

VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

Hashem 'Davens' That We Should Choose Good

“ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך” (י"ב)

In *Maseches Brachos* (7a) *Chazal* explain: “From where do we learn that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is *mispallel*? As it says (*Yeshayah* 56:7): ‘*Vehaviosim el Har Kodshi vesimachtim beveis tefillasi*’ – it does not say ‘*tefillasam*’ their *tefillah*, but rather “My *tefillah*”, to teach us that Hashem prays.” And what is His *tefillah*: “May it be that My compassion should overpower My anger, and My mercy should be cast on My *middos*, and I should treat My children with the *middah* of *rachamim*...and *lifnim mishuras hadin*.”

The commentators ask: Isn't the essence of *tefillah* that the *mispallel* is asking that his wish be fulfilled and doesn't this request belong only to a person who is dependent on the *chassadim* of Hashem, and not to Hashem Who is the Orchestrator of everything?

The *Noda B'Yehudah* explained:

A human is unique among the other creations in the fact that he has the power to choose between good and bad. Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires our good, He pleads with us to choose good. If we do this He will be able to treat us with *middas harachachim*, and that is His *tefillah*. This request is described by this *passuk*: “*V'atah Yisrael, mah Hashem Elokecha sho'el me'imach*” – what is He asking from us? “*Ki im leyirah*” – that we should choose good!

Tzelach Brachos 7a

A Life of *Yiras Shamayim*

One of the six constant *mitzvos* is the *mitzvah* of *yiras Hashem*, which we are commanded in this *parashah*, in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 10:20): “*Es Hashem Elokecha tira*.” Because *yirah* is a *mitzvah temidis*, a person must conduct himself throughout the day with a sense of fear of the glory of his Creator, and as the *Chinuch* writes in this *parashah* (*Mitzvah* 432): “To have *yiras Hashem* on our faces always so that we should not sin, meaning that we should fear the punishment and our hearts should not be without fear of it all day.”

Constant *yirah* like this seems to be very hard to achieve, and the question is asked: How can a person can fulfill this obligation? *Chazal* expounded on this subject, and many pens have been broken by their efforts. I would like to suggest one of the ways that were offered on this subject, and in fact, is explicitly written in this *parashah*, a few *pesukim* before the *passuk* of the *mitzvah* of *yirah*.

In the *passuk* (ibid 10:12) “*V'atah Yisrael mah Hashem Elokecha sho'el m'imach ki im leyirah*,” *Chazal* explain (*Menachos* 43b, and in *Rashi* ibid) in the way of ‘*al tikrei*’ – do not read it “מה” but rather “מאה” – meaning “One hundred [brachos each day] Hashem Elokecha is asking from you.” The words “*ki im leyirah*” written after that indicate that one who is strict about the *mitzvah* of *Meah Brachos* merits to be filled with *yiras Hashem*.

The connection between one hundred *brachos* and *yiras Hashem* can be learned from the words of

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

the Baalei *Hatosafos* [*al haTorah*] in this *parashah* (ibid) who added a proof to the *mitzvah* of *Meah Brachos* from the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 128:4): “הנה כי כן יברך גבר ירא ה'” – is numerically equivalent to 100, to teach that the amount of “*ki-chen*” *brachos* “a man who is a *yerei Hashem*” should make each day.

The *Rambam* in *Hilchos Brachos* (14) teaches that the *brachos* bring a person to be a *yarei Hashem*, and he wrote: “We find that all the *brachos* are one of three types: *brachos* of *hana'ah*, enjoyment; *birchos hamitzvos* and *birchos hoda'ah*, *brachos* of gratitude and praise and requests to Hashem, in order to remember the Creator always and to fear Him.”

Apparently, not only saying *brachos* imbues a person with *yiras Shamayim*; so does answering amen after them. Because the amen is an agreement and a completion to the *brachah*, and it is an integral part of it. If the *brachah* brings *yiras Shamayim*, then amen brings to complete *yiras Shamayim*. And as the words are explained in *Rashi* (*Sanhedrin* 111a, ad loc. *Mai*) the meaning of amen that is answered to every single *brachah* means *kabbalas yiras Shamayim*.

