

# Ve chol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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ת.ד. 102 בני ברק  
פקס: 03-5055919  
9139191@gmail.com

## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

### Tefillah Is Accepted in the Merit of Milah

”ביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו” (יב ג)

The *sefer Menoras Ham'aor* wrote that it is in the merit of the mitzvah of *milah* that Am Yisrael is spared from the travails and troubles that they endure during *galus*. In the merit of being circumcised, Hashem hears their *tefillas* and sends salvation. This concept is alluded to in the words of the *tefillah*: “*Ki Atah Shomea tefillas kol peh*” – פה is numerically equivalent to מילה – as if we say that Hashem תפילת שומע – כל מהול - He hears the *tefillah* of each person who is circumcised.

This concept is brought in *Pirkei DeRabi Eliezer* (Chapter 28): “One who touches an *arel* is like one who touches a dead person, because in their life they are like the dead, and in their death, they are like the carcass of an animal. And their *tefillah* does not enter before Hashem as it says (*Tehillim* 115:17): ‘*Lo hameisim yehallelu K-h.*’ But Am Yisrael, who are circumcised, have their *tefillas* rise up before Hashem like a pleasant aroma, as it says (*ibid* 18): “*V'anachu nevaresh K-h mei'atah v'ad olam halleukah.*”

The Mekubal **Rabi David Ben Shimon** [the Radbash] added a *remez* that the *passuk* “*v'anachnu nevaresh K-h mei'atah v'ad olam halleukah*” is said about “Yisrael, who are circumcised,” from the fact that the numerical value of the last letter of each word is equivalent to מילה. The Radbash added that this is the source for the custom brought by the **Rema** (*Yoreh Deah* 265 11) that the *mohel* is sent to daven from the *amud* on the day of the *milah*, as alluded to in the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 149:6): “*רוממות א-ל בגרונום וחרב פיות בידם.*” Because in the merit of the *milah*, the *tefillah* is accepted. And **Harav Moshe Halperin**, Av Bais Din of Minsk, and the son of the author of *Seder Hadoros*, wrote that this custom is alluded to in the word מילה which is an acronym for מודה לרד לפני התיבה.

,*Erchei Hachnuim* 40 – Milah  
in the comments of the author's son

## Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder  
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### The Emunah and Bris of Avraham Avinu

*Parashas Tazria* begins with the Torah's commandment of the mitzvah of *milah*, with the *passuk* (12:3): “And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.” The mitzvah of *milah* is a very prominent one in Am Yisrael, and has become a symbol of *mesirus nefesh* throughout the generations, as Jews both near and far to their heritage sacrificed so much to observe it.

While I was learning *Maseches Sanhedrin* in Daf Yomi, I encountered something interesting towards the end of the *masechta* (110b): How should a young Jewish child, who was not yet given a *chinuch* to do *mitzvos* merit life in Olam Haba? Two of the opinions brought in the *Gemara* hold that for this, he needs to have at least one mitzvah in hand, but they differ as to which mitzvah gives him a merit. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak holds that the mitzvah of *milah* on his body gives him the merit, while the Tanna Rabi Meir says that the mitzvah of answering amen is what gives him the merit. If a child just answers amen, he will merit life in Olam Haba.

The fact that the holy Tanna Rabi Meir thinks that the mitzvah of amen has a merit that is equal to the mitzvah of *milah* can teach us a lot about its lofty status. But when I thought about it, I found that indeed, there is a special connection between these two *mitzvos*. They are both a central part of our legacy that we inherited from Avraham Avinu; Avraham Avinu was the first one to have a *bris milah*, and as the *brachah* of *milah* says “*Lehachnisu bevrisei shel Avraham Avinu,*” and Avraham Avinu was also the *rosh lema'aminim* (see *Rambam Avodah Zarah* Ch. 1).

Answering amen, which is the root of *emunah*, is part of the legacy of *emunah* that has been instilled in us since Avraham Avinu, and it is what completes the *Bris shel Avraham Avinu*. It is not for naught that at the beginning of a *bris*, we recite the eternal *passuk* of *emunah*: “*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad,*” because this entire ceremony and action is one that expresses *emunah*.

The connection between these *mitzvos* is also expressed by their constancy. Just like the mitzvah of *milah* accompanies a person every moment until his final day, so, too, the mitzvah of answering amen accompanies a person throughout his life, through every day, as it is a very easy mitzvah to perform, and readily available.

