

# VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

## Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

### Meyuchasim the Sons of Meyuchasim

”שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל  
למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר  
שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם” (א ב)

The *Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar 684)* says that when Bnei Yisrael received the Torah, the nations of the world were jealous of them and wanted to know why Am Yisrael was so special that they received the Torah. Instead of an answer, HaKaodsh Baruch Hu said to them, “Bring me a genealogy book...just like My children bring...as Yisrael only merited to receive the Torah because of its lineage.” Thus, the *Midrash* explains the reason for the placement of the *passuk* that concludes *Chumash Vayikra* “*Eileh hamitzvos asher tzivah Hashem es Moshe el Bnei Yisrael beHar Sinai*” right next to the commandment that begins *Sefer Bamidbar*: “*Se’u es rosh kol adas Bnei Yisrael lemishpechosam lebeis avosam.*”

**Harav Hillel Lichtenstein of Kolomaya** explained that this is why Bnei Yisrael have a custom to call a person up to the Torah using his name and his father’s name (see *Rema Orach Chaim 139 3*). Just like Am Yisrael merited to receive the Torah in the merit of their lineage, hence it is correct to mention their *yichus* whenever they are called up to the Torah.

*Mikrei Dardaki*

### ‘Distance Yourself From a Bad Neighbor’ In Shul

”משפחת בני קהת יהנו על ידך  
המשכן תימנה” (ג כט)

The reason that some of the children of Reuven that were

dragged into the dispute of Korach is attributed by *Chazal (Tanchuma Bamidbar 12, cited in Rashi)* to the fact that they camped next to the Bnei Kehas, from who Korach was descended. From here, *Chazal* tell us “woe to the *rasha* and woe to his neighbor.”

Because the way of a person is to be drawn after his neighbors, and to learn from their deeds, *Chazal* warn (*Avos 1:6*): “Distance yourself from a bad neighbor and do not befriend the *rasha*.”

**Rabi Yehuda Hachassid** writes that this caution is also necessary in shul, and notes: “When a *yarei Shamayim* davens he should not stand or sit next to a bad person, because when he stands next to a bad person during davening, he will think bad things and the Shechinah grows distant from him.”

**Harav Gershon Stern**, the Rav of Maros-Ludus in Romania, added that the fact that *Chazal* wrote “distance yourself from a bad neighbor and do not befriend a *rasha*” teaches us that they directed their words especially to the subject of *tefillah* in shul. Because in the description ‘*shachen ra*’ a bad neighbor, *Chazal* included (*Brachos 8a*) “someone who has a shul in his city and does not enter there to daven.” Therefore, they warned, “Distance yourself from a bad neighbor” – from someone who does not enter the shul to daven, so that you should not learn from him to daven alone, *b’yechidus*, and even when you are in shul “do not befriend the *rasha*” – those who defile the honor of the shul and *tefillah* by speaking of mundane matters.

*Yalkut Hagershuni, Agados HaShas, Vol. II, p. 53*

A word from the founder  
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### A Gift Called ‘Amen’

When we talk about the lofty virtues of answering amen, it is important to precede with the mention that it is not only a ‘good practice’ that is worthwhile to uphold. Rather, it is an absolute obligation ruled upon in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 215 2)*: “One who hears someone in Yisrael making one of the *brachos*...must answer amen after him.”

Although most of the *brachos* we make are *takanos* of *Chazal*, and therefore the amen we answer after them is likewise a *takanah* from *Chazal* [regarding *brachos* whose obligation is *d’Oraisa*, see *Pri Migadim Orach Chaim 215 in Eshel Avraham 6*], the word ‘amen’ is mentioned in the Torah a number of times. Sometimes, Am Yisrael are commanded to answer amen at various occasions, such as Mount Grizim and Mount Eival. For this reason, **Rabi Yehuda Bar Yakar**, the Rav of the Ramban (*Peirush Hatefillos Vehabrachos Vol. I, p. 112*) explained that the words “*Az miSinai nitztavu*” recited in *Mussaf* of Shabbos are an acronym for ‘amen.’

In order to gain insights into the holiness of this word in its own right, let us think about the fact that although every ‘amen’ has a clear meaning – ‘*emes*,’ this is truth, or ‘*halevai*’ may it be – in accordance with the *brachah* it is being answer to, still, we will never answer ‘*emes*’ or ‘*halevai*’ after a *brachah*. Instead we will express ourselves specifically with the holy word ‘amen’ with the necessary *kavanah*.

