

Vechele Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Teshuvah Removes the 'Ro'a' of the Decree

"למה יאמרו מצרים לאמר ברעה הוציאם להרג אתם בהרים ולכלתם בעל פני האדמה... וינחם ה' על הרעה אשר דבר לעשות לעמו" (לב יב, יד)

Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni Ki Sisa 392) say that רעה is the name of a star that symbolizes blood and death, and they explain: When Am Yisrael asked to leave Egypt for the desert, Pharaoh warned them (ibid 10:10): "Re'u ki ra'ah neged peneichim," in other words, "I see in my astrology that there is one star that is rising to greet you, and its name is Ra'ah, and it is a sign of blood and killing." Now, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu decreed death on Am Yisrael because of the sin of the *eigel*, Moshe claimed: "Why should Egypt say with Ra'ah He took them out to kill them in the mountains" – if You kill them, the Egyptians will smugly boast that their words had been true, and the constellation of Ra'ah that rose to greet Am Yisrael is what caused them all to die in the desert. Indeed, HaKadosh Baruch Hu accepted this claim: "Vayinachem Hashem al hara'ah," and He replaced the decree of blood that was decreed on Am Yisrael with the blood of the *milah* that Yehoshua circumcised them.

From the fact that HaKadosh Baruch Hu did not completely nullify the decree of blood, and rather transformed it to the blood of the *milah*, **Harav Avraham Chaim Schorr** learned that a bad *gezeirah* cannot be nullified, but with the power of *teshuvah* and *tefillah* it can be transformed for good. That is the reason that in the *tefillos* of Yamim Noraim we do not say "Uteshuvah utefillah utzedakah ma'avirin es hazezeirah," and instead we say "ma'avirin es ro'a hazezeirah," in other words, the bad in it is transformed to good.

This way we can also understand

what Chazal say (*Brachos* 55b) that one who dreams a dream and does not understand if its meaning is good or bad, should stand in front of the Kohanim during *Birchas Kohanim* and say "Ribbono shelOlam, I am Yours and my dreams are Yours. I dreamed a dream and I do not know what it is...If it is good, strengthen it like the dreams of Yosef, and if they need healing, heal them like the waters of Marah by Moshe Rabbeinu." Because Chazal say (ibid 57b): "A dream – is one sixtieth of a prophecy," and the decree of Heaven cannot be nullified, therefore we do not ask for the bad dreams to be completely nullified, but rather that Hashem should "heal" them and transform them to good.

Toras Chaim Bava Kama 55a

Even One Who Is Not Worthy – Is Answered

"ועתה אם תשא חטאתם ואם אין מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת" (לב לב)

Rashi explained that Moshe asked HaKadosh Baruch Hu: If you do not forgive Am Yisrael, erase my name from the entire Torah, "so that they won't say of me that I was not worthy of asking for mercy for them." The **Bais Aharon** of Karlin asked: Is it possible that Moshe, the humblest of all men, considered himself worthy of asking for compassion?

He explained: Indeed, Rashi does not mean that Moshe was afraid that people would say that he was not worthy of asking for compassion for Am Yisrael. On the contrary, he was afraid that they would say that his *tefillah* was not accepted because he was not worthy of asking for compassion, and thus, they would mistakenly believe that HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not listen to the *tefillah* of someone who is not worthy, while the truth is that Hashem hears the *tefillah* of every single person.

Bais Aharon p. 144 2

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Washing Hands for Meah Brachos

Each morning, when we prepare to begin the *avodah* of *tefillah*, we read the *Parashas Hakiyora*, which is found in this *parashah*, in which the Kohanim were instructed to purify their hands and feet "whenever they approach the *mizbe'ach* to do the *avodah*, or to burn the *ketoress*" (*Shemos* 30:20).

Even though this mitzvah is unique to the Kohanim, and was practiced only when the Bais Hamikdash was standing, in our times, as well, every Jew begins his day with it, and the first *brachah* we make each morning is sourced in this mitzvah.

The *Rashba* (*Shu"t* 191) explains that the source of the mitzvah of washing our hands each morning upon arising is the mitzvah of *kiddush yadayim veraglayim* that the Kohanim who served in the Bais Hamikdash were commanded to do. He says that every Jew who rises to a new day of *avodas Hashem* is like a Kohein who comes to serve in the Bais Hamikdash, and therefore, just like the Kohanim were commanded to sanctify their hands and feet each morning when they came to work, so, too, each Jew is commanded to purify his hands each morning when he begins the *avodah* of the day. Dovid Hamelech also had this in mind when he wrote (*Tehillim* 26:6): "Erchatz benikayon kapai, I washed my hands with cleanliness, and I encircled Your *mizbe'ach*, Hashem." (See *Brachos* 15a)

Upon further perusal, we will see that with this mitzvah of *netilas yadayim* in the morning, and the *brachah* we make on it, we sanctify ourselves for the daily service of Hashem, a central point of which is the privilege and obligation to recite one hundred *brachos* each day. I had a thought that this is alluded to in the *brachah* that we make on this mitzvah: "Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzinvau al netilas yadayim." על מאה is numerically equivalent to מאה. In other words, while we make the first *brachah* of the day, we declare, "Asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu" to make a *brachah* "al" the *brachos* of the whole day.

Each morning, in the first *brachah* of the day, we are sent an important reminder about our *avodah* – to remember Hashem throughout the day by reciting one hundred *brachos* properly, and of course, completely – by ensuring that amen is answered to them.

Let us be strict about *brachos* with *shleimus*, completion, and we will be blessed with *shleimus*!

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Amen With Mesirus Nefesh

Nissan 5550. Jewish Horodna was in an uproar. The bitter story of Reb Eliezer of Werblow, who had recently moved to Horodna, had quickly made waves, and became the main topic of conversation in the city. People spoke amongst each other about the terrible decree that Reb Eliezer had been struck with.

It had all begun a week earlier. Reb Eliezer, a kindhearted and compassionate Yid, had been walking in the city, and from afar, noticed an elderly non-Jew walking towards a deep pit on the side of the road, not realizing the danger. Reb Eliezer ran with all his might to stop him, but reached the place one minute too late. The man tumbled into the pit, and if that was not enough, he was buried under a mound of sand that had been left near the pit, and now collapsed on top of him.

Reb Eliezer tried to descend into the pit



The center of Grodna (Horodna)

to help the gentile fellow, but he quickly realized there was no chance. The man had sustained fatal injuries, and he was buried under the sand, lifeless.

When Reb Eliezer climbed back to the edge of the pit, to his horror, he found himself surrounded by a furious mob of Christians. The fact was that there was a dead gentile, and a Jew was standing beside him triggered their imaginations, and made them quickly conclude what seemed obvious to them: The Jew had killed the gentile to use his blood to bake *matzos* for Pesach, and then had tried to bury him to hide the evidence.

Reb Eliezer tried to protest that he was innocent. "The man fell, and I just tried to save him!" he cried desperately. But his voice was drowned out by the cries of revenge from the mob. The police that had been summoned to the scene barley managed to extract him, and Reb Eliezer soon found himself shackled

hands and feet, like a common criminal, and being led to jail.

At the time, 250 years ago, a few thousands Jews lived in Horodna, or Grodna, and one of the prominent figures was the holy Harav Alexander Ziskind, the author of *Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah*.

The Jewish of Horodna were very afraid for the fate of their brother, and tried in every way possible to save him. They knocked at the doors of ministers and judges, they tried to bribe whoever they could, and of course, fervently davened that the truth would come to light and that nothing bad would happen to Reb Eliezer.

But on the other hand, the local priest, an avowed anti-Semite, worked to fire up the atmosphere, and to make sure that the judges, who were anti-Semitic as well, would not be able to rule in favor of Reb Eliezer.

The day of the trial arrived. The courtroom was packed when the Jew, suspected of murder, entered. He was met with furious glares, and the demand was clear: to convict him. As expected, within a few minutes, he was sentenced to death

by hanging.

A moment before the verdict was read, one of the judges stood on the podium, leveled his gaze at the Jew, and said sweetly, "Jew, even though your fate is sealed, out of compassion for your family, we've decided to open you an avenue to salvation. If you accept upon yourself the Christian faith, we will immediately nullify your verdict, and you will be able to continue living..."

It was clear to the judge that the Jew would quickly accept his 'generous' offer, but the Jew refused to even think about it, and immediately said, "*Chalilah!* I am a Jew and I will die a Jew!"

The shocked judge tried to persuade him to reconsider, but the Jew firmly refused. He looked steadily back at the judge and said, "There is nothing in the world that will make me give up the

religion of my ancestors."

The date set for Reb Eliezer's execution was 7 Sivan, Yom Tov Sheini of Shavuos.

A few days before the execution, Harav Alexander Ziskind obtained permission to visit the cell to which Reb Eliezer had been thrown into. He entered the cell and was moved to see Reb Eliezer firm in his faith, and preparing with awe for the impending moment. The *tzaddik* learned the *halachos* of *Kiddush Hashem*, and the *nusach* of the *brachah* that he had to make for this mitzvah.

On the morning of the execution, the city was enveloped in a black cloud. The Jews were all in shul for the *tefillos* of Shavuos, and they locked the gates, in fear of outburst of hate and murderous fury that might be directed at them from the incited mob. The gentiles, for their part, gathered en masse at the city square, waiting with burning hatred for the Jew who would be hanged very shortly.

Silence fell on the crowd. From the bend in the road, a black wagon approached, surrounded by soldiers. The Jews was taken to the gallows his face covered; all eyes were on him. No one noticed an anonymous figure, concealed in his cloak, that slipped into the crowd and compassionately watched the Jew being taken to be hanged. It was the *tzaddik* Rav Alexander Ziskind, who had slipped out of shul, taken his life into his hands, and blended in with the bloodthirsty masses to be with the *kadosh* in his final moments.

A short time later, the quiet was broken by Reb Eliezer's clear voice, as he recited word for word, with tremendous *kavanah*, the *brachah* that Rav Alexander Ziskind had taught him: "*Baruch Atah Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ha'Olam Asher Kidshanu Bemitzvosav Vetzivanu Lekadesh Shemo Berabbim.*" And from where he was standing, Reb Alexander Ziskind answered with tremendous *kavanah*: "Amen!"

At the same time, Reb Eliezer fervently cried out "*Shema Yisrael!*" and his soul ascended Heavenward, to take its place amongst the holy and purified ones.

For many years after, people spoke about the *mesirus nefesh* of the Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah to merit to answer amen after the *brachah* of the *kadosh*, Reb Eliezer ben Reb Shlomo of Werblow, *Hy"d*.

Derech Emunim

The Halachos of Answering Amen

Question Regarding Two Equal Amens

One who hears from an *oleh l'Torah* the end of his *brachah*: “*Baruch Atah Hashem Nosein HaTorah,*” should answer amen after him, even if he does not know if the *oleh* finished the *brachah* that is before the *leining* – *Asher Bachar*, or the *brachah* following, *Asher Nasan*. Because the essence of these *brachos* is equal, the *halachah* is like one who knows which *brachah* he is answering, and that is not an *amen yesomah*.

Sources and Explanations

This is the ruling of the *Eshel Avraham* (Rav A.D. of Butchatch, Vol. II 124 8). And he wrote there that this *halachah* also applies to other *brachos* whose essence is equal, like the *Birchos HaTorah* said in the morning, that if one hears his friend finishing one of them, he should answer amen, even if he does not know which *brachah* he finished. The same is true for one who hears a person making the *brachah* on *tefillin* and doesn't know if he recited “*Lehaniach*

Tefillin,” for putting on *tefillin shel yad*, or “*Al Mitzvas Tefillin,*” recited when donning *tefillin shel rosh*, for which he has to answer amen. Because both *brachos* are even in essence, his amen is not considered an ‘*amen yesomah*.’

Brachah in Another Language

If a person makes a *brachah* in another language, even if the listener does not understand that language, as long as he knows which *brachah* is being made – he should answer amen.

Sources and Explanations

One who makes a *brachah* in another language fulfills his obligation if he understands that language, as explained in *Mishnah Berurah* (162 3). In the case where the listener does not understand the language of the *brachah* made by the *mevarech*, if he knows which *brachah* he is making, the *oneh* should answer amen, because it is not worse than someone who did not hear the *brachah* who needs to answer amen if he knows which *brachah* the *mevarech* made (*Shu”t Shevet Hakehati* Vol. IV 69).

Gedolei Emunim

From the Words of Our Gedolim on Answering Amen

One Who Answers Amen Benefits the *Mevarech*

In *Megillas Rus* (2:19) we read about the discussion between Rus and her mother-in-law Naomi: “And her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today and what did you work? May he who took heed of you be blessed. And she told her mother-in-law what she had worked with him, and said, the name of the man with whom I did today, Boaz.”

Why did Rus say “the name of the man with whom I did.” Did she do something for him? Was it not Boaz who did *chessed* with Rus? *Chazal* learn from this (*Rus Rabbah* 5 9) a basic concept: “More than the master does with the poor man – the poor man does with the master of the house.”

Indeed, the master, when giving a handout to the poor man, does benefit him, but the poor man, by taking from the master, does an even greater thing for the master. This was so simple to Rus, the mother of royalty, that she noted it in casual conversation with Naomi.

That is also the secret of the virtue of answering amen. Because the *mevarech* is the one who begins with the mitzvah

and makes the *brachah*, and without him there is no *brachah* and no amen, one would think that the *mevarech* is greater than the *oneh*. But *Chazal* teach us (*Brachos* 53b) that “the *oneh* is greater than the *mevarech*.” Why?

In the same way that the poor man who accepts *tzedakah* benefits the giver more than the giver benefits the poor man, so, too, the one who answers amen to a *brachah* benefits the *mevarech* more than the *mevarech* benefits him. The *mevarech* gives him the merit of a big and precious mitzvah – answering amen – but the one who answer amen benefits the *mevarech* with more than that, because in his merit, the *brachah* has a *kiyum*, it is everlasting, and the gates of Heaven are opened to it.

The *Zohar* wrote (*Eikev* 271 1): “When the *brachah* that is answered by amen rises from the lower world to the Upper World there is not opening On High, and there is no supervisor on High, that does not open all the gates in front of this *brachah*, and declare in all the firmaments: “This is the gift that So and So has sent to the King! This is the gift that was brought with *kiyum* and *shleimus*, as is fitting! Which *brachah*

is one that is said with *shleimus*? That is a *brachah* that is answered with amen. Because every *brachah* that had amen answered after it is a *brachah* that is said in its form and with completion, as it is fitting to be.”

So we find that when *Chazal* say “*Gadol ha'oneh yoser min hamevarech,*” they mean to say that even the act of *chessed* that the one who answers amen does with the *mevarech* is greater than what the *mevarech* does with him.

We can add that this concept is also alluded to in the words of the *Midrash* with which we opened this segment: More than the master of the house does with the poor person, the poor person does with the master. We can explain the word עני to be from the root of answering – עניית אמן – Hence, more than the master – the *mevarech* without whom there is no *brachah* and no amen – does with the poor man, the one who answers amen benefits the *mevarech* even more.

The Mashpia Harav Nachman Biderman, *shlita*



Otzros Emunim

The Virtue of Answering Amen

The Power of Decision When Answering Amen

Many have asked about the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 53b): “*Gadol ha’oneh yoser min hamevarech*,” that it seems that the *mevarech* is the one who offers praise and thanks, and the *oneh* just agrees with his words. Why, if so, does Rabi Yosi say that the one who answers amen has a greater virtue than the *mevarech*?

The Mashgiach, Harav Moshe Rosenstein, explained:

We all grow up from an early age on the known concept and *emunah* that life in this world is not the *tachlis*, the main goal, and the role of a person in his world is to be subject to Hashem and the *mitzvos*. From an early age we learn and engage in things relating to this, and yet, these words are not completely etched in our hearts, and we often forget or are distracted from our goals and our roles. Why is that?

