

Vechele Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

Parashas METZORA | 5782 | Issue No. 428



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

'On the Day of His Purity' His Torah Returns to Him

"זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן" (יד ב) Chazal (Erchin 15b) say that *tzara'as* comes upon a person for the sin of *lashon hara*, and that this is alluded to in the word "*metzora*" in this passuk, which can be explained as two words: מוציא רע (see *Shelah Maseches Pesachim* 336).

The *Chovos Halevavos* (Shaar Hakeniah 7) wrote that when one speaks *lashon hara* about another, then the sins of one who was spoken about are attributed to the speaker, and the speaker's merits are transferred to the one who was spoken about. Based on this, the Kozhiglover Rav, Harav Aryeh Tzvi Frommer, Hy"d, explained this passuk: "*Zos tihiyeh Toras hametzora*" – from when do the Torah and merits of one who is '*motzi ra*' remain in his possession and are not transferred to the person he spoke about? "*Beyom taharaso*" – on the day that he repents completely and stops talking about the other.

The Vayaged Yaakov of Pupa added, based on this, an explanation for what we say in *Al Cheit*: "*Al cheit...beyodim ubelo yodim*." A "*cheit beyodim*" is a sin that

we sinned ourselves and we know about it. But a sin "*belo yodim*" is a sin of one who we spoke *lashon hara* about, which is attributed to us, but we don't know what it is.

Eretz Tzvi; Vayaged Yaakov
Moadim 1 Drush 16

The Takanah of Those Who Speak Lashon Hara

"זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן" (יד ב)

As is known, *tzara'as* is a punishment for the sin of *lashon hara*, and Chazal say that the *takanah*, the rectification for those who speak *lashon hara*, depends on their level: "If he is a *talmid chacham*, he should learn Torah...and if he is an *am ha'aratz*, he should lower his view of himself." (Erchin 15a)

The *Pardes Yosef* explained that these two possibilities for rectifying his deeds are alluded to in the *tefillah* of *Elokai Netzor*, said at the end of *Shemoneh Esreh*. First we ask: "*Elokai netzor leshoni meira*" – that I should not stumble on the sin of *lashon hara* at all. And then we continue to ask that even if, *chalilah*, we do sin, we should merit to rectify our sin through "*venafshi k'afar lakol tihiyeh*" – for the *am ha'aretz* and "*pesach libi beTorasecha*" – for the *talmid chacham*.

Pardes Yosef, Vayikra 13 1

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

'Bais Halevi Barchu Es Hashem'

As we all sit down on Seder night this year, *b'ezras Hashem*, I will remember the seventh *yahrtzeit* of *Mori Verabi*, Harav Shmuel Halevi Wosner, *zt"l*, who was accepted across the spectrum as the *posek hador*, and was known as the *Shevet Halevi*.

I thank Hashem for the tremendous *zechus* that I had to be close to him and to benefit from that closeness. I feel a tremor of emotion whenever I remember how he would welcome me with a smile, and with the warm question of "What is doing with your big mitzvah?"

There are no words to describe the *chizuk* and encouragement that I drew from his constant accompaniment and the guidance that he gave me in my efforts to strengthen the mitzvah of *amen*, which I undertook upon his advice and encouragement.

I remember now how he attended the founding gathering of Bney Emunim, together with the Rosh Yeshivah, Harav Ahron Yehuda Leib Steinman, *zt"l*. His powerful words about the tremendous virtue of the practice of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* remain etched in my heart. He said:

"There was an ancient *minhag* in Am Yisrael to recite *Birchos Hashachar* each man to his friend, and the entire *kahal* would recite the *brachos* together, one reciting and the friends answering *amen*. Then they would switch off, with another one being *mevarech* and others answering. This practice was forgotten in recent times, and our prominent friend, Reb Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, [it was a tremendous *zechus* for me that in his humility he called me a friend], has merited to grasp onto this tree of life of *zikui harabbim* with his efforts to strengthen the answering *amen*, and his desire to revive and reestablish this early practice, in the essence of (*Shabbos* 104a): 'they forgot them and then returned to establish them.'

He then added: "In *sefer Chassidim* (261) it says that the mitzvah that is neglected and that receives no attention, is like a *meis mitzvah* and a person must strengthen and specifically grasp onto this mitzvah."

