

Veche Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

The Objective of the *Korban* and *Tefillah* the Person's Will

“וכי תזבחו זבח שלמים לה' לרצונכם תזבחהו” (ויקרא י"ה)

Harav Tzadok Hakohein of Lublin explained:

The *korban* is not a goal in and of itself, because HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not have a need for the actual *korban*. The primary goal of the *korban* is the will and the desire of a person to bring a sacrifice to his Creator. This will is what brings *nachas ruach* to the Creator (see *Rambam Moreh Nevuchim* 3 36). This is what *Chazal* mean when they explain at the end of *Maseches Menachos* (110a): “Perhaps you will say that it is needed for eating, the *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 50:12): ‘*Im er'av lo omar lach ki Li seivel umeloah*’...I did not tell you to bring *korbanos* so that you should say I will do His Will and He will do my will. It is not for My Will that you bring *korbanos* but rather for your own will, as it says “*lirtzonchem tizbechuhu*.”

This concept is also stated with regard to the *tefillah* that we

say in place of the *korbanos*. HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not have *nachas ruach* from the actual *tefillah*, but rather from the desire and the will that a person has to stand before Hashem and daven.

Tzidkas Hatzaddik 42

'Do Not Stand on Your Brother's Blood' - Even If He Is a Sinner

“לא תלך רכיל בעמך לא תעמוד על דם רעך אני ה'” (י"ט טז)

Harav Gershon Litsch-Rosenbaum, author of *Shu"t Meishiv Devarim*, explained:

In these *pesukim* the Torah appeals to the person and says: Even when you hear about a sinner who has gotten sick, “*lo seilech rachil b'amecha*” – to say that his illness comes as a punishment for his sons, and as such, you will refrain from davening for him. Rather “*lo sa'amod al dam re'iecha*” – stand and daven for his recovery, because “*Ani Hashem*” – Who is compassionate and does *chesed* even with sinners.

Imros Hashem, end of the *parashah*

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

'Mi Shebeirach... Venomar Amen!'

We may not have noticed, but each and every Shabbos, during *Krias HaTorah* – in the time ‘*bein gavra legavra*’ – between the men called up for an *aliyah* – we have an opportunity for many amens. That happens at the end of each *Mi Shebeirach* that the *gabbai* makes – and there are usually many of them, depending on the custom of each place.

Yes! Even answering amen after a *Mi Shebeirach* is an obligation. It is not for naught that it was instituted to say at the conclusion “*Venomar Amen*”! The *Mishnah Berurah* (215:9) wrote: “The *Midrash* says, when a person hears that someone is davening or giving a *brachah* to a Jew, even without mentioning the Name of Hashem, he must answer amen.” Not only that, but this ‘amen’ after the *Mi Shebeirach* is even a *mitzvas aseih* of *v'ahavta lerei'acha kamocho*, which is written in our *parashah* (*Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim* 215 9).

Another important point to think about: We have a custom to say a *Mi Shebeirach* for the sick in front of a *Sefer Torah*. Answering amen after this *Mi Shebeirach* is inestimably important, because when all the *mispallelim* answer amen after it, it becomes like a *tefillas rabbin*, which can be very powerful in advocating for a *refuah* for sick people. In general, any *brachah* that is answered by amen has increased power to be fulfilled.

It is therefore so surprising to see that many people, during the *Mi Shebeirachs* in general, and for a sick person in particular, are talking and do not answer amen, or they murmur amen distractedly. How can one ignore the silent cry of the sick person, ailing in bed, and not participate in at least answering amen after a *Mi Shebeirach* that is being made for him?!

No one knows what awaits him each day; a person does not know what is going on in his body at this moment. With one small word that we utter, we can become a ‘*mispallel al chaveiro*,’ one who davens for his friend, and who is guaranteed: “and he will be answered first.” That is besides the actual virtue of answering amen.