Having this in mind, we will surely all hurry to be *mechanech* our children to amen, so that they can merit life in Olam Haba. But we need to know that above all, it is fitting that we should precede that by being *mechanech* ourselves. If we become accustomed to answering amen, then our children will also get used to this and will be inculcated with the mitzvah. This is how we will merit that we and our offspring should be meritorious of the title of *בן עולם הבא* - and the last letter of each word comprises amen.

Good Shabbos  
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

### Minchah Accepted at the Foot of the Carmel Mountain

This story was sent to us by a relative of one of the people involved. It is a strong reminder of the power of *tefillah* with *minyan*, and how HaKadsh Baruch Hu loves a mitzvah that is done with *mesirus nefesh*, even in the case where it was not performed to perfection the way the person had planned...

It was lunch break at Yeshivah Torah Utefillah. A large bang heard from one of the rooms startled the *bochurim*. Those who arrived at the scene were alarmed to see their friend Motty laying on the floor unconscious.

Motty had climbed up to change a lightbulb in the room. Lacking a ladder, he put a chair on the table, and as he climbed up his improvised 'ladder', he tripped and crashed to the floor, sustaining a serious blow to his head.

Emergency services arrived quickly to take him to the hospital, still unconscious; his friends began to daven fervently. The updates that came later from the hospital informed them that the situation was serious, and because of the nature of the injury, it would take a few days to know how significant it was, and what the chances of the boy recovering were.



A view of Yokne'am from the south part of Mount Carmel

Over the next few days, the yeshivah held a constant *tefillah* vigil, in shifts, and Shlomo Mordechai ben Devorah Zissel was on everyone's lips as they pleaded for Heavenly mercy for their friend.

Reuven and Yosef, Motty's roommates, were obviously the most affected by this incident. They, along with the other *bochurim*, intensified their *tefillos* and took upon themselves *kabbalos* in their friend's merit. But deep inside, they were very uneasy; they felt that as good friends of Motty, they had to make a special effort to do something more.

They talked it over and came up with a plan. Then they went to the Mashgiach and shared their plans: they would travel at lunchtime from Yerushalayim to Meron

to say *Sefer Tehillim*, and would return to yeshivah that same night. The Mashgiach thought it over for a moment, and then agreed.

At one o'clock, Reuven and Yosef boarded a bus; according to the plan they were to arrive in Meron at three thirty. They would daven *Minchah* and then say *Sefer Tehillim*, and right after that would return to yeshivah. The ride was a pleasant one, and the two *bochurim* used the time well.

As they rode on Highway 6, traffic was light, but when the bus got to the Elyakim Interchange, they slowed down considerably, and shortly after, stopped completely. Apparently a bad accident had happened near Yokne'am, which had resulted in road closures, bringing traffic in the area to a standstill.

After about an hour and a half of standing still in the traffic jam, the *bochurim* realized they would not reach Meron before *shekiyah*. Now they were faced with the obligation to daven *Minchah* with a *minyan* on the one hand, but on the other hand, getting off in Yokne'am would likely mean they would have to give up their plan to daven for their friend in Meron. In the end, davening with the *minyan* won out. The boys approached the driver and asked him politely to let them off. The driver agreed and opened the doors.

Reuven and Yosef began to look for a shul in the unfamiliar city. Suddenly, they noticed posters on a fence of one of the homes announcing that a family was sitting *shivah*. The *bochurim* figured there would surely be a *minyan* in a *shivah* house, and decided to try.

They entered the mourners' tent and found family members, with a few people comforting them. The *bochurim* entered tentatively, but were welcomed warmly. They explained to the people there how they had come here, and the *aveilim* agreed to have a *minyan* for *Minchah*. Wondrously, there were eight people there, and with the two *bochurim*, they had a *minyan*.

After davening, they remembered the reason they had come, and asked the other members of the *minyan* to recite two chapters of *Tehillim* with them for their friend's recovery. The locals willingly acceded to this request as well, and the *aveilim* even thanked the *bochurim* for bringing about an *aliyah* for the *neshamah* of their newly deceased family member.

When the two turned to leave, a frum Yid

who was there approached, and asked where they were headed. They hadn't actually thought about it, but a quick look at their watches made it clear that they were headed back to Yerushalayim. They would not have time to travel to Meron and back.