His firm words were like a cornerstone for all of the work of Bney Emunim, and those words effected that Hashem should want our success. Today, more than a decade later, *baruch Hashem*, many adhere to this practice. We can say that in many shuls, and among thousands of people in Klal Yisrael, it is no longer a *meis mitzvah*. But of course, we still have much more work ahead; Am Yisrael needs additional *chizuk* in *emunah* and *tefillah*, and may his tremendous merit advocate for us so that we can continue to work to fulfill the words "*uneromemah Shemo yachdav*" in the most lofty manner. Amen.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

A Reunion After Fifty Years

At the age of eighty, against all odds, Reb Dovid Cohen left Kadima on a difficult and tumultuous search. Many tried to dissuade him from the trip, both because of its dim chances, and because of his ailing health. But an inner voice urged him to ignore the other voices, and to embark on a journey to the unknown.

His tremendous pain gave him no reprieve, and that left him with no choice. Over all the years that had passed, he had invested himself on behalf of hundreds of Jewish children, in the institutions he had established in the town of Kadima, in the Sharon region of Israel. But from time to time, the pain resurfaced even more acutely, and reminded him that it was very possible that his oldest daughter, Shifra'le, was still waiting for him.

He could not forget the image of Shifra'le, the charming child that had been born to him and his wife, of blessed

Reb Dovid returned to Romania, and was reunited with his family. After the war, he tried to make contact with his daughter, but found that the borders had closed by the Russians behind the Iron Curtain, and until the situation improved, he would not be able to try to find his daughter.

Meanwhile, Reb Dovid remarried, but his travails were not yet over. His oldest son from his second marriage was run over at the age of two. *Bechasdei Shamayim*, he merited another son, and in 1950, he was able to obtain *aliyah* permits to Eretz Yisrael. When they arrived they were assigned a meager tent in the settlement of Kadima. Some time later, another son was born and the family moved into permanent housing.

Because the situation of Yiddishkeit and Jewish education in Kadima was very poor, Reb Dovid devoted his energies to improving the Torah atmosphere and *chinuch* there. After indescribable

efforts, he was able to build a large shul, and when he gazed with satisfaction at the fruit of his labors, he decided to continue on to the next project, building a three story building that would be dedicated to the *chinuch* and welfare of orphaned and abandoned children.

Throughout the construction, he kept the image of Shifra'le, his orphaned daughter abandoned in Europe, in his mind. Only he knew how many efforts he

had invested in locating her, how many *tefillos* he had poured out to Hashem, how many letters he had written, how many ads he had placed in local media, how many consulates he had appealed to. But the Iron Curtain was hermetic, and he could not glean even the slightest clue.

Many years had passed since. Hundreds of students had passed through the walls of the beautiful institutions he had established. He accompanied many of them to their weddings. Meanwhile, the Iron Curtain fell and the gates of the Soviet Union opened wide. A ray of hope began to shine in Reb Dovid's heart, but it took him a few more years until he was actually able to take action.

When he was about eighty, after he had passed the mantle of leadership of the institutions to his son, Reb Dovid informed his family that he was planning to travel to the last place

where he had seen his daughter, the city of Chernowitz. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was under independent Ukrainian rule.

Reb Dovid began his trip to Ukraine with a *tefillah* at the *tziyun* of Rav Nachman of Breslov. He poured his heart out tearfully, pleading with Hashem to bless his efforts with success. After a harrowing journey, he was finally standing in Chernowitz, and was surprised to discover that of the glorious community that had thrived in the city until the war, almost no remnant existed.

One of the local residents who heard his request directed him to a remote village, 150 kilometers away, where a few Jews from Chernowitz lived. Reb Dovid followed the instructions he had received, and when he reached the town, he was somehow able to find the handful of Jews who lived there. He gathered snippets of information, and slowly, was able to visit the homes of most of the town's Jews. But none of them had information that could help him.

Reb Dovid entered the last Jewish house on his list with *tefillos* on his lips, and his heart pounding with hope. But this time, again, he was not successful. The person heard his request, but responded indifferently: "Shifra Cohen?! Don't know her! Never heard the name!" Despondent and broken, Reb Dovid turned to leave, but then he heard a voice behind him: "Are you Dovid Cohen?" the voice asked. Reb Dovid turned around and noticed saw an elderly woman who had followed him out of the house.

