

# VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly  
Pamphlet  
From  
"Bney  
Emunim"



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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah  
in the Parashah

### Following Two Words – In Four Places

א) "בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ" (א)

In *Maseches Chulin* (91b) *Chazal* praise Am Yisrael that they are more beloved than the *Malachei Hashares*, the Ministering Angels, in that while the angels say *Kedushah* they mention Hashem's Name after three words as it says (*Yeshaya* 6:3): "*Vekara zeh el zeh v'amar: Kadosh Kadosh Hashem...*" But Am Yisrael mention Hashem's Name already after two words, when they are *meyached* His Name in the *passuk*: "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.*"

The Vilna Gaon added that aside for saying *Shema Yisrael*, this beloved status of Am Yisrael is manifested in three other places where the Name of Hashem is mentioned after just two words. They are: In the *passuk* that begins the Torah: "*Bereishis bara Elokim...*" and in the *passuk* that commands *ahavas Hashem* (*Devarim* 6:5): "*V'ahavta es Hashem...*" and in the opening of all *brachos*: "*Baruch Atah Hashem...*"

We thank Hashem for this in the *brachah* of *Ahavah Rabbah* when we say "*Vekeiravtanu leShimcha hagadol,*" meaning, You brought us closer than the angels in the fact that You allowed us to mention "*Shimcha Hagadol*" already after two words. Where? "*Be'emes*" – in the beginning of the Torah, which is called "*emes*"; "*lehodos Lecha*" – with the *brachos*; "*uleyachedcha*" – in *Krias Shema*; "*b'ahavah*" – in the *parashah* of "*V'ahavta.*"

*Pardes Yosef*

## Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### A Brachah Without Amen Is Like a Body Without a Neshamah

In this *parashah*, the Torah describes how HaKadosh Baruch Hu created man; He created the body from the lower world, as it says (*Bereishis* 2:7): "And Hashem formed the man, dust from the ground," while the soul was hewn On High, as it says (*ibid*): "*Vayipach b'apav,* and He blew into his nostrils the breath of life."

The holy *neshamah* that Hashem infused us with is what completes our creation and transforms from a lump of earth into a living being. And it is for this wondrous *chessed* that we thank Hashem each morning in the *brachah* of *Elokai Neshamah*.

Like people, angels also have a body and soul. But in contrast to humans, whose body is comprised of physical elements and the soul is spiritual, the angels' body and soul are both comprised of spiritual elements (see *Sifri Ha'azinu* 306).

This whole introduction is an effort to clarify an important concept about the loftiness of answering amen: Everyone knows that each amen that we answer creates an angel. The fact that אמן is numerically equivalent to מלאך is also something that we know. But the Rebbe Rav Zusha of Anipoli added that the process of creating the angel begins already when saying the *brachah*, and the creation of the angel is completed when amen is answered. Its 'body' is created with the recital of the *brachah*, and amen is what infuses it with a '*neshamah*.' He added that this is the reason that "the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*" (*Brachos* 53b). This is because the *neshamah* that is given to an angel by the amen is what infuses it with life, and therefore, it is the *ikkar* (*Ohr HaTorah, Ma'amarei Razal V'inyanim* p. 54).

This fits in with the concept brought in the *Zohar Hakadosh* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) that answering amen is part of the *brachah*, and only a *brachah* that is answered by amen is a complete *brachah*. Only a complete *brachah* can create a complete angel that will advocate for us On High.

These words further clarify that amen is not just part of the *brachah*, it is the principal part of the *brachah*! Because the soul of the angel, which is its primary part, is not placed in the angel unless amen is answered.

So we have a source for the well-known statement that a *brachah* that is not completed with amen is considered a body without a soul, and therefore, the angel that is created from it lacks a soul. Is there someone who makes a *brachah* who would forego complete *malachim*? How remarkable it is to discover that the outcome is in our hands!

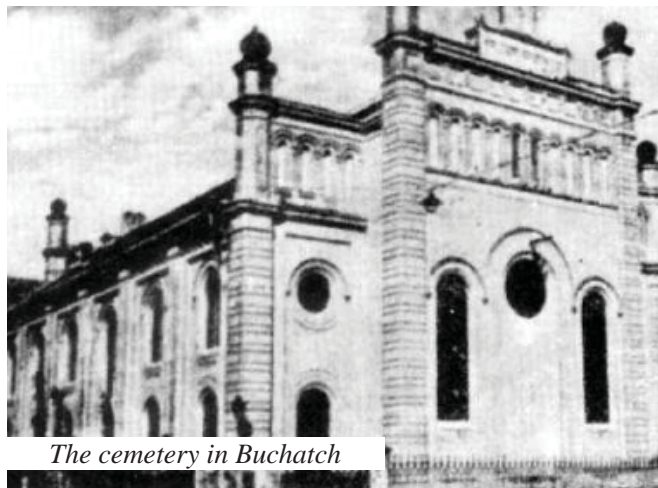
Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

It was dawn in the main shul in the town of Serdehely, Slovakia. Reb Yoel, the elderly *shamash*, was busy preparing and lighting the candles in the shul, a job he did as part of his role as *shamash*. He had begun the job decades earlier, in the lifetime of the famous Rav of the town, Harav Yehuda Assad, *zy" a*, and continued in the subsequent years during the tenure of his son, Harav Aharon Shmuel, *zt" l*.