This word is so holy and deep, it is understandable why *Chazal* were so strict about answering it according to *halachah*, with the right enunciation and timing, to the extent that they promised *arichus yamim*, a long life, to one who utters it properly. Conversely, *chalilah*, one who recites it in an improper fashion, *chatufah* or *ketufah*, is likewise punished. (See *Brachos 47a*.)

Over the years, I have encountered precious Jews who are strict not to recite an ‘amen’ *levatalah*, for no reason, and when it is not a time when they are obligated to recite it, they mention it with the letters, saying ‘*aleph mem nun*.’

How much must we rejoice, and grasp at every opportunity to answer amen according to *halachah*. Aside for answering it properly, it also gives a merit to one who answers it to have a tremendous reward and lofty *brachos* that were promised to *Chazal* to those who are strict about answering it.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

## Cleanliness that Cleared Up the Illness

This story takes place many years ago in Kollel Hod Hasharon, the *kollel* that has graced the Ramatayim neighborhood of Hod Hasharon for many years.

The *kollel* was established by the Mahatzri family, who immigrated from Yemen, who were pained by the fact that so many members of the young generation had been drawn to a secular lifestyle. They attributed it to the fact that there was no *kol Torah* in their area. Toward this end, they traveled to Bnei Brak, and entered the *kollel* in Yeshivas Ponevezh, and pleaded tearfully with the *avreichim* there to come and learn in their city. The *avreichim* all pointed to the well-known *mezakeh harabbim*, Harav Chaim Ezra Barzel, as the suitable person, and Rabbi Barzel acceded on the spot.



The She'arayim neighborhood in Hod Hasharon.

The very next day, Reb Chaim Ezra took a group of learned *avreichim* from the *kollel* and traveled with them to Hod Hasharon, where they sowed the seeds of a Torah revolution that influenced the whole atmosphere in the city. The fruits of those labors are being reaped to this day.

For many years, Reb Chaim Ezra continued to travel each morning with the group of *avreichim* from Bnei Brak to learn in the *kollel* in Hod Hasharon.

Late one afternoon, during the afternoon *seider* at the *kollel*, the *avreichim* were so engrossed in their learning, that they did not notice two figures who entered the room. The mother and daughter stood in shocked silence as they curiously gazed at the

young men toiling in their learning. They were new immigrants from Morocco, and had settled in the area. They entered the *beis medrash* with tears on their cheeks, but when they saw the tumult in the *kollel*, in total contrast to the rural tranquility outside, they seemed to forget for a moment the reason that they came.

Only after the mother and daughter recovered from their shock, and they began to sob loudly again until they were heard, did the *avreichim* notice their presence. One of them, Reb Eliyahu Kirschberg, raised his eyes from the *Gemara* in front of him; he paused his learning and turned to ask the weeping mother what she needed.

The mother could hardly control her sobs to express her pain. She related:

“My family and I are experiencing a tremendous trouble in recent days, and I have no idea how I will be able to withstand it. After a long time during which my daughter, who is with me, experienced debilitating weakness and pain, to our distress, after a series of tests, we’ve been told that she is critically ill. She is in such a bad state that the doctors agree that there is no natural way for her to recover from her ailment.

She is also suffering terrible pains, and her condition is deteriorating...I don’t know what to do...”

The *avreichim* who gathered round, looked at each other, trying to understand what kind of assistance the woman expected from them. She continued to speak:

“I did not come here to ask you for money, or for any other assistance. I just want to ask if you can allow my ill daughter and myself to clean the *beis medrash* each day. I will make every effort to wash the floor, and make it as clean as possible, so that you should be able to learn Torah in a comfortable setting.”

“I learned from my father’s house in Morocco,” she explained, “that this is a great *segulah* for a *yeshuah* and

*refuah*. Aside for that, I want to show the Creator that my love for Him has not been mitigated at all despite my suffering, and that I yearn with all my heart for His speedy *yeshuah*. I truly hope that if I clean the shul, which is the place where HaKadosh Baruch Hu dwells during the exile, then perhaps He will have mercy on my poor child, and will quickly send her a recovery.”

