

VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

A Brachah for Hashavas Aveidah

לא תראה את שור אחיך או את שני נדחים (והתעלמות מהם השב תשיבם לאחריך) (כב א)

Harav David Avudraham cited a *teshuvah* in his *sefer* written by Rav Yosef Ibn Platt in which he details the *mitzvos* for which one does not make a *brachah*, and the reasons why not. Among the *mitzvos* that we do not make a *brachah* on is the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah*, returning a lost item.

Harav Aryeh Leibush Balchover, the Rav of Zaslav and author of *Shem Aryeh*, cited on this subject a story that happened in his city. "There was a man who found his friend's lost money and returned it, and when returning it, he made a *brachah* of *Asher Kidshanu Bemitzvosav Vetzivanu al Hashavas Aveidah*. A few people thought he had done a fine thing. And when they related this to me I told him that his reward for doing the *mitzvah* had been forfeited due to the loss – and that is a *brachah levatalah*. They wondered about this until I showed them the *teshuvah* in *Avudraham*, where he explains that one does not make a *brachah* on *hashavas aveidah* at all."

From the response of Rav Y. ben Platt, it appears that we do not make a *brachah* on *hashavas aveidah* because there is a rule in *birchos hamitzvah* that we only make a *brachah* on a *mitzvah* that is entirely contingent on the person doing it. But one does not make a *brachah* on *mitzvos* that are contingent on others. Because *hashavas aveidah* also depends on the owner agreeing to receive the returned item, we do not make a *brachah* on it. (See *Tamim De'im* 179)

Another reason why we do not make a *brachah* on this *mitzvah* is offered by *Shem Aryeh*, according to the rule written by *Rabbeinu Bechayei* (*Bamidbar* 15:38), that *Chazal* instituted to recite *birchos hamitzvos* on the "*mitzvos muskalos*" – *mitzvos* that we would be doing even if we would not have been commanded to do them. We make *brachos* only on *mitzvos mekubalos* – the *mitzvos* that we would not have fulfilled if we would not have been commanded to do so, such as *tzitzis* and *tefillin*. *Hashavas aveidah* is a

mitzvah sichlis, a common sense *mitzvah*, and therefore we do not make a *brachah* on it.

Avudraham Birchas Hamitzvos; Shu"t Shem Aryeh, 1

We Earn Double for Meah Brachos

שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים תקח לך למען (י"טב לך והארכת ימים) (כב ז)

Harav Yitzchak Majeled, one of the sages of Baghdad, derived from this *passuk* an allusion to the reward of one who is strict to recite 100 *brachos* each day:

האם has the same letters as מאה. "*Shale'ach teshalach es ha'em*" – if a person sends each day one hundred *brachos* to his Father in heaven, "*v'es habanim tikach lach*" – the *hashpa'os* of holiness that are born from the power of the *brachos* he will take for himself. And the *passuk* continues: "*Lema'an yitav lach*," that one who makes *meah brachos* a day will have good, in that he will receive as a reward a thousand gold coins. As *Chazal* say (*Chulin* 87a), the reward of each *brachah* is ten gold coins. In addition, he will merit the *brachah* of "*veha'arachta yamim*," and as *Chazal* say (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) that when *Dovid Hamelech* instituted the *meah brachos*, he stopped a death plague that was raging in his days.

Tzelach Rechav

The Land and Everything On It Are Sanctified for Meah Brachos

לא תזרע כרמך כלאים פן תקדש המלאה הזרע (אשר תזרע ותבואת הכרם) (כב ט)

The *Yerushalmi* (*Brachos* 6a, based on *Yafeh Mareh* *ibid*) explains from this *passuk* a source for the obligation of *Birchos Hanehenin*. The word *המלאה* alludes to the land and all that fills it, and the Torah put it next to *tevuas hakerem* to teach that the world is like a vineyard. Just like the fruits of the vineyard in its fourth year [*neta revai*] are permitted to eat out of *Yerushalayim* only if they are redeemed with money, likewise, the entire world and all that is in it are not permitted to eat until they are redeemed with a *brachah*.

In light of the words of the *Yerushalmi*,

Harav Betzalel Hakohen of Vilna extrapolated from this *passuk* the obligation to say *Meah Brachos*: The word *המלאה* has the same letters as *המאה* and the *passuk* cautions: "Do not plant *kilayim* in your vineyard" – don't redeem all the pleasures of this world, which is compared to a vineyard, with one *brachah* like "*shehakol nihiyeh bidvaro*", that will exempt them all, "*pen tikdash hameleah*" because the world and all that is in it with all its pleasures are sanctified in order to reach the quota of *Meah Brachos* (see *Menachos* 43b). And as we see, the *brachah* of *Hamotzi* on the "*zera asher tizra*" does not exempt the *brachah* of the wine, that is required of "*tevuas hakerem*."