"Yerushalayim?" the man exclaimed. "That's exactly where I'm going! I came here from Yerushalayim to be *menachem avel* my relatives, and I'm leaving back there in a few minutes. If you don't mind waiting, I'll be happy to have you join me."

A few moments later, the two climbed into a comfortable, late model car. The trip was quick and pleasant, and they exchanged *divrei Torah* with the driver as they rode. When they reached Yerushalayim, the driver offered to take them to the yeshivah, and the *bochurim* returned earlier than expected. They even made it to third *sefer* in the *beis medrash*.

The Mashgiach was surprised to see them back at such an early hour, and asked how it was possible. They shared what had happened, and also expressed their disappointment that despite their efforts, they had not merited to reach Meron to daven.

But the Mashgiach didn't look disappointed: "It's possible that the *tefillah* that you davened in Yokne'am is what will do the most for your friend," he said. "Yokne'am is located at the foothills of Mount Carmel, the famous mountain upon which Eliyahu was answered at *Tefillas Minchah*, as described at length in *sefer Melachim* I (Chapter 18). Chazal learn from this (*Brachos* 6b) that 'A person should always be careful about *Tefillas Minchah*, because Eliyahu was only answered at *Minchah*."

"The same way, in the merit of your *mesirus nefesh* not to give up *Tefillas Minchah* with a *minyan*, I am sure that your *tefillah* will *b'ezras Hashem* effect the *yeshuah* we are yearning for, no less than *tefillah* in Meron."

And indeed, *bechasdei Shamayim*, the very next day the *bochurim* were overjoyed to hear that their friend's condition had improved significantly. Over the next few days, his recovery progressed and a short time later, he was back in yeshivah, with a cast and some bruises, but well on the road to recovery.

Apparently, the One Who answered Eliyahu on Mount Carmel at *Minchah* answered the *tefillos* of the *bochurim* who were *moser nefesh* to daven *Minchah* according to *halachah*, and He sent a *yeshuah* and *refuah* for their friend.

### Chinuch of Young Children to Answer Amen

**A person should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a child answers amen he merits Olam Haba.**

#### Sources and Explanations

In *Maseches Sanhedrin* (110b) the *Gemara* brings various opinions in response to the question from which age a child in Am Yisrael who passes away merits Olam Haba. The *Kolbo* (12) concurs with Rabi Meir (ibid) that a child merits Olam Haba from when he answers amen. Based on this, the Rema (*Orach Chaim* 124:6) rules: “And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a child answers amen, he has a share in Olam Haba.” Rabbeinu Manoach (*Tefillah* 15:9) learned that “every person who is a *yarei Shamayim* needs to teach his wife and children and all who are with him to answer amen after all the *brachos*.” From the words of the *Rambam* (ibid based on *Yerushalmi Brachos* 5:6): “In a shul where everyone is Kohanim, they all are *nosei kapayim*...and who answers amen after them, the women and children.” Rabi Eliyahu Hakohen of Izmir (*Minchas Eliyahu* Chapter 32) explained this according to the *passuk* in *Megillas Eshter* (2:7): “*Vayehi omen es Hadassah hee Eshter bas dodo ki ein lah av v'eim.*” Mordechai would אמן את הדסה – he taught her from a young age to answer amen because “she had no father and mother” – to teach her, as the Rema ruled.

From the simple meaning of the Rema’s words, it seems that the obligation of the father to teach his son to answer amen is not from the *halachah* of *chinuch*, but rather with the goal of bringing him to a life in Olam Haba. Therefore, as soon as a child begins to utter words, the father should teach him to answer amen. Even

though *Chazal* say (*Sukkah* 42a) that if a child knows how to speak, his father should teach him the *passuk* (*Devarim* 33:4): “*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe morashah kehillas Yaakov,*” and the first *passuk* of *Krias Shema*, but there is no mention of amen. That is because the *Gemara* there is discussing a later stage, when the child learns to speak fluently and he can say full *pesukim*. The *Gemara* there says – “*kattan...hayodea ledaber*” – a child who knows how to speak, while the obligation to teach a child to answer amen applies when the child has not really begun to talk, and just utters a number of words (*Alei Tamar Yerushalmi Shevi'is* 1 8).

This is also evident from the words of the *Shevet Mussar* (beginning of Chapter 17), who wrote: “The one who understands should prove, and the one who has wisdom should guide his children in the path of Hashem right when they are small and begin to speak, and he should accustom them that whenever they eat something they should say amen, and when they grow older he will habituate them to the *passuk* of ‘*Torah tzivah lanu...*’ and the like.”

