

Vechele Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

Saying 'L'Shem Yichud' Before the Mitzvah

"ועניית ואמרת לפני ה' אלקיך ארמי אבד אבי וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט ויהי שם לגוי גדול עצום ורב" (כוה)

Harav Shlomo Kluger explained the virtue in saying "L'Shem Yichud" before performing a mitzvah with an apt parable: A person was asked to transport a valuable gift for the king in his carriage. Before he left, the wagon driver suddenly began to worry that the gift would be stolen during the long trip. His friend advised him: "Throughout your trip, make sure to let those around you know that the gift you are transporting is for the king, and this way you will know that no one will dare to steal it, because who would dare start up with the king..."

A person who prepares to daven or do a mitzvah should fear the *mekatregim* and hostile and harmful elements who want to grab it from him. Therefore, it was instituted to precede by saying the *tefillah* of "L'Shem Yichud" through which he declares that he is dedicating the fulfillment of this mitzvah to the Name of the King of kings. This way, he can be sure that the *mekatregim* will be afraid to approach his *tefillah* or mitzvah and it will make its way with certainty to the Kisei Hakavod.

Based on this, Harav Shlomo Kluger explained the *passuk* (Tehillim 45:2): "*Rachash libi davar tov omer ani ma'asai laMelech.*" One who comes to do a "*davar tov*", a good thing, and is afraid that the *mekatregim* will steal his mitzvah from him, should precede by declaring "My actions are for the King!" and by doing so he is guaranteed that no one will come close.

The Maharsham of Brezhan added that the Torah teaches us this concept in the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, saying to the one who fulfills this mitzvah: "And you should answer and say," that you are fulfilling this mitzvah "in front of Hashem Elokecha" and by doing so, the *mekatregim* will not be able to grab it away from you. For this reason, *Rashi* states: "*V'anisa v'amarta* – this is a term of raising one's voice." When a person is afraid of those hostile elements he has to say his words in a whisper (see *Tur Orach Chaim* 619 regarding saying *Baruch Shem...*), but with the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, the *mekatregim* cannot touch him because he announces and says that he is fulfilling this mitzvah *l'Shem Hashem*, and therefore, he can say the *Mikra Bikkurim* aloud.

Techeiles Mordechai; Sichas Chulin shel Talmidei Chachamim Hachadash, Chapter 1:1

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Amen Gives Validity and Existence to the Brachah

In the *parashah* this week, the Torah commands Am Yisrael that when they enter the Land, they should gather at Har Grizim and Har Eival, where the *brachos* for those who fulfill the Torah would be heard, along with the curses for those who transgress its laws.

From the words of the *passuk*, it appears that the ones who issued the blessings and curses are those who stood on the mountains, as the *passuk* says (*Devarim* 27:12): "*Eileh ya'amdu levarech es ha'am al Har Grizim... Shimon v'Levi v'Yehudah v'Yissachar v'Yosef uBinyamin.*" But *Rashi* right there brings in the name of *Chazal* that the *Leviim* who stood **between** the mountains are the ones who issued the blessings and the curses, and the rest of the *Shevatim* who stood on the mountains answered amen after each *brachah* and curse.

I thought to say that the simple meaning of the *passuk* can be reconciled with the words of *Chazal*. Although the *Leviim* who stood between the mountains are the ones who recited the *brachos* and curses, the ones who in essence give them validity and existence are the *Shevatim* standing on the mountains and answering amen. That is why the *brachos* and the curses are attributed to them.

The *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* have long expounded on the fact that amen gives existence and foundation to the *brachah*. *Rabbeinu Bechayei* (*Shemos* 14:31) compared the *brachah*

to the testimony said by one witness, and the answering of amen to the second witness, who joins him, and through him the testimony is fulfilled. Regarding this subject, I especially love the words of the *Kli Yakar* (*Ollelos Ephraim* Vol. III *Ma'amar* 460) that compares the *brachah* to the body of the document, while the amen is compared to the signature that gives it validity.

