

# Ve chol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

## Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

### One Brachah That Includes All Other Brachos

“יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך” (ו כה)

In the *brachah* of *Sim Shalom*, said after *Birchas Kohanim*, we ask: “*Barcheinu Avinu kulani k'echad be'or Panecha...*” Why of all the *brachos* said in *Birchas Kohanim* do we focus only on “*Ya'er Hashem Panav eilecha?*”

**Harav Eliezer Horowitz**, the Rav of Tarnograd, explained:

*Chazal* say (*Taanis* 8b) that we do not daven for two things at once, and rather, each *tefillah* should have only one request. Because we have so many needs, even asking for two things is not enough for us. Therefore, the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah* instituted that in the *brachah* of *Sim Shalom* we ask only for “*he'aras panim*” – one request that is the source of all the goodness and blessings, as we then continue to detail: “*Ki be'or Panecha nasata lanu Hashem Elokeinu- Toras Chaim v'avahas chessed utzedakah ubrachah verachamaim vechaim shalom.*”

**Harav Shlom Kluger** added that this concept is also emphasized in the words “*Barcheinu Avinu kulani k'echad,*” meaning with one *brachah* that includes all our needs, and that is “*Or Panecha.*” He added: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* loves *Am Yisrael* so much that He wants only their good, and when *chalilah*, they deserve punishment, He conceals His Face from them, and then the *brachah* is taken away. This is what we ask: “*Barcheinu Avinu,*” in that we should always be in “*Or Panecha*” and never conceal

Your Face from us, because “*be'or Panech nasata lanu.*” You have given us all the *brachos*...And surely You will not withhold this from us, because “it is good in Your Eyes to bless us...at all times and at every hour with Your Peace.”

*Noam Megadim; Yerios Shlomo on the Siddur, ad loc. Sim Shalom*

### Inaugurate the Mizbe'ach with 'Zos'

“זאת חנכת המזבח ביום המשה אתו מאת נשיאי ישראל...” (ו פד)

The Rosh Yeshivah, **Harav Elchanan Wasserman** spoke at the inauguration of the building of *Baranowitz Yeshivah*, and shared an allusion from this *passuk*:

The word *זאת* is numerically equivalent to 408, which is the same as *צום* [*teshuvah*] קול [*tefillah*] and *מזון* [*zedakah*.] We can explain from this that when we inaugurate a new place intended for *avodas Hashem* – a *Chanukas Hamizbe'ach*, we should precede it with “*zos,*” meaning to arouse the hearts to *teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *zedakah*.

At the groundbreaking for the yeshivah in *Bnei Brak*, which took place not long after the destruction of *European Jewry*, the **Chazon Ish** told **Harav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman**, the *Ponevezher Rav* something that caused the latter to burst into tears that shook all of those present: “When you begin with drinking and confections – then the success of the endeavor is in doubt... But when you plant with copious tears, it will certainly be successful...”

*Ohr Elchanan Vol. I p. 134; Pe'er Hador Vol. II p. 224*

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### Answering Amen Is Halachah

We are so used to talking about the importance of the virtue of answering amen, and its many *segulos*, that we may mistakenly think that it is a *minhag*, a custom that we practice, while in fact, it is an absolute obligation! It's important that we remind ourselves from time to time that answering amen is a holy obligation imposed on every person in *Klal Yisrael*, as the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 215 2): “One who hears someone in *Yisrael* making any one of the *brachos*...is obligated to answer amen after him.”

*Chazal* (*Yoma* 37a, based on *Rashi Brachos* 21a ad loc. *deleis*) source this obligation from the *passuk* (*Devarim* 32:3): “*Ki Shem Hashem ekra, havu godel l'Elokeinu,*” and explain that when the *mevarech* mentions the Name of Hashem in the *brachah*, those who listen must offer praise by answering amen.

**Harav Shlomo Kluger** added (*Chochmas Shlomo Orach Chaim* 215 1) that **Dovid Hamelech** also instructs the mitzvah of amen in *Tehillim* (106:48): “*Baruch Hashem Elokei Yisrael min ha'olam v'ad ha'olam v'amar kol ha'am amen.*” In other words: At any time when a *brachah* is heard, we are commanded: “And the whole nation should say amen!”