The simple woman’s words, which emerged from a pained heart, but which were infused with deep *emunah* and great hope, left an impression on the *avreichim*. They promised to daven for the sick girl, and told the mother that in about an hour, after the *seider* ended, they were supposed to return to Bnei Brak, at which time she could clean as much as she liked. The next morning, when the *avreichim* returned, they hardly recognized the place. They had left the *beis medrash* the day before when it was dirty and messy, as it had not been cleaned in a long time. Now, they entered a sparkling clean room, which was also neat and organized. You could see that the mother and daughter had invested all their energy in the cleanup, and they didn’t even skip the small corners. They did everything they could to do as perfect a job as possible.

A short time later, the mother and daughter again arrived; the joy on their faces was a transformation from the pain and anguish that had clouded them not long before. The mother was thrilled to tell the *avreichim* that during recent tests for her daughter, the doctors were stunned to see that the disease had disappeared, leaving not a trace.

“How did you do it?” the doctors were stunned. “Which hospital did you visit?” they asked. When they heard the truth, that it was in the merit of cleaning the *beis medrash*, they were astonished, the mother related. She even went a step further and made a generous donation to the *kollel*. She also asked to publicize these words prove to the world what a tremendous reward one gets for honoring a *beis medrash* and a *beis knesses*.

## The Mitzvah of Meah Brachos (1)

### Source of the Mitzvah

The source of the *takanah* of *Meah Brachos* is in the *Breisa* in *Maseches Menachos* (43b): “*Tanya*, Rabi Meir said: A person must recite *meah brachos* each day, as it says (*Devarim* 10:12) ‘*V’Atah Yisrael mah Hashem Elokecha sho’el me’imach.*’”

*Rashi* and *Tosafos* differ in the meaning of this *passuk*: *Rashi* explains (as is explained in *Zohar Bamidbar* 179 1) that the *passuk* should not be read מה but rather מאה – “*Meah [brachos bechol yom] Hashem Elokecha sho’el me’imach.*” But the *Tosafos* explained that *Chazal* derive this from the fact that the *passuk* has one hundred letters. Furthermore, *Tosafos* explain that this is learned from the fact that if we replace the letters of מה according to ש-ב-א then we get the letters צ which are numerically equivalent to 100.

Another proof of this obligation is derived by the *Baalei Hatosafos al HaTorah* (*Devarim* *ibid*) from the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 128:4): “*Heinei ki chein yevarech gever yerei Hashem.*” כִּי כֵן is numerically equivalent to 100. The number “*ki chein*” of *brachos* “*yevarech gever yerei Hashem*” – a G-d fearing person should make each day.

The *Shibbolei Haleket* (*Inyan Tefillah* 16) brings in the name of the Gaonim that after the *chachamim* of Eretz Yisrael instituted the *takanah* of *meah brachos*, they sent a letter to the people living in the diaspora and asked if they wanted to take it upon themselves as well. In response, the latter expressed their agreement in a sentence whose acronym is numerically equivalent to 100: “*אמת] ויצייב ונכון וקיים וישר והאמן והאהוב והביב ונחמד[*” “...ונעים ונורא ואדיר ומתוקן ומקובל וטוב ויפה הדבר הזה” This sentence was later placed as the opening of the *Birchos Hageulah* in *Shacharis*.

### Protects From all Trouble

The mitzvah of one hundred *brachos* was instituted, as noted, in order to nullify the decree of the death of one hundred people in Klal Yisrael each day. The *Bach* (*Orach Chaim* 46) wrote that this danger still hovers over us, and to this day, we nullify it by reciting 100 *brachos* each day.

The *Rokeach* (320) added that one who makes one hundred *brachos* a day is spared from 100 *klalos*. Ninety-eight of those curses are written in *Parashas Ki Savo* and two more are alluded to in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 28:61): “גם כל חלי וכל מכה” which means “also all illness and every blow.”