Kovetz Kerem Shlomo, Sivan 5759 p. 203, from a ksav yad

A Curse and Its Converse

ולא אבה ה' אלקיך לשמוע אל בלעם ויהפך ה' אלקיך (לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך) (כג ו)

The *Arizal* said: When we reverse the word *קללה* from end to beginning, we get the word *הלל-ק*, and that is an allusion to the praise of the Name of Hashem one hundred times, which is done by reciting one hundred *brachos* a day. From here, when there is a *קללה* – a curse – decreed on a person, the decision is in his hands whether to accept it as it is, or perhaps to transform it to *הלל-ק* – by being strict to say *Meah Brachos* a day, which turns the curse into a blessing. This is what the *passuk* refers to when saying: "ויהפך" – *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* put in our hands the possibility to turn the curse into a *brachah*, through *brachos*.

That is what the *passuk* means (*Devarim* 11:26): "*Re'eh Anochi nosein lifneichem hayom brachah veklalah*." Even when there is a curse decreed upon you *chalilah*, it is in your hands, and you can transform it into a *brachah*, by saying 100 *brachos* a day. *Dovid Hamelech* alluded to this in *Tehillim* (109:17): "*Vaye'ehav kelalah vatevoe'hu velo chafetz bivrachah vatirchak mimenu*." When someone does not want to be strict to say one hundred *brachos*, and by doing so to transform the curse to a blessing, it is a sign that he likes the curse, *chalilah*.

Derech Moshe for Day 11

Both Brachos and Amen

This story was sent by a loyal reader, who wanted to share the wondrous *yeshuah* he merited in the *zechus* of being strict about *brachos* and answering amen. This is the letter, with minor editorial changes:

I married about three years ago. Because our parents are not people of means, they were unable to help us with housing. By that I mean with paying the rent; buying an apartment was not something any of us dreamed about.

On the advice of one of our relatives, we purchased, using a mortgage and other loans, an old apartment in Teveriah, at a bargain price. Based on the calculations that we made, after deducting the mortgage payment, there should have been enough left from the rent payment to help towards the rent we were paying on a tiny studio apartment in Bnei Brak.

The plans were wonderful...but as the *passuk* says, "*Rabbos machshavos*

we also had the added expenses of the many repairs. The situation was terrible. We went into tremendous debt. But the straw that broke the camel's back was after we finished all the repairs.

A new tenant entered the apartment and we hoped that from that point on, the rental payments would be made on time. But we quickly realized that this was not the case. When we signed the contract, we asked the renter for checks for a year, and he replied that there was nothing to worry about, and promised to provide them very soon. Because we were so anxious to rent the apartment out, we believed him and let him move in before he made payment arrangements. Whenever we asked him for the rent, he had different excuse. First, his checks were used up, and then his son got very sick. He apologized and excused himself endlessly, and always promised that in the next few days he'd come to Bnei Brak to bring us the checks.



Kiryat Shmuel - Teveria

belev ish v'atzas Hashem hi sakum."

The purchase turned out to be disastrous on all fronts. Although the apartment that we had purchased was old and neglected, and located in one of the older, more rundown neighborhoods of the city, it turned out to even be worse than it appeared. The infrastructure was all eroded; there were countless problems in the water and sewage systems, and many electrical issues. As soon as we finished fixing one problem, another one arose...As such, we struggled to find tenants, and even when we finally found one, he quickly fled the apartment.

Time passed and the expenses were mounting. Repair followed repair, and the apartment remained empty for many long months. So if it wasn't enough that the sporadic rental payments that we received didn't cover the mortgage,

When the checks finally arrived after he had been living in the apartment for three months, we breathed a sigh of relief. But unfortunately for us, within a day, they bounced. The bank refused to honor them. Again, we heard countless promises, and that's how things kept going until he moved out after seven months without

paying us even one shekel.

But that was not yet the end of our travails. When we came to visit the apartment we were stunned into silence. Absolute destruction met our eyes; scraped walls, broken doors and piles of garbage everywhere. It was indescribable.

My heart sank. As it was we had barely survived the damage that this apartment had caused us until now. I felt like I just could not stand anymore.