It is wonderful to discover in light of these words that there is a source from the Torah, because of the fact that the Torah crowns the *Shevatim* who stood at Har Grizim as those who were standing to "bless the nation," even though they did not actually say the *brachah*, and only fulfilled it by answering amen.

It very important to remember and to internalize that someone who is scrupulous to make his *brachos* when someone else hears and can answer amen merits both tremendous *zikui harabbim* and also benefits himself, first and foremost. Because by doing this, he merits to have his *brachah* become valid and to last. In contrast, a *brachah* that is not answered by amen has its lasting existence cast into doubt, as we learn from the piercing words of the *Rebbe Rav Tzvi Hirsh of Zidichov* (*Pri Kodesh Hilulim, Sha'ar Habrachos* Ch. 4): "A *brachah* without amen is literally like half a body."

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Twenty Minutes That Brought About Brachah

It was a quarter to eleven at night. The Coca Cola Junction, at the exit of Bnei Brak, was busy as always, even at this hour. After a short wait, the traffic light turned green, and the D. family's minivan turned left and then right, and from there, began traveling south. For the D. family, who lives in Netivot, in southern Israel, the full hitchhiking post on the right of the road symbolizes the exit from the bustling city of Bnei Brak towards the more tranquil south.

Suddenly, they heard a cry from behind, "Wait, I forgot to *bentch!*" The car immediately turned to the side and stopped. "It's alright, I'll *bentch* here, *bedieved*, it is alright..." the voice said again, apologizing for the stop that he had caused. But the father of the family refused – in his eyes, a '*bedieved*' for *Birchas Hamazon* was not "alright" and he decided to turn off at the next exit and return to Bnei Brak.

The D. family was returning from a family *simchah* in Bnei Brak. Fortunately, when the member of the family remembered that they hadn't *bentched*, they weren't too far away,



One of the roads leading to Netivot.

so the whole delay, which included returning to Bnei Brak, *bentching* at the hall and then getting back onto the highway, took just twenty minutes. But those short twenty minutes later emerged to be absolutely crucial. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

The D. family set out again, with a ride of an hour and a half ahead of them. The family was tired, and most of the occupants of the car fell asleep, and the ride was quiet and calm.

Close to midnight, the car turned onto a dark narrow road leading to their destination – Netivot, and suddenly, the father noticed a car standing on the side of the road. The hood was open, and the driver was waving frantically

for help.

Nu, how does one refuse a Jew who needs help?! thought Rabbi D. to himself. He stopped on the side of the road and got out of the car. Only after he emerged did he notice the suspicious appearance of the driver.

"Hey, man, thanks for stopping," the driver said in a pronounced Arab accent. "Our battery is dead and we've been waiting for someone to stop for an hour and a half," he added, and then sent cast a surreptitious glance behind him.

Why had the Arab said "we" in the plural, and who was he looking for behind him? These were the questions that arose in the father's mind, but before he could draw the right conclusion and flee for his life, the frightening reality tapped him on the shoulder...

In front of Rabbi D.'s shocked eyes, three figures suddenly appeared from among the tall stalks in the wheat field on the side of the road. They were three Arabs whose evil expressions gave away their malicious intentions.

In the interim, the members of the family in the car awoke, and quickly realized that they were in deep trouble. From the window they watched in fear as their father stood outside the car, as four Arabs closed in on him threatening. The intentions of

those Arabs were not yet clear enough, but either way, they did not seem positive...

The family stared at what was transpiring outside the car, and in their hearts they were sure that they were about to become the victims of a violent carjacking – in the best case – or a brutal terror attack in the worst case. But suddenly, the story took a turn.

Right and blue light suddenly illuminated the darkness of the night, accompanied by a wailing siren. Two police vehicles appeared as if from the Heavens and stopped with a squeal of the brakes right near the group.

"There are terrorists here!" the family screamed in fright to the police, who

jumped out of the car. The terrorists were also stunned at the sudden arrival, and it took them a second to recover and try to flee. But *bechasei Shamayim* they were arrested after a short pursuit.

A quick interrogation at the scene made it clear to the family what they had been spared from.

After the terrorists were taken to jail and the family somewhat calmed down after their frightening experience, they headed home to sleep for what was left of the night.

The next morning, when word of the miracle was publicized, the surprising other half of the story came to light.

Apparently, at the same time that the D. family had left the hall in Bnei Brak and set out for Netivot, another family, the C.s, had also left; the C. family also lived in Netivot. But while the D. family turned back, the C. family continued straight to Netivot without any delay.

So twenty minutes before the D. family drove by, the C. family had already noticed the car standing at the side of the road, and they also stopped to help. But in contrast to the D. family, they did notice the Arab identity of the "innocent" driver, and they drove on, and as they did, they decided to call the police and report what they had seen.

"There are people here who look like terrorists!" they reported dramatically. But the operator was tired... He listened with half an ear to the complaint, and decided by himself that it was not an urgent call. Ultimately, his conscience gnawed at him, so he decided to send to patrol cars to the scene. Those were the officers who, *bechasei Shamayim*, came to the scene at that critical moment when the D. family was in such crucial danger.

It's not too difficult to imagine what would have been the fate of the D. family had they not gone back to Bnei Brak so the member of the family could recite *Birchas Hamazon b'hiddur*. They would have come to the scene long before the police, and they would have needed a miracle to be saved.

So in the merit of their effort and the sacrifice of the family for the *mitzvah* of *Birchas Hamazon*, they also merited to have their lives saved – and of course, to offer gratitude to Hashem with all their hearts.

— The Kavanah of Amen —

‘K-I Melech Ne’eman’

The word amen has another meaning, that Hashem is the ‘א-ל מלך נאמן’ – which is an acronym of amen, meaning that the one who answers amen testifies that his Creator is the K-I Melech Ne’eman. Therefore, he should ponder these words while answering amen.

Sources and Explanations

The simple meaning of the word amen is “emes,” it is true (*Peirush Hatefillos Vechabrachos* by Rav Y. ben Yakar, Vol. II, p. 112). But in *Maseches Shabbos* (119b), Rabbi Chanina explains that “א-ל מלך נאמן” is an acronym for “א-ל מלך נאמן” and *Rashi* explains (ibid ad loc. *K-l*): “This way, he testifies that his Creator is a K-I Melech Ne’eman.” *Siddur Tzelosa D’Avraham* (Vol. I, p. 261) points out that the source of this praise is in *Sefer Yetzirah* (Ch. 5:5). And see *Peirush Hatefillos Vechabrachos* by Rav Y. Ben Yakar (Vol. I, p. 81), who wrote

that the sons of Yaakov said this praise when they asked their father to reveal to them the end of the *galus*, and the Shechinah departed from him (see *Pesachim* 56a). Because the children of Yaakov were aware that he was being precluded from revealing the end to them, and said, “K-I Melech Ne’eman,” meaning: Even though the end was not revealed to them, we are sure and we believe with all our hearts that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is faithful to His promise and will redeem us when the time comes. But see *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 61), which brings that the *Rema*’h wrote of this praise: “Yaakov did not say it, and neither did his sons, nor did Moshe.”

And here the *Tosafos* writes (*Shabbos* ibid ad loc. *Amar Reb*) that a person should think of this praise at the time that they answer amen, and they cite the *Bach* (*Orach Chaim* end of 56) and the *Prishah* (ibid 7; *Orach Chaim* 124 6). And the *Sefer Chassidim* wrote (18): “And a person should have *kavanah* in his heart at the time when he answers amen that He is the K-I Melech Ne’eman.”

Ro’ei Emunim

From the Words of Our Gedolim on Answering Amen

Harav Bentzion Yaakov Halevi Wosner, shlita

Av Bais Din Shevet Halevi Beit Shemesh



B”H Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 5783

To the honorable Bney Emunim, the *chassidim* and *yirei Hashem* who work to strengthen the answering of amen,

I would like to convey what I heard from my father and teacher, the *gaon* and *tzaddik*, the Shevet Halevi, *zi”l*. When many illnesses that are not brought in the Torah became common, and there were other very difficult occurrences, he often said that in his view, these *tzaros* strike us for two sins: the first is “*aveiros shebaseser*” – regarding all that is holy for Am Yisrael, and it is known that he was at the forefront of the campaign against the “plague of the impure internet,” and the second is the laxity in answering amen.

The *poskim* bring that one must be careful to answer ninety amens a day (see *Magen Avraham* 6:4). And women must meet this quota as well. And in order to strengthen this matter overall, and for the sake of *zikui harabbim*, I will reveal a personal practice that I have implemented in my home and in my children’s homes, with much success. And I am revealing this despite the fact that it is brought that a person should keep his good deeds discreet, as it says (*Michah* 6:8): “*Vehatznea leches im Elokecha*,” because if one believes that by publicizing his deeds, others will learn from him, it is permitted, and in fact it is a mitzvah to publicize it.

This mitzvah of answering amen has been beloved to me for many years, in addition to the great merit one earns from it, and especially in light of the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 53b): “The one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*,” and their promise that “anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened to him,” (*Shabbos* 119b). I therefore implemented in my home, when my children were little, that my Rebbetzin, *tlita*, said *Birchas HaTorah*, *Birchos Hashachar* and *Birchos Hanehenin* in front of us and the rest of the family, aloud. This way, all of us, including the children, heard and answered amen. We uphold this practice to this day. And even once my children grew up and got married, and became parents themselves to grandchildren who visit our home, or

whenever I have the chance to visit their home, I have asked that they do this. It is remarkable how much joy this brings to Hashem, and to other people, who are all *b”H* keeping this great *minhag* with *simchah*, along with their wives and sons and daughters from near and far. And with this, even the women manage to accrue more than 90 amens each day.

Aside for the great virtue of amen, as mentioned, this holy and dignified practice is also a matter of *chinuch* for the younger generation, so that they learn to habituate themselves to recite *Birchas Hamazon* and other *brachos*, to thank Hashem “*bekol simchah*” as is the *halachah*. I saw this practice among the sages of the generation, my father, and the Bais Yisrael, *zechusam yagen aleinu*, both of whom were very scrupulous about this.

This was all reinforced after I saw the holy words written in the *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) about the great virtue and reward of answering amen [and conversely, dreadful things about the punishment for those who are lax, and are quiet when they should be answering amen, see there]. See there that the *passuk* (*Yeshayahu* 26:2) says of a person who is on guard and waits for the merit to answer amen, “*Pischu she’arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*.” And we can say that this contains an allusion that with the merit of answering amen, we merit to see righteous generations – “*Goy tzaddik shomer emunim*.” May it be Hashem’s Will that your reward and the reward of all who are careful about this should be very great.

Praised are you, *mezekei harabbim*, who have merited to raise awareness for Am Yisrael, and may you see the rewards in this world and in the World to Come.



Otzros Emunim

Saying Brachos Out Loud

Write the *Kavanos* of Amen

Rabbi Eliezer Papo, author of *Damesek Eliezer (Maareches 1, Amen)*, urges one to make every effort to have *kavanah* when answering amen, despite the difficulty involved. He also offers a practical piece of advice that makes it easier: “Even though Chazal say (*Avodah Zarah 3a*): ‘HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not expect from His creations something they cannot do,’ and He knows that our hearts are not with us, we are like drunks because of the many things we are busy with, yet, it still behooves us to strengthen ourselves and to have *kavanah* whenever possible, and may Hashem help us. One who fears the Word of Hashem should write on a paper or parchment the *kavanah* of amen of the *brachos* and *Kaddish*, and these words should always be in front of his eyes during *Chazaras Hashatz* and *Kaddish*. And Hashem wants the way a person wants to go, and if he seeks to purify himself and to have *kavanah*, then he receives Divine assistance, and he will receive a twofold reward from Heaven.”

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

To the Nasi of Bney Emunim,
Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*

I read the *Vechol Ma'aminim* pamphlet each week, and derive from it much benefit. Regarding answering amen, Chazal say (*Brachos 6b*): “These are things that are at the pinnacle of the world, and people are lax about them,” and you stand on guard each week to raise awareness about the importance of answering amen.

You have written a number of times about the shame that people feel, as they are embarrassed to ask people they don't know if they can recite *Birchos Hashachar* for them. You aptly wrote that “everything is based on the one who is ashamed,” because one who knows the value of answering amen understands that he is giving his friend a gift that cannot be quantified.

A beautiful allusion that came to mind on this subject: In Chapter 29 of *Tehillim*, there are 91 words, which is the numerical value of amen. And the last *passuk* is “*Hashem oz l'amo yiten...*” to teach us that one who seeks to be strict to answer amen receives an abundance of courage and strength from Above.

May Hashem give you much strength to continue to raise the banner of answering amen for many more years, amen v'amen.

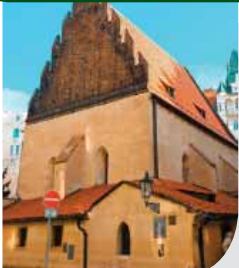
Sincerely,

Boruch Shimon Hakohein, Haifa

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

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The Almeu Shul in Prague

The Maharal of Prague

18 Elul 5369

Harav Yehudah Loew was born to his father, Rav Betzalel, in the city of Posna, Poland, around the year 5280. The Maharal does not mention in any of his many *seforim* who his teachers were, and therefore, there are those who conclude that he learned most of his Torah by himself.

When he became of age, he married Rebbetzin Pearl, the daughter of Reb Shmelke Reich. In 5313, he was appointed Rav of Nikolsburg, and later, as Rav of the entire Moravia region. After twenty years, in 5333, the Maharal moved to Prague and established a large *beis medrash*, where sages and *talmidei chachamim* learned. He printed his first work, *Gur Aryeh*, on the *peirush* of *Rashi* on Torah, in 5338. He later published many more *seforim* that delve into the fundamentals of Torah and the obligation of a person in this world, which have become basic Torah works.

In time, the Maharal moved from Prague to his native city of Posna, and served as Rav there. In 5358, he was appointed to serve as Rav in Prague, a position he held until his passing on 18 Elul 5369.

The greatness of the Maharal and the esteem in which he was held by the sages of his time are indicated by the inscription that the Jews of Prague wrote on his *matzeivah* in the ancient cemetery in the city. The *matzeivah* extols his proficiency in פ"ד"ד – the four parts of Torah, and praises his ability to delve into everything, big or small, his prolific writing and publication of *seforim*, with more than 15 compilations. It also notes that he supported his generation with his ability to answer questions, and to be *mechadesh chiddushim* on all of *Mishnah*, *Gemara*, *Rashi* and *Tosafos*. All this was done with purity and *yiras Shamayim*, alacrity and caution.

Emunah Out of Understanding

The Maharal (*Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Ha'avodah* Chapter 11) explained that because the main point of answering amen is declaring *emunah* in the words of the *mevarech*, therefore, it needs to be said with *kavanah* and understanding: He wrote:

“You must understand the word amen, and the difference that there is between the one who makes the *brachah* and the one who answers amen. Because the *oneh* needs to have understanding that he believes this thing. And something that is without understanding is not called *emunah*; only *emunah* is in the heart. And that is not the case with the *mevarech*, because even though it is fitting that he should have *kavanah* in his heart, still, because he makes the *brachah*, even if he does not have *kavanah* he is still *yotzei*. But if the one who answers amen does not have *kavanah* it is not an amen at all.”

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