The Ari Hakadosh said that not only do the 100 *brachos* nullify all the curses, they even transform the curses into blessings. An allusion to this can be found in the word קללה, which when read backwards makes קללה meaning that when we praise Hashem one hundred times a day by saying 100 *brachos*, the curse is transformed into a *brachah*. This is what the *passuk* alluded to in saying (*Devarim* 23:6): “*Vayahafoch Hashem Elokecha lecha es haklalah librachah*”; when you will fulfill the opposite of *klalah* – קללה then Hashem will transform it to a *brachah* for you. (*Derech Moshe* Day 11)

### A Holy Practice

From the words of the *Gemara* in *Menachos* (*ibid*) it seems that the mitzvah of *meah brachos* was instituted in the days of the Tannaim, after they found proof for it from the words of the *passuk* (see *Baalei Hatosafos al HaTorah* *ibid*). But the sages of the *Midrash* wrote that this *takanah* was already established by Dovid Hamelech, as alluded to in the *passuk* (*Shmuel* II 23:1): “ואלה דברי דוד האחרנים נאם דוד: – בן ישי ונאם הגבר הקם על – the word על is numerically equivalent to 100, to say that Dovid is the one who instituted the obligation of *meah brachos* each day.

*Chazal* add that there was also a special reason for this. At a certain time during the days of Dovid, one hundred people in Klal Yisrael died each day. Dovid saw that the number of fatalities each day was exactly 100, and because he realized through *Ruach Hakodesh* that this trouble was coming upon Am Yisrael because they were not properly thanking Hashem for all the good He bestows upon them, he instituted to recite 100 *brachos* each day. Indeed, after he did that, the plague stopped. (*Tanchuma Korach* 12; *Bamibar Rabbah* 18 21; *Tur Orach Chaim* 46, in the name of Rav Natronai Gaon; *Levush*, *ibid*, *Beis Elokim*, *Shaar Hatefillah* Chapter 17)

Some of the Rishonim wrote that in fact, Moshe Rabbeinu already instituted this *takanah*, as alluded to in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 33:1): “*Vezos habrachah asher beirach Moshe ish ha'Elokim.*” The words משה have an acronym of מאה. However, in time, this *takanah* was forgotten and Dovid Hamelech reestablished it. It was again forgotten, and the Tannaim reestablished it. (*Baal Haturim*, *ibid*; *Kad Hakemach, Brachah*)

### One Hundred Gates of Brachah

Aside for one hundred *brachos* each day protecting a person from bad things, it also brings upon a person an abundance of good and blessing. As the early *mekubal* Rabi Yosef Gikatilla wrote in his *sefer Shaarei Orah* (1): “And while Am Yisrael are *tzaddikim* and recite one hundred *brachos* each day as they should, this well is filled with *mayim chaim* from the abundance of Divine nobility, and then they are all rich and filled with so much good, and they draw the *mayim chaim* as needed.”

Rabi Menachem Rekanati wrote that in the Heaven, there are one hundred gates of *brachah*, as it says (*Bereishis* 26:12): “*Vayizra Yitzchak ba'aretz hahu vayimatzei bashanah hahu meah shearim vayevarcheihu Hashem.*” These one hundred gates are opened only through the power of reciting *meah brachos*, “because each and every *brachah* has a place, and a wellspring from where it draws abundance. And if *chalilah*, one of them will be lacking, this will ruin the conduits, and cuts down the saplings of the soul, and woe to the person for this lack, as he does not enter the *shaarei tzedek*.” However, one who is strict to complete the one hundred *brachos* each day is blessed with one hundred corresponding *brachos*. (*Peirush Harekanati al HaTorah, Parashas Toldos*)

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

## Otzros Emunim

Reciting Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa

### A Brachah Without Amen Is Like Half a Body

The Ateres Tzvi of Zidichoiv wrote that he heard from his Rebbe, the Chozeh of Lublin, that one should say *Birchos Hashachar* in shul, *betzibbur*, so that others should answer amen after them. He concluded by saying: “And a *brachah* without amen is like a half a body, as is known.” (*Pri Kodesh Hilulim, Shaar Habrachos* Ch. 4; *Shomer Emunim Ma’amar Pischu Shearim* Ch. 19)

The Chozeh of Lublin would also summon a child each morning to say *Birchos Hashachar* in front of him, and he would answer amen afterwards. (*Besuros Tovos* [Bilgorei 5687] *Sichos Vesippurim*)

### Eisav Came After the Brachos

When the Mekor Baruch of Seret Vizhnitz served as the Rav of the city of Seret, he davened each Shabbos in a different shul in the city.