Those who have merited to cleave to this mitzvah understand even more: Answering amen is not only an obligation in and of itself, it is also the purpose of the recital of the *brachah*. This is proven from the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 53b) that compares the combination of the *brachah* and amen to a war strategy. Just like in war, first the simple soldiers are sent to confront the enemy, and then at the right moment, the heroic, strong soldiers are dispatched and they triumph, similarly with a *brachah*: reciting the *brachah* brings down the *shefa*, the abundance, and the amen is what activates it, in the sense of the “strong soldiers that triumph.”

Just like all agree that the purpose of the fighting is not the actual war, but rather the triumph over the enemy that they are fighting, the same is true with answering amen. If *Chazal* compared amen to the heroic soldiers that triumph, that indicates that the purpose of the *brachah* is the amen.

One of our loyal readers has even written in the past that this concept is alluded to in the name of this *parashah*, *Naso*, which is an acronym for *שמענו אמן*. In other words, the purpose of the *brachah* is the answering of amen.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

## 'Before They Call, I Will Answer...'

This week, on 9 Sivan, is the *yahrtzeit* of the *mekubal* Harav Aharon Ezriel, *zt"l*, the son-in-law of the Pele Yoetz. Rav Aharon, who served for a decade as the Rosh Yeshivas Hamekubalim Beis K-1 in the Old City, would sign his letters and responsa with the nickname "אענ"ה, in which he alluded to his name and his father's name "Aharon ben Harav Ezriel".

In this remarkable story, which is printed in the introduction to his *sefer Kefi Aharon*, Harav Aharon Ezriel reveals that this nickname is also an allusion to the wondrous miracle that happened to him when he was spared from a certain death.

The story began on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Teves 5634, at the height of a stormy Yerushalmi winter. Rav Aharon awoke and felt a strong pain in his head. He tried to get up from



The gravesite of Rav Aharon Ezriel in the Jewish cemetery in Yaffo.

bed, but he was not able to, and his head flopped back down on the pillow helplessly. From moment to moment, he felt himself growing weaker, and he was barely able to call to his family before losing consciousness.

A doctor was summoned quickly and he determined that Rav Aharon had contracted a severe winter illness. He advised rest and expressed hope that the ailment would pass. In addition, he prescribed a number of medications for Rav Aharon to take over the next few days, and promised to come back to see the patient.

Over the next few days, Rav Aharon's condition fluctuated. If one day, it

seemed that things were improving – then the next day, things got worse. Either way, there seemed no end in sight. The doctors who were summoned had despaired of bringing any balm to Rav Aharon, and he lay in bed, weak and helpless.

On 9 Shevat, more than a month after falling in, Rav Aharon's condition worsened. He felt that his end was nearing, but did not despair of Heavenly Mercy. The next day, on the morning of 10 Shevat, while Rav Aharon was laying ill in bed, he suddenly remembered that this day was the *yahrtzeit* of the holy *mekubal* Harav Shalom Sharabi, *zy"א*, the Rasha"sh – the one who had founded and led Yeshivas Beis K-1.

He remembered with longing how each year on this day, the *mekubalim* of Beis K-1 would hold a *seudah* and learn the secrets of Torah in memory of his holy soul. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he recalled the heightened emotions in the *beis medrash* during this learning, to the extent that one could virtually feel the Shechinah descend on the *lomdim*, and they all felt the merit of the Rasha"sh enveloping the yeshivah.

As he spoke, Rav Aharon thought to himself: "I am now in danger of death; the doctors have given up on me, and I can rely only on the Heavenly Mercy, and the merit of the holy Rasha"sh. It's been six years since I took him over as leader of his yeshivah, and I am carrying out his mission to daven from the *amud* for all of Klal Yisrael according to the *kavanos* that he instituted." With this thought, Rav Aharon mustered up the bit of strength he had, called to his family and said: "Hurry now to the yeshivah, where they have certainly all gathered for the *hilula*, and urge them to light, on my behalf, candles for the soul of the *baal hilula*, and then to daven and cry for me, that I should be saved from death. They should mention the merit of the *baal hilula* to ask for compassion from our Father in heaven, and perhaps in his merit, Hashem will spare my soul..."