From this we learn that the way to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *yirah* in a constant way is by being strict about saying *brachos* and answering amen properly throughout the day. Let us be strict about it, and it will be good for us all our lives, *amen v'amen*.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The Tefillin Arrived Just in Time

“*Keshertefillin her'ah le'ainav, temunas Hashem lenegged einav...*” The words of the song played in the Goldschmiedt home. Excitement was at a fever pitch. Moishy was about to start putting on *tefillin*, ahead of his upcoming bar mitzvah. Already two years earlier, the *tefillin* had been ordered at an expert *battim macher*, and the *parshiyos* had been ordered by an expert and G-d fearing *sofer*. Everything seemed to be in order ahead of the exciting moment.

A month before the appointed day, Moishy's father contacted the *battim macher* and reminded him of the upcoming date. The *battim macher* remembered it well, and reassured the father that he was almost finished.



A workshop where tefillin battim are made.

A week beforehand, the father called again; now the *parshiyos* were also ready, and even the beautiful *tefillin* bag had already been embroidered with the bar mitzvah boy's name. Only the *battim* were not yet ready.

“There's been an unexpected delay, but now I can reassure you that the *battim* have already been given to the squarer,” the *battim macher* updated. “The squarer is the one in charge of ensuring that the square is perfect, in accordance with the *halachos* of *mehudar tefillin*. After he finishes his work we can insert the *parshiyos* into the *battim*, and from there, we'll send the *battim* to the final painting, insert the *retzuos* and then put them into the *tefillin* bag...”

Time was already tight, but things seemed to be falling into place, and it looked like all would be ready in time.

On Friday morning, Moishy's father once again placed a called to the *battim macher*. On Tuesday, Moishy was supposed to put on *tefillin* for the first time. The final details needed to be tied up, the *parshiyos* needed to be inserted and the *battim* closed. But

then, a surprise: the *battim macher* now learned that the boy was left-handed. A left-handed person puts on *tefillin* on the right hand, in contrast to most people who put *tefillin* on their left hand. Upon hearing this, he was stunned: “The boy is left-handed?? How is it possible that I didn't know? Usually this is the first question that I ask people coming to order *tefillin*, and now I don't see anything written down about it...Unfortunately, I prepared right-handed *tefillin* for the boy, and I'm going to have to prepare new ones. It takes a long time.”

Whether the blame for this mishap was the father's or the *battim macher*'s made no difference. The bottom line was that three days before putting on the *tefillin*, there was no *tefillin*. If that was not enough, then a short time later, the *battim macher* informed them that the *battim* of the *shel rosh* were also not usable – they had gotten ruined during the painting process and needed to be redone.

This is the place to note that this *battim macher* was a renowned expert in his field; he was a *yarei Shamayim* and very reliable. All his clients were satisfied, and the Goldschmiedt family was also pleased with him. Their older son's *tefillin* had arrived in time, and were beautiful and *mehudar*. This time, an unexpected mishap had occurred.

To make a long story short, under normal circumstances there was no way the boy could have his *tefillin* in the next month. The only effort that could be done at that time was to obtain a pair of *tefillin* from a *gemach*. But Moishy was by nature very organized and pedantic; he struggled to accept the idea that instead of new *tefillin*, he was going to put on used *tefillin*. There were tears in his eyes.

No one saw how he stood at the side, davening with all his heart that he should merit to have new *tefillin* for his bar mitzvah. But it did not seem that his *tefillah* would bear fruit...New *tefillin*?! Left-handed Ashkenazi *tefillin* were hard to obtain even from a *gemach*. Phones calls to here and there yielded no progress.

The *battim macher*, to his credit, tried

to do everything. He was very upset by the unexpected situation that had arisen, and turned over the world until he reached a *gemach* that had left-handed *tefillin*. However, the *tefillin* were worn and rubbed out, and needed significant painting repairs. They were far from looking new.

The boy was sad, but didn't have much of a choice.

Friday afternoon. The owner of the *gemach* was pressed for time, and wanted to go from his workplace to his house. “Come in the next half an hour,” he told Moishy's father. But to get there in that time, Moishy's father needed to urgently get ahold of a car. As a first step, he called two rental companies that were on his corner, who rented cars by the hour. He subscribed to both, but as expected at that hour, all the cars were in use. It was a very busy time.