One Shabbos, after he entered one of the shuls, he saw that for some reason, the davening had begun earlier than usual that week, and he wasn’t apprised of it. By the time he entered, the *mispallelim* were after *Birchos Hashachar*. To the surprise of the *mispallelim*, the Rebbe left the shul, and decided that he would daven elsewhere. The *gabbaim*, not wanting to miss out on the opportunity, asked him to please remain, once he’d already made the effort to come. But the Rebbe remained firm and left the shul, and remarked to them with a smile, “I am not Eisav...”

When he saw the surprise on their faces, he explained simply: “Eisav came after the *brachos*...” And then he left. (*Noam Habrachah* p. 84)

At another opportunity, the Mekor Baruch came to a shul and saw that had a sign posted on its bulletin board noting the time for *Birchos Hashachar* and then the time for *Hodu*. It looked like it was done to make it possible for anyone who was interested in coming late to get there in time for *Hodu*. The Rebbe did not like this, and his reaction was similar to the previous incident: “One must arrive for *tefillah betzibbur* from the recital of *Birchos Hashachar*. This is what the generations have always done. Only Eisav came after the *brachos*...” (ibid p. 177)

## Igros Emunim

Readers’ Letters

### To the Editors of *Vechol Ma’aminim*

I very much enjoyed the last segment written by the president and founder of your organization, which has become a driving force in strengthening the answering of amen in the whole world. He wrote that in light of the words of the *Zohar*, the *mevarech* also needs to pursue the amen, because a *brachah* said without amen answered after it is half a body. The Rema ruled this way in *Hilchos Betzias Hapas* (*Orach Chaim* 167 2): “And the *mevarech* should concentrate on the amen that they say,” and the *Mishnah Berurah* explained (ibid 20) “by answering amen the *brachah* is more important.”

I thought that perhaps the *passuk* (*Koheles* 4:9) “*Tovim hashnayim min ha’echad asher yesh lahem sachar tov b’amalam*” can be explained in this context. When saying the *brachah* it is good that there should be two and not only one making the *brachah*, because this way the *brachah* is complete and “they have a good reward for their toil.”

With best wishes,

M. Weiss, Haifa

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## Tzaddik B’Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



The burial site of Rabi Yosef Irgas in Livorno, Italy.

### The Mekubal Rabi Yosef Irgas, zy”a 3 Sivan 5490

Rabi Yosef Irgas was one of the leading *mekubalim* in Italy. He was born to his father, Rabi Immanuel Irgas in 5445 in Livorno. In his time, the *mekubal* Rabi Binyamin HaKohen Vitali [the *Raba*”ch], the *talmid* of Rabi Moshe Zakut [the *Rema*”z], lived in the Italian city of Reggio. Rabi Yosef yearned to study *Chochmas Hasod*, so he left his home to live in Reggio and study under Rav Binyamin.

When he returned to Livorno, he was asked to serve as the Rav of the city. There, he continued to teach Torah to many students, among them Rabi Malachi HaKohen, author of *Yad Malachi*. He corresponded with the giants of his generation, and the author of *Mishnah Lamelech* praised him and wrote: “Who is like him who guides the right path, no one should stray right or left from what he says, because what he says – that is it.” He was known for his *sefer Shomer Emunim*, which discusses *kabbalistic* matters. He authored additional *seforim*, among them *Pri Migadim* and *Minchas Yosef*.

He passed away in Livorno on 3 Sivan 5490 at the age of 45, and was laid to rest in the city.

### Inculcating Students to Say *Brachos* and Answer Amen

*Chazal* say (*Avos* 1:17): “*Lo hamidrash ha’ikar ela hama’seh*.” He wrote: “It is not the *midrash* that is the main topic of study with the youths, but rather, the actions, that the teacher should habituate them to good deeds, imbue them with *Yiras Hashem*, and make them clearly understand *emunas Hashem* and His *mitzvos* – that they should be *chareidim* to the words of Hashem, and not enjoy from this world without a *brachah rishonah* and *acharonah*, and answer amen to every *brachah*.” (*Minchas Yosef* 55)

### Answering Amen in *Chazaras Hashatz*

While the *shaliach tzibbur* is repeating the *tefillah*, a person should have *kavanah* to answer amen and should not be busy with anything else, not even *divrei Torah*. It is told that the Ari Hakadosh would stand during *Chazaras Hashatz* with his eyes closed, and would answer amen after every *brachah*. (*Pri Migadim*, 81 and 124)