

Veche Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Gratitude for the Miracles of the Night

"באהל מועד מחוץ לפרכת אשר על העדת יערך אתו אהרן ובניו מערב עד בקר לפני ה'." (כז כא)

Chazal say (Shabbos 22b) that despite the fact that each day they would put an equal amount of oil in each of the lights of the menorah, which would be sufficient for them to burn from "evening to morning," the *ner hama'aravi*, the western light would continue to miraculously burn throughout the day. This was in order to testify to those in this world that the Shechinah is dwelling among Yisrael.

Harav Yehonasan Eibeshitz asked: If such a miracle occurred each day with the menorah, why do we marvel and thank Hashem so profusely for a similar miracle that occurred on Chanukah, when the burned for eight days even though the flask contained only enough oil for one day?

He replied: The miracle of the *ner hama'aravi* occurred only during the daytime hours, because the oil that had been poured in was sufficient for the nighttime hours, and the daytime hours are worthy for miracles, as the *passuk* says (Tehillim 52:3): "*Chessed K-l kol hayom*." In contrast, the miracle of Chanukah, which continued through eight days and nights, occurred also at night, when the *Middas Hadin* is prevalent. Therefore, it was instituted that we thank and praise for it. This concept is also alluded to in the *passuk* (Tehillim 42:9): "*Yomam Tetzaveh Hashem chasdo*." The daytime hours are intended and *mesugal* to merit the *chedes* of Hashem, "*ubalaylah shiro imi*" – but when he does *chedes*

with us at night, it behooves us to say praise and to offer gratitude for it.

Thus we can also understand the language of the *piyut* we say on Pesach night: "*Oz rov nissim hifleisa balaylah*," in other words, the special '*pele*,' wonder is that the miracles detailed in this song took place at night.

Tiferes Yehonasan

'Avodah' That Is L'Shem Shamayim

"ואתה הקרב אליך את אהרן אחיך ואת בניו אתו מתוך בני ישראל לכהנו לי" (כח א)

Harav Chaim of Chernovitz explained that HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe: Do not feel bad that your brother Aharon merited the *avodah* of the *korbanos* and you did not. On the contrary: "*Hakrev eilecha es Aharon achicha*" – consider it as if Aharon's service was done by you. Because the intention and goal of the *avodah* is to generate *nachas ruach* for Me, Hashem, and if so, then what difference does it make if it is done by you or by someone else?!

This important concept is emphasized each morning in *Kedushas Yotzer*, as we say of the angels: "*Venosnim b'avahavah reshus zeh lazeh kehakdish leYotzram nachas ruach*." Because there is no envy, hatred or competition among the angels, therefore they "give with love permission for one another to sanctify for their Creator," because their entire intention is to bring '*nachas ruach*' for their Creator – no matter who it is from.

Be'er Mayim Chaim

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

'Modim Anachnu, We Thank You Every Day of Our Lives'

Each morning, we thank Hashem in *Birchos Hashachar* for our vision – *Pokeach Ivrim*, for the movement of our limbs - '*Matir Assurim*,' and for other wonderful gifts that we merited from the compassionate Hand of Hashem. Regarding things that were granted to us once, on the day of our birth, it would seem that it certainly behooves on us to pray constantly that they should continue working properly. But why do we have to thank for this each morning anew?

I once heard a beautiful parable that explains this well: A person worked in a minor position in a large courier company, and as part of his job, he had to open the office each morning. Because the man lived a distance away from the office, the manager suggested that each evening, one of the drivers of the company would park his car near this man's house, so that he could use it the next morning to come to work early. One day, after a few years of this arrangement, something happened and the driver could not leave the vehicle next to the worker's house. In the morning, the person got up, as always, and discovered that there was no car parked under the house. He began to shout, "My car has been stolen!" But one of the neighbors realized the real reason that the car was not parked in its regular place and said, "No one stole your car, the car is not yours and today no one put it next to your house, as they usually do..."

The *nimshal* is that our vision, the ability to walk on healthy legs, and the other gifts that Hashem has granted us, are not really ours. But because we have gotten so used to getting them each morning anew, if Chazal would not have instituted for us to thank for it each morning, we would not remember to thank for them unless they were *chalilah* taken away from us...