Uncomfortably, he called a friend who lived not far away and asked if he could use his car for a short trip. But the friend was on his way out of the city. Ultimately, he knocked at the door of the neighbor downstairs, who also had a car, and asked permission to use the car. The neighbor agreed happily, and as he got the keys, Moishy's father told him about the crisis, and the *tefillin* that had been ordered but at the last minute, were not going to be ready.

And at that moment, the neighbor's face grew very serious. He thought for a minute, and then took the keys back from Moishy's father and said hesitantly: “I may have a way to help you...” The neighbor then related an unbelievable story: “Just this week, my father-in-law, *shlita*, surprised me by giving my son the gift of *tefillin*. The child is only nine years old, but for various reasons, my father-in-law already purchased his beautiful *tefillin*. I planned to send them to be checked, and just then, you showed up. You can use them, with pleasure.”

“Wait a minute,” Moishy's father stemmed the neighbor's enthusiasm: “Do you know that my son is left-handed?”

“Yes,” came the surprising answer. “My son is also left-handed...”

Yes, with unbelievable *Hashgachah pratis*, accompanied by a fervent *tefillah* for a *yeshuah*, on that Tuesday, a jubilant Moishy merited to put on new *tefillin*, left-handed *tefillin* in *nusach Ashkenaz*, against all odds, just as he'd davened.

Heard from the person it happened to

Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, shlitá
Rosh Yeshivas Me'or Hatalmud



Goy Tzaddik – Shomer Emunim

One of the members of the holy *chaburah* who rose early to learn with the Rosh Yeshivah, Harav Aharon Leib Steinman, *zt"l*, and davened with him *vasikin*, related:

Once, at the end of learning, in the moments that remained until davening began, the Rosh Yeshivah spoke to the *chaburah* and urged them: "Be careful not to lose the billions!"

He didn't need to raise their awareness about the importance of engaging in Torah or the importance of *tefillah*, but rather about one thing: in the moments of preparation for *tefillah*, when *Birchos Hashachar* are said, and he saw it fitting to arouse them to the fact that answering amen is a "deal worth billions."

Let us take a closer look at this and see the virtue of the one who answers amen:

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 110b) says: "From when does a child come to Olam Haba? ...He says in the name of Rabbi Meir: From the time he says amen, as it says, '*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.*' Do not read it *shomer emunim*, but rather '*she'omer amen.*'"

From the words of the *Gemara* "from the time he says amen" it is explained that even by answering amen once, a person can merit a share in *Olam Haba*. But it is still not explained if it is a small share or a large share. But even if he merits only a small share, it is still a "deal worth billions" because "one hour of pleasure in Olam Haba is greater than all of life in Olam Hazeh" (*Avos* 4:17).

We find a clearer description in *Maseches Shabbos* (119b): "Reish Lakish says: Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden open to him."

The *Maharsha* (*ibid*) discerned from the fact that the *Gemara* writes "*poschim lo shaarei Gan Eden*" – in the plural, that all the gates of the internal levels of Gan Eden are opened for one who answers amen, not only the level that he is deserving of. When doing all the *mitzvos*, a person merits a level in Gan Eden in accordance with his deeds, as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 152a): "Every single *tzaddik* is given a level according to his honor." But one who fulfills the mitzvah of answering amen with all his strength is an exception in the fact that all the gates of all the levels of Gan Eden are opened for him – even those who, according to his level – he would not be worthy of.

We learn from his words that answering amen brings a person into the interior chambers of the King – "*heviani haMelech chadarav*" (*Shir Hashirim* 1:4) – and he is not burned from the canopy of those who stand there,

because being constantly careful about answering amen, with the deepest level of its understanding, and with the proper attention to its meaning, grants him belonging to the innermost and loftiest levels!

We need to further study this well. The *Gemara* at the end of *Maseches Nazir* (66b) says: "Tanya, Rabbi Yosi says: The one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*. Rabbi Nehorai says: *HaShamayim!* That is how it is, know that the simple soldiers fight at the beginning of the war and the strong heroic ones triumph."