"Yes!" he replied.

"I knew you'd come," she replied. "I am your sister-in-law. Your wife's sister. You are probably looking for Shifra'le..." Reb Dovid didn't reply; he crumpled to the ground in a faint.

Only after he was revived could he hear the rest of the woman's words: "Shifra'le married a Jew many years ago, and she lives in the next city."

Words cannot describe the moments of reunion between father and daughter after more than fifty years. Reb Dovid's *tefillos* had been heard, and he merited to reunite with his only daughter and her Jewish family, with whom he remained in contact until his final day.



The city of Chernowitz, Ukraine.

memory, during World War Two. Reb Dovid was a native of Romania, and had been living then in the town of Chernowitz, in the Bukovina region, which was under German occupation. He married a pious woman during the war; she was a local resident of the city and they settled there. But his happiness did not last long, because a few months after the birth, his young wife passed away and he remained alone with the baby.

Some time afterwards, the Russians captured Chernowitz, and expelled all the foreign citizens, Reb Dovid among them. He pleaded tearfully to be allowed to take his daughter, but was met with firm refusal, because she was registered in the name of his deceased wife. Having no choice, he left the baby at a relative, who promised to take care of her until she could be reunited with her father.

The Brachah of Al Achilas Matzah

The Mitzvah and the Brachah

From the *passuk* that instructs us to eat the *Korban Pesach* “*al matzos umerorim*” (*Bamidbar* 9:11), it seems that eating matzah on Seder night is customary only at the time when we can bring a *Korban Pesach*. Therefore, the Torah stipulates in another *passuk* (*Shemos* 12:18): “*B’erev tochlu matzos*” – to teach us that the mitzvah of eating matzah is practiced even in our times, when it is eaten on its own (*Pesachim* 120a).

Like many of the positive commandments, the *mitzvos aseh*, even before performing the mitzvah of eating matzah, *Chazal* instituted that we recite the *birchas hamitzvah*.

Even according to those who hold that aside for the **obligation** to eat matzah which is applicable on Seder night alone, one who eats matzah through all seven days of the Yom Tov fulfills a mitzvah (*Shu”t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah* 191 in the *Da’as Hachizkuni Shemos* 12:18; *Mishnah Berurah* 475:45 in the name of the Gra), still, we do not recite *birchas hamitzvah* on eating matzah all seven days, because one does not make a *brachah* on a mitzvah that is not obligatory (*Shu”t Chasam Sofer, ibid*).

Time of the Brachah

Before eating matzah, just like before eating anything, we have to recite a *birchas hanehenin*. We find, then, that one who eats *matzos mitzvah* makes two *brachos* before eating: *Hamotzi* and *Al Achilas Matzah*. The *brachah* of *Hamotzi* precedes *Al Achilas Matzah* because it is more common, and we have a rule (*Brachos* 51b): “*Tadir veshe’eino tadir tadir kodem*,” when there is a regular and an irregular, the regular comes first (*Ohr Zarua, Pesachim* 256; *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 475 1).

When one prepares to eat matzah, he has three *matzos* in front of him. The top and the bottom are whole, and the middle one is split. The *brachah* of *Hamotzi* and the *brachah* of *Al Achilas Matzah* are not said on the same matzah; one of them is said on the upper whole matzah and the second is said on the middle split one. The Rishonim differ on which matzah each of the *brachos* is said, and therefore, when one makes the two *brachos*, he needs to hold onto the top matzah and the middle matzah (*Shulchan Aruch, ibid; Biur Halachah ibid*).

Right after reciting the two *brachos*, one must eat from the top and middle matzah together, so that there should not be a *hefsek*, a pause, between the *Al Achilas Matzah* and the eating of the *matzas mitzvah*, and the between the *brachah* of *Hamotzi* and eating the matzah of *hamotzi* (*Shulchan Aruch ibid; Mishnah Berurah ibid* 8).

