

# Ve chol Maaminim

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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

## Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

### The Kehunah Is Fulfilled Through Two Mitzvos

“וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אִמֹר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לִנְפֹשׁ לֹא יִטְמָא בְעַמּוּזוֹ” (כא א)

The **Ben Ish Chai** explained the seemingly redundant wording in the *passuk* – “*emor - v'amarta*” – as follows:

The Kohanim were commanded with many *mitzvos* exclusive to them. Most of those are only practiced when there is a Bais Hamikdash, yet two of them are constant and are practiced even today: *Birchas Kohanim* and the prohibition of becoming impure for a deceased person. The *passuk* alludes to this: “*Emor el Hakohanim Bnei Aharon*” – aside for the *mitzvas aseh* of reciting *Birchas Kohanim* that is practiced for generations, “*v'amarta aleihem*” – tell them also about the *mitzvas lo sa'aseh* for generations, and that is “*lenefesh lo yitama b'amav.*” And by fulfilling both of them, there will be a clear sign and symbol of their *kehunah*, even in this time.

*Od Yosef Chai, Chelek Hadrush*

### Two Judgements Regarding the Wheat

“דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תִבְאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְקִצְרַתֶּם אֶת קִצְרֵיהָ וְהִבַּאתֶם אֶת עֲמֹר רֵאשִׁית קִצְרֵיכֶם אֶל הַכֹּהֵן; וְהִנִּיף אֶת הָעֲמֹר לִפְנֵי ה' לְרִצְנֹכְכֶם מִמִּזְחֶרֶת הַשָּׁבֶת יְנִיפֶנּוּ הַכֹּהֵן” (כג י-יא)

*Chazal* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) say that Pesach is the *Yom Hadin*, the day of judgement, for the success of the crops, and therefore, the *Minchas Ha'Omer* was brought on the second day of Pesach “so that the wheat in the fields should be blessed.” **Harav Yehonasan Eibeshitz** pointed out that we say in the *tefillah* of Rosh Hashanah, in *Zichronos*: “*V'al medinos bo ye'amer... eizo lara'av v'eizo lasova*” – does this not indicate that we are judged regarding the crops on Rosh Hashanah? He further asked: If the *Korban Omer* comes to appease for the success of the crops, why do we only bring it on the second day of Pesach, and not right at the beginning of the judgement, on the first day? He explained: The words of *Chazal* are referring to the crops of Eretz Yisrael; the grain of the other nations is indeed judged on Rosh Hashanah, as the words of the *tefillah* clearly state: “*v'al medinos bo ye'amer... eizo lara'av v'eizo lasova*, and on the nations it is said...which will have famine and which will have plenty.”

In light of this, it emerges that even on Pesach there is a judgement. On the first day, the spiritual part of the crops is judged – the part that sustains the *neshamah*. On the second day, the physical part of the crops, which sustains the body, is judged. So because the *Minchas Ha'omer* was brought from barley, because it ripens the earliest (see *Shemos* 9:31-32) and it is fitting to call them “*Reishis ketzirchem*” – and the barley is a food for animals that alludes to the physical part of the crops, therefore, we bring it on the second day of Pesach, when this aspect of the crops is judged.

*Tiferes Yehonasan*

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### A Heavenly Welcome

It is just a few days before the holy day of Lag BaOmer, the *hilula* of the Tanna Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, *zy"ta*. Just the mention of the words “Lag BaOmer” arouse a tremor of emotion in every Jew. The great joy and the inspired *tefillos* that rise On High with fiery fervor on Lag BaOmer in Meron are scenes that remain forever etched in the hearts of those who participate.

Jews from all over the world take great care not to miss the opportunity to ascend to the Upper Galilee to rejoice in the *simchah* of the holy Tanna, and to offer a *tefillah* for *yeshuos* for individuals and for the *klal*, relying on the power of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai, about whom *Chazal* recommended (*Brachos* 9a): “*Kedai hu Rabi Shimon lismoch alav bishas hadchak,*” Rabbi Shimon is worthy of being relied on in times of trouble.

Lag BaOmer is the most appropriate day to connect to the deep concepts of Torah in the teachings of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai, explained in *Sefer Hazohar*, where he also repeatedly praises the virtue of reciting *brachos* and answering amen after them.