It is explained that the *Gemara* compares the recital of a *brachah* and the answering of amen to it to going out to war, where there are strong soldiers who tip the scales and triumph over the enemy. The *Maharsha* (*ibid*) explained as follows: "Because a person has hostile *mekatregim* that make it very difficult for him to obtain his sustenance in a plentiful way, and the *brachos* are the *melitzei yosher*, the advocates and defendants against the *mekatregim*. This is what the *brachos* and answering of amen are compared to – the soldiers that start the war and the strong ones that triumph in the war. Because the *brachos* are the simple soldiers and answering amen are the strong soldiers that come to win the war against the *mekatregim*, which are the *Malachei Mashchis*." However, later, the *Gemara* adds a *Breisa* from which it seems that the *mevarech* is greater than the *oneh*. And it is explained that they differ on whether it is more worthwhile to make a *brachah* and be *motzi* others, or to be *yotzei* from a *mevarech* by answering amen or his *brachah* (regarding the practical *halachah* see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 201 4 and *Magen Avraham* *ibid* 6).

And despite the fact that we find a dispute among the Tannaim as to who is greater than whom, the *oneh* amen or the *mevarech*, in any case, we do not find that there is a dispute in the words of the *Gemara* that "one who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him." This needs an explanation – because according to the view that the *brachah* is greater than the one who answers amen, why are all the gates of Gan Eden opened specifically in front of the person who makes a big deal of answering amen with all his strength?

The explanation is: There are things that themselves give a person a share in Olam Haba, and there are things that are "keys" through which one enters the greater levels.

Regarding Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, we find in the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 31b) that "Any person who has Torah and

does not have *yiras Shamayim* is like a treasurer who was given the internal keys but was not given the keys to the outside chambers..." In other words, even though Torah is "*chayei olam*", *yiras Shamayim* is the key to gain entry to it!

And so, it is possible that answering amen, aside for its inherent virtue, and according to the words that the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*, has a special virtue - that it opens the gates to Gan Eden.

Rabbeinu Yona wrote in *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*Shaar Gimmel* 143): "All creations were created in honor of Hashem Yisbarach." And we see, that although the *mevarech* performs an act of *Kavod Hashem*, the *kavod* comes through it, while when one answers amen, he agrees and wants the *kavod* to come even through others, and that shows an even greater respect for the King. As Rabbeinu Yona wrote (*ibid* 160) that those who deep in their hearts will struggle with the fact that others are honoring the King – might *R"l* be *sonei Hashem!*

The *Mashgiach*, Harav Yechezkel Levenstein, *zt"l*, was once told about the great love of Torah of a prominent Rosh Yeshivah, which was evident in his emotion, to the point of tears, when he saw the *bnei yeshivah* engaging in the toil of Torah. Rav Levenstein agreed that indeed, this was a great virtue. However, he added, the real test is how that Rosh Yeshivah feels and looks when he sees such a scene in a yeshivah that is not his. If he is moved to tears then as well, it is evident that he is a genuine lover of Torah and seeks its honor.

These are the words of Rabbeinu Yona (*ibid* 19): "And know that the creation is obligated to be a loyal worker and a wise servant in all the work of serving his Master, and the loyal one will be rapid in his deeds and then will oversee the deeds of his fellow workers. And his eyes will be on their ways, to see if they are doing it with faith, and he will warn them and inform them of what they should do, because his desire is that the work of his Master should be done without deception, therefore, he will help out those who are also working."

Therefore, one who answers amen after the *brachah* of his friend with all his heart and *kavanah* is a genuine *mechabed Hashem*, who fulfills the Will of Hashem in creating him: "*Kol hanivra liChvodi barasiv yetzartiv af asisiv*," and the gates of the innermost chambers of Gan Eden are opened to him, because his deeds are in honor of Hashem Yisbarach.

Otzros Emunim

Saying Brachos Out Loud

Bereishis: Make the Brachah Aloud

The Chida, in *sefer Nachal Kedumim* (*Parashas Bereishis*) brings an allusion in the name of the disciples of the Arizal about the obligation to recite the *brachah* aloud, so that people can answer amen to it from the fact that the first word in the Torah is בראשית which is an acronym for “קול רם אברך” – “ג.י. תמיד.”

Sefer Yagdil Torah (*Bereishis*) added that he heard from the Bais Yisrael of Ger that “the first thing one should demand of the *talmidim* is to make *brachos* aloud,” and he wrote that based on this this, one should explain that this is why this obligation is alluded to in the word *bereishis*.