The *sefer Piskei Teshuvah* (124 13) learned from the *Maharsha* (*Sanhedrin* 110b) that the *halachah* of *chinuch* of children to answer amen is only practiced when the child reaches the age of *chinuch* to *brachos*, meaning that he understands to Whom he is making the *brachah* (and see there comment 120 that the earliest age that one can reach this understanding is age five). But *sefer Chinuch Habanim Kehilchaso* (Chapter 36:6) wrote that his understanding from the *Maharsha* is not necessarily the case, and proved that teaching a young child to answer amen is not part of the *halachah* of *chinuch*, as explained above.

## Ro'ei Emunim

### From the Words of Our Gedolim on Answering Amen

**Harav Yaakov Meir Schechter, shlita**  
Rosh Yeshivas Sha'ar Hashamayim



Being strict to answer amen is a very great thing. We don’t understand the loftiness of this holy word, which alludes to and includes the Holy Names. But we must know that answering amen is the purpose of the *brachah*, and completes it, and as such, one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*, as he receives a reward for amen and a reward for a *brachah*, because he finishes and elevates the *brachah* to its purpose.

A person needs to know that there is a special reward for each and every amen. Even when one answers amen copiously, each amen is a great and important mitzvah on its own, as *Chazal* say (*Kiddushin* 40b): “A person should always see himself as half guilty and half innocent; he does one mitzvah – praised is he that he moved himself to the meritorious side, he did one *aveirah* – woe to him that he moved himself to the guilty side.”

I have long said that conveying the answering of amen to future generations is a special facet of the *halachah* of *chinuch* to *mitzvos*, because we are commanded about this chain of *emunah* in the Torah (*Shemos* 13:8): “*Vehigadeta levincha.*” For this reason, it is fitting to implement the custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar* each morning one to another, and each one should answer amen to his friend. This

practice brings about many holy virtues and success in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 119b) that “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him.” We must know that this reward of having the gates of Gan Eden opened also has a manifestation in this world. One who answers amen with all his strength merits to see the good that is concealed in each day, and through that, he feels a *ta’am* and vibrancy in his *avodas Hashem*, and is drawn to fulfill more *mitzvos* and refrains from sin. Through this, he merits to have many gates open to him in Gan Eden, because “one mitzvah leads to another.”

One merits this reward especially when has a fixed time to answer amen every single day, when a person seeks to answer amen to *Birchos Hashachar*, and after every *brachah*. *Chazal* (ibid) conditioned the opening of the gates of Gan Eden to answering amen “*bechol kocho*,” with all his strength, and what greater “*bechol kocho*” is there than being diligent about answering amen each and every day?

I still remember the practice of my neighbor, Harav Elazar Brizel, who would stand and listen each morning with joy and enthusiasm to *Birchos Hashachar* from people who make the *brachos* and he rejoiced with each and every amen like he had found a

treasure. Every amen that he answered was treated like it was the greatest gift, and anyone who understands the value of amen does not forego answering it.

When reciting *brachos* properly, and answering amen to them, one also merits to have special *he'aras panim* in all matters, in the sense of “*nesah aleinu ohr Panecha Hashem*” Raise up over us the light of Your countenance, Hashem. (*Tehillim* 4:7). With the power of *brachos* and amen, we can transform *he'ster panim* to *he'aras panim*, and draw down endless *chessed* and *yeshuos*. There is a beautiful *remez* for this in the *passuk* “נסה עלינו אור” “פניך ה” as it is numerically equivalent to אור מזה ברכות, and furthermore, the words אור פניך ה are numerically equivalent to אמן.

Anyone who sets a goal for himself to recite *Birchos Hashachar* and all the *brachos* properly, and completes them with answering amen, draws down upon himself endless *chessed*, in *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*, and brings closer the arrival of Mashiach Tzidkeinu, may it be speedily in our day amen.

## Otzros Emunim

The Virtue of Answering Amen

### Woe to Those Who Withhold Olam Haba from Their Children

Regarding the words of Rabi Meir that a child merits Olam Haba from when he says amen (*Sanhedrin* 111 b), the *Sema"k* wrote (11): "And if so, woe to those who speak mundane things or are lighthearted in shul during davening, and withhold from their children Olam Haba."