In this segment, I would like to point out his well-known words (*Eikev* 271 1) that when the *brachos* that are answered with amen go On High, all the Gates of Heaven are opened before them, and proclaim in all the firmaments: “This is the gift that so and so sent the King! This is the gift that was sent with complete fulfillment, as is fitting!”

Opening the gates! Proclamation in all the firmaments! – Is there anything more valuable than that?! And, it is evident, every single person can do this! Yes, you as well! All you need is to take one small action: someone has to stand next to you and answer amen after your *brachos*. That's it.

Sometimes, after I merit to stand next to someone and answer amen after his *Birchos Hashachar*, I point out to him these words of the *Zohar*, and in order to bring the words closer to his heart, I ask him: “Would you believe that at this time, your name is being mentioned in all the firmaments, and the Heavenly Angels are carrying your *brachos* as a gift to the Creator?”

If we take care to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* each day before davening, we will merit to have our names announced On High as those bringing a perfect gift to the King, and surely, this will help our *tefillos* be accepted willingly and with compassion.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

### A Dance of Gratitude on Friday Night

It was during *Kiddush* on Friday night, at the table of the holy Baal Shem Tov. Around the table stood his closet disciples, gazing at their Rebbe reciting *Kiddush*, and suddenly they noticed that his expression had changed, and a joyous look came over his face.

The disciples were very puzzled about this, but they did not dare to disturb their great Rebbe, who appeared to be in another world entirely. They resolved to wait until after Shabbos, and hoped that they could then ask him to answer their questions. Indeed, right after Shabbos ended, and *Havdalah* had been made, the renowned disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, Rav Wolf Kitzes approached the Rebbe and asked why he had seemed especially joyful during the Friday night meal.

Instead of an answer, the Baal Shem Tov instructed Reb Wolf to summon his famous wagon driver, Alexei, and to ask him to hitch up the horses to the carriage because they would be going on a long ride. A short time later, the Baal Shem Tov set out on the mysterious route, accompanied by a



few close disciples, Rav Wolf among them.

The carriage traveled nonstop through the night, and when dawn broke, it suddenly stopped next to the large shul in the city of Apta. After *Shacharis*, the Baal Shem Tov instructed his disciples to summon Rav Shabsi, the bookbinder. The students asked around about him, and indeed, a short time later, Reb Shabsi came before the Baal Shem Tov.

Reb Shabsi, who was already in middle age, but had not yet been blessed with children, was perplexed by the mysterious summons. As soon as he came, the Baal Shem Tov asked Reb Shabsi: "Please tell me what happened

with you this past Friday night." Surprised, Reb Shabsi began to relate:

"I am a poor man," he said, "and I eke out a living binding books. *Baruch Hashem*, I am pleased with my lot, and thank Hashem for all the goodness that He gives me. My pious wife is also satisfied with her lot, and does not complain about our *parnassah* struggles. But recently, as we have both reached an older age, our health has taken a turn for the worse. My body is weak and sometimes, I don't earn enough to live from. Yet, I try to refrain from accepting anything from others, and I place my trust solely in Hashem.

Last Friday, our situation was so dire that we didn't even have a small amount of money to purchase anything we needed for Shabbos. In keeping with the words of Chazal (*Shabbos* 118a) "Make your Shabbos into weekday, and you will not need to come onto others," I decided to adhere to my practice of not benefitting from gifts of others. Having no choice, and no money, I went to shul early to recite "*Shnayim Mikra*" and *Shir Hashirim*.

By the time I finished learning, people had already begun to gather for *Kabbalas Shabbos*. If at first I was worried about my Shabbos needs, as the *tefillah* continued, my soul felt more and more elevated, until it rose above the experiences of this world, and I completely forgot that my house was bare.

At the end of davening, I didn't hurry home. There was no reason to. There was no Shabbos meal waiting in the dark house. Moreover, I

was worried that the neighbors would ask me about the darkness in the house.

Only once the last *mispallelim* left shul did I leave for home. When I drew closer, I noticed, to my surprise, a bright light coming from the windows. When I arrived home and opened the door, I was stunned at the scene that met my eyes: The table was set with delicacies, in great abundance, and the bright light of the candles made the house look royal.

I walked in with great joy, greeting my wife with a "*Shabbos shalom umevorach*." I did not share my niggling worry that perhaps my wife had not been able to withstand the test, and had asked for help from others.