The family hurried to comply. They went to the yeshivah of the *mekubalim* and urged the sages there to do as their father had instructed. Indeed, within the hour, the yeshivah was like a fire – the sages had lit candles, then began to weep and sob, and they did

a *pidyon nefesh* and davened for the rosh yeshivah with all their might.

Meanwhile, at home, the rosh yeshivah lay on his bed like an immobile stone, only partially conscious, and in time, he fell asleep. In his dreams, he saw holy visions, which he describes in the introduction to his *sefer*:

"And it was in the middle of the night, and I saw a man appear to me, he was like an Angel of Hashem, and he stood in front of me with a smile. I said to him, 'Who are you, sir?' and he replied 'I am Shalom Mizrachi' [the Rasha"sh]. I recoiled in shock. He asked me with a smile: 'I heard that you are printing a *sefer*.' I replied, 'Yes, sir, my glory, ... I am preparing to print a small booklet, and I named it *Kefi Aharon*, in the merit of myself and others that are like me...'

He said to me: 'Tell me! Why do you sign your name as "אענ"ה? I replied: 'Because it is an allusion to my name and my family name and my father's name, *z"l*.' He said to me with a smile: 'There is another reason to sign "אענ"ה – אהרן עזריאל ניסי ה' and then he disappeared...

I woke up from my sleep and sat on the bed, and pondered this great scene, not knowing what it mean... Then I calmed down a bit and remembered the words of the *passuk* (*Shemos* 17:15): '*Vayikra Shemo Hashem Nisi*,' and *Rashi* explained: 'Hashem Who makes for me a miracle...' So I said I have no doubt that this is a day of good news, and my *rebbe* and teacher Harav Shalom Mizrachi Sharabi prayed for me, and in his merit, the decree that hovered over me was nullified. From Above, a miracle was performed for me, and I was spared from death..."

The Rav concluded: "And praise to Hashem, that is what happened. Because with Hashem's compassion, I grew stronger, and today I am healthy. May He, in His compassion, give me long days in goodness and pleasant things, and give me the merit to make His wishes my wishes, and may it be His will that our *tefillos* and Torah and good deeds should be desired by Him..."

Towards the end of his life, the Rav was struck with a heart ailment. He suffered for about two years, and on 9 Sivan 5739, he was summoned to the Heavenly Court, at the age of sixty. His *tziyun* is in the city of Yaffo.

## Amen Is the Source of Brachah

When the Mekor Baruch of Seret Vizhnitz served as the Rav of the town Seret, in Romania, he would daven each Shabbos in a different shul. He once came to a shul, and when he noticed that they had already finished *Birchos Hashachar*, he immediately left and went to a different shul to daven, noting to the *gabbaim* who tried to dissuade him from leaving: "I am not Eisav... Eisav came after the *brachos*!"

His words are the essence of the "*sichas chulin shel talmidei chachamim* that need to be studied," but on this topic we need to remember that even Eisav, when he was late for the *brachos*, knew what he had missed... But when we are late to davening, *chalilah*, do we know what we lost?! The *segulos* of answering amen are endlessly deep, but if a person knows from the start that it is the source of all blessing, then he will look at it with an entirely different approach!

There is a story about Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg, who was strict not to say a *brachah* without someone answering amen to it. He was once traveling with an uncouth and ignorant wagon driver. During their trip, it became necessary to recite the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, but he didn't have anyone who could answer amen to it. Suddenly, two strange-looking Jews emerged from the forest, and Reb Shmelke made the *brachos* and they answered amen and then disappeared... When he asked the wagon driver if he had seen something, he had no idea what the Rebbe was talking about. As such, Rav Shmelke realized that the men had surely been angels sent to answer amen for him.

At the same time, Rav Shmelke explained the words in the *tefillah* of Rosh Hashanah: "*Vehu b'echad umi yeshivenu, venafso ivsah vaya'as nora marom vekadosh.*" "*Vehu b'echad*," when one is standing alone, in an isolated place, and wonders "who will answer him" – with amen, "and his soul desires" – to fulfill his *kabbalah*, "*vaya'as Nora*" – Hashem performs a miracle for him, "*marom vekadosh*" – and sends him from On High a holy angel to answer his *brachah*.