Before we returned to Bnei Brak, completely broken and helpless, I went to the shul in the Kiryat Shmuel neighborhood to daven Maariv. I waited for a *minyan* to gather, and in the meantime, I noticed an elderly Yid sitting on the side of the shul. He was holding a small pad and a calculator, and was very busy making calculations. "How does a distinguished looking

Jew like this allow himself to make calculations in a shul?!" I felt the criticism rising in my mind, and he must have felt my surprised looks and replied with a smile, "Don't worry, I'm not doing mundane calculations...I'm calculating the *brachos* and the *amens* that I said today. I do this every evening, to see if I fulfilled my obligation to say one hundred *brachos* and ninety *amens* each day."

"Young man!" the older man exclaimed as he looked at me with wise eyes. "It's a good thing for you to do as well, and it is guaranteed that the gates of *brachah* will open for you."

I was very moved to hear his words. I understood that it was not for naught that I had heard them right now, and on the spot, I took upon myself to recite one hundred *brachos* and ninety *amens* a day. The next morning, I purchased a little pad and began to mark down my *brachos* and *amens*.

At the beginning of Tammuz last year, exactly two weeks after I began this practice, I returned home after *Maariv*, and the phone rang. The speaker identified himself as the administrator of a Torah school in Teveriah. "I am missing a place for a kindergarten to open next year," he said, without realizing how significant his words were for me. "And your apartment is on the ground floor and very close to our institution, so it is perfectly suited to our needs. We'll take care of renovating it and adapting it, and we'll pay you rent starting from right now."

I did not believe what I was hearing. I hadn't dreamed of such a thing happening. Of course, I agreed right away.

Presently, the administrator of the school came to my house and signed with me on a long term contract that included generous rental payments, more than a thousand shekel than an apartment in that area was worth, and also took upon himself all the renovation expenses. If that was not enough, as the apartment was being adapted for a new classroom, it was completely renovated, and with the agreement of the neighbors, a bit of the building's back yard was also attached to it. So it went from being a neglected, rundown apartment, to a modern, clean place that was a pleasure to use.

In the merit of the *brachos* and the *amens*, my dream came true. We began to receive monthly rental payments that were higher than we expected, and after the mortgage was paid, we still had a nice sum to pay rent for the apartment where we lived. Thank You, Hashem!

The *Mashpia* Harav Elimelech Biderman, *shlita*



Chazal say (*Tanchuma Ki Sisa* 31) that the first *luchos* that were given in public did not merit to last and were broken, while the second *luchos* that were given in a covert manner did last. The *Sfas Emes* asked (*Ki Sisa* 5639): Why if so did Hashem give the first *luchos* publicly if He knew this would lead to their breakage? And he answered that when you start something quietly, it does not have longevity. It was necessary to begin giving the Torah in public, even though in the end this led to the first *luchos* being broken, as long as it has publicity and through that, longevity.

There is a parable that illustrates this: A person who prepares himself a cup of coffee must first make it very hot, even though it's not possible to drink it like that, because if he prepares it from the start at a temperature that he can drink it at, he won't be able to drink it at all because it will have a bland flavor...

For this reason, Bney Emunim is doing a great thing at their gatherings, and the many public activities they do to increase the importance of answering amen. And by doing so they inculcate in Am Yisrael to begin the *avodah* of the day by saying *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, which has many great virtues.

It is brought in the name of Harav Yechezkel of Kuzmir that why "is the *oneh* amen greater than the *mevarech*" (*Brachos* 53a)? Because one who answers amen focuses on his friend's benefit. The *mevarech* is doing the mitzvah, but the one who gives it validity and completion is the one who answers amen to it, and because he is helping his friend, he is greater than the one doing the mitzvah for himself (*Nechmad Mizahav, Parashas Pekudei*).

This point can illustrate the great virtue of someone who strengthens the matter of answering amen, as the whole meaning of answering amen is focusing on the good of the *mevarech* that his *brachah* should be fulfilled.

The Maggid of Mezeritsch says on

the *passuk* (*Bereishis* 7:1): "Bo atah vechol beisecha el hateivah – your life and that of your whole family are contingent on one 'teivah,' one word, and that is amen."

On the same subject, the Rebbe of Lechovitch added: Some will ask how a great person can get into a small *teivah*...? But in fact, someone who thinks that he is a *gadol* and the amen is small – cannot get inside it...but if someone thinks that he is small and the amen is great, he can get into it with plenty of room, with his whole family.

