

Vechele Maaminim

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Saying Tehillim – Even Without Kavanah

"וראה הכהן את הנגע בעור הבשר ושער בנגע הפך לבן ומראה הנגע עמוק מעור בשרו נגע צרעת הוא וראהו הכהן וטמא אתו" (יג ג)

Chazal (Midrash Tehillim 18) say that Dovid Hamelech asked HaKadosh Baruch Hu that the reward for saying *Tehillim* should be equal to the reward of engaging in the laws of *'nega'im* and *ohalos*. Why did he ask specifically regarding these laws, and not other laws whose study is more widespread, such as the laws of Shabbos or money?

Harav Dovid of Tolna explained: One of the laws of *'nega'im* is that when the Kohein is not an expert in the appearance of *'nega'im*, he must summon a sage in Am Yisrael to rule on the blemish, and the Kohein then rules with his mouth as per the ruling of the sage. This is because the purity and impurity of *'nega'im* is solely in the hands of the Kohein (Rambam Tumas Tzara'as 9 2).

Based on this we can explain that this is what Dovid Hamelech asked for – that those who say *Tehillim* should merit reward even if they do not understand the meaning of the *pesukim*, like a Kohein who has the power to render a blemish pure or impure by uttering the words, even if he does not know the laws of *'nega'im*.

Imrascha Chiyesani, p. 393

Daven Instead of Trying to Nullify

"והתגלה ואת הנתק לא יגלה והסגיר הכהן את הנתק שבעת ימים שנית" (יג לג)

In the commandment "*v'es hanesek lo yegaleach*", the

Torah commands the *metzora* not to shave the hair near the *'nesek*' [the place where the hair falls out in blemishes of the head and the beard], because by doing so it will not be possible to discern if the blemish has spread. The *Sefer Hachinuch* (Mitzvah 170) explains that from this prohibition we should learn that "a person should suffer a *tza'ar*, and some punishment that he should be punished by HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and he should not reject them. And he should not think that he will have the ability to nullify them and to make them disappear from mankind, and all he can do is plead from Hashem to heal his blows."

After a Fire - Tefillah

"וראשו יהיה פרוע ועל שפם יעטה וטמא טמא יקרא" (יג מה)

Chazal say (Shabbos 67a) that the Torah's commandment to the *metzora* to declare of himself that he is impure is intended to "inform the public of his distress, and many will daven for mercy for him."

Harav Pinchas of Koritz explained:

There is a widely used remark – 'after a fire, one becomes wealthy.' And my Rebbe the Baal Shem Tov said that this statement is true. And we should bring a source for it from this *passuk*: Just like the *metzora* who is healed from his *tzara'as* from the power of *tefillah* of the public who see his distress and have mercy on him, likewise, someone whose possessions go up in flames is destined to become wealthy from the power of the *tefillah* of the many, who feel compassion for him because of his calamity.

Baal Shem Tov Al HaTorah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

How Does One Get to Olam Haba? Through Amen!

We find an interesting discussion in Chazal (Sanhedrin 110b), as to when a child begins to merit Olam Haba. This is an important question, and of course, it determines what the Heavenly Court will rule, as it follows the words of Chazal in this world. From the range of answers to this question, it emerges that as far as the matter is dependent on the ability to speak, it is "from the time that he says amen," even if he does not yet know how to speak properly (see Rema Orach Chaim 124 7).

This view is also brought down in the Gemara next to the opinion that states "from the time he is circumcised," so we find that both these *mitzvos* are equal in their importance, as they are the 'entry ticket' to Olam Haba. This is no wonder to one who peruses the end of that *sugya*, in the meaning of the word 'amen': "Amar Rabi Chanina: 'א-ל מלך נאמן' meaning, the importance of amen stems from the fact that it is a de facto, readily available declaration that encapsulates one's *emunah* and acceptance of the Yoke of Heaven.