Before we cry "*Al tashlicheinu l'eis ziknah kichlos kocheinu al ta'azveinu*," let us thank Hashem from the bottom of our hearts for each day that we merit to enjoy His gifts. Even after we make the *brachah*, let us listen to the *brachos* of others, and we will complete them by answering amen. This way, we will deepen the feelings of gratitude that we are obligated to have, and certainly this will be a *zechus* for us to continue to enjoy these gifts for many days and years to come. And may we merit to have the *passuk* fulfilled "*Od yenuvun beseivah deshenim vera'ananim yihiyu*, they will yet grow in old age; fat and fresh will they be" with us.

Good Shabbos,
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

'It Is the Finger of Hashem'

This story was related by Rabbi Meir Azarzar, *shlita*, who has served for more than twenty years as the Rav of the Shuvah Yisrael community in Hong Kong. This community was established more than 150 years ago by Jewish merchants from Iraq. Today it is comprised primarily of their descendants and other Jews who live in the area for business purposes.

During his tenure as Rav of this remote community, and as part of his job as the coordinator of Arachim seminars in the Far East, Rabbi Azarzar has merited and continues to merit to strengthen hundreds of Jews who are distant from Torah and *mitzvos*. In recent years, he has lived in Eretz Yisrael, but he is still connected to his community on a daily basis. He also travels to them once in two weeks to give them *chizuk* and to provide for their spiritual needs.

On Erev Yom Kippur 5779, a few minutes before *Kol Nidrei*, Rabbi Azarzar stood facing some 300 *mispallelim* in his shul. He surprised them when, at the beginning of his traditional speech, he told them that he

quickly summoned by the *mispallelim* to come outside, and I was horrified to see Yishai lying on the floor, crying in pain.

I hurried over and immediately noticed his hand, which was bleeding badly. The other children related that they had been playing when suddenly, a heavy piece of metal fell from the nearby fence and landed right on Yishai's fingers. His thumb was the most badly damaged, as it was completely severed, and remained hanging only by a piece of skin.

An ambulance hastily evacuated the hysterical child, and I went along to the hospital. The ambulance sped through the empty streets, and my heart pounded in fear. I could not digest this sudden crisis. The Magen David Adom paramedic who came along with us tried to lift my spirits. He told me that three years earlier he had been summoned to the site of a very bad accident, where a little boy was mortally injured. All resuscitation efforts were futile, and the doctor who accompanied the ambulance was about to declare the child dead, *R"l*.

'Because I was the first to arrive,' the paramedic related, 'I pleaded with the doctor to try just one more time...' Meanwhile the grandfather of the child came running up to the scene, and when he realized the severity of the situation, he raised his hands Heavenward, and cried in a choked voice, 'Ribbono shel Olam, Rachum Vechanun, You know that I have never spoken during davening, and I ask You to take from me this merit and give life to my grandchild through it...'

'The grandfather finished his *tefillah*, and...you won't believe what happened,' the volunteer told me. 'Within a few seconds, the child began to convulse, and literally came back from the dead.'

When Rav Azarzar finished telling his *mispallelim* the story of his son, and the story that the paramedic had told him, he fell silent. After a short pause, he continued, in a choked voice, and asked the audience:

'Fellow Jews, now is a special *eis ratzon*, a time auspicious for prayer. I don't often ask you for things, but for the future of my son, I will deviate from that practice. The doctors sewed his thumb back into place, but they are very pessimistic about the chances

of it healing. They say the chances of the finger fully fusing and functioning properly again are very low. It looks like there is gangrene there, and they will probably end up having to amputate it completely.

"Nevertheless, despite all of this, I came to spend this holy day with you, as I always do, and I plead with you to please take upon yourselves not to speak during davening, as a merit for the recovery of my son, Yishai Chaim ben Sarah."

There was a short silence in the shul, and then one of the *mispallelim* stood up and announced loudly: "I take upon myself not to speak during davening for the recovery of Yishai Chaim ben Sarah." One by one, all the *mispallelim* took upon themselves not to speak during davening.

