

Ve chol Maaminim

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

Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Take Sefer Devarim With You

"אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל בעבר הירדן במדבר בערבה מול סוף בין פארן ובין תפל ולבן וחצרת ודי זהב" (א א)

Harav Eliyahu Hakohein of Izmir, author of *Shevet Mussar*, explained:

When a person wants to do *teshuvah* and be purified from his sins, he can be overcome with thoughts of despair. Numerous times already, he has already regretted his deeds and done *teshuvah* and then stumbled with them once again. How can he dare stand once again in front of his Creator to do *teshuvah*?! But then he should remember that he has the entire *Sefer Devarim*, which showers him with encouragement and comfort; on the one hand, the Torah describes a whole chain of sins that Am Yisrael committed during their travels in the *midbar*, and on the other hand, it tells us that despite every time they did *teshuvah*, they once again stumbled. Yet, time after time, Hashem accepted the *teshuvah* and forgave their sins.

This is alluded to by the Navi, who says (*Hoshea* 14:2-3): "*Shuvah Yisrael ad Hashem Elokecha*, return to Hashem because you have stumbled in your sins; take with you *devarim*, and return to Hashem." This means: Even if you've stumbled under the weight of your sins, your spirits should not flag, and instead, "*kechu imachem devarim*," – take a lesson from *Sefer*

Devarim, which instructs and teaches how forgiving Hashem is, and "*veshuvu el Hashem*," that our *teshuvah* will surely be accepted with love. The *Shevet Mussar* added that these words are based on the *Midrash* in *Chazal* (see *Shemos Rabbah* 38:4): "And I found in the *Midrash* that "*kechu imachem devarim*" is explained to refer to *Sefer Devarim*."

Agudas Eliyahu, End of *Maseches Yoma*

One Who Believes Acquires the Middah of Histapkus

"כי ה' אלקיך ברכך בכל מעשה ידך ידע לכתך את המדבר הגדל הזה זה ארבעים שנה ה' אלקיך עמך לא חסרת דבר" (ב ז)

Harav Tzvi Hirsch Farber, one of the rabbanim of London, explained:

When the Torah testifies of Am Yisrael: "It has been forty years that Hashem is with you and you lacked for nothing," it does not mean to teach the generations that anyone that "*Hashem Elokav imo*" will never see any difficulty or lack in his life. Rather, it teaches us that one who cleaves to his *emunah* that Hashem is watching over all His creations, and provides them all they need to fulfill their tasks, lives his life with a sense of calm and satiation, in the essence of "*lo chasarta davar*," you lacked for nothing.

Kerem Hatzvi

Answering Amen to *Birchos Hageulah*

Nearly two thousand years have passed since that bitter, tragic day when the Second Bais Hamikdash was destroyed and we were sent for a long and difficult exile from which we have yet to be redeemed. Our faith in the Redemption is deeply imbued in our hearts, and we have grown up on it from the earliest age. But the fact that throughout the generations Am Yisrael believed in the Geulah and awaited it, and yet their hope has not yet been realized, creates an opening for the *yetzer hara* to incite and to make us think: Is it really possible that this year, of all years, our salvation will arrive? Why is it different from all previous years? Which advantage does it have over the many generations that hoped and waited, yet did not merit to see *Mashiach*?

But the truth is that with each year that passes, our Redemption comes closer, and we should know that with every day that goes by and we did not merit to see *Mashiach*, we've come one step closer to the desired goal.

We declare our firm faith in the impending Geulah each morning and evening, when we answer amen to the *brachos* of the Geulah, such as *Mechayeh Hameisim*, *Boneh Yerushalayim*, *Matzmiach Keren Yeshuah*, *Hamachazir Shechinaso LeTzion* and other such *brachos*. When we answer amen to these *brachos*, we declare our faith that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is a *Kel Melech Ne'eman*, and will fulfill His promises regarding the future Geulah. We also join the request of the *mevarech* that these promises should be fulfilled quickly.

The amen and Geulah are contingent on one another; the depth of our faith in the Geulah depends on answering amen with

kavanah, because as the *Megaleh Amukos* wrote (*Parashas V'eschanan*): "The main point of the *emunah* depends on answering amen," and the Geulah we are waiting for depends on the depth of our faith. If we answer amen properly, and believe with *emunah sheleimah*, then we will merit the Geulah quickly."