I waited for my wife to solve the mystery. Indeed, after I said *Shalom Aleichem*, she related:

"On Erev Shabbos, after you left to go learn, I said to myself that if we could not honor Shabbos with food and drink, at least I will honor Shabbos with a clean and orderly home. Indeed, all the energy that I usually put into preparing the Shabbos food, I channeled into cleaning the house. I cleaned even places that I sometimes only clean on Erev Pesach... And in one of the corners, I discovered an old garment that had shiny gold buttons. I immediately ran to the goldsmith and sold him the buttons for a large sum. Using the money that I got, I purchased everything we need for a beautiful Shabbos."

Upon hearing this, my heart expanded with gratitude, and I began to sing with great joy and appreciation the words that are said at this time '*Modeh Ani Lefanecha Hashem..al kol hachessed asher asisa imadi v'asher Atah asid la'asos imi...*' For a long while, my heart overflowed with gratitude, and my legs seemed to lift in a dance of joy, of their own accord..."

At this point, the Baal Shem Tov stopped Rav Shabsi's story and said to him: "Know that that moment when you danced, the entire Heavenly Entourage joined the dance, and there was great joy in the Upper Worlds."

The disciples then understood the joyous expression that had spread on their Rebbe's face during the *seudah*. The Baal Shem Tov continued speaking to Rav Shabsi: "Because you caused such great joy On High with your behavior, you can ask for anything you want, and your wish will be granted. Tell me what you want." Rav Shabsi immediately replied with the most fervent request that he and his wife had harbored for so long: "My request is that Hashem should grant us a son!"

The Baal Shem Tov blessed them to merit a son. Indeed, one year later, Rav Shabsi and his wife had a baby boy. The Baal Shem Tov served as the *sandak*, and called the baby Yisrael.

Young Yisrael grew up and rose to greatness, and in time, he became renowned as the famed and holy Maggid of Kozhnitz.

*Toldos Hamaggid MiKozhnitz [by Rav Chacham Tzvi Halberštam] Chapter 1*

## The Halachah of Amen Ketufah

## Answering Amen Before the Brachah Ends

1. Just like Chazal forbade one to linger with answering amen too long after the *mevarech* finishes the *brachah*, they also forbade answering amen before the *mevarech* finishes saying the *brachah*. Therefore, one should answer amen only after the *mevarech* finishes reciting the last word in its entirety. Answering amen *bechataf*, hastily, before the *mevarech* ends the *brachah* is called by Chazal (*Brachos* 47a) an *amen chatufah*.

## Sources and Explanations

This is how by Rav Cohen Tzedek Gaon (*Sefer Ha'aruch, Amen*), the *Re'eh* and the *Me'iri* (*Brachos* 47a) explained the significance of the prohibition of *amen chatufah*, and their opinion is brought down as *halachah* in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 124 8). Regarding this, the *Mishnah Berurah* pointed out (ibid 30) that "there are people who begin to answer while the *sha"tz* is still saying the last half a word, and that is forbidden."

Harav Shaul Brach of Kaschau, in his introduction to *sefer Givat Shaul*, brings that the *passuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 1:4) "*mashcheini acharecha narutzah*", whose acronym is "amen" alludes that one must be strict to answer amen exactly on time, not to recite it early, before the *brachah* ends [*amen chatufah*] and not to wait after it ends [*amen yesomah*]. מִשְׁכַּנִּי - one should draw out the amen until the *mevarech* finishes his *brachah*, but אַהֲרִיךְ - נְרוּצָה - right

after the *mevarech* finishes, one should hurry to answer amen.

2. Even when the *sha"tz* sings at length at the end of the *brachah*, one should not answer amen as long as the *chazzan* did not finish the last word of the *brachah*. But the *sha"tz* should refrain from prolonging the song of the last word of the *brachah*, because some people do not know this *halachah*, and they unwittingly transgress and recite an '*amen chatufah*.'

## Sources and Explanations

From the words of the *Magen Avraham* (124 14) it emerges that if the *chazzan* prolongs the singing at the end of the *brachah*, one should not wait until he finishes singing to answer amen. But from the fact that the *Mishnah Berurah* wrote (ibid) regarding *Kaddish*, that if the *sha"tz* prolongs the singing on the final words of "*v'imru amen*", the *tzibbur* will answer amen right away, because these words are not part of the "actual request," it appears that if the *sha"tz* sings at the end of the *brachah*, one should wait for him even if he draws it out a lot.