A small child who is capable of murmuring amen connects to the golden chain of the Jewish people, who, throughout all times and situations, believes in One G-d. Through that, he becomes meritorious of Olam Haba. So we can explain that there is even a preference and virtue of the mitzvah of amen over *bris milah*, because of all the opinions in the Gemara, this is the first that the child can fulfill himself, and not through others.

It is important to note the obvious message from the concept that answering amen has a great value even if it is not said with the full *kavanah*, because the child likely does not really understand what he is saying. He also does not speak fluently enough, and yet, from the moment he utters the word 'amen' he already merits Olam Haba.

Let us internalize, and value, the tremendous virtue of this wonderful mitzvah, even if we are adults, and through that, our children should absorb its importance from us, and we will all become part of the group of "בן עולם הבא" – as the acronym of the last letter of each words is amen.

Good Shabbos,
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Blood Mixed with Tears Result in a Prayer Answered

It was late afternoon, a few decades ago, when the phone rang in the office of the *chazzan* and *mohel* Rav Raphael Abuhav, ז"ל. "Hello, this is Mrs. Golan, are you available tomorrow to perform a *bris*?" a voice asked.

"When and where?" Reb Raphael asked, and the woman replied, "Tomorrow morning at 7:30 in Holon," and gave a specific street address. Reb Raphael was taken aback at the early hour, but after a moment's thought, responded that he would come.

"Thank you. Please be on time," the woman added, before hanging up. The strange and detached tone in which she spoke triggered some questions for Reb Raphael, but he reassured himself that it was probably the result of natural excitement that she was feeling on this momentous occasion. The next morning, right after davening, Rav Abuhav traveled to the



address he had been given. When he arrived, he was surprised to see that it was not a shul or a hall, but rather an attractive private home in the heart of an affluent neighborhood. There was a nameplate on the door that said 'Golan Family.'

Rav Abuhav knocked lightly, and it was opened right away by a young man wearing a tailored suit and holding an elegant attaché case. "Hello, are you the *mohel*?" he asked with a forced smile, and then turned to leave: "I'm in a hurry to take care of some urgent errands, so please do your job responsibly and with the necessary attention..." he said, and disappeared from view.

When Rav Abuhav entered the house, he was surprised to see that the woman of the house was about to follow her

husband. "Nice to meet you, I'm Mrs. Golan!" she said. "My husband is waiting for me outside, but don't worry, the babysitter will be here in fifteen minutes to watch Yuvali... Meanwhile, you'll have time to do the surgery, right?!"

"Who is Yuvali?" the *mohel* asked.

"Uhhh..." the woman replied. "I forgot to mention, Yuvali is the baby that you are supposed to circumcize."

"You named him already?" the *mohel* was taken aback once again.

"Sure, a while back," the lady replied. "Honestly, we didn't plan to give him a *bris* at all, because we have nothing to do with Judaism. We deliberated for a long time and finally decided that maybe we should do it, you know...so that he shouldn't be mad at us when he grows up."

Shocked and confused, Rav Abuhav entered the baby's room. He spread his sheets down on well-appointed diaper table, and when he glanced at the baby, sleeping peacefully in his bed, his eyes filled with tears. In his wildest dreams, he'd never imagined he'd perform a *bris* under such circumstances.

Rav Abuhav gently woke the baby, lay him across his knees, and skillfully performed the *bris*, serving as the *mohel*, *sandak*, *avi haben* and the one making the *brachos*...

After the *bris*, the Rav soothed the crying baby, as his tears blended with those of the baby. Suddenly, a *tefillah* burst forth from his heart: "Please Hashem, have mercy on Your children who have strayed from the path, because '*lechol ha'am bishgagah*,' it is unintentional. Have mercy on this poor soul, and give knowledge and compassion in his parents' hearts to raise him to Torah and *yiras Shamayim*."

About half an hour passed until the babysitter arrived, out of breath. Only when she noticed the *chareidi* rabbi sitting and praying tearfully as he held the baby, did she remember. "Oh, that's right, I forgot...Mrs. Golan told me that Yuvali was supposed to have a small procedure today. How is he? How does he feel?"