Most notable is the one who heads this wonderful enterprise, and *gedolim* have said that he is a *mechayeh meisim* in our generation, because the author of *Sefer Chassidim* (261) wrote that every mitzvah that does not have demand is like a *meis mitzvah* and all are his relatives. Indeed, in our generation there has been an unbelievable *techiyas hameisim*...old and young – everyone says *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*.

If you want to hear a real *techiyas hameisim* that was done from the power of this wonderful mitzvah, listen to what the brother of Nasi of Bney Emunim Harav Aharon Tzvi Marmorstein, *shlita*, Rosh Kollel of Seret Vizhnitz in Bnei Brak, related:

The Liezhe Rebbe, *zt"l*, of Stamford Hill, London, suffered a heart ailment and became very weak. His Rebbetzin, *tlita*, took upon herself to be strict – like Bney Emunim – to say *Birchos Hashachar* each day in front of someone who could answer amen. Toward this end, she would wait each day for her husband, the Rebbe, to return from shul, listen to her *brachos* and answer amen.

On the morning of Monday, 13 Elul, 5778, when the Rebbe returned from the *beis medrash*, the Rebbetzin was busy cooking in the kitchen. At first, she thought she'd first finish her cooking, and then she'd go to say *brachos*, as was her practice.

On second thought, she decided not to push it off, because "a mitzvah that comes your way, do not miss out on it." And answering amen needs to be

done as early as possible, with the whole *bren*, that shouldn't be cooled off *chalilah*.

In the middle of cooking, the Rebbetzin stopped and went into the Rebbe's room and began to say the *brachos* for him. She began with *Hanosein Lasechvi Binah*, and continued until *Hanosein Laya'ef Koach*.

When she finished "*Hagomel Chassadim Tovim L'Amo Yisrael*," she waited for the amen, but the Rebbe didn't answer...She looked up and saw his head slumped down and his eyes closed.

She realized right away that it was a heart attack and called *hatzolah*. Within a minute, an ambulance was on the scene, and after extensive resuscitation, they were able to restore his heartbeat.

Had she stayed in the kitchen to finish cooking, she would have been delayed quite a while, and she would not have known what was happening in the Rebbe's room.

When Chazal say (*Brachos* 48a): "Anyone who prolongs his amen has his day and years lengthened," they were talking about this as well...

"*Yismechu Hashamayim vesagel ha'aretz*" – this happened on the exact day of the *yahrtzeit* of the one in whose merit the Bney Emunim revolution, the *techiyas hameisim* of the generation, was established – Rav Chaim Bentzion Marmorstein, *zt"l*, the father of the Nasi of Bney Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov. Who knows? Perhaps it was the upper and lower worlds together that saved the Rebbe...

And as has been often explained, *אמן מצילה נפשות* is an acronym for *אמן*.

Indeed, that is the rule. When you do something regularly and don't give up on it no matter what, then Hashem provides special *siyata diShmaya*.

Excerpted from words delivered at a Bney Emunim gathering – Tishrei 5778

Hayom Nechbad LiBney Emunim

Tuesday, 13 Elul, will be the twentieth *yahrtzeit* of my father, Rav Chaim Bentzion ben Rav Aharon Tzvi, *zt"l*. This day will also mark fourteen years since the establishment of Bney Emunim, the greatest revolution to strengthen the answering of amen in Eretz Yisrael and around the world, established in his memory.

As one who grew up under the influence of my father, the mitzvah of answering amen is part and parcel of who I am. My father, *zt"l*, from an early age until his final day, observed this mitzvah with all his strength and ability. He valued each and every amen, and saw it a veritable treasure, and he could never get enough amens. He never was able to understand how people are ready to forego such a treasure.

It took about six years after my father's passing to establish Bney Emunim. At first, when I raised my desire and my plan to work to strengthen answering amen to my friends, they shook their heads. They agreed with me that this is something that needed a *tikkun*; no one disputed that. But they didn't believe it was possible to change the approach of people to this lofty mitzvah. But in the end, the tremendous backing I received from *Gedolei Yisrael* gave me the strength and courage to forge ahead.

The first Bney Emunim gathering took place on my father's *yahrtzeit*, 13 Elul 5769, in Bnei Brak. It was graced with the participation of the *posek hador*, HaRav Shmuel Wosner, and the Rosh Yeshivah, Harav Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman, *zy"ta*. It was an impressive event that signaled the launch of Bney Emunim's expansive activities, which *baruch Hashem*, are growing as the years go by.