However, all this is relating to one who prolongs the singing on the last word of the *brachah*, but if the *chazzan* begins to sing after he finishes the *brachah*, one must answer amen right at the end of the *brachah* and should not wait for the singing (*Mishnah Berurah* 281 4, from *Pri Migadim Eshel Avraham* ibid 4; *Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak* Vol. VII 9). The *Mishnah Berurah* further wrote (ibid) that the *chazzanim* should not prolong the ending of the *brachah* "because sometimes [the *tzibbur*] answers [amen] before he actually finishes the *brachah*."

## Ro'ei Emunim

## From the Words of Our Gedolim on Answering Amen

There is a general *inyan* that we should all strengthen ourselves with, as unfortunately, it is one of the things that people tend to tread on with their heels (i.e. be lax about). I am referring to the obligation to be careful and strict about answering amen, and 'Amen, yehei Shemei Rabbah...' We find in Chazal (*Shabbos* 119b) lofty and awesome words about the greatness of answering these: "His decree is torn up"; "even if he has a trace of *avodah zarah*, he is forgiven"; "the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him." Chazal have also said (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1) that "Anyone who answers amen in Olam Hazeh - merits to answer amen *l'asid lavo*." And the *Tosafos* (*Shabbos* ibid ad loc. *Kol ha'oneh*) cites the *Pesikta* that "When Am Yisrael enter the shuls and say *Yehei Shemei Rabbah Mevarach* out loud, harsh decrees are nullified."

Those who peruse the various pamphlets and booklets when *Kaddish* is being said or during *Chazaras Hasha"tz* barely notice the *brachos* of the *chazzan* and the *Kaddish*, and by doing that, they lose out on answering amen and "*amen yehei Shemei Rabbah*" whose value is inestimable. They think they are bringing pleasure and *nachas ruach* to Hashem by learning Torah at this time, but in fact, it is the opposite of His Will. That is in addition to the *chillul Hashem* that may be caused by this practice, as it is a public derision of the value of answering amen and *Amen yehei Shemei Rabbah*.

My great-grandfather, the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz, zy"va, once rebuked two Yidden who were talking during *Krias HaTorah*, during the time when a *Mi Shebeirach* for a sick person was being made. He said: In Heaven there

## The Rebbe of Dzhikov Vizhnitz, shlita



is a ruling on this sick person that if one hundred people

answer amen at the time when he is blessed at the *Sefer Torah*, he will be cured of his illness. And ninety-eight people answered amen, aside for you two, who were talking during this moment...So by doing so, you are responsible for having a bad decree on him passed.

When, *b'ezras Hashem*, we will become stronger with this, then we will surely merit to become closer to Hashem, also by rectifying other matters that need a *tikkun*. As Chazal say (*Yoma* 80a): "*Tafa'sta merubah, lo tafa'sta* - if you grab too much you don't grab anything; if you grab a little bit, you get it."

## Otzros Emunim

Teaching the Young to Answer Amen

### Answering Amen Indicates the Character of a Person

One who hears the *tzibbur* answering amen and he joins them, without knowing to which *brachah* he is answering, has answered an *amen yesomah* (*Rashi Brachos 47a*, ad loc. *Yesomah*). And therefore, *Chazal* say (ibid) that “anyone who answers an *amen yesomah* – his children will be orphans.” This is very remarkable: is the sin of one who answers an *amen yesomah* so great? Isn’t his intention to fulfill the mitzvah of answering amen, and even though he doesn’t know which *brachah* he is answering, he still affirmed to the words blessing Hashem? Why does he have to be so severely punished? Furthermore, from the words of *Chazal* “his sons will be orphans” it seems that the punishment is also cast upon his children. What is their sin?

Harav Yosef Yehuda Leib Bloch explained:

A person who answers amen without knowing which *brachah* he is answering to shows his character – that he can be drawn after the influence of others without checking if their views are correct or not. When a person is not a master for himself, and is constantly dependent on the opinion of others, then his children will see this nature and they will not hold his words in importance or listen to him. When *Chazal* say “his children will be orphans” they mean that the children of one “who answers an *amen yesomah*” do not accept his authority, and therefore,

they are not considered his children and they are like orphans. (*Shiurei Daas* Vol. III, p. 128)

### The Shefa Chaim's Avodas Hakodesh

The Shefa Chaim of Sanz-Klausenberg would distribute fruits to young children on Shabbos, so that they should make a *brachah* in front of him and he would answer amen after them. This was a special *avodas hakodesh* for him, and even when he was extremely ill and suffering, he did not give up this practice. Despite his weakness, he sat for a long while and answered amen after children who made *brachos* on his fruit. (*Darchei Halachah* [Harav C. Schmerler] *Hilchos Birchos Hanehenin* 25).