"Yuvali will be fine," Rabbi Abuhav said as he prepared to leave the house. He left behind a paper with clear instructions for the baby's parents. Over the coming days, anyone who

met the *mohel* heard this story from him, but in time, he forgot about the whole incident.

Thirteen years passed. One day, a woman and her son, who both looked secular, arrived at his office in the Tel Aviv Rabbinat building. "Are you the *mohel* Abuhav?" the woman asked.

"Yes," he replied. "And who are you?"

"I'm Mrs. Golan from Holon, do you remember...? Rabbi Abuhav did not remember, and she continued: "Thirteen years ago, we invited you to do a *bris* for our Yuvali, and we left him alone with you until the babysitter came..."

"Of course I remember!" Rav Abuhav exclaimed, as he glanced at the tall youth standing in front of him. The incident came back to him with remarkable clarity.

"I don't know what's gotten into my Yuvali," the woman said worriedly, "but for a few weeks, he hasn't been going to school and is hardly eating. He is demanding to meet his *mohel*. At first we tried to take him to major psychologists, but he is insisting, so I have no choice. Please, speak to him."

As thirteen years before, the woman left the room and left her son alone with the Rav. When the door closed, the boy burst into bitter tears, and could hardly express himself: "Honored Rav, I can't do this anymore...I want *tefillin*, I want Shabbos, I want Torah, I feel like without them, I have no life."

Rav Abuhav hugged the poor boy tightly, and then emerged from his office and spoke to the mother: "Ma'am, your son has no psychological problem, he simply wants to learn Torah!"

"I know," the woman replied, wiping an errant tear from her eyes. "All the psychologists we went to said the same thing. We'd be happy if the Rav would teach him!"

Rabbi Abuhav readily agreed, and thirteen years after that emotional *tefillah* emerged from the *mohel's* mouth as he sat helplessly in a strange home in Holon, his *tefillah* was answered. Eliyahu, the Malach Habris, was sent from Above to draw this distant soul closer to his heritage.

The Brachah of Bi'ur Chametz

The Mitzvah and the Brachah

The Torah commands a person to remove all of his *chametz* on Erev Pesach by midday, as the *passuk* says (*Shemos* 12:15): “*Ach bayom harishon tashbisu se'or mibateichem.*” This is done both by getting rid of the *chametz* from the world [*bi'ur chametz*] and by annulling it in one's heart [*bittul chametz*]. (*Ran Pesachim* 1 1, First Edition)

Although from the Torah it is enough for a person to nullify his *chametz*, *Chazal* instituted that he should search and check on the evening of 14 Nissan by candlelight in every place where there might be *chametz* in his home [*Bedikas Chametz*], for fear that *chametz* will be found on Pesach and he might eat it mistakenly (*Rambam Chametz Umatzah* 2, 2-3; *Tosafos* *ibid* ad loc. *ohr*). Before doing the mitzvah of *Bedikas Chametz*, *Chazal* instituted to recite a *birchas hamitzvah* (*Pesachim* 7a).

Nusach of the Brachah

The Amora'im differ (*Pesachim* *ibid* 7a) on the *nusach* of the *brachah* one should make before checking for *chametz*: Some say the *brachah* is “*Leva'er Chametz*” and some say it is “*Al Bi'ur Chametz*.”

One thing is clear: Any *brachah* said before fulfilling mitzvah must be said in the future tense and not in the past. Therefore, everyone concedes that the *brachah* can be said with the words “*Leva'er Chametz*” which means in the future. But the Amora'im are divided regarding the wording “*Al Bi'ur Chametz*,” as to whether this *nusach* also means for the future, and therefore, it can be used, or perhaps it means for the past [as one who says “of that, that I annulled the *chametz*”] and that it cannot be used (*Pesachim* *ibid*).