The reason is because we lack an internal resolve that these concepts are an absolute and unique truth that cannot be evaded, and we have no choice but to live according to these truths. The Torah calls on each Yid to make this decision in the *parashah* of *Vehayah Im Shamo*, with the words (*Devarim* 11:18): “*Vesametem es devarai eileh al levavchem v’al nafshechem*.” Placing these words on our hearts as absolute and required, is what will make us live according to Torah in reality, and not only to believe the words theoretically.

That is the meaning of answering amen. While the *mevarech* declares that he believes in the Kingship of Hashem, and that everything is from Him, the one who answers amen declares about his faith that this is the absolute and only truth that we must live by. And because this decision is what motivates the person to actually subject himself to a life of Torah and *mitzvos* in the practical sense, this is why *Chazal* say that the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*. (*Yesodei Hada’as* Ch. 27)

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma’aminim*,

Bechasdei Hashem, it has been some time already that I have merited to begin my day by reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*. Just being strict about this is already a tremendous merit for me – and there’s a wonderful feeling of “beginning the day by being close to Hashem.”

But in addition to that, I cannot ignore the fact that as a result of this practice, I see tremendous *siyata diShmaya* in all that I do. The power of amen accompanies me the entire day. I thought that the reason for that might be that despite the fact that I always said *brachos* and amen, like with every *mitzvah*, the effort to fulfill it is the main principle of it. The same is true with amen, and when you come early to shul to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar* there is a special importance to it, and therefore, also a special *brachah*.

I thought to bring a *remez* for this: It is known that amen is numerically equivalent to אמן – and there is a *remez* that by answering amen a person merits to have the Gates of Heaven open to him, and he will merit to emerge from all his straits and problems, in the essence of לו תאמר (Yesayah 30:22).

May you see much *hatzlachah*
in all that you do,
M.S.G., Haifa

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Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The matzeivah on
the kever of Harav
Elimelech of Lizhensk.

Noam Elimelech

21 Adar 5547

Harav Elimelech of Lizhensk, known by the name of his *sefer Noam Elimelech*, was born in 5477 in Lezajsk, a small village near Tiktin, to his father, Reb Eliezer Lipman. When he grew older, his father sent him to learn in Tiktin, where he met Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg, who lived in Tiktin at the time, and they forged a close friendship that continued throughout their days.

Rav Elimelech heard about *chassidus* still in the lifetime of the Baal Shem Tov, but he continued serving Hashem

in his way. Only years later, influenced by his older brother, Harav Zusha of Anipoli, did Rav Elimelech join the *talmidim* of the Maggid of Mezeritsch, the successor of the Baal Shem Tov.

In the Maggid’s *beis medrash* he became one of the primary *talmidim*, and after the epasing of the Maggid, he was appointed to lead the *chaburah* of those disseminating Toras Hachassidus. He was recognized as the leader of the Chassidic movement in Galicia and Poland. Under his guidance, its leaders stood firm against the inroads made by *haskalah*, which originated in Berlin and began to rear its head in his times. As a result, the pure Jewish traditions were upheld.

After thirteen years of leadership, on 21 Adar 5547, his soul departed, and he was buried in the cemetery in Lizhensk. In his lifetime, thousands flocked to learn from him, and even after his death, to this day, tens of thousands visit his *tziyun* to pour their hearts out in *tefillah*.

Amen from the Siddur

Among the list of practices written by Rav Elimelech in *tzettel kattan*, he cautions to be careful about answering amen, and wrote (11): “In the repetition of the *shaliach tzibbur* of *Shemoneh Esreh* one should peruse the *siddur* and answer amen with all his strength to every single *brachah*.”

Praise from All the World

In his *sefer Noam Elimelech* (*Balak*) Rav Elimelech explains the great benefit that the *mevarech* has when his *brachah* is answered by amen. He wrote:

“With each *brachah* that a person recites he arouses the world of that *brachah*, where its roots and light are. And for each and every *brachah* there is a world in and of itself until the end of all the worlds.” But when the listener agrees with the *brachah* and answers amen, he then elevates the *brachah* to even higher worlds, because while every *brachah* has a root in its special world “amen is a praise of all the worlds together.”