### 'Tafasta Merubah - Lo Tafasta'

The *mechanech* Rav Chaim Aharon Sklar would imbue the young students with the importance of answering amen, and he would say to his students: Answer amen with *kavanah*! With every amen that you answer, imagine you are putting a fifty dollar bill into your pocket...”

With his special approach and his wise pedagogic insights, Rav Chaim Aharon knew that the children would not connect to the words if he would mention a sum that was beyond what they could comprehend. That is why he used a relatively low amount, but it was big enough to get the children enthusiastic about valuing the mitzvah. (*Kuntress Az Amar Shlomo* p. 85)

## Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



### 'Toraso Magen Lanu Ume'iras Eineinu'

#### Answering Amen with Kavanah

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) wrote that anyone who does not answer amen

with *kavanah* is scorning the Name of Hashem and his punishment is very severe. He wrote: *Tanna*, anyone who answers a *brachah* from a *mevarech* and does not have *kavanah* when answering amen, of him it is said (*Shmuel I* 2:30) “*Ubozai yekalu*.” And of this it is said (*Malachi* 1:6): “A son honors a father, and a slave his master. Now if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My fear? says Hashem Tzevakos to you, the Kohanim, who despise My name. But you said, “How have we despised Your Name?” When this person needs a *yeshuah* what is his *din*; just like he did not open the *brachos* On High – likewise it is not opened for him. Not only that, but when he leaves this world, it is declared before him: close the doors to this person and he will not enter and do not welcome him. Woe to him, woe to his soul.

The *Rama*’z in his commentary on the *Zohar* (ibid) explained the reason for the fact that someone who does not have *kavanah* with amen is included in the description of “*ubozai yekalu*”

and is punished so severely: “Because it is an easy thing [amen] to understand and to have *kavanah* with it, it is the simplest of the secrets, that the word amen is numerically equivalent to Hava-ya-h and A-donai.” One who is lax about a mitzvah that is easy to observe receives a greater punishment than one who is lax about a mitzvah that is hard to observe (see *Menachos* 43b), and that is why his punishment is so severe for one who does not have *kavanah* when answering amen. The *Rama*’z added that according to the *Zohar* that the *passuk* “*Ubozai yekalu*” is said about someone who does not answer amen, the intentions of the Arizal can be explained, as he said (*Pri Eitz Chaim Shaar Kavanas Amen*) that the letters at the end of the words of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 83:17) מלא פניהם קלון form the word amen.

*Notrei Amen* (Vol. I, p. 79) also explained that amen is a great gift that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave to His creations from His treasure houses. It is the greatest praise that a human can praise his Creator with, and as *Chazal* say (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1): “There is nothing greater in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu than the amen that Yisrael answer.” For this reason, one who, with neglect, misses out on this opportunity, and does not pay attention to answer

amen with *kavanah*, arouses a great *kitrug* upon himself and he is given such a severe punishment.

The *sefer Yesod Veshores Ha'avodah* (*Sha'ar Hakorban* Chapter 6) wrote that anyone who sees the words of this *Zohar* “will have streams of water coming from his eyes for not keeping to answering amen properly, he will not lay by day and will not rest at night, from the fear of his heart that he will feel, and from the scenes that he will see...”

The early Mekubal, Rav Meir Papirash, brought the words of this *Zohar* in his *sefer Ohr Tzaddikim* (*Tikkun Hatefillah* 52) and in light of this, suggests to each person to say a special *tefillah* each day. These are his words:

“Therefore, every person should have these words in his *Siddur*, or on the wall, during *tefillah*, and he should say when he begins to pray: ‘Ribbono shel Olam, it is known to You that I am a human being and I do not have the strength to have the right *kavanah* with amen. So may it be Your will, that my *kavanah* of amen should rise with the *kavanos* of amen from those few who remain who know how to have the right *kavanah*.’”