The *Gemara* rules the *halachah* (*ibid*) that one must recite “*Al Bi'ur Chametz*.” The *Ramban* writes (*ibid*) that even though from the words of the *Gemara* it appears that one can also recite “*leva'er*” one should say specifically “*al bi'ur*” because the term “*al...*” is used regarding *mitzvos* that a person can fulfill with an emissary, and the mitzvah of *hashbasas chametz* can be done by proxy.

Essence of the Brachah

Although the *brachah* is recited before performing the mitzvah of the *bedikah*, the wording is not “*Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al bedikas chametz.*” Instead, it is “*al bi'ur chametz.*” This is because the *bedikah* is merely the beginning of the mitzvah of removing the *chametz*, because right after the search, the searcher then is *mevatel*, he nullifies the *chametz* he did not find. He then burns the *chametz* that he did find the next morning. Therefore, even though the *brachah* is made before the *bedikah*, the word “*bi'ur*” is used, as it includes both the *bedikah* that is a preparation for *bi'ur*, and the *bittul*, which is one of the ways of doing *bi'ur*. (*Rosh Pesachim* 1 10; *Kolbo* 48). Furthermore, because *bi'ur chametz* is an obligation from the Torah, and the *bedikah* is only *d'Rabbanan* (*Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah* 249 in *Da'as Harosh* *ibid*).

But there are those who hold that this *brachah* refers to the mitzvah of *Chazal* to search for *chametz* only and not for the mitzvah of *bi'ur*. In their view, the word “*bi'ur*” said in the *brachah* is not a term of burning and eradicating, but rather, collecting the *chametz* from the house. As we find in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 26:17): “*Bi'arti hakodesh min habayis,*” which means I gathered the *ma'asros* and took them out of the house, as is the *halachah* (*Rabbeinu Dovid, Pesachim* 7a; *Maharam Halawa, ibid*).

The Custom of Hiding Ten Pieces of Chametz

There is a *minhag* to hide ten pieces of *chametz* around the house before *bedikas chametz*. This is in case the *bodek* does not find any *chametz* in his search, and his *brachah* could be for naught (*Rema Orach Chaim* 432 2). Many wonder about this: What did *Chazal* achieve with this *takanah*? Isn't it known where the pieces are placed, and there is no need to search the house to find them? If so, is it not the case that the searcher is not saved from reciting a *brachah levatalah* when placing the pieces?

The Tchebiner Rav explained: *Chazal* (*Pesachim* 7b) compared the search for *chametz* to a search described in the Torah (*Bereishis* 44:12) for the goblet that Yosef instructed be hidden in Binyamin's satchel. In this search, the searcher knew that the goblet was in Binyamin's possession, because he put it there himself. Therefore, with searching for the *chametz* as well, which is learned from this, we can perform it in a way that the searcher knows where the *chametz* is found. (*Peshat V'Iyun* [Harav Moshe Sternbuch] *Pesachim* *ibid*).

The Kavanah of Amen

It is true that HaKadosh Baruch Hu sanctified us with His *mitzvos* and commanded us to banish the *chametz* from our homes.

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

Otzros Emunim

Answering Amen After Birchos Hashachar

The Practice of the Ari Hakadosh

Harav Chaim Vital testified that his *rebbe*, the Ari Hakadosh, would answer amen after people who recited *Birchos Hashachar* in shul, and wrote: "And when he was in the *beis knesses*, and someone would recite *Birchos Hashachar*, he would sit and listen and answer amen. Even if he was in the middle of the *tefillah*, he would pause and answer amen, and even if there were many *mevarchim* [he would do this]" (*Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Habrachos* Chapter 4. And see there, that it is evident from his words that those who made the *brachos* in the Ari's *beis medrash* would also recite *Birchos HaTorah* in front of him).

Rabi Meir Papirash also cites the practice of the Arizal to answer amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* of numerous people, but he detailed that "even if there one hundred [*mevarchim*] he would [still] answer amen after them (*Ohr Tzaddikim* 6 2. And also copied in *Shaarei Teshuvah, Orach Chaim* 6 5). As a result, Rabi Meir Papirash ruled that every person should follow this path and "one who hears *Birchos Hashachar* must answer amen even if he has heard them one hundred times" (*Ohr Hayashar Amud Ha'avodah* 7 11).

Harav Aharon of Karlin also wrote in *Seder Hayom*: "I agree that each and every person should hear from his friend every *brachah* that needs to be said in order to answer amen. Because it is written in the writings of the Arizal that he would listen to *Birchos Hashachar* even from one hundred people, even though he could have in one moment been *meyached* all the worlds, yet he was not strict about his time and would not be lazy to listen even one hundred times to *Hanosein Lasechvi Binah* and all the *brachos*."

Coming Closer to the Shatz to Hear the Brachos

The *Chavas Ya'ir*, in his *sefer Mekor Chaim* (46 2) brought a beautiful testimony about being strict to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar*: "I saw a practice among the elderly, who stand far from the *shaliach tzibbur*, who walk from their place and draw closer to the *mevarech* when he recites *Birchos Hashachar*, in order to be able to hear well and to answer amen."

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*, and the founder and chairman Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*,

I saw in your pamphlet that you have brought in the name of early sages that the *brachah* is compared to the body of the document, while amen is the signature that gives the document validity, and that an unsigned document has no value. We can illustrate it with another example: As is accepted in workplaces, the employee needs to sign in upon arriving at work. There are places where the policy is that if someone does not sign in, he is considered absent that day, even if he did actually turn up and work. The same is with a *brachah* and amen – even if a person made the *brachos* properly, if it is not concluded with amen, then it is a *brachah* that is lacking, and its reward is commensurate, as you have expounded at length.

I thought this might also be the reason why *Chazal* were so strict that the utterance of the word amen should be precise and correct, without missing out on a single letter. That is the character of a signature, it must be precise to the letter.

I used this idea to persuade a friend of mine to start reciting *Birchos Hashachar*. He claimed that he said the *brachos* with more *kavanah* when he was alone, but I countered: What is worth more to you, a check in a big amount without a signature, or a check with a smaller amount with a valid signature?

In appreciation,
S.M.G.

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 *matzeivah* of the Ohev Yisrael in Mezibuzh, Ukraine.

The Ohev Yisrael

5 Nissan 5585

Harav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta, *zy"ta*, was born in 5515 to his father, Rav Shmuel, in the town of Zhemigrod. At first, he served as the Rav of a small town called Kolbasov, and in 5560, he began to serve as Rav in Apta. As per his request, he was called in the name of the town, even though he served there for only eight years. Thousands of *chassidim* flocked to him, and learned Torah and *chassidus* from him. His *divrei*

Torah served as a guiding light for many, and they were compiled into his renowned *sefer, Ohev Yisrael*.

Towards the end of his life he moved to Mezibuzh, and there, on 5 Nissan, 5585, his soul departed. He was buried next to the *tziyun* of the Baal Shem Tov. His *matzeivah* was etched with the words: "Po Nitman Harav Ha'admor Ohev Yisrael, Moreinu Harav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta, son of Harav *hachassid* and *anav*... Moreinu Shmuel, *z"l*. Passed away on 5 Nissan 5585. In his old age, he pitched his tent of Torah here in Mezibuzh, and...where his greatness was that was where his humility was, and he instructed his sons not to write accolades on his *matzeivah*. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה."

Be Careful About Amen Before It Is Too Late

In this world, a person does not recognize the value of answering amen, but when a person comes to Olam Haba he will recognize the value of each and every amen. One who merited to be strict about answering amen will rejoice to see the tremendous reward that amen has earned for him, just like that tiny seed that flowers into a fruitful tree. But someone who is lax about answering amen will be very regretful about his negligence when he sees how important each amen is to Hashem, but by then it will be too late for him. (*Sefer Hapnim* 31)