I learned this from the words of *Chazal* (*Midrash Tehillim* 31) who explain the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 31:24) "*Emunim notzer Hashem*," as follows: "These are Yisrael who say *Baruch Mechayeh Hameisim*, and with *emunah*, answer amen – that they believe with all their strength in HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who is the *Mechayeh Hameisim*... We say '*Baruch Boneh Yerushalayim*,' and it has not yet been built. Hashem said: Yisrael... believe that I am destined to redeem them, which is '*Emunim notzer Hashem*'- we believe and answer amen, *Notzer Hashem*.' So we see that answering amen to the *brachos* of *emunah* expresses our *emunah* in the *Geulah* and hastens its arrival.

This is also alluded to at the end of the *tefillah* of *Yechadsheihu*, said on Shabbos Mevarchim: "*U'leGeulah sheleimah venomar amen*." If we want to merit the Geulah we have to be strict about answering amen.

Let us answer amen with *kavanah* to the *brachos* of the Geulah, and the *brachos* in general, and we will merit yet this year to have the prophecy of Zecharya Hanavi fulfilled (8:19) that the days of fasting and grief over the *churban* should "be le'Bais Yehudah a rejoicing and happiness and good times," amen.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Even When I Pray in the Valley of Death, Nothing Bad Will Happen

Rabbi Sinai Adler, who served as the first Rav of the city of Ashdod, was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He was a youth when the Holocaust broke out, and was incarcerated with his family in the Theresienstadt Ghetto. Later, he was deported to the Auschwitz and Matthausen death camps, until, *bechasdei Hashem*, he survived the war and made *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael.

He recorded his experiences from the Holocaust years in his well-known book *Begei Tzalmaves*, [In the Valley of Death], whose pages are filled with pure Jewish faith and wondrous stories about Jewish life that continued despite the darkness of those times.

A chapter in the book is dedicated to an anonymous Hungarian Jew whose name he did not know, but whose image remained etched in his mind until the end of his life. This Jew, who Rabbi Adler met while in Auschwitz, left an indelible impression, as he continued to grasp onto his firm faith in turbulent times as in calmer times. Even when he was being crushed under the Nazi boots, he adhered to all

for us to understand?"

"As a youth," Rav Sinai explained, "I didn't know how to answer, and the man, who felt my distress, provided an answer right away: 'I'll tell you; even a person whose faith is strong may sometimes encounter times of severe crisis when he may lose his hope in Hashem, *chalilah*. Therefore, after the *passuk* instructs every Jew to hope in Hashem, it then reiterates it, because even when you are in the most difficult situation '*chazak ve'yametz libechah*' – make the effort and muster up all your strength and continue to hope in Hashem!"

"This powerful lesson encouraged me and gave me strength to get through those days. It was also etched in my heart forever," Rav Sinai noted, "and for good reason. That is because the person who gave me the lesson was a pure *tzaddik* who lived by the light of his faith. Even in the depths of our suffering, he didn't move one iota from his faith and his practices in *halachah*, as the following story that I witnessed shows:

Each evening, I would admirably watch this Jew, as when we returned to our barracks to sleep, after an exhausting day of work, he would stand up to daven *Maariv* near his bunk. When he was davening, he looked like an island of tranquility in the turbulence that was our existence.

One evening, as he was davening *Shemoneh Esreh*, as if standing before the king, a person known as the '*block elteste*,' the elder of our barracks, walked in.

In every department of the Nazi camp there was one person who held this title, appointed by the Nazis. Many of those *block elteste* figures were dignified people, and even used their status to help the inmates. But in the barracks that we were in, the *block elteste* was an evil and cruel man, who had originally been a prisoner in Germany. His shirt bore the green triangle symbol, indicating that he was a convicted criminal of the worst type. But compared to us, the 'inferior' Jewish prisoners, he felt himself on a high status, and he used his status at every opportunity to sow fear and terror, and to do everything he could to make our lives harder.

According to the camp laws, the *block elteste* had an equal status to

the SS figures, and as such, when they entered the barracks, all the prisoners had to stand at attention. In addition, one was not allowed to wear a head covering in their presence.

There was a general rule in all the Nazi camps: 'When you enter the barracks, remove your hat!' In other words, one was not allowed to be in the barracks with a covered head. Now, this evil man entered the barracks while this holy Jew was pouring his heart out in *tefillah*, as if there was no one around him. One would expect that he would stop davening, but surprisingly enough, he continued, completely ignoring the *block elteste*.

