

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

A word from the founder
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

It Depends Only on You!

"וכי ירבה ממך הדרך כי לא תוכל שאתו כי ירחק ממך המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך לשום שמו שם כי יברכך ה' אלקיך" (ד' כד)

Harav Mordechai Hakohein of Tzefas explained:

"*Ki yirchak...hamakom*" – if you feel a sense of distance from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who is the *Mekomo shel Olam*, know that this distance stems "*mimcha*", it is because of you, because for His part, "Hashem is close to all of those who call His Name" (*Tehillim* 145:18), and it is in the hands of a person to decide with his deeds if he will remain close to Hashem, or *chalilah*, he will grow more distant.

Sifsei Kohein

Tefillah Spares a Person from Many Things

"לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עני" (טז ג)

Chazal explain (*Pesachim* 36a) that the Torah calls the matzah "*lechem oni*" because it is "*lechem she'onin*, bread that many things are answered for" and *Rashi* explains "that *Hallel* is finished over [this bread], and the *Haggadah* is said over it."

The Dzikover Rebbe, the Imrei Noam, added that these words of *Chazal* contain another meaning:

The *Gemara* (*Taanis* 8b) says that when the decree of hunger comes to the world together with the decree of a plague, one must pray only for the nullification of the decree of hunger, because if Hashem is appeased, and He brings satiety to the world, then the plague will also be cancelled. That is because Hashem only gives satiation for the sake of life, as the *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 145:16) "*Pose'ach es yadecha umasbia lechol chai ratzon.*"

This concept is alluded to in these words: When a person needs salvation on a number of matters, it is enough for him to pray to be spared from "*lechem oni*" and then He will be answered from Above and be spared from "*devarim harbeh.*"

Imrei Noam, Va'eira

A Brachah Aloud – Is Everything!!

At the beginning of this *parashah* we read a *passuk* that contains a very important rule and a fundamental concept for anyone seeking to fulfill the obligation to recite *brachos* according to *halachah*, and that is "*es habrachah – asher tishme'u.*" In other words, a *brachah* of a *Yid* needs to be heard! These words were heard from the *Divrei Chaim* of Sanz, zy" a, as a rebuke to one of his *chassidim* who said *Birchos Hashachar* quietly, so no one was able to answer amen after them (*Ateres Chaim* p. 103).

The obligation to say the *brachah* aloud is well understood and clear, because the objective of the *brachah* is to arouse *emunah* in the Kingship of Hashem in the heart of the listeners. In fact, we learn that Avraham Avinu taught the people in his generation to believe in Hashem through saying *brachos*. But Rabbi Yehuda Hachassid, in *Sefer Chassidim* (257) added that reciting the *brachah* out loud saves a person from the prohibition of stealing. That is because one who says the *brachah* in a whisper robs the *tzibbur* of the mitzvah of answering amen.

At first glance, this seems puzzling: Who did I rob?! What relevance does the other person have to the *brachah* that I am about to make, in a whisper or aloud, being that the food is mine and the *brachah* is my obligation?

Based on the above, we can understand this well: By the fact that the Torah stresses "*es habrachah asher tishme'un,*" it

is revealing that the *brachah* is not the exclusive domain of the *mevarech*, because part of the obligation is to say it aloud to those who are listening, so that they can answer amen after it.

This powerful *chiddush* of Rabbi Yehudah Hachassid led me to a piercing insight: *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 35b) that eating without a *brachah* is "like stealing from HaKadosh Baruch Hu and *Knesses Yisrael*," and in light of this, we find that only a *brachah* said out loud will completely absolve us of this issue. Because if one makes a *brachah* in a whisper, there will still be a chance that he is stealing the mitzvah of answering amen from *Knesses Yisrael*. It needs to be emphasized that it is not only the stealing of the actual mitzvah, because we all know how many tremendously good things one who answers amen receives, and the one who makes a *brachah* in a whisper robs the *oneh* of these things that he would merit if he would answer amen.

Let us be strict to make all our *brachos* –from *Birchos Hashachar* until the end of the day – aloud and in the ears of someone who will answer amen after them. This way, we will merit to make the *brachah* according to *halachah*, and to give our friends the *zechus* of the mitzvah of amen and the abundance of blessing that is promised to those who answer.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Open My Heart to Your Torah, With Love...