One Who Whispers Brachos Is Punished

In contrast, Harav Menachem Di Lonzano, author of *Shtei Yados* (*Derech Chaim* p. 30b): wrote: Just like someone who hears a *brachah* and refrains from answering amen is severely punished (see *Zohar Vayeilech* 285 2), likewise, one who whispers a *brachah*, leading to the fact that amen is not answered, will similarly be punished.

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

To the editorial board of *Vechol Ma'aminim*, and the Nasi of Bney Emunim, Rabbi Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*,

In the pamphlets of the Three Weeks, you were very appropriate in bringing sources from *Chazal* and the early Sages that “*geulah sheleimah*” is contingent on “*venomar amen*.” A special segment was also dedicated to this subject by the Nasi of Bney Emunim, who, as he does each week, begins the pamphlet with a wonderful essay that always hits the target.

I would like to humbly add something of my own on this subject.

The third *brachah* in *Birchas Hamazon* is dedicated to requesting the *Geulah*, and it concludes with the request of “*Uvneh Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh...*” One who studies this will see that the acronym of the words of this request [ו,י,ע,ה] is numerically equivalent to that of amen. This is an allusion to the words of our early Sages that being strict about answering amen brings the building of Yerushalayim closer. Moreover, there is a clear allusion here to the words of the *Derech Moshe* (Day 11) that there is a special obligation to be strict about answering amen after the *brachos* of the *Geulah*, because this *brachah* is also considered one of the *brachos* of *Geulah*.

Moreover, the month of Av, which includes the days when we mourn the *churban*, is an acronym for אמן-ברכות, as well as בני אמונים...Likewise, *Parashas* בא, in which the first redemption from Egypt is described, is also reminiscent of the word Av.

It is wondrous that this month is called Menachem Av, for the consolation and for the name of Mashiaich (see *Sanhedrin* 98b) and as an abbreviation it is customary to write מנ"א – which are exactly the same letters as amen.

With anticipation to see the consolation of Tzion and Yerushalayim,

Moshe Shmuel Cohen
Yerushalayim

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Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



A view of the Jewish cemetery in Istanbul.

The Me'am Loez

19 Av 5492

Rav Yaakov Kuli was born in Yerushalayim in 5445 to his father, Rav Machir, who was the son-in-law of the Rishon LeTzion Rav Moshe ben Chaviv. When he grew up, he moved to Tzefas, where he learned under the sages of Tzefas, and also prepared the writings of his maternal grandfather, Mahara"m Chaviv, for print.

In 5374, he traveled to Istanbul [Kushta at the time] in an effort to print his grandfather's writings. There, he met Rav Yehuda Rozanes, author of *Mishneh Lemelech*, who discerned Rav Yaakov's greatness and appointed him a *dayan* on his *beis din*. In Istanbul, he printed his grandfather's writings, and after the passing of Rav Yehuda Rozanes, he also edited and printed his writings.

The Chida wrote about the greatness of Rav Yaakov Kuli (*Shem Hagedolim, Ma'areches Sefarim* 70 29): “And I heard about the holiness and *chassidus* of Rav Yaakov Kuli, and his diligence in Torah...that he was a fast scribe and an expert in *Shas* and *Poskim* and the commentaries, and it is evident in the *sefer Me'am Loez* that he compiled to give a *zechus* for the public. Praised is he and praised is his lot.”

Rav Yaakov Kuli passed away on 19 Av 5492 and is buried in the cemetery in Istanbul.

Hundreds of Gold Coins Each Morning

In arousing awareness about the special importance of a *brachah* answered by amen, and its great reward, the Me'am Loez specifically addressed *Birchos Hashachar*. He pointed out the obligation to recite them aloud so that people can answer amen to them. He wrote (*Mishpatim* p. 731): “What *Chazal* say (*Chulin* 87a) that the reward for a *brachah* is ten gold coins is specifically when he says them aloud, as he is *mezakeh* the *rabbim* who answer amen. This is the honor of Hashem Yisbarach to recite the *brachah* in front of others, as it says (*Mishlei* 14:28): ‘*Berov am hadras Melech*.’ And from here a person should learn to say the *brachos* in front of a *tzibbur* with a loud voice, both the *Birchos Hanehenim* and *Birchos Hashachar*, so that the *tzibbur* should answer amen... If so, the *brachah* that a person says to himself is not rewarded by ten gold coins” (and see *Shach Choshen Mishpat* 382 10).