There are Rishonim who hold that one does not fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah with the matzah eaten at the beginning of the meal, but rather with the matzah of the *afikoman* at the end of the *seudah* (*Rashi* and *Rashbam Pesachim* 119b, ad loc. *Ein mafirin*.) According to their view, one has to have in mind when making the *brachah* that they will eat the *afikoman* to fulfill the mitzvah (*Shaar Hatzion* 477 4).

Nusach of the Brachah

The Rishonim dispute what the *nusach* of the *brachah* on matzah is: The *Ramban (Pesachim* 7a) holds that the *nusach* is “*Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu le’echol matzah*,” because every mitzvah that cannot be fulfilled by a proxy has a *brachah* with the words “*L’...*,” meaning “*to...*” The mitzvah of eating matzah cannot be carried out by a proxy.

But the *Rambam (Chametz Umatzah* 8:8) is of the opinion that the wording of the *brachah* is “*al achilas matzah*” and that is the practical *halachah* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 475 1). The *Chok Yaakov (Orach Chaim* 432 2) explains that we make the *brachah* on this mitzvah with “*al*” because the wording of the *passuk* that describes the obligation to eat matzah is “*al matzos umerorim yochluhu*.”

The *Rambam* wrote (*ibid* 6, according to *Maggid Mishnah ibid*) that during the time of the Bais Hamikdash, when they would place the *Korban Pesach*, matzah and *maror* together, they would include only the *mitzvos* of eating matzah and eating *maror* in one *brachah* and said: “*Asher kidshnu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al achilas matzos umerorim*.”

In a *Haggadah* from the time of the Bais Hamikdash, discovered in the Cairo *genizah*, there is a *nusach* of a *brachah* that includes also gratitude for the miracles: “*Baruch Atah Hashem...asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al achilas matzah umaror balyalah hazeh, lehaizkir gevuraso shel Melech Malchei Hamelachim HaKadosh Baruch Hu she’asah nissim l’avoseinu bazman hazeh, ba’avur Avraham Yitzchak veYaakov, baruch Atah Hashem, zocheh habris*.” (*Halaylah Hazeh*, p. 76)

Standing When Saying the Brachah

The *Bais Yosef (Orach Chaim* 8) cites the *Yerushalmi* (it is not in the *Yerushalmi* that we have printed) that one must make all the *birchos hamitzvos* while standing. The *poskim* differ on this. Some are of the opinion that indeed, these *brachos* should be made while standing (*Magen Avraham ibid* 2; *Mishnah Berurah ibid* 2). Others hold that a *brachah* for a mitzvah is only recited when standing if the mitzvah is performed while standing. But if the mitzvah is performed when seated, then the *brachah* can be recited when seated, because the *din* of the *brachah* is the *din* of the mitzvah (*Pnei Yehoshua Megillah* 21b; *Aruch Hashulchan ibid* 3).

Even those who hold that all the *birchos hamitzvos* should be recited standing agree that the *brachah* of *Al Achilas Matzah* is made while sitting because it is unanimous that a mitzvah that has a physical benefit in its fulfillment has the rule of the *Birchos Hanehenin*, which are said when sitting. (*Pri Migadim ibid Eshel Avraham* 2; *Pesichah L’Hilchos Brachos* 18)

The Kavanah of Amen

It is true that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has sanctified us with His *mitzvos* and commanded us to eat matzah on the night of 15 Nissan.

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

Otzros Emunim

Reciting Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa

Saying Birchos Hashachar in Shul

It is brought in *Yesod Veshoreish Ha'avodah* (Sha'ar Ha'ashmores Ch. 10) that: "Birchos Hashachar... it is good to attend to them in shul, with the rest of *tefillah*, so that others should answer amen after his *brachos*, because how much greater is the *brachah* when others answer amen to it."

Harav Tzvi Hirsh of Zidichov, author of *Ateres Tzvi*, wrote that it is correct to say *Birchos Hashachar* in shul because this way each person can make the *brachos* to another, who will complete his *brachos* by answering amen. Because "a *brachah* without amen is like half a body." (*Pri Kodesh Hilulim, Sha'ar Habrachos* Ch. 4)

The Baal Shem Tov's Custom

Harav Eliezer Tzvi of Komarna wrote (introduction to *Ohr Einayim* Vol. II, *Klal* 21) that each and every Jew "especially one who has a *nefesh yekarah*," a precious soul, should say *Birchos Hashachar* in shul in order to give Am Yisrael merits of answering amen. He added that the Baal Shem Tov did this.