This story is about Shlomo Zalman, a refined yeshivah *bochur* with good *middos*, a son of a distinguished family in Israel, who struggled greatly with his studies in yeshivah.

He was able to understand the basic meaning of the *Gemara* the yeshivah was learning only after herculean efforts and great difficulty. But when it came to *Tosafos* and the commentaries, he just could not grasp the material.

But his primary difficulty that marred his success was the fact that even the bit that he was finally able to grasp he forgot within a short time. This was evident on the tests that the yeshivah administered, on which he earned very poor grades, if he even took the test...

Think about a *bochur* who tries and



The Divrei Yoel of Satmar during davening

tries and is still left with nothing...How much motivation will have to continue investing an effort?! And that was the case with Shlomo Zalman; he tried so hard, but failure after failure wore down his spirit and drove him nearly to despair.

His devoted parents, who did whatever they could to provide their son with professional help, poured their hearts out in *tefillah*. They used every free minute they had to daven and plead for their son to find his way in Torah. The *tefillas* infused them with energy to keep on hoping and believing in his success.

The change was very sudden.

Each Motzaei Shabbos, Shlomo Zalman's *maggid shiur* graded the

tests from the past week. Naturally, he began with the tests of the *bochurim* who brought him much *nachas*. It was enough to just glance at the tests to see that, as usual, they were written well and indicated the excellence and diligence of the *bochurim* who had filled them out. Then he moved onto the tests of the more mediocre boys, where he needed to work a bit harder to make sure they had written the right answers, and to make comments in the margins when necessary, to point out the errors and guide the boys to the correct response.

He would leave Shlomo Zalman's test for the end. Usually, the test was largely empty, and wasn't even returned, but sometimes, Shlomo Zalman would write partial answers, and in such cases, the *maggid shiur* took care to address this with admiration. He knew very well how much effort Shlomo Zalman put into his learning, and he sought any way possible to express his admiration for the effort.

This time as well, instinctively, the *maggid shiur* put Shlomo Zalman's test on the bottom of the pile. When he finished the other tests, he sighed deeply, opened the folded page of Shlomo Zalman's test, and he emitted a cry of surprise...

At first, he pinched himself in disbelief. Then he glanced at the name on the test again; perhaps there was a mistake... But no: there was Shlomo Zalman's name at the top of the page. The test was filled in completely, with long, clear, detailed answers, in the *bochur's* familiar rounded writing – which could not be mistaken for someone else's.

After calming down a bit, the *maggid shiur* went over the answers one by one, and he literally gasped. This was not to be believed. The answers were all correct, written with clarity and understanding. It was clear that the writer was proficient in the *sugya* and its many details. In other words – it was a perfect test!

Excitedly, the *maggid shiur* picked up his pen to write some words to the *bochur*. In contrast to all the previous times, when he'd had to choose his words carefully to try to find those that on the one hand, would not be detached from reality, but on the other hand, would not deflate Shlomo Zalman's resolve to keep trying, this time, the words of praise flowed from his pen, along with encouragement and amazement.

This scene repeated itself for two or three weeks. By then, the *maggid shiur* could not contain his curiosity, and he

had to understand the secret. Was it a medication that the *bochur* had started taking, or perhaps a special treatment that his parents had decided to try?

He called Shlomo Zalman's parents, and after opening with the appropriate praise, he probed gently for an explanation. The parents' response was stunning in its simplicity. It turned out that the one who had merited for the *zechus* to come about through him was none other than the *maggid shiur* himself:

The father reminded the *maggid shiur* how, a few weeks earlier, he'd told the *talmidim* what he had seen in his early youth, when the holy Divrei Yoel of Satmar wept tearfully during the *tefillah* of *Ahavah Rabbah*, and especially with the words "*Vesein belibeinu binah lehavin ulehaskil.*"

These words seeped into the pure heart of our son, who strived so hard to advance in his Torah learning, and aspired to follow the ways of the Divrei Yoel. But he was afraid to do this in front of all the *yeshivah bochurim*, so he asked his mother what to do. She advised him to rise a few minutes earlier each morning and to say the *tefillah* of *Ahavah Rabbah* at home, without *Shem* and *Malchus*, with tears and weeping as he wished.