### Open the Gates for Children of Yisrael

*Chazal* (ibid) learn that a child merits Olam Haba by answering amen from the *passuk* (*Yeshayahu* 26:2): "*Pischu she'arim vayovo goy tzaddik shomer emunim,*" and it was explained as if it says "*Pischu sh'arim veyavo goy tzaddik she'omer amen.*" Rav Shmuel Laniado, the Baal Hakeilim, explained that from the fact that the *passuk* uses the word 'goy' it is evident that the opening of the gates of Gan Eden refers to a child who answers amen, because we find that the Torah calls a child "goy" in the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 25:23): "*Shnei goyim bevitnech.*" (*Kli Paz Yeshayahu* ibid)

Harav Eliyahu Hakohen of Izmir explained this as follows: During *techiyas hameisim* the gates will only be opened to those souls that will ask to go down and dwell in the body of one who merited in his life to be a "*goy tzaddik shomer emunim.*" But someone who did not answer amen will not have the merit to rise in *techiyas hameisim* and to merit a life in Olam Haba (*Aggados Eliyahu, Yerushalmi Shvi'is* 4 8).

## Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*

Thank you very much for all your activities that imbue the importance of answering amen in Klal Yisrael. I read your pamphlets regularly and learn a lot from them about the fundamentals of *tefillah*, the power of *tefillah* and mainly about the tremendous power of answering amen.

I would like to share with you a great *yeshuah* that we merited in the *zechus* of amen.

A few years after our marriage, we had not yet been blessed with children. We davened and pleaded, and also visited the top doctors, but the *yeshuah* did not come.

About six years after our marriage, on Shabbos *Parashas Devarim* 5781, when we read in the Torah the *passuk* (*Devarim* 1:11) "*Hashem Elokei avoseichem yosef aleichem kachem elefpe'amim,*" I noticed that the acronym of עליכם ככם אלהי is numerically equivalent to amen. On the spur of the moment, I took upon myself to strengthen myself and others with answering amen.

I will note that even before then, I had a regular chavrusa for *Birchos Hashachar*, but in light of this awakening that I felt following what I viewed as a sign from Above, I decided to try harder. Indeed, from that day on, I began to listen to *Birchos Hashachar* from a few people, and of course, to be on alert throughout the day to answer amen as best I could.

*Baruch Hashem*, about a year later, my joy knew no bounds when Hashem granted us the wondrous gift of our oldest daughter. The *kiddush* was held on Shabbos *Parashas Devarim* 5782. And on the advice of my Rav, I called my daughter Bracha to eternalize the merit through which she was born to us.

With deep appreciation.

A.W., Ofakim

Letters can be sent to fax number 08-9746102 or emailed to the Vechol Ma'aminim email address. 9139191@gmail.com

## Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The matzeivah of Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg

### Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg

1 Iyar 5538

Harav Shmuel Shmelke Halevi Horowitz was born in 5486 to his father, Rav Tzvi Hirsch, the Rav of Tchortkov, who was known as a giant in Torah and a *kadosh Elyon*. As a child Rav Shmelke learned under his father's tutelage, and later, he studied day and night with his younger brother, Harav Pinchas, the Baal Hafla'ah. Due to his diligence, he didn't sleep in his bed, and he would learn until he nodded off. Together with his brother Rav Pinchas, they followed the Maggid of Mezeritsch and became prime disciples.

In his younger years, he was chosen to serve as Rav in the city of Rychwal, Poland, where he established a *yeshivah gedolah* that was attended by great scholars. Then years later, he took on the mantle of Rabbanus in Shineva, and in 5533, he moved to Nikolsburg, or Mikolov [today in the Czech Republic] to serve as Rav. There, he established the well-known yeshivah where many giants in Torah and *chassidus* learned. He also served as Rebbe, and many of the *tzaddikim* of Poland and Galicia traveled to him.

On 1 Iyar 5538, his soul departed this world suddenly, as he sat on his chair, at the young 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. He also wrote *sefer Nezir Hashem* on *Shulchan Aruch Even Ha'ezer*.

### Amen to Every Brachah

Shortly before his passing, the Rebbe said of himself that he was scrupulous all his days to only make a *brachah* if there was someone to answer amen after him. He explained that the creation of the angel that is formed by reciting a *brachah* is completed only when amen is answered to the *brachah* (*Ohel Yitzchak*, p. 70).