The *mispallelim* of Shuvah Yisrael in Hong Kong will never forget the *Kol Nidrei* that followed. After all the *mispallelim* took upon themselves not to speak during davening, they all felt inspired and uplifted, and davened with exceptional *kavanah* and fervor.

The results of that *kabbalah* came about three months later.

In Teves, the parents brought their son for a follow up visit to the plastic surgeon, who was a leading expert in her field. She took off the bandages from the finger, and after examining it closely, she discovered that unfortunately, it seemed that the predictions were coming true. The gangrene had spread to about sixty percent of the finger. She informed the parents they would need to schedule the amputation surgery.

Two days later, the parents came to the hospital. They had come to terms with the fact that their son would be losing his finger. When they entered, they were met by the doctor on shift, who sent the boy for an x-ray to help prepare for the surgery. But when the x-ray came, the doctor was stunned into silence.

The x-ray showed clearly and unequivocally that the finger had fused together perfectly. "Are you sure it's the same child?!" the stunned doctor asked the father. The father just pointed Heavenward and said, '*Etzba Elokim hie*, it is the Finger of Hashem...'

Heard Firsthand



The Shuvah Yisrael shul in Hong Kong is on the third floor of this building.

had spent the past Rosh Hashanah in Sheba Hospital in Ramat Gan. Upon hearing this surprising introduction, the *mispallelim* listened attentively for the Rav to continue.

"At the beginning of Rosh Hashanah, I was davening in the regular shul where I daven in Elad. I was immersed in my *tefillos* and my son Yishai, who is six years old, was playing in the courtyard of the shul. Suddenly, I heard a cry of pain from outside. I was

The Brachah of Teshuvah

Source of the Brachah

After the *brachah* of *Atah Chonen*, we continue to ask for *teshuvah*: “*Hashiveinu Avinu...vehachazireinu b'teshuvah sheleimah lefanecha*.” The reason *Chazal* (*Megillah* 17b) placed this *brachah* right after the *brachah* of *Atah Chonen* is based on the words of the *passuk* (*Yeshayahu* 6:10): “*Ulevavo yavin vashav verafa lo*, and his heart understands and he repents and is healed.” From these words we learn that from the power of wisdom, a person recognizes his sins, and understands how bad and bitter it is that he has abandoned Hashem, and through that, he returns to *teshuvah* and his soul is healed from its sins (*Rashi* *ibid*).

The *Shelah HaKadosh* (*Yisro Derech Chaim*) explained the reason these two *brachos* are next to each other based on the words of the *Mekubalim*. They wrote that sometimes, when a person struggles to understand his Torah learning in depth, it is because a *klipah* has been formed from a sin he did. That creates a barrier that precludes him from understanding. When he introspects into his deeds and repents, that *klipah* will be removed and he will understand the Torah. That is why *Atah Chonen* comes next to *Hashiveinu*, because *teshuvah* helps the understanding of Torah.

Structure of the Brachah

This *brachah* is comprised of three requests on one subject – to return and become close to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

First we ask: “*Hashiveinu Avinu leSorasecha*” – because only the Torah can open our eyes to understand and to know how much we have sinned and what the path to *teshuvah* is. Furthermore, if we do not know the laws of the Torah, then we will continue to sin for lack of knowledge (*Kisei David* [the Chida] *Drush* 9). In this request, we mention the description ‘*Avinu*’ because just like a father is obligated to teach his son Torah (*Kiddushin* 29a) so, too, Hashem will teach us and return us to His Torah. (*Tur Orach Chaim* 115)

The second request “*Vekeiravtanu Malkeinu L'Avodasecha*” is explained by the *Avudraham* in two ways: One, that we merit to serve Hashem and fulfill all His *mitzvos*, and two, that He should bring us closer to Him and this way we can serve Him with *tefillah* [which is known as *avodah shebalev* (*Taanis* 2a)] fittingly.