Following his mother's advice, and armed with a powerful desire to succeed, the very next morning, the *bochur* rose early, and from that point on, each morning, he stood in a corner, *siddur* in hand, and poured his heart out tearfully before the King of kings, saying: "*Vesein belibeinu*, put in our hearts wisdom to understand...to hear and to learn and to teach...illuminate our eyes with Your Torah...so that we should not be shamed or humiliated nor should we stumble forever."

Slowly, his heart opened. His meager skills were no match for the huge treasures of knowledge bestowed upon him from Above, which, like water dripping continuously on a rock, eventually penetrated his heart and infused new life into his dry bones.

So despite the dismal predictions of all his acquaintances, the *bochur* began to grow in Torah and *hasmadah*, until he became one of the top boys in the yeshivah – all because of the power of *tefillah*.

Heard from the mashpia
Harav Elimelech Biderman, shlitza

Harav Chaim Schmerler, shlita
Rosh Yeshivas Chayei Torah



Answering Amen to the Brachah of a Child

When answering amen to the *brachos* of a *kattan*, a child, the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 215:3): “And we do not answer amen after a child...when he is learning *brachos* from his *rebbe*, but when they make *brachos* to be *yotzei* themselves, because they are the age of *chinuch*, we answer amen after them.” From these words, the *Pri Migadim* in his *sefer Rosh Yosef* (*Brachos* 53b) derived that we answer amen only after the *brachos* of a child that reaches the age of *chinuch*. But when a *kattan* is younger than the age of *chinuch*, we do not answer amen after his *brachos*. These words are also cited in the *Mishnah Berurah* (ibid 17).

However, the *tzaddikim* were strict about it, and it is practiced in the world to answer amen after the smallest of children who make *brachos*. I witnessed a practice that was adopted by the Shefa Chaim of Sanz, *zy”a* (and his son, the *Rebbe*, *shlita*, also has this practice), that he would distribute fruits to young children, even the very young ones, and they made *brachos* in front of him, and he answered amen. This was a special *avodas kodesh* for him. And I remembered that one Shabbos in 5781, when he was ailing and suffering terribly,

and did not distribute *shirayim* to anyone at the table because of his weakness, but he would not forego distributing the fruits. He sat for a long while and answered amen after the *brachos*.

In *Sefer Derech Moshe* (Day 11) Harav Moshe Kanaha of Gibitsch related a story about the Baal Halevushim, about which he writes, “Therefore, I, who fears the word of Hashem, will read this story once a month.” And this is the story:

When the residents of the community of Posna turned to Harav Mordechai Yaffeh, the Baal Halevushim, and asked him to serve as Rav in their city, he wanted to first travel to Venice to complete his knowledge of *chochmas ha’ibur* from the sage Rabbi Yitzchak Abuhav, who was an expert in this wisdom.

Rav Mordechai traveled to Venice, and one day, while learning with Rabbi Yitzchak, Rav Yitzchak’s young son entered the room and made a *brachah* aloud. Everyone present answered amen, except Rav Mordechai, who did not notice it. Rav Yitzchak got angry at Rav Mordechai and excommunicated him. When Rav Mordechai asked Rav Yitzchak to forgive him and retract the excommunication, Rav Yitzchak rebuked him over the severity of the sin

of refraining from answering amen to a *brachah*.

He then added that there had been in story in previous generations about a *chassid* that was sentenced to death because he refrained from answering amen to the *brachos* of his son. But Rav Yitzchak added: “Your sin will be forgiven if you take upon yourself, that wherever you will be, and in whichever community you step foot into, you should commit to speak about the great sin of one who refrains from answering amen.”

Rav Moshe Kahana added that when he was accepted as a *mochiach*, one who delivers rebuke, in a number of countries, his father-in-law told him that because he was a grandson of the Baal Halevushim, who took upon himself to speak about and rebuke about the obligation to answer amen, it behooved him as well to speak about this subject and to warn the communities in Am Yisrael about the severity.

The author of the *Derech Moshe* wrote there that Rav Abuhav’s young son who made the *brachah* was “about five years old” and this shows to what extent one must be strict to answer the *brachos* of young children.

The Virtue of Answering Amen

There is a famous statement that teaches us about the great virtue of answering amen, that was repeated in two places in the Talmud, in *Maseches Brachos* (53b) and in *Maseches Nazir* (66b): “Rabbi Yosi says: the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*.”

The Rishonim asked about this *Gemara*: It seems that the *mevarech* is the one offering praise and gratitude, and the *oneh* amen just agrees with him. Why then does Rabbi Yosi say that the *oneh*’s virtue is greater than that of the *mevarech*?

The *Rashba* (*Shu”t* Vol. V, 53) writes on this subject as follows: “There is a hidden concept here, for those who know the wisdom. But in the simple meaning, this makes sense. Because the term ‘amen’ indicates the *kiyum* of something, as it says (*Devarim* 16:27): ‘*V’amar kol ha’am amen*,’ and the *mevarech* only offers the praise...because the *mevarech* is like the one who raises the awareness and the one who answers amen is like the one who finishes it all.”

The words of the *Rashba* that the *mevarech* just begins and the *oneh* amen is the one who completes it and fulfills it, are explained very well in the words of *Rabbeinu Bechayei* (*Shemos* 14:31) which compares reciting the *brachah* and answering amen after it to testimony. The *mevarech* testifies in his *brachah*

that HaKaodsh Baruch Hu is the Source of *brachah* and the King of the world, but that is like only one witness. And the Torah says (*Devarim* 19:15): “*Al pi shnei eidim...yakum davar*.” But when one answers amen and joins this testimony, then we have two *eidim*, two witnesses. And like the testimony that begins with the words of the first witness is not rendered valid, and become sound only through the words of the second witness, likewise, the *brachah* is only fulfilled with through the answering amen after it. That is why “the *oneh* is greater than the *mevarech*.”

Similarly, the *Kli Yakar* illustrates this concept by comparing the recital of the *brachah* like writing the body of a document and answering amen to the signature on it. Even though writing the body of the document expresses the desire of the writer, the signature is what gives the document validity. Likewise, here: the *brachah* is only fulfilled when it is answered by amen (*Olelos Ephraim* Vol. III, 460). In *Orchos Chaim* (Vol. I, *din aniyas amen*) there is another explanation for why the *oneh* is greater than the *mevarech*, based on the words of *Chazal* (*Pesachim* 50a) that one must not recite the Name of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the Shem Hava-y-ah as it is written, but rather to read it as if it is written with the letters A-d-nai. Therefore, while

the one who makes the *brachah* only mentions the Name of Adnus in the *brachah*, the one who answers amen also adds an allusion to the Shem Hava-y-ah. Because amen is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the same as the numerical value of the Shem Hameyuchad as it is written [Hava-y-ah] and as it is read [א.ת.ת.א.], which together combine to 91. So we find that amen completes the Name of Hashem, and therefore, it is more important than the *brachah*.

These words of the Rishonim teach us how great and lofty are the words of answering amen. Therefore, let us express our gratitude to Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein for all that he does to imbue Klal Yisrael with the mitzvah of answering amen, especially after *Birchos Hashachar*. And I know to what extent he himself is strict about this. When I was in New York, and I davened with my host at the Brizdovitz *beis medrash* in Boro Park, I saw him there about two hours before davening, circulating among the people to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from every person in the shul, to be able to answer amen. When I saw this, I realized that he follows the very same path that he speaks about and promotes so extensively. And he is seeing Hashem bestow success on his efforts and his words are heard.

Otzros Emunim

Saying Brachos Out Loud

Chazal have warned extensively about the obligation to have *kavanah* when answering amen, as the *Tur* explains (*Orach Chaim* 124) the words of the *Breisa* (*Brachos* 47a): “And he should not throw a *brachah* from his mouth,” which means one should not throw an amen from his mouth, in other words “he should not hastily say it without *kavanah*.” Likewise, regarding the words of Reish Lakish (*Shabbos* 119b): “Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened to him,” and *Rashi* explains (*ibid ad loc. Bechol*) that “*bechol kocho*” means with all his *kavanah*.

In this chapter, we will present readers with a compilation of insights, including words of caution from the sages *gedolim* of the generations, about the obligation to have *kavanah* when answering amen.

Its Severity Is Because of Its Ease

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) extensively expounds on the severity of answering amen without *kavanah*, and writes that one who hears a *brachah* from the *mevarech* and does not have *kavanah* when answering amen, the *passuk* describes him as (*Shmuel* I, 2:30) “*Ubozai yekalu*.” See there, where he expounds on the punishment.

Rav Moshe Zakut, in his commentary on *Zohar* (*ibid*) explains the reason for the fact that someone who does not have *kavanah* with amen is included among those who shame Hashem and is punished so severely: “Because it [amen] is such an easy thing to understand and have *kavanah* with, and it is the simplest of the secrets that the word אמן is numerically equivalent to הרי”ה א-ג. The Rema”z added that according to the *Zohar* that the *passuk* “*ubozai yekalu*” is said about someone who does not have *kavanah* when answering amen, the words of the Arizal are clear, as he said (*Pri Eitz Chaim Sha’ar Kavanas Amen*) that from the letters at the end of each word of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 83:17) אמן מלא פניהם קלון we can form the word אמן.

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma’aminim*,

As someone who merits to distribute your pamphlets each week, I have seen how people await it and are happy to receive it.

I often point to the sentence that is highlighted in your pamphlet, excerpted from the famous *Iggeres HaRamban*: “And when you rise from the book, seek out in something that you learned if there is something you can fulfill.”

This is the place to point out that in your pamphlet there is no need to look for something that can be fulfilled. The words in all the segments cry out the clear message: Yidden, take heart! You are surrounded by treasures of amen throughout the days. Not to mention the time of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* each morning, which is a distribution of billions, as Harav Steinman said.

A Yid told me that he was once at a *drashah* from the Maggid Harav Shalom Schwadron, in which he spoke about the tremendous reward that a person gets for every amen that he answers. At the end of the *drashah*, one of the listeners approached and said: I am a pauper, and if the reward of answering amen is so great, may Hashem please give me now the reward of one amen, and I will be able to marry my children off with dignity. In response, Rav Shalom gazed at him with wise eyes and said, My dear man, there isn’t in this entire world enough to give the reward of one amen. The reward for amen is something you can only get in the World to Come.

And we can learn a *kal vehomer*, that if this is true for a single amen, you, who have aroused the *tzibbur* to strengthen his mitzvah, and your voice resonates all the time in the whole world “Yidden, say amen!” then how great is the reward that awaits you?

With respect,
Y.S., Beit Shemesh

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 Netziv of Volozhin

The Netziv of Volozhin

28 Av 5653

Harav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin was born in 5577 to his father, Reb Yaakov, in the town of Mir. When he was eleven, he began to study in the yeshivah in Volozhin, and at the age of fourteen he was chosen as the son-in-law of the *rosh yeshivah* Harav Yitzchak of Volozhin.

For many years, he toiled in his learning and excelled in diligence. Upon the passing of his father-in-law in 5609, the older son-in-law, Harav Eliezer Fried was appointed *rosh yeshivah*, and the Netziv was appointed his deputy. When Rav Eliezer Yitzchak passed away in 5613, the Netziv was appointed *rosh yeshivah*.

Under his leadership, Yeshivas Volozhin grew and became famed as the ‘mother of *yeshivos*.’ The number of students grew during this time to around four hundred. The Netziv dedicated himself to supporting the yeshivah, and to disseminating Torah to its students, until it was shut down by the Russian authorities in 5652.

The closure of the yeshivah in which he had invested his life took a negative toll on his health and on 28 Av 5653, the Netziv passed away while in Warsaw. He was buried the next day in the cemetery in the city.

The Netziv was known for his deep commentary, *Ha’amek Davar*, on Torah. He also compiled a commentary on the queries of Rav Achai Gaon, called *Ha’amek She’eilah*, *Meromei Hasadeh* on *Shas*, and other *seforim*.

Proof from the Torah for Answering Amen

The Netziv of Volozhin wrote: In contrast to the *brachos* where the source of the obligation of most of them is *d’Rabbanan* (*Brachos* 35a), the obligation to answer amen has a proof from the Torah. *Chazal* explain (*Devarim* 32:3): “*Ki Shem Hashem ekra*” – with a *brachah*, then you should “*havu godel l’Elokeinu*,” by answering amen (*Rashi Brachos* 21a ad loc. *Ki Shem*, based on *Yoma* 37a). And because the obligation to answer amen has a proof from the Torah, then answering amen is greater than the *brachos*, whose obligation is *d’Rabbanan*, and as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 53b): “The one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*” (*Birchas Hanetziv Mechilta Bo Parashah* 15).