Besides that, we know that the early sages revealed that in the order of the *aleph-beis*, the letters after אמן are בנס to teach us that after the amen comes the miracle, and who needs a miracle more than a sick person? If we all make sure to answer amen after the *Mi Shebeirach*, he will surely merit – as will the rest of those who are blessed with a *Mi Shebeirach* – *nachas* and all good things, amen!

**One who answers amen to a Mi Shebeirach will be blessed.
Good Shabbos,
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein**

Five Thousand Kabbalos and One Mi Shebeirach

This impressive story was related by the person it happened to, Rav Meir Azarzar, the Rav of the Jewish community in Hong Kong, after the wave of feedback from the story that we published a few months about the miraculous *yeshuah* his son experienced after the doctors had given up on his finger. With the power of the *rabbim* who accepted in his merit not to speak during davening, he made a wondrous recovery. This is his story:

It happened two and a half years ago; I was in New York for a series of lectures that I was asked to deliver for Arachim, which I work for. At the end of one of the lectures, I shared with the audience a *kiruv* project that I planned to establish in the Far East for the tens of thousands of Jewish backpackers who come to these lands.

The next morning, one of the participants at the lecture called me. He is a businessman who I knew because of his frequent visits to Hong Kong. I was surprised when he said, "I have arranged a



meeting for you with *kiruv* philanthropist Reb Aharon Wolfson. You have to come to his office in Manhattan today at four o'clock sharp."

I was overjoyed. I had heard a lot about this person who invests huge sums in the *kiruv* world, and I would have been ready to travel all the way from Israel just to meet with him. From Above it was arranged that I could have this meeting while in his city...

I arrived at his office a few minutes ahead of time. Because I did not prepare, I spent the waiting time to organize my thoughts and to highlight the points I wanted to emphasize. But then I was interrupted by a phone call. On the screen was the name of a *bochur* who we had merited to bring closer a few years earlier in Hong Kong; today he is a businessman living in Israel. I rejected the call again and again, but he did not let up, so having no choice, I answered. Two and a half years earlier,

we had merited to marry him off, and we were in contact until then.

The man on the other end could hardly speak. "Rabbi," he said in a choked voice, "my wife has just been diagnosed with the dreaded disease in the advanced stages. The doctors say she has forty-five days to live. What do we do?"

First I sympathized with his plight, but I could not speak for long. Hashem put the words in my mouth and I said to him, "First of all, this Shabbos you go to shul with your baby daughter, bang on the *bimah* and tell everyone: 'If you want this girl not to grow up an orphan, please taken upon yourselves not to speak during davening as a merit for my wife, Rivka Esther bas Naomi!' *B'ezras Hashem* when I return home, we'll discuss what to do next."

Right after that, I went into the meeting. Apparently, the bad news I had heard had left its impressions on me, and Reb Aharon Wolfson noticed and asked if everything was alright. I briefly told him about the conversation I had just had. During the conversation, he heard a bit about the connection we have with the many people we have brought closer through our work in the Far East. This captivated him, and he pledged a tremendous sum to help get our project off the ground. It was unbelievable *Hashgachah pratis* that I had come into this with so little effort.

When I returned to Israel, the man came to my house. We spoke at length, and at the end of the conversation, we agreed that day to print five thousand papers with a *kabbalah* not to speak during davening. Together, we began to get people to sign them. The man took this upon himself with all seriousness; from that day, he left his business and dedicated his time to this mission.

Each day, he went from shul to shul, and without any embarrassment, he told the *mispallelim* that his wife's days were numbered. He gave them the papers and asked them tossing. He also visited Harav Gershon Edelstein, *shlita*, who was very impressed by the idea, and instructed him to get all the *bnei yeshivah* to sign. After two weeks, the man told me that his mission had been crowned with success; the papers were all signed, and now we just had to hope for a *yeshuah*.

Three weeks later, on Sunday, I was supposed to fly to the Far East to establish

the project that was now being generously supported by Reb Aharon Wolfson. I had a very packed schedule of meetings on the subject, but then my travel agent called me and said that my flight had been cancelled because of demonstrations taking place at the time in Hong Kong, and ongoing tensions in that country.