אמן Is Numerically Equivalent to בטלן

There is a *takanah* of Chazal (*Megillah* 3b) that in every city, there have to be ten *batlanim*, people who do not do any work and are always in the shul. In *Maseches Brachos* (6b) we find the reason for this: "When HaKadosh Baruch Hu comes to a shul and does not find ten people in it, He immediately gets angry..."

Harav Tzvi Hirsch Horowitz, the Rav of Frankfurt and son of the Hafla'ah, says that the role of those "*asarah batlanin*" is not only in their engagement in Torah and *tefillah*, but also to answer amen after those who make *brachos* in shul. The hint for this is that בטלן is numerically equivalent to אמן. (*Lachmei Todah, Tochachah*, first day of *Selichos*)

Igros Emunim

Readers' Letters

To the members of the editorial board of *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

I was recently in the Bais Medrash of Harav Yisrael Zusha Halevi Horowitz, *shlita*, Rav and Av Bais Din of Kehillos Hachassidim in Elad for Shabbos. I saw that they have a beautiful practice of strengthening the recital of *brachos* and answering amen. During *Shalosh Seudos*, each one recites *Hagafen* aloud, at his turn, and they all answer amen. So in fifteen minutes, the participants earned many amens. I thought that this practice is a wonderful idea that should be publicized so that others can merit from it. It is actually something that can be done at any opportunity when people, or family members, gather, and all can merit many amens easily.

With the blessings of the Kohein,

Gamliel Hakohein Rabinowitz

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Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



The tziyun of the Shelah Hakadosh in Teveriah.

The Shelah Hakadosh

11 Nissan 5390

Harav Yeshaya Halevi Horowitz was born in Prague in 5318. As a *bochur* he learned from Harav Shlomo of Krakow, known as the

second Maharshal, and from the Maharam of Lublin and the Sema. For twenty years he served as the Rav of prominent communities in Europe, and in 5375, he returned to Prague, where he had been born, and began to serve as the Rav there. Initially, he served alongside the Kli Yakar, and when the latter passed away in 5379, he served as the only Rav of the Prague community.

In 5380, he left Prague and came to Yerushalayim, where he was appointed *Av Beis Din* of the Ashkenazi community in the city. In Yerushalayim, he completed his renowned work *Shnei Luchos Habris*. Due to harassment from the Turkish Pasha, the Rav fled to Teveriah, where he passed away on 11 Nissan 5390. He was laid to rest in Teveriah, not far from the *tziyun* of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, in the courtyard where the Rambam is buried.

Basis of all Worlds

In his *sefer Shnei Luchos Habris* (*Maseches Tamid* 80-83), he expounds on the great virtue of the mitzvah of answering amen, and the tremendous abundance that descends as the result of being strict about it. He wrote (ibid 80) the following moving words: "Because the Upper and Lower worlds in general are dependent on the word 'amen' and it is the *ikkar* and the root and basis upon which all the worlds are based."

'Its Greatness Cannot Be Searched...'

Regarding the virtues of answering amen, he wrote (ibid 81): "The language is found in the *poskim* and *seforim* of the Mekubalim: 'The one who answers amen is greater than the one who makes the *brachah*' [meaning to say that even though in *Maseches Brachos* 53b we find that there are those who dispute this rule and who hold that the *mevarech* is greater than the one answering,

in the *poskim* and *seforim* of the Mekubalim they are of the view that the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*.] It is true that amen is great on its own right, and that its greatness cannot be searched..." (ibid 81)

One Who Answers Amen Properly Brings Abundance

The Rav also expounded (ibid) on the great virtue of amen, writing: "And one who has *kavanah* on each and every *brachah* that emerges from the mouth of the *mevarech* and answers amen with *kavanah*, as per the *halachah*, causes an abundance of *Kedushah* On High, and an abundance of good for all the worlds, because he opens the Highest Source, the *Mekor Mayim Chaim*, like one who opens the wellspring to water all that needs watering, and the Voice descends from Above, and informs that all this good and joy was brought about by Ploni, a servant of the Holy King."