Over the years, thanks to the work of Bney Emunim, more and more Yidden merit to connect to *Birchos Hashachar*, and to say them aloud, with *kavanah*, and *bechavrusa* – in keeping with the ancient *minhag* – to another Jew who completes and adorns the *brachah* by answering amen.

From then to this day, I have invested, *bechasei Shamayim*, a tremendous fortune in imbuing the public with awareness of answering amen in general, and after *Birchos Hashachar* in particular. Endless effort and resources have been invested in *chinuch mosdos* and in the community. There is no one who hasn't been exposed to the activities, and this is not the place to detail their tremendous scope.

When I look back today, upon my father's twentieth *yahrtzeit*, I am extremely moved to see the revolution we have been *zocheh* to effect. Today, it is not an unusual sight to see people saying *Birchos Hashachar* for one another. The sound of answering amen aloud can be heard in shuls and *batei medrash*, schools and *yeshivos* from very early in the morning. This entire *chizuk* of the mitzvah is

in my father's merit, as it was all inspired by him.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 119b) promise tremendous reward to one who is careful to answer amen properly: "Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden open for him," as it says (*Yeshayah* 26:2): '*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.*' Do not read it *shomer emunim*, but rather *she'omrim amen.*" And the question is known: Why does it say "*shaarei Gan Eden,*"



Rav Chaim Bentzion ben Reb Aharon Tzvi Marmurstein, *zt"l*, passed away on 13 Elul 5763.



The founding event of Bney Emunim on 13 Elul 5769 in the presence of Harav Shmuel Wosner and Harav Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman, *zecher tzaddikim livrachah.*

in the plural – isn't the purpose to sit in Gan Eden? What difference does it make how many gates are opened for one to get there?

I thought that perhaps a person who "answers amen with all his strength," like my father, *zt"l*, merits to open many gates not only for himself, but also for many others, because when people learn from his deeds and are careful to answer amen, then the gates of Gan Eden are opened for them as well. And you can see what kind of revolution has taken place in my father's merit.

Another point: At the passing of a parent, we see that answering amen is the cord that ties us to them. Because one of the primary components of *tefillah* from the *amud* is the

repetition of the *tefillah*, and saying *Kaddish*, whose goal is to be *mezakeh* the *rabbim* with answering amen, as we declare time after time when saying *Kaddish*: '*V'imru amen.*'

A beautiful idea came to my mind: The Tanna Rabi Meir (*Sanhedrin* 110b) answers the question from which age a little child who passes on merits Olam Haba, that "from the time he says amen." Based on this, the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 124 7) rules: "And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as the baby answers amen he has a share in Olam Haba." And see how wondrous it is that with that same amen that our parents taught us, they brought us to a life in Olam Haba, and at the same time we also grant them a benefit after their passing and that brings them to life in Olam Haba. As Rav Moshe ben Machir wrote in his *sefer Seder Hayom* (*Kavanas Bircho*): "They instituted to say *Kaddish* for the dead because when answering amen with all his strength, he draws the *koach* of *taharah* and cools the Gehinnom for an hour and a half (see *Zohar Noach* 62 2) and banishes the power of impurity so that it should not control his father or mother at that time, and on the contrary, brings them to Gan Eden."

One can say that Rabi Yehuda Halevi alluded to this concept in his *piyut* "*Yom Shabason Ein Lishkoach*" with the words: "*Hayom nechbad libney emunim zehirim leshomro avos ubanim.*" The mitzvah of answering amen "is carefully observed by fathers" – as soon as the son begins to speak, "and sons" – after the passing of their parents when they bring them to a life in Olam Haba from the power of answering amen. So we find that being strict about answering amen connects the son to his parents from the moment the child is born unit the passing of the father, in the essence of "in their lives and in their deaths they did not part" (*Shmuel* II, 1:23).

My father passed away in 5763. That year, 13 Elul fell, like this year, on the Wednesday after *Parshas Ki Seitzei*, and every year, the *yahrtzeit* falls around the time that this *parashah* is read. *Parashas Ki Seitzei* begins with the *passuk*: "*Ki seitzei lemilchamah* –

If you go to war against your enemy, and Hashem puts them in your hands, and you capture prisoners from them." I thought to say: The words *כי תצא* are an acronym for *כל יום תענה צ' אמנים*, and this was the uniqueness of my father, that he was strict each day to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from many people, to meet the quota of ninety amens. I am sure that this merit advocated for him to prevail over his enemies and *mekatregim* when he came to the world that is all good, and the gates of Gan Eden were opened wide for him, as is promised to one who answers amen with all his strength.

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein