

Veche 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

The Prayer of Sinners Removes the *Kitrug* from the Prayers of *Tzaddikim*

"קח לך סמים נטף ושהלל וחלבנה סמים ולבנה זכה בד בבד יהיה" (ל לד)

Rashi explained (according to *Krisos* 6b) that one of the spices in the *ketoress* mentioned in this *passuk* – the *chelbenah* – had a bad smell, "and the *passuk* counts it among the spices of the *ketoress* to teach us not to look with contempt at including in our gatherings for fasts and prayers the sinners among Yisrael, that they should be counted with us

From the words of *Rashi* it appears that not only is the *tefillah* of a *rasha* not a hindrance to the *tefillah* of the *tzibbur*, it even helps it be accepted. How is this

:The *Chasam Sofer* explained

When the Satan sees the good people in Klal Yisrael davening, immediately, he tries to disturb them and confuse their *kavanah*, fearing that perhaps they will repent and do *teshuvah* for their sins. But the Satan does not disturb the prayers of the sinners, who are asking for material matters in this world. Therefore, when we add their *tefillos* to those of the good people, the Satan thinks that the purpose of their gathering is to daven for material matters, and he leaves them be

Likutei Chaver ben Chaim, Vol. V, p. 24 1

A Merit for the Public by Saying *Vayechulu*

"ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת לעשות את השבת לדרתם ברית עולם"

Harav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv explained

There are two commandments in this *passuk*: The first is "veshomru Bnei Yisrael es haShabbos," which obligates each person in Am Yisrael to keep Shabbos. The second is "la'asos es haShabbos," which obligates those who observe Shabbos to make sure that others will also keep Shabbos. This is because the covenant of Am Yisrael with the Shabbos is not a covenant of individuals, it is a bris of all of Klal Yisrael as one. When there are those who do not keep Shabbos, the covenant is not kept

In order to fulfill both these commandments, we say *Vayechulu* on Friday night twice: first in *Shemoneh Esreh*, corresponding to the personal commandment to keep Shabbos, and second aloud, right after *Shemoneh Esreh*, corresponding to the commandment to caution others about keeping Shabbos

This is what *Chazal* intended with the words (*Shabbos* 110b) "Anyone who davens and says *Vayechulu*, the *passuk* considers it as if he was made a partner to HaKadosh Baruch Hu in *Ma'aseh Bereishis*, the Creation of the world." This is puzzling: *Vayechulu* is included in the *tefillah* of *Shemoneh Esreh*, so what is this term of "hamispallel v'omer *vayechulu*," as if they are two different things? Certainly it means to praise he who has already davened and said *Vayechulu* in his prayers, and he then goes on to say it again aloud after davening, in order to warn others about *shemiras Shabbos* because only such a person merits to reach the level of "a partner to HaKadosh Baruch Hu in *Ma'aseh (Bereishis).*" (See *Me'iri* there

Divrei Aggadah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

The *Brachah* and the Amen - Two Halves That Become a Whole

In the *parashah* this week, the Torah commands every Jew to give a "*machatzis hashekel – terumah l'Hashem*," a half a shekel as a donation to Hashem. The question is obvious: Why specifically a half, and why shouldn't each Jew give an entire shekel as a donation to such a lofty purpose such as building the Mishkan?

The *Alshich* brings a beautiful answer to this in the name of Rabi Shlomo Alkabetz, author of the *Lecha Dodi piyut* that Am Yisrael sings each week at *Kabbalas Shabbos*. He notes: By the fact that the Torah established that every Jew gives only a half, it seeks to teach us that every Jew on his own cannot consider himself a complete person. But when another Jew joins him – together they can be considered a '*davar shalem*,' a complete entity.

It appears that nothing can illustrate this concept better than the subject we merit to address each week – *brachos* and amen. When a Jew makes a *brachah*, he can do only half of the act – saying the *brachah* with *kavanah*. He fulfills his obligation by doing this. But in order for it to be a *brachah sheleimah*, he must have another person to complete the second half by answering amen. A *brachah* without amen is compared to half an entity, as many of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* have explained (see *Rema Orach Chaim* 167 2 and *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 20).

But just like the *brachah* is not complete when standing on its own, so, too, the amen cannot stand on its own. Amen said randomly has no significance, because its entire meaning is affirmation and confirmation. If no one says anything, what does it confirm? Only after we hear a *brachah* can we contribute our part and complete it by answering amen. The *brachah* and amen are not two complete entities joining together, but rather two halves, which together create a complete entity.

We ask that our *tefillos* and requests should be fulfilled with *sheleimus*, completion: *teshuvah sheleimah*, *geulah sheleimah*, *refuah sheleimah*. If we want to merit the *brachah* of Hashem with *sheleimus*, why should we not express our gratitude with that same *sheleimus*, by making sure that someone is around to answer amen to our *brachos*.

With blessings of *bivrachah sheleimah –venomar amen*,
Good Shabbos,
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

An Innocent Tefillah That Made Waves Far Away

One who passes through the center of the city of Dallas, Texas, cannot miss the impressive building right in the middle of the city, which casts a bright Jewish light on all its surroundings. The Jewish Center building in Dallas serves as a beacon for tens of thousands of Jews who live in Texas, many of whom have discovered the meaning of being Jewish for the first time there.

There is an exceptional story behind the building, which was shared by the renowned *mashpia*, Harav Elimelech Biderman, *shlita*:

When Rabbi Moshe Rodner, *shlita*, was given *semichah* he decided to move to Dallas, Texas, with the purpose of dedicating his energy and talents to disseminating Judaism in the city.

Dallas, despite its large size, was virtually a spiritual desert for the tens of thousands of Jews who lived there. Specifically for that reason, Rabbi Rodner decided to settle there, in the hope that he would be able to infuse

eating dinner one night with his family, when he heard a quiet knocking at the door. He hurried to open, assuming it was likely another one of the dozens of people who came to the door to ask questions on the subject of Judaism. His home had become known as an address for anyone seeking answers or assistance.

But this time, it was something else. An elderly person stood at the door, dressed in a most dignified fashion. He identified himself as a local Jew seeking to hear a bit more about the meaning of being a member of the Jewish people, and to find out how he could learn about his ancient heritage.

Queries such as this infused Reb Moshe with renewed strength. He invited the man to sit down in his modest living room, and for a long time, he spoke to him at length and answered all his questions. Rabbi Rodner explained that Judaism is not merely a nationality, it also obligates those who are Jewish to conduct their lives according to specific instructions conveyed at Har Sinai, thousands of years ago, and yet which are still in effect to this day.

The Rav's words fell on an attentive set of ears. The words were gentle, but decisive, and the man felt his Jewish heart coming to life, and tears coming to his eyes.

At the end, Rabbi Rodner happened to mention the many difficulties he

was encountering in his efforts to disseminate the light of Torah and Yiddishkeit to the Jews of Texas. He made his remarks innocently, with no special intentions. But in response, the man stuck his hand into his jacket pocket and took out a leather-bound checkbook. Then he pulled out a gold pen, and wrote a check, folded it and handed it to the Rav. Rabbi Rodner was surprised, but when he looked at the check he was stunned into silence. The sum was extraordinary, by any stretch – six million dollars!

"I don't want there to be any difficulty in your path to realize your very important objectives," the man said. "With this donation, you can build a nice building from which you can disseminate Torah and Yiddishkeit, not only in Dallas, but to all of Texas."

Rabbi Rodner was so moved and

shocked that he could hardly utter a sound. He just about managed to politely bid the man farewell, and to stammer a few words of thanks, and the man went on his way.

In the coming weeks and months, Rabbi Rodner was very busy looking for a suitable plot of land and hiring a team to plan the building to meet his unique needs in an optimal fashion. He consulted with the donor every step of the way, but a few weeks after the donation, the man passed away suddenly. Apparently with his donation, he had completed his purpose in this world.

In an emotional *hesped* that he delivered at the *levayah*, Rabbi Rodner revealed for the first time what the donor had told him a short time after he had made the donation:

"You probably want to know what led me to give such a huge donation without being asked," the donor said to him. "So, it was some time ago, on a rare visit that I made to Israel. Late at night I came to the Kosel. The scenes were all new to me, but the scene that took me most of all was of an elderly Jew standing near the ancient wall and praying with such fervor, as tears streamed from his eyes, and his face shone with purity.

"For many long moments, I could not tear my eyes away from this man, who for me, symbolized all that Judaism stands for. It appeared that the pleasures of this world meant nothing to him, and he drew all his life directly from an Upper Source. I was so impressed that I wanted to go over to him and talk to him, and even become a follower perhaps, but the hour was late, and I had to leave.

"When I returned home, after a moving visit, the first thing I did was find out if in distant Dallas there are also such Jews. Someone directed me to your house, and I spoke to you, and honestly – I was not disappointed...And you know the rest of the story..."

This huge donation that Rabbi Rodner received did not just turn up out of the blue. It was the direct result of a warm and genuine *tefillah* from the depths of the soul of an anonymous Yid, who surely has no idea what he did. But in its merit, thousands of Jews have become closer to Torah and *mitzvos*, and the tremendous *zikui harabbim*, the public merit, continues to this day.

Peninei Parashas Hashavua, Ki Savo



The city center of Dallas, Texas

the city with a Jewish spirit and ignite flames from the embers that still glowed in many Jewish hearts.

At first, he rented a small apartment in the city center, and began to conduct activities and various *shiurim*. He hoped through these to forge ties with the local Jewish community in an effort to organize a community. But he didn't seem to have mazel. Almost every conceivable obstacle stood in his way. Whenever he tried to do something, he was met with bureaucratic and financial difficulties that prevented him from realizing his aspirations.

So for a long time, he lived in his modest home, trying and failing over and over, until he was all but ready to give up.

The change came suddenly, almost 'like in the books.' Rabbi Rodner was

The Brachah of 'Selichah'

Source of the Brachah

The sixth *brachah* in *Shemoneh Esreh* is *Birchas Haselichah*, the *brachah* of asking forgiveness. Chazal placed it after the *brachah* of *Teshuvah* (*Megillah* 17b) based on the *passuk* (*Yeshayahu* 55:7): “*Veyashuv el Hashem*, and he will return to Hashem, and He will have mercy on him...*ki yarbeh lisloach*.” From here we learn that through a person repenting from his bad ways, and taking upon himself to follow a good path, he merits to have HaKadosh Baruch Hu forgive him for his sins. ((*Tur Orach Chaim* 115

Another proof for this *brachah* is learned by Chazal (ibid) from the *passuk* (ibid 6:10): “*Ulevavo yavin vashav verafa lo*,” that the *brachos* of *Binah* and *Teshuvah* are followed by the *brachah* for *selichah*, which brings healing to the soul of a person. ((*Orchos Chaim* [Rav A. of Lunil] *Tefillah* 20

Structure of the Brachah

This *brachah* begins with a request that seems to be redundant – “*Selach lanu Avinu ki chatanu*,” and then “*Mechal lanu Malkeinu ki pashanu*.” The differing descriptions – first “*Avinu*” and then “*Malkienu*” also need explanation.

Harav Yehonasan Eibeshitz explains: As long as a person has not sinned extensively, he is considered a son, but when he sins a lot, he descends to the status of an *eved*, a servant. It is for his benefit, because although there is nothing like the love a father has for his son, on the other hand, a son who sins against his father is deserving of a stronger punishment than a servant who sins against his king. The Torah was much stricter with a *ben sorer*, who defied his father's words, and punishes him with death. (*Devarim* 21:18-21)

That is why at first we ask “*Selach lanu Avinu ki chatanu*,” because as long as we have not sinned a lot, we can ask from Hashem to have mercy on us like a father has mercy on his sons, and to forgive us, meaning He should erase our sins as if we never committed them [the term *selichah* means eradicating the sin retroactively]. Then we add another request: “*Mechal lanu Malkeinu ki pashanu*,” that even if we sinned a lot, to the extent that the ‘*cheit*’ grew to a ‘*pesha*’ and we are not meritorious of asking full forgiveness like sons, we ask at least for forgiveness as servants. In other words, the impression of the sin should be weakened, and it should be easier for us to cleanse ourselves of the sins. (*Yearos Dvash*, Vol. I, *Drush* 1, in *Birchas Selach Lanu*)

Essence of the Brachah

One of the ways of *teshuvah* after a person repents completely for his sins, is to pray that Hashem should forgive him. As Rabbeinu Yona wrote in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (1:42), the fifteenth principle of the principles of *teshuvah* are: “He should daven to Hashem and ask for mercy to atone for all his sins.” The Rambam (*Teshuvah* 2 4) mentions *tefillah* as one of the paths of *teshuvah*: “One of the ways of *teshuvah* is for the one repenting to keep crying to Hashem with weeping and pleas.” Therefore, after *Birchas Hateshvuah*, we daven to Hashem that even if we have sinned a lot, after we repent, Hashem should forgive us for our sins. (*Sifsei Chaim – Rinas Chaim*, *Shemoneh Esreh* p. 107)

In addition, in the mitzvah of *teshuvah*, the Rambam lists (*Teshuvah* 2 2) four primary steps: 1. Abandoning the sin; 2. Committing not to sin in the future; 3. Regret for the sin; and 4. *Viduy*. In this *brachah*, we complete the mitzvah of *teshuvah* by admitting to our sins, when we say “*Selach lanu Avinu ki chatanu mechal lanu Malkeinu ki pashanu*.” This style is unique only to this *brachah*, and it is for the purpose of fulfilling the mitzvah of *Viduy*, because in the rest of the *brachos* we do not detail our personal need in fulfilling the request, for example, we do not say ‘Heal us Hashem, because we are sick.’ Or ‘Bless us ... because we need it.’ (*Olas Tamid* Chapter 22; *Sifsei Chaim – Rinas Chaim* ibid)

Beating Our Hearts in Selach Lanu

It is customary to beat our hearts while saying *Viduy*, as the *Midrash* says (*Koheles Rabbah* 7 9) that through that, we are *kaviyachol* blaming our hearts for dragging us toward sin (*Magen Avraham* 607 3). Based on this, we beat our hearts in this *brachah*, when we say the words ‘*chatanu*’ and ‘*pashanu*’, like when we say *Viduy*. (*Siddur Hayavetz* in the name of the *Shelah* in *Selach Lanu*; *Mekor Chaim*, 115)

Some write that on days when we do not say *Tachanun* one should not beat his heart, because it appears like he is saying *Viduy* on a day that we do not do so (*Siddur Hayavetz* and *Mekor Chaim* ibid; *Peirush Iyun Tefillah* in *Siddur Nehora Hashalem* in the laws of *Arvis* for *Motzaei Shabbos*). But the widely accepted custom is to beat one's heart in this *brachah* even on days when we do not say *Tachanun*. (*Mara D'Shmaatsa – Ateres Yehoshua* 31)

The Kavanah of Amen

It is true that we must thank Hashem for forgiving often, and may it be that He also forgive us for our sins.

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

Otzros Emunim

The Virtue of a Brachah Answered by Amen

The Mevarech Should Have in Mind to Fulfill the Obligation of Answering Amen

We can learn about the importance of amen for the *brachah* and for the *mevarech* from the clear *halachah* in the *Rema*, in *Hilchos Birchas Hamazon* (*Orach Chaim* 167 2): “If many are seated, they should have in mind to hear a *brachah* [*Hamotzi*] and answer amen, and the *mevarech* should have in mind the amen that they say.” In other words, because a person does not answer amen to a *brachah* that he makes, the *mevarech* should have in mind to fulfill his obligation of answering amen to his own *brachah* by hearing it from those who answer his *brachah*.

It would seem that the *mevarech* made the entire *brachah*; why then, does he need to have in mind to be *yotzei* amen from those who heard him?

The *Mishnah Berurah* explained (ibid 20): Answering amen makes the *brachah* more important and elevates it. Therefore, even the *mevarech* should not suffice with just saying the *brachah*. He should have in mind to fulfill the obligation of answering amen to his *brachah*. He writes: “Because answering amen is also part of the *brachah*, even though he already made the *brachah* himself, still, by others answering amen to it the *brachah* becomes more important. Therefore, it is correct to have in mind to be *yotzei* with answering amen through the one who answers the *brachah*.”

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

Dear Vechol Ma'aminim,

Thank you for the refreshing new look of your pamphlet. With *siyata diShmaya* you have managed to clarify to people all over the world the importance of answering amen and all the virtues that come with being strict about amen. Now, with your revamp, may Hashem continue to give you much *brachah* and success in your endeavors.

I would like to thank you because in your merit I have become very careful about answering amen. I began after reading in your pamphlet about the importance of doing so. Recently, I have noticed, in retrospect, that since I began doing so, I have seen a tremendous abundance and *siyata diShmaya* in all that I do. *Parnassah* is more plentiful, and a number of difficulties that were part of my life for years slowly disappeared. The quality of my life has, *baruch Hashem*, increased remarkably.

Each Motzaei Shabbos we begin the new week with the recital of the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 27:28): “*Veyiten lecha Elokim mital hashamayim umishmanei ha'aretz.*” The acronym of ויתן לך אלקים מital השמיים ומשמני is numerically equivalent to 92, which is the numerical value of amen together with the *kollel*. If we calculate the acronym of the words ויתן לך אלקים מital השמיים ומשמני they are equivalent to exactly 91 – the same as amen. This is an allusion to what you cited in the name of the *Shelah Hakadosh* (*Maseches Tamid*, 80) that the entire *brachah* and the abundance depend on answering amen.

May you see much *brachah* in the *Kiddush Shem Shamayim* you are making and in the dissemination of the importance of amen among Klal Yisrael.

Y.S.G. - Boro Park

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



Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach

20 Adar 5755

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was born on 23 Tammuz 5670 in Shaarei Chessed, Yerushalayim, to

his father, Harav Chaim Yehuda Leib, Rosh Yeshivas Hamekubalim Sha'ar Hashamayim. He was one of the pillars of *hora'ah* in the last generation, and served as a central halachic authority for tens of thousands in Klal Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael and around the world.

For forty-six years, until his passing, he served as Rosh Yeshivah of Kol Torah. His *psakim* and *shiurim* have been published in many *seforim*, most released after his passing. He passed away on 20 Adar I 5755. Hundreds of thousands escorted him on his final journey to Har Hamenuchos.

‘Meah Brachos’ for a Refuah Sheleimah

In the *sefer Piskei Teshuvos* (46:116) he wrote that it is worthy to publicize that once, a Torah scholar came to him after he was struck by a severe illness, and wanted some *chizuk*. The Rav told him with great emotion that he should strengthen his recital of *Meah Brachos* and should make sure to concentrate on each and every word.

Answering Amen after a Mi Shebeirach for a Sick Person

He would point out that after reciting *Tehillim* for a sick person, the *chazzan* should say a ‘*Mi Shebeirach*’ aloud, and those who are there should remain and answer amen after it. (*Halichos Shlomo*, Chapter 8:61)

A Day That Passed in a Worthy Fashion

When a *talmid* asked him how he considers a day to have passed in a worthy fashion, he replied, “A day when I merited to have *kavanah* in all three *tefillos* on the meaning of the words.” (ibid Chapter 1:16)