Despite my disappointed, I accepted the turn of events. And then half an hour later, the CEO of Arachim, Rav Yosef Wallis, called me and asked that I join a trip to Poland leaving that night so that I could lecture on the trip. So from Above it was arranged that instead of traveling east I would be going west... The trip was moving and remarkable in a way that I cannot describe. Towards the end, we arrived in Krakow, and among other places, we davened at the *tziyun* of the Tosafos Yom Tov, Harav Yom Tov Lipman Heller, *zt"l*.

Without planning, Rav Wallis asked me to speak. I began to talk about the power of *tefillah*, and suddenly I realized. We were right there, at the *tziyun* of the Tosafos Yom Tov, who during the pogroms of 1648-49 learned in a dream that the punishment was being meted out to Am Yisrael because they were not careful about talking during davening. As a result, he instituted the famed *Mi Shebeirach* bestowing wonderful *brachos* and a *shemirah* for those who take upon themselves to be careful about talking during davening.

Because emotions were running high, I used the opportunity and tearfully cried to the holy *matzeivah*:

"Holy Rebbe, you are the one who promised that one who takes upon himself not to speak during davening will merit *shemirah* from all bad things and ailments. There is a woman in Eretz Yisrael, Rivka Esther bas Naomi, for whom five thousand people signed a pledge not to speak during davening. Please, advocate on High that she should be healed!"

I cannot describe the emotion that enveloped all of those in the group. They all answered amen with *kavanah* and even took upon themselves to join the *kabbalah* for her recovery. When I returned to Eretz Yisrael I was informed that against all odds, *bechasdei Hashem*, there was an improvement in her condition.

Today, two and a half years later, we can say that *bechasdei Shamayim*, the woman is completely healthy. Once again I received the clear lesson of the power of this special *kabbalah*.

The Brachah of Sefiras Ha'omer

The Mitzvah and the Brachah

The Torah commanded us to count forty-nine days, from the second day of Pesach, 16 Nissan. The Torah attributes this counting to the *Korban Omer*, sacrificed on 16 Nissan, as it states (*Vayikra* 23:15): “*Usefartem lachem mimacharas haShabbos miyom haviachem es omer hatenufah sheva Shabbasos...*” Therefore, in the wording of the counting we mention the number of days with regard to the sacrifice of the Omer (see *Sefer Hachinuch* Mitzvah 306). The *nusach* of the *brachah* instituted by *Chazal* for this mitzvah is: “*Asher kidshanu...vetzivanu al sefiras ha'omer*” (*Rambam Temidin Umusafin* 7 25). At this time, when we do not bring a *Korban Omer*, the Rishonim are divided as to whether this mitzvah is practiced as a mitzvah from the Torah, or perhaps it is only a *takanah* of *Chazal* (see *Biur Halachah* 489 1). In any case, even according to those that hold that the mitzvah of counting in our time is *d'Rabbanan*, we must make a *brachah* on it, as we do for other *mitzvos d'Rabbanan*, such as lighting the Chanukah lights and reading the *Megillah*. (*Shu"t Harashba*, Vol. III 284)

The Meaning of 'Sefiras Ha'Omer'

As noted, the *nusach* of the *brachah* for this mitzvah is “*asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al Sefiras ha'Omer*.” The words *Sefiras Ha'Omer* are not explained in their simple meaning – because we are not counting the *Korban Omer*. The meaning is counting the days from the sacrifice of the *Omer* and on. *Chazal* adopted this language because mentioning the mitzvah in a clear fashion in the wording of the *brachah* would have required it to be very verbose. (*Me'iri Pesachim* 121b)

Some think that it is necessary to attach the counting to the *brachah* itself, and to say “*vetzivanu al Sefiras Ha'Omer shehayom... la'Omer*” (*Rokeach* 294; *Mordechai Megillah* 2 803. According to their view, indeed, the mitzvah is explained in the body of the *brachah*). But *l'halachah*, the *Magen Avraham* wrote (489 5) that this should not be done, and rather, when the *brachah* is complete, one should fulfill the mitzvah of counting the *Omer* by saying “*Hayom... l'Omer*.”