After these two requests, we ask to get to the third stage: “*Vehachazireinu b'teshuvah sheleimah lefanecha*.” We ask that Hashem should help us rectify that which we have sinned, and to return to the status and place where we were before we distanced ourselves because of our sins. (*Sifsei Chaim* – *Rinas Chaim*, *Tefillas Shemoneh Esreh* p. 102)

The *Rambam* (*Teshuvah* 2 2) says that the *Viduy* of the sinner needs to stem from the depths of his heart, out of such genuine regret that “the Knower of all secrets should testify of him that he will not return to this sin forever.” And the *Maggid* of *Koehnitz* thus explained (*Avodas Yisrael*, *Parashas Parah*) our request: “*Vehachazireinu b'teshuvah sheleimah lefanecha*” that we should repent with such absolute *shleimus*, that it will be clear to Hashem that we will never return to this sin.

Essence of the Brachah

In this *brachah* we ask Hashem to help us repent, because He wants and waits for us to return to Him, as it states (*Yechezkel* 33:11): “*Chai Ani ne'um Hashem Elokim im echpotz bemos harasha ki im beshuv rasha midarko vechayah*.” Indeed, the *Avudraham* wrote (*Shemoneh Esreh*) that this is why we conclude the *brachah* with “*Harotzeh B'Teshuvah*.”

The *Yesod Veshores Ha'avodah* (*Shaar* 5, Chapter 4) wrote that when saying “*vehachazireinu b'teshuvah sheleimah lefanecha*” we need to first have in mind to ask for Klal Yisrael to repent “*b'teshuvah sheleimah*,” and only afterwards, to offer a person request that he also merit complete repentance.

The author of *Sefer Chareidim* wrote of this *brachah* (*Mitzvas Hateshuvah* 8): “And because there is no *tzaddik* in the land that does good and does not sin, therefore it was instituted that *teshuvah* should have a *brachah* of its own...and one should have *kavanah* on this more than all the middle *brachos*, because it is for the benefit and healing of the soul.”

Tefillah for Sinners to Repent

Harav Chaim Vital brings that one of the *gedolim* of his generation consulted with the Arizal about his son, who was a *meshumad*, *R"l*. The Arizal instructed him to add in the *brachah* of *Hashiveinu* a *tefillah*: “*Yehi ratzon...shetachtot chatirah mitachas Kisei Kevodecha* and accept in full repentance Ploni, my son, because Your Right Hand is proffered to accept the repentant” (*Pri Eitz Chaim Shaar Ha'amidah* 20). Harav Chaim Vital added the *kavanos* that the Arizal instructed to have in this *Yehi Ratzon*, but the *Kav Hayashar* (chapter 5) wrote that although this *tefillah* has *kavanos* and *yeichudim*, which make it most effective, because not all are proficient in them, the person should ask it in brief and with concentration on the meaning.

The Kavanah of Amen

It is true that it is fitting to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for wanting *teshuvah*, and may it be His Will that our *teshuvah* is accepted. (*Siddur Nehora Hashalem*)

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

Otzros Emunim

The Virtue of a Brachah Answered by Amen

Answering amen is a mitzvah and a merit unlike any other, as we have expounded upon at length in this pamphlet. In this segment, we will cite sources that state that aside for the actual mitzvah and merit of answering amen, it also completes the *brachah* and makes it more important. So we find that when one is *mehader* to make his *brachos* out loud for someone to answer amen, aside for giving the other person the merit of answering amen, it is also effective for the *mevarech*, because this way, his *brachos* are complete.

A Complete Gift to the King of the World

The holy Zohar says (Eikev 271 1):

When the *brachah* answered by amen rises up from the lower world to the Upper World, there is no opening On High, and there is no one appointed on High that does not open all the gates for this *brachah*, and throughout the firmaments it is announced: This is the gift that Ploni sent for the King! This is the present that was brought with the proper and complete fulfillment! What is a *brachah* that is said with completion? That is a *brachah* that is answered with amen. Every *brachah* that is answered with amen is one that is said in its full form, the way it is fitting to be.

The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz explained that this is why we say at the end of *Birchas Hamazon*: “*Kein yevarech osanu kulanu yachad bivrachah sheleimah venomar amen.*” When is a *brachah* complete? Only when we say amen after it. (*Divrei Yisrael* 58)

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

A Letter from a Loyal Reader Dear Vechol Ma'aminim,

As someone who enjoys reading your *divrei Torah* and insights into *tefillah* and amen each week, I feel it is a *zechus* for me to tell your readers about the special *siyata diShmaya* I merited after strengthening my observance of answering amen.

For many years I have engaged in a certain field, and because of the advancement of technology, in recent years, it is becoming less profitable. Recently, I was offered to start a business in a new and very competitive field. I was afraid to get into it, and decide instead, to take upon myself to strengthen my answering of amen, and to be strict each day to answer ninety amens to *brachos*. I made a calculation that to do that I would have to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from three people, and I would have to listen and answer amen after the *brachos* in *Chazaras Hashatz* in *Shacharis* and *Minchah*, and answer amen after the rest of *brachos* in *tefillah*. By doing this I reached more than ninety amens. After three months of being scrupulous about it, I can note with satisfaction that *bechasdei Hashem*, despite continuing with my regular business, I see tremendous success, and am earning even more than in the past.

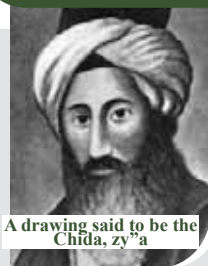
On Shabbos *Parashas Vayeitzei* I was called to the Torah in the shul where I daven, and my *kriah* ended with the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 30:43): “*Vayifrotz ha'ish me'od me'od veyihyu lo tzon rabos ushefachos va'avdaim ugemalim vachamorim*, and the man became exceedingly wealthy, and he had prolific animals, and maidservants and manservants, and camels and donkeys.” I saw this as a hint and a good sign for the success that I am experiencing in the merit of answering amen. After davening I noticed that the acronym of the words *ויפרץ האיש מאד מאד* is numerically equivalent to amen, while the words “me'od me'od” are numerically equivalent to 90. My feeling was that I was called to the Torah to get an affirmation that my being strict about answering 90 amens a day is a *segulah* for abundance, *brachah* and success.

With deepest respect and appreciation,
Z.S., Netivot

Letters can be sent to fax number 08-9746102
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Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



A drawing said to be the Chida, zy" a

The Chida

11 Adar 5566

Rabbeinu Chaim Yosef David Azulai, known by the acronym Chida, was born in Yerushalayim in 5480 to his father Rabi Raphael Yitzchak Zerachya. From a very young age, he was dedicated to learning Torah and doing *chessed*

for others. The Chida was known in his generation and subsequent generations as a giant in Torah, *Nigleh* and *Nistar*.

He traveled abroad a number of times on behalf of the Jews of Chevron. During his travels, he visited many countries in European, and worked there to strengthen the foundations of religion. Wherever he went, he studied libraries and book collections, some of which were still in manuscript form, and cited from them in his own *seforim*.

In 5533, he departed on his final journey, from which he did not return to Eretz Yisrael. He settled in Livorno, Italy, and dedicated his time to writing and printing his *seforim*. The Chida authored more than 120 *seforim*, about fifty of which were printed in his lifetime. He passed away on Shabbos Zachor 5566, and was buried in Livorno. In 5720, his *aron* was brought to Eretz Yisrael, and he was buried on Har Hamenuchos in Yerushalayim.

The Practice has Spread

Regarding the custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, the Chida wrote (*Birchei Yosef, Orach Chaim* 677 2): “And as is known, the custom has spread in large cities and towns...”

Not to Forgo Protection

Because reciting *Meah Brachos* was instituted to save Am Yisrael from the one hundred curses in the *Tochachos* (*Rokeach Brachos* 320), we find that anyone who does not make *Meah Brachos* each day, aside for losing out on the mitzvah, loses out on the protection and *shemirah* from the curses of the *Tochachah*. (*Devash Lefi*, 2:8)

Quota of Holy Words

“He should complete each day 90 amens, 4 *Kedushos*, 10 *Kaddish* and 100 *brachos* – which are an acronym for *קדושה*. And that is one of the *tikkunim* of “*tzaddik yesod olam.*” (*Tziporen Shamir* 9:133)