From this we can learn a lesson, that if a Jew is strict about something, then he will receive assistance from Above and below to fulfill his *kabbalah*.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 4 6) cites the ancient custom that one who says *Birchos Hashachar* in shul, and others answer amen after him. The Chida says of him (*Birchei Yosef Orach Chaim* 677 2): "And as is known, this practice has spread in the larger towns and cities..."

The *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*Orach Chaim* 6 6) brought down that the holy Arizal would answer amen even to one hundred people, one after another, and even in the middle of *Pesukei Dezimrah*, because he wanted to fulfill the obligation of answering 90 amens even before *Shemoneh Esreh*. Harav Aharon Hagadol of Karlin said of this with wonder: Who is greater than the Ari Hakadosh, who was so scrupulous about his

precious time, and yet, he dedicated time to answer amen to one hundred people each morning...

There is a legend about a person who had plenty of money, but very little intelligence... One year, on Erev Yom Kippur, after seeing each year how people vied for the merit to open the *aron* for *Kol Nidrei*, he decided that this time, it would be his. He bid for the privilege, and ultimately purchased it for one hundred thousand dollars...

When it came time, he stood in his place, and the *gabbai* prodded him: "Nu, open!" But he didn't know what to do. The *gabbai* had to explain every detail to him, and the same happened with the closing of the *aron* and then to pull the *parochess* over it. After davening, the *gabbai* asked the man: "If you don't even know how to do the *pesichah*, why did you pay so much money for it?!"

The answer was surprising: "I don't know what *pesichas ha'aron* is, nor do I understand the meaning of *Kol Nidrei*," the rich, stupid man said. "I know only the advice for life that my father, *z"l*, gave me before his passing: 'Wherever the rich people invest, you should also invest!' When I saw that rich people pay a lot of money for this *kibbud*, I decided that I also must purchase it..."

The story is cute, but the lesson obligates us: If *gedolei Yisrael* invested so much into amen, if *Chazal* expounded so extensively on its praises, then that is enough for us to understand that it is worth it for us to invest in it as well!

Harav Yechezkel of Kuzmir, *zy"l*, explained: Why is it that the *oneh* is greater than the *mevarech*? Because while the *mevarech* is doing the mitzvah, the one who gives it validity and completion is the one who answers amen after it. And the one who helps his friend is greater than the one who does the mitzvah for himself. (*Nechmad Mizahav, Parashas Pekudei*)

The entire essence of amen is helping the other person complete his *brachah*, and that is also its virtue. This obligates each one to see and to disseminate the importance of answering amen among his friends.

The Divrei Chaim once saw someone reciting a *brachah* quietly, without anyone answering amen after him, and said: The *passuk* says (*Devarim* 11:27): "*Es habrachah asher tishme'u...*" The *brachah* needs to be said aloud in a voice that is heard, so that everyone should answer amen after it. Don't think that this is a *middas chassidus* – it is included in the "*mitzvos Hashem Elokeichem*" – it's one of the *mitzvos*.

When a person internalizes the importance of answering amen, then he will succeed in persuading others around him of it as well. How great is the merit of the one who, aside for being strict himself to answer amen, also gives others the *zechus* to fulfill this remarkable mitzvah.

## Otzros Emunim

Teaching the Young to Answer Amen

### The Children Also Need to Come to Davening

Harav Yosef Bloch, the Maggid of Stanov, explained the *passuk* (Devarim 29:9): “*Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem*” in the context of *tefillah*. The word “*hisyatvus*” means *tefillah*, as the *passuk* says (Shmuel I, 1:25): “*Ani ha'ishah hanitzeves imachem bazeh lehisparallel el Hashem.*” And the Torah instructs us: your *tefillah* “*lifnei Hashem Elokeichem*” – in the shul that is the place where the Shechinah dwells, needs to be in the presence of “*kol Ish Yisrael*” and even “*tapchem*”, your children. The participation of the youngsters in *tefillah* is so important, that it is fitting even to be late for davening to ensure that this happens. “It is said that Harav Yosef Hollis, z”l, [the Rav of Tismanitz] would come late to shul so that the younger children should come to answer ‘*Yehei Shemei Rabba,*’ *Kedushah* and amen.” (Ginzei Yosef, Nitzavim)

### Kiddusha Rabba – Without Losing an Amen

Harav Gamliel Rabinowitz said: When people make *simchos* in shuls, they must be strict not to organize the *simchah* on account of the *tefillah*. At the *kiddush* in honor of the birth of my granddaughter, I asked that they should not start getting the *simcha* together until after davening, “because if as the result of setting up the *kiddush* one child will miss answering one amen, the whole *kiddush* is not worth it.” (Tiv Hischazkus – *Tefillah* p. 566)

## Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

Thank you very much for the great *hisorerus* that you are effecting regarding the mitzvah of amen. In the Pesach issue, you cited the *Shevet Halevi*, who quoted on the subject of this mitzvah the words of the *Sefer Chassidim* (261): “Love a mitzvah that is similar to a *meis mitzvah*, that only few involve themselves with...”

Today, after your many years of work have reaped the fruits, *baruch Hashem*, it is heartening to see that this is now a mitzvah that many involve themselves with, after they learned to recognize and appreciate its lofty value. Today, wherever you go, you can see those who fulfill the instructions of *Chazal* “*tzei uleamad*” – that they learned about the great value of answering amen, which is numerically equivalent to א“ז.

May you see much strength and success going forward in your efforts to strengthen the answering of amen, until those that answer amen multiply מאד מאד [which is numerically equivalent to amen, with the *kollel*] and can be found everywhere.

With best wishes,  
Y.S.

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



Volozhin yeshiva building

### The Nefesh Hachaim

14 Sivan 5581

Harav Chaim of Volozhin was born in 5509 to his father, Rav Yitzchak, who was the *parnas* in the Volozhin community. As a youth, he learned under the Sha'agas Aryeh, who was serving as Rav of Volozhin at

the time. When he was nineteen, he went to study under the Vilna Gaon, and became his *talmid muvhak*. In the introduction to the *Biur HaGra* on the *Shulchan Aruch*, the children of the Gra list Rav Chaim as his prime *talmid*.

With his *rebbe's* blessing, he returned to Volozhin, where he was appointed to serve as the *mara d'asra*. After the passing of his *rebbe*, Rav Chaim established the famed Volozhin Yeshivah, which later became known as the ‘Mother of all Yeshivos.’

He shared his teachings on the fundamentals of *avodas Hashem* in his *sefer Nefesh Hachaim*, which has been printed in many editions over the years. Likewise, he wrote a commentary entitled *Ruach Chaim* on *Maseches Avos*. He passed away on 14 Sivan 5581 and was buried in the cemetery in Volozhin.

### A Special Shaliach to Answer Amen

The Raavad of Yerushalayim, Harav Zelig Reuven Bengis, who learned in Volozhin during the time of the Netziv, related a story attributed to the yeshivah's founder, Rav Chaim of Volozhin. It was told that he had taken upon himself not to make a *brachah* if there wasn't someone to answer amen after it. He would recount a wondrous story about this: One night, as he sat and learned, he began to feel very thirsty. Rav Chaim wanted to find someone to answer amen after his *brachos*, but there was no one around. Suddenly, one of the *bochurim* came from the yeshivah because he had a question on the *sugya* he was learning. Rav Chaim was happy to see him and was able to make a *Shehakol* with *kavanah*. The *bochur* answered amen and Rav Chaim was able to drink, and then answered the *bochur's* question.

The next morning, when Rav Chaim entered the *beis medrash*, and came to thank the *bochur* for giving him the possibility to make the *brachah*, the *bochur* looked at him in surprise and said, “Rebbi, I don't remember such a thing happening at all.”

That was when Rav Chaim realized that that because of his insistence not to breach the boundary he set for himself about making *brachos*, a special emissary was sent to him from Above, in the form of that *bochur*, to enable him to make the *brachah* and quench his thirst. (*She'al Avicha Veyagedcha* [Rav Shalom Schwadron] Vol. I, p. 87)