Nusach of the Brachah

In the *nusach* of the *birchos hamitzvos*, we find two *nuschaos*. There are *mitzvos* that we make a *brachah* on with the wording of “*al...*” and there are those that are made with “*le'...*” (i.e. to do...) The *Ramban (Pesachim* 7a) explains that *brachos* on the *mitzvos* that a person must fulfill himself, and cannot be fulfilled by proxy, such as *tzitzis* and *tefillin*, are made with the words “*le'...*” while *brachos* on *mitzvos* that one can fulfill by proxy such as *milah* or *shechitah*, are made with the words “*al...*” With regards to this mitzvah, the *poskim* dispute whether one fulfills his obligation by hearing *sefirah* from another person, under the *halachah* of “*shomea k'oneh*,” one who hears is like one who answers. Or must a person count by himself (see *Mishnah Berurah* 489 and *Biur Halachah* *ibid*). It would seem, according to those who hold that it is impossible to fulfill this mitzvah through another person, why should we make a *brachah* using the word “*al...*” – “*vetzivanu al sefiras ha'omer*”?

The *Rosh (Pesachim* 1:10) explained that because the custom is that the *shaliach tzibbur* makes this *brachah* aloud, and is *motzi* those who are not fluent in the *brachah*, therefore it is considered a mitzvah that can be fulfilled by others, and the *nusach* of the *brachah* was instituted with “*al.*”

The *Me'iri* also explained (*ibid*): At this time, when we do not sacrifice the *Omer*, the mitzvah of counting is not an obligation from the Torah, but rather a *d'Rabbanan* – *zecher leMikdash*. Because the main point of fulfilling the mitzvah was during the time of the *Bais Hamikdash*, it is considered in our times a mitzvah that is not obligatory to fulfill. Therefore, we make a *brachah* using “*al...*”

A Brachah Each Day

The Rishonim are divided as to whether the count each day is a mitzvah in and of itself. Some think that counting all the days is one mitzvah, and by counting each day, the person fulfills a part of the mitzvah, until its completion on the forty ninth day (*Sefer Hachinuch* *ibid*; *Shut Maharleba"ch* 62). But some differ and think that counting each day is a mitzvah in and of itself (*Rosh Pesachim* 10 41; *Shibbolei Haleket* 234)

Even according to those who hold that counting each day we only fulfill part of the mitzvah, *Chazal* instituted that we make the *brachah* each day of the counting, because the *brachah* is not contingent on the completion of the mitzvah. Rather, one must make a *brachah* on each part of the mitzvah. That is because the Torah divided the fulfillment of this mitzvah over forty-nine days, and a person cannot possibly fulfill it all at once (*Shu"t Betzel Hachochmah*, Vol. V, *Orach Chaim* 45).

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

Otzros Emunim

Reciting Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa

Amen from the Mouth of the Heavenly Entourage

During the time that Rav Yaakov Yitzchak of Lanzhut, who later became known as the Chozeh of Lublin, learned in the yeshivah of Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg, he would say *Birchos Hashachar* each morning in front of his Rebbe and his Rebbe would answer amen. When Reb Shmelke was asked by a student why it was specifically Rav Yaakov Yitzchak who merited to have amen answered to his *brachos* he replied: "All the *Pamalya shel Ma'alah* [the Heavenly Entourage] answers amen to his *brachos*..." (*Shemen Hatov* [Piotrkov 5665] Vol. II, p. 25). When he became a leader, the Chozeh was careful before saying *Birchos Hashachar* to summon a child to answer amen after his *brachos*. (*Shemuos Tovos* [Bilgoraj 5687] *Sichos Vesippurim*)