The evil man fixed him with a hateful glare, expecting the Jew to understand what was expected of him. But the Yid ignored him, and this raised the ire of the official.

'Stand at attention and remove your hat, Jew!' the *block elteste* yelled furiously at the Jew. But the latter was unmoved, and continued to sway as he davened fervently; he completely ignored all the words that were directed at him.

We all stood around, stunned and terrified, and at the same time, marveling at the fortitude of this man against the threatening figure of the *block elteste*. We were well aware of the tremendous risk he had taken upon himself. Refusing the *block elteste*'s orders was like refusing a Nazi officer, and he had the power to punish the refuser with the most severe of punishments.

Wondrously, even though the official was exploding with fury, he seemed to also be overcome with awe. The Jew continued davening, and after he finished, and took three steps back, he took off his hat, went over to the *block elteste*, and explained to him patiently and fearlessly that the reason he had kept his hat on was because he had been praying, and the custom of the Jews is to cover one's head when praying.

There was no logical explanation for the fact that the Jew's excuse was accepted. It was an absolute miracle to see how instead of a harsh punishment, the *block elteste* 'sufficed' with an arrogant response that included mockery and cursing, but he didn't actually do anything else to punish the Jew.

Begei Tzalmaves, p. 68



The Matthausen camp in Austria.

his Jewish practices, and also worked to give *chizuk* to all those around him. Rabbi Sinai, who, as noted, was a youth in those days, drew much encouragement and inspiration, comfort and hope from this person. He related in his book that one morning, when they were standing in the courtyard of the camp in the freezing cold, waiting for morning roll call, the man noticed his dejected expression and came over and asked, "My dear boy, in *Sefer Tehillim* (27:14) it says: '*Kaveh el Hashem chazak veyametz libecha vekaveh el Hashem.*' Perhaps you can tell me why the *passuk* repeats the commandment '*kaveh el Hashem*,' twice? Is it not enough to say it once

— The Kavanah of Amen —

After the Three First Brachos
in the Amidah

The first three brachos in the Amidah are defined as “*birchos shevach*,” brachos of praise, and therefore, when answering amen after them, one should have in mind that they are true. But some say that because the brachos of Magen Avraham and Mechayeh Hameisim contain promises that we want to be fulfilled quickly, one should have in mind when answering amen after them the kavanah that is befitting requests and tefillos: It is true that Hashem is the Magen Avraham and remembers the chasdei avos and brings redemption to their descendants, and may it be His Will that this should be fulfilled quickly, and it is true that Hashem resurrects the dead and may it be fulfilled speedily.

Sources and Explanations

In *Maseches Brachos* (34b), Chazal say that when reciting the first brachos, the *mispallel* is similar to a “servant who offers praise before his master.” This is brought in the *Rambam* (*Tefillah* 1 4) and the *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 112). The *Bach* (*Orach Chaim* 124), the *Shelah* (*Maseches Tamid* 59), the *Pri Migadim* (*Orach Chaim* 51, *Mishbetzos Zahav* 3) and the *Machatzis Hashekel* (124 10 in the *Magen Avraham* *ibid*), wrote that the halachah of these brachos is like the rest of the brachos of shevach, where we answer amen with the meaning of “it is true.” The *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (*ibid* 9) concurs. The *Yesod Veshoreh Ha’avodah* (*Shaar* 5, Chapter 3) explained that the kavanah of amen for these three brachos is: “It is true that we have to thank Hashem Yisbarach Who is the Magen and Moshia for the whole world, and was the Magen of Avraham”; “it is true that He will resurrect the dead *l’asid lavo*, and it is fitting and just to praise Hashem for this”; “it is true that He is holy and we cannot fathom His Holiness” [and see *ibid* chapter 4, where he added that in the three first brachos of the Amidah, “only one kavanah is relevant: It is true that this is so and it is fitting to praise Hashem for this.”]

However, the *Biur Halachah* (124 6) wrote in the *Da’as Magen Avraham* (*ibid* 10), that because in the brachah of Magen Avraham the Redemption is mentioned, in the words “*gomel chassadim tovim vekoneh hakol vezocher chasdei avos umevi go’el livnei beneihem*,” and in the brachah of Mechayeh Hameisim, the resurrection of the dead is mentioned, both of which are promises that we anticipate should be fulfilled quickly. Therefore, one should have in mind when answering amen after them both “emes” and “yehi ratzon,” as we have in mind when answering amen to brachos that have both praise and a request. The *Ben Ish Chai* (*Terumah* 11) and the *Kaf Hachaim* (5:11) cite this view as a “*yesh omrim*,” and they do not render a decision. The *Biur Halachah* also concludes: “*vetzarich iyun lema’aseh*.”

The *Biur Halachah* there stressed that according to the Magen Avraham, one should have in mind when answering amen on the brachos of Magen Avraham and Mechayeh

Hameisim that these requests should be fulfilled *bimheirah*, speedily. This emphasis can reconcile the comment of the *Pri Migadim* (*ibid*) that when answering amen to the brachah of Mechayeh Hameisim, with the kavanah of “*Yehi Ratzon*,” it is *kefirah* in *techiyas hameisim*, as the one who is asking shows with this that he is not sure that it will be fulfilled. But when he has in mind that this promise should be fulfilled speedily, then that concern is resolved, because his request is not about the actual resurrection, but rather only about when it will happen.

Regarding the brachah of Atah Kadosh, the *Biur Halachah* wrote that because there is no promise that we are anticipating, the Magen Avraham will also concede that one only needs to have the kavanah of “emes” when answering amen (*Biur Halachah* *ibid*). And see *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 66 3; 109 1, according to the *Mishnah Berurah* 66 21) that answering amen to this brachah is especially important because this brachah concludes the first three brachos.

After the Middle Brachos
in Shemoneh Esreh

The “middle brachos” in the Amidah are considered brachos with requests, because they are only tefillos and bakashos. But because they conclude with praise of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, then one should have in mind when answering after them: “Emes” and “Yehi Ratzon.” For example: When answering amen to the brachah of Chonen Hada’as, which contains a request for knowledge, but also concludes with praise of Hashem – Chonen Hada’as, then one should have both kavanos in mind – “It is true that Hashem is the One Who grants wisdom, and may it be His Will that He grant us wisdom.”

Sources and Explanations

After the first three brachos, which are *birchos shevach*, the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah instituted that we say a series of *birchos bakashah*, in which a person asks for his needs. As Chazal say (*Brachos* *ibid*) that in the middle brachos, the *mispallel* is “like a servant that asks for a prize [sustenance (*Rashi Megillah* 6b ad loc. *pras*)] from his master.” These brachos all begin with a request and conclude with praise [aside for the brachah of Atah Chonen, which, because is it adjacent to the brachos of shevach, also begins with praise (*Iyun Tefillah* in *Siddur Otzar Hatefillos*, *Atah Chonen*, in the name of the *Maharshdal*)], and the *Bach* (*Orach Chaim* 124 in the name of the *Siddur HaRav Hertz*) and the *Shelah* (*Maseches Tamid* 61) wrote that in these brachos one must have in mind both “emes” and “yehi ratzon,” and that is the agreement of the *poskim* (*Shulchan Aruch Harav* *ibid* 9; *Od Yosef Chai* [by the Ben Ish Chai] *Parashas Vayechi* 16; *Kaf Hachaim* 5 14 and the *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid* 25).

The brachah of Shom’ea Tefillah concludes the middle brachos, and therefore, answering amen after it has a special importance (*Rema Orach Chaim* 66 3 and the *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid* 21).

Galus for the Sin of Not Answering Amen

Chazal say that the Land was destroyed and Am Yisrael were exiled for the sin of not answering amen. They explain (*Sifri Ha'azinu Piska* 320) the *passuk* we say in *Shiras Ha'azinu* (*Devarim* 32:19-20): "Hashem said, I will hide My Face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are an upsetting generation, sons who are devoid of faith." And they explain "Do not read it "לא אמון" rather "לא אמן בם" they did not want to answer amen after the Nevii'm when they blessed them."

Chazal derive an allusion that the *churban* occurred because of not answering amen from the *Tosafos* in the *passuk* in *Eichah* (2:7) about the *churban*: "Zanach Adonai mizbecho ni'er Mikdasho hisgir beyad oyev chomas armenoseha, Hashem has rejected His altar, He has abolished His Sanctuary, He has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces." The word זנה is the same as the letters of חזן and the acronym of א-דני מזבחו נאר אז-דני is amen, to teach us that for the sin of not answering amen,

the House was destroyed (*Tosafos Hashalem* *ibid*).

