* (*Siddur Nehora Hashalem*). And some think that an additional *kavanah* is necessary: And may we merit this revival very quickly. (See *Biur Halachah* 124 10)

Essence of the Brachah

Chazal call this *brachah* “*Gevuros*” because it contains praises of Hashem that He Alone leads the world and He has the ability to do anything he wishes, even to give life and to take life. There is nothing that impedes Him, as it says (*Devarim* 32:39): “*Re’u atah ki Ani Ani Hu*, Now observe, for it is I, I am the One, and no god matches Me; I put to death and make live, I smite and I heal and no one can rescue from My grasp” (*Shu”t HaRashba* Vol. V, 115). Indeed, all the praises in this *brachah* are all based on the *middah* of *gevurah*, which shows the Power of Hashem and His ability to act without anything preventing His actions (*Avudraham Shemoneh Esreh*). The *Maharsha* (Vol. I, *Taanis* 2a) added that in this *brachah* we emphasize the fact that the *gevurah* of Hashem is the opposite of the strength of a person. A person’s strength is recognized by his ability to destroy and to kill, while the strength of Hashem is recognized by bringing the dead to life and being benevolent to His creations.

Gevuros of Rains

The reason *Chazal* instituted (*Brachos* 33a) to mention “*gevuros geshamim be’techiyas hameisim*” is because the falling of the rains is comparable to the revival of the dead, as rains and the crops that grow because of them bring life to the world. (*Rashi Taanis* 7a, ad loc. *upliga*)

In the *brachah* of *Gevuros*, we praise with the words “*Morid hageshem*” while in *Birchas Hashanim*, we ask “*Vesein tal umatar livrachah.*” This is because in the request we have to ask for “*matar*” which is largely the name for rain that falls for *brachah*, but when we praise Hashem for His power we have to mention the word “*geshem*” because that is the general name for all types of rains that fall in the world, both good, blessed rains, and the opposite. (*Cheishek Shlomo, Taanis* 2a)

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

Otzros Emunim

The Segulah of Answering Amen

A Treasure Trove of Amens

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 286 1) explains the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 31:24) “*Emunim notzer Hashem*” to refer to one who is careful to answer amen. The Shomer Emunim explained (*Ma’amar Pischu Shearim*, Chapter 20) that the intention of this *passuk* is that HaKadosh Baruch Hu saves and guards each amen that is answered and reserves it for him so that it should protect and guard over this person in this world and the next.

Amen Hastens Recovery

The Rebbe Harav Aharon Roth, the Shomer Emunim, explained:

When Am Yisrael answer amen, immediately the holy Shechinah comes to dwell in that place where they answer. From the power of the Shechinah dwelling there, the person who said amen is granted a full recovery – a *refuas hanefesh* and a *refuas haguf*. This is alluded to in the *passuk* (*Shemos* 15:26): “*Kol hamachalah asher samti beMitzrayim lo asim alecha, ki Ani Hashem Rofecha*, every disease that I put in Mitzrayim I will not put upon you because I am Hashem your Healer.” Through “כי אני” – which is numerically equivalent to amen, “ה’ רפאך” – the Shechinah of Hashem will dwell upon you and you will merit a *refuah* and *yeshuah*. (*Imrei Aharon Beshalach*)

The Mashpia, Harav Eliyahu Roth, would tell his listeners:

“Know that by answering amen properly, we bring upon ourselves good *hashpa’os*, influences, in *gashmiyus* (material matters) and *ruchniyus* (spiritual matters) and we banish diseases from the house. Every person needs to make a calculation, what his more important to him – does he want to go seek out doctors or does he want to answer amen aloud? Because that is a wondrous *segulah* to be spared from all these, and to bring *yeshuah* and success in all matters.” (*Ish Chassid Hayah*, p. 231)

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

Dear *Vechol Ma’aminim*,

I was very moved at the story you printed about the Jew who was spared from being at the site of a terror attack near the Kosel on 17 Kislev in the merit of pausing to answer amen to *Birchos Hashachar*. I wanted to add that the *Hashgachah* of Hashem was especially evident in this attack because miraculously, the street was relatively empty for that hour. The terrorist was armed with an automatic weapon, and had the situation been different, he could have caused a far more catastrophic outcome, *challilah*.

You shared the story of one of those people who was supposed to be there. On a personal note, it always moves me to read about *Hashgachah pratis* that a Yid experiences in the merit of answering amen. This time, when I read the story, for some reason, the *passuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 2:9) “*Hinei zeh omed achar kosleinu mashgiach min hachalonos meitzitz min hacharakim*” came to mind. When I thought about it, I realized that the acronym of “עומד אחר כתלינו” is numerically equivalent to amen. Indeed, that Yid who was careful to answer amen at the Kosel merited to Divine *Hashgachah* and special protection.

This is also an opportunity for me to express thanks and appreciation for the wonderful *shemirah* that envelopes Am Yisrael in the merit of your work.

In appreciation,
Y.Z., Modiin Illit

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



The Chelkas Yehoshua of Biala, zy”a

The Chelkas Yehoshua 21 Shevat 5742

The Rebbe Harav Yechiel Yehoshua Rabinowitz of Biala, the Chelkas Yehoshua, was born to his father, Harav Yeruchamiel Tzvi of Shedlitz, on 5 Teves 5661. When he was five

years old, his father passed away, and in 5684, he was asked to take his father’s place. When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, he fled to Russian controlled territory and was exiled to Siberia, where he was *moser nefesh* to keep the *mitzvos*, and did not give up even on his holy *minhagim*.

In 5707, he came to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Tel Aviv; in 5715, he moved to Yerushalayim. He was a widely admired and respected figure, especially for his pure *tefillos*, recited with fervency and *dveikus*. His *tziyun* reads: “All his days, he davened for *yeshuos* for Am Yisrael.”

A Brachah Without Amen - Is Half a Body

“Say *Birchos Hashchar* in front of someone who can answer amen, as it is known from holy sages that a brachah without amen is literally a half a body.” (*Chelkas Yehoshua Takanos Vehanhagos* p. 61)

One Who Makes *Brachos* Aloud Has His *Tefillos* Answered

One should make *brachos* aloud, because aside for the voice that arouses *kavanah*, it gives those who hear him the merit of answering amen. A person who is careful to recite *brachos* aloud has his *tefillos* heard Above. (*Chelkas Yehoshua, Ha’azinu*)