Habituate Us to Answer Amen

Harav Eliyahu Dovid Rabinowitz Teumim, the Aderes, described his caution and alacrity in fulfilling the mitzvah of answering amen. He particularly noted his care to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar*, and wrote: "I was very, very careful to answer amen, already from when I was a child, and I loved this mitzvah and ran with excitement to do it. Until it has almost become a nature to me, as I have become accustomed each day to hearing *Birchos Hashachar* from several people. And all those who see me should learn from me to do this, and to love answering amen. At first they were lax about it and did not hold this mitzvah in any esteem...Yet how *Chazal* have praised it! With this very easy way, every person can acquire Olam Haba, and can fulfill the mitzvah hundreds of times each day, easily, without becoming weary. (*Nefesh Dovid* 34)

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

To the Editors of *Vechol Ma'aminim*

In the past, you have cited *Meforshim* that amen is compared to a signature. Just like a signature on a document is what gives validity to what is written in that document, likewise, amen gives validity to the *brachah*. I thought to compare amen to the *melachah* of *Makeh Bepatish* (literally, banging with a hammer, i.e. completing the vessel).

The *melachah* of *Makeh Bepatish*, which is a final hammer blow that completes the vessel, is not classified as a '*melachah*' in and of its own, unless it completes the vessel. Likewise, amen; it has no validity on its own, unless it comes to affirm a *brachah* or request. Answering amen to a *brachah* is *Makeh Bepatish*, through which the *brachah* is completed. Because the light bang of a hammer gets importance when it completes the vessel, likewise, amen, despite being a small word, has an importance of its own when it completes the *brachah*.

At the same time, we must remember that answering amen is also the *patish*, the hammer that 'bangs' on the Gates of Gan Eden and opens for us the gates of *brachos* and *yeshuos*, as *Chazal* have guaranteed.

With brachah,

M.R., Lakewood, New Jersey

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Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg

1 Iyar 5538

Harav Shmuel Shmelke Halevi Horowitz was born in 5486 in Chortkov, to his father, Rav Tzvi Hirsh, who was appointed that year as the Rav of the

city. As a child, he learned from his father, and studied through the day with his brother, Rav Pinchas, the Baal Hafla'ah. Later, he traveled with his brother to the Maggid of Mezeritsch, and they became two of the Maggid's prime disciples.

When he was young, he was chosen to serve as the Rav of the city of Ritchval, Poland, where he also established a yeshivah gedolah that attracted many scholarly bochorim. After ten years, he accepted the position of Rav in Shineva, and in 5533, he began to serve as Rav in Nikolsburg, which is the city of Mikulov [today in the Czech Republic]. In Nikolsburg, he further established his yeshivah, and many Torah and Chassidic giants studied there.

On 1 Iyar 5538, he passed away suddenly, while sitting on his chair, at the age of 52. He was buried the next day in his city, Nikolsburg. His divrei Torah were printed in his seforim, *Imrei Shmuel*, *Divrei Shmuel* and others.

Amen to Every Brachah

Before his passing, he said of himself that he had always been strict to make a *brachah* only when there was someone to answer amen to it. He explained that the angel created by the recital of the *brachah* would only be completed if someone answered amen to it. (*Ohel Yitzchak* p. 70)

Amen and the Brachah in *Hanhagos Hayom*

The Rebbe wrote *Seder Hanhagos Hayom*, which was printed in many editions. There, he addresses matters of *avodah shebalev* at length. Following are three practices that he wrote:

1. "One should daven from a *Siddur* and in a holy place, and specifically with a *minyán*." (4)
2. "He should say amen to every *brachah* that he hears. Even from a child." (6)
3. "He should recite *Birchos Hanehenin* with *kavanah* for every single thing so that he should not benefit from this world without a *brachah*. Rather, he should give Hashem His share with his *brachah* with *kavanah* before enjoying something in this world, and then a *brachah acharonah* with *kavanah* for each thing." (9)