The poet (*Kinnos Letishah B'Av, Eichah Yashvah*) also lamented this with the words: "She remembered the time that *na'aseh venishma* were answered, and now they didn't want to answer amen..."

Tefillah for the Geulah That Concludes with Amen

A beautiful allusion regarding answering amen to the requests for the Geulah is shared by Harav Yehuda ben Rav Yakar, the Rav of the Ramban (*Seder Hatefillos Vehabrachos*, Vol. I, p. 112):

The beginning of the middle *brachah* in *Mussaf* of Shabbos, *Tikanta Shabbos*, is arranged in the reverse order of the *aleph beis* which is known by the Rishonim as ק"תשר. And because the *tefillah* in this order alludes to the Geulah (see *Siddur Haya'vetz*, *ibid*, where it explains this concept) therefore, this passage concludes with: "אז מסיני" which is an acronym for amen.

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The tziyun of the Ari Hakadosh.

The Arizal Hakadosh

5 Av 5332

Harav Yitzchak Luria – Ashkenazi was born in 5294 in Yerushalayim to his father, Rav Shlomo, who was from a family that traced its lineage back to Rashi and Dovid Hamelech. When he was eight years old, his father passed away, and because of *parnassah* struggles, his mother moved to Egypt to live in the home of her wealthy brother, Reb Mordechai Francis.

In Egypt, he learned in the yeshivah of the Radbaz, and later, he studied under the *talmid* of the Radbaz, Rav Betzalel Ashkenazi, author of *Shittah Mekubetzes*. Under the tutelage of Rav Betzalel, he became a *gadol* in Torah and a tremendous *talmid chacham*, and began to compile Torah works. When he became of age, his uncle Reb Mordechai took him as a husband for his daughter.

One day, he came across a manuscript of the holy *Zohar*, and that is how he began to engage in *Toras HaKabbalah*. For six years, he was *misboded*, and learned this wisdom, and during that time, the Gates of Heaven were opened for him and he became proficient in this wisdom.

Harav Chaim of Volozhin wrote in his introduction to the commentary of his *rebbe*, the Gra, on *Sifra D'Tzniusa*, that the Gaon's entire body would tremble when he spoke about the Arizal, and he would say, "What can we say and speak of the holy one of Hashem, the *Ish Elokim kadosh venora* like him, to whom all of the secrets of wisdom were revealed, and from when he merited the revelation of Eliyahu *zachur latov*, his comprehension was doubled and went ever higher."

At the end of his years of solitude, it was instructed to him from Above to ascend to Eretz Yisrael, and there, to teach his Torah to his *talmid*, Rav Chaim Vital. The Arizal made aliyah in 5330 and settled in Tzefas. For three months, until the passing of the Rama"k, he learned from the Rama"k, and after his passing, many *talmidim* flocked to the Arizal, led by Rav Chaim Vital. For a year and ten months, until the Arizal's passing, Rav Chaim studied his Rebbe's Torah, and he wrote it down and conveyed it to the generations.

On 5 Av 5332, the Arizal passed away, and was buried in the ancient cemetery in Tzefas.

Even if There Were Many Mevarchim

Rav Chaim Vital said that his Rebbe, the Ari Hakadosh, would answer amen after many people who recited *Birchos Hashachar* in shul, and he wrote: "And when he was in the *beis knessess*, and there was a person reciting *Birchos Hashachar*, he would sit and listen and answer amen, and even if he was in the middle of the *tefillah* he would pause, remain quiet and answer amen, even if there were many *mevarchim*" (*Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Habrachos* Chapter 4, and see *ibid* that it appears from his words that the *mevarchim* in the *beis medrash* of the Arizal would also recite *Birchos HaTorah* in front of him.)

Even One Hundred Times

Harav Meir Papirash also cited the practice of the Arizal to recite amen to the *Birchos Hashachar* of many people, but he detailed that "even if there were a hundred [*mevarchim*] he would answer amen after them" (*Ohr Tzaddikim* 6 2, and copied in *Shaarei Teshuvah, Orach Chaim* 6 5). As such, he even ruled that every person should follow this path and "he should hear *Birchos Hashachar* to answer amen, even if he heard them one hundred times" (*Ohr Hayashar Amud Ha'avodah* 7 11).