At that hour, there usually were no people in the shul aside for him. But this time, one of the members of the community had arisen early and had come to the shul. It was Eizik, the wealthy farmer.

Eizik stood and stared at the sublime, otherworldly scene. Outside it was dark, and inside, the light began to spread, filling the shul with holy flames. To Eizik, Reb Yoel appeared at that hour like the Kohein Gadol preparing the wicks for the holy menorah. He walked swiftly from lamp to lamp, emptied the remnants of the previous day's oil, and lit a new candle in its place. As the flame began to glow, he would fervently recite the words of the *passuk* in *Bereishis* (*Bereishis* 1:3): "*Vayehi ohr.*"



The cemetery in Buchatch

The wondrous scene aroused a strong sense of envy in Eizik's heart. He felt a deep desire to merit this job. He understood that it was a great *zechus*, and he was ready to pay well for it. "Reb Yoel," Eizik turned to the *shamash*, "I am ready to pay you two florins a week, as long as you give me the merit of preparing and lighting the candles."

Reb Yoel was stunned into silence. He was very aware of the holiness of this job. But ultimately, he decided to agree to the deal, only because the price

Eizik was offering was high enough to be life-altering for him. Instead of struggling with poverty, he could allow himself to live a bit more comfortably.

From that day on, there was no one more thrilled than Eizik. If until then, he had felt endlessly guilty that he had not merited to learn Torah, now he felt like a lofty angel. It was no minor thing, to merit to illuminate the shul the way a Kohein illuminated the Mikdash!

But at the time, the *shamash* was feeling just the opposite. His conscience plagued at him; how had he abandoned such a lofty job for mere money?! So just a month later, he found himself standing at the door to the home of the *mara d'asra*, Rav Aharon Shmuel, as he sought *daas Torah* about what to do.

Rav Aharon Shmuel, who usually issued responses on the spot, for some reason was not answering the question. He was enveloped by lofty thoughts, and before he replied, he asked the *shamash*: "Is it true that Eizik has a young daughter?" Reb Yoel, who could not understand the connection to his question replied, "Indeed, Rebbe, he has an only daughter, and she is six years old. Her name is Yutka."

"How old are you?" the Rav asked. "I am sixty nine years old," Reb Yoel replied.

And then the Rav turned to Reb Yoel and said, "Reb Yoel, I'm sorry to tell you but what you did was not appropriate. You are paid a salary from the public coffers, and it includes the payment for preparing and lighting the candles. Why are you taking a double payment?!"

"However, you should not cancel the agreement," the Rav continued. "Continue to take the money, but save it for when you will need it for a holy purpose. If you do this, then I promise you that you will merit a long life."

Fully trusting *daas Torah*, from that day on, Reb Yoel stopped using the money. He crafted a copper box, into which he deposited the two florins he received from Eizik each week.

Fourteen years passed. Reb Yoel was already in his eighties, and the Rav's

*brachah* was fulfilled. He still took care of the shul, in good health, and Eizik continued to light the candles each morning. At the time, Eizik's only daughter became engaged. As he was wealthy, he promised the *chassan* a large dowry, and everyone looked forward to the upcoming wedding.

But then, during that happy time, calamity struck. Due to an unexpected financial issue, Eizik lost all his money overnight, and remained penniless. More than the poverty distressed him, he was terrified at the fact that he didn't have from where to pay the fifteen hundred florins he had promised as a dowry. The minute it would become known, he knew, the *shidduch* was likely to be broken.

The next morning, he arrived for his holy work, as he did every day. But the elderly Reb Yoel noticed his distress and pleaded with Eizik to share what was on his mind. He was very saddened to hear of Eizik's woes, but suddenly, he was struck by the memory and a smile spread across his face. Now he understood the reason the *mara d'asra* had inquired, fourteen years earlier, about Eizik's daughter. The Rav had instructed him to keep the money for a holy purpose, and now, that time had come.

Reb Yoel hurried home and with trembling hands, he took the copper box in which he had put the two florins each and every week, and poured it into a cloth satchel.

He returned to the shul and put his hand on Eizik's shoulder: "Reb Eizik, you can be calm. Take this money, there's enough to cover the dowry that you pledged. You will surely be surprised to hear that this money is yours." And then, Reb Yoel told Eizik what had happened, and how the Rav, in his wisdom, had instructed him to keep the money, and how in retrospect it turned out that he had designated it for Yutka the *kallah*.

At the time, Reb Eizik was lighting the final candles, the ones that were at the *amud* of the *chazzan*. He lowered his head onto the large *siddur* that was open on the *amud* to *Birchs Hashachar*, and tears began to pour from his eyes. Reb Yoel, who stood next to him, emotionally recited the *brachah* of "*Baruch Atah Hashem... shelo asani goy,*" and everyone in the shul fervently answered amen.

*Sefer Zikaron L'Kehillas  
Dunserdehely p. 205*



## Derech Emunim

The Halachos of Answering Amen

### The Opinion of the Gra on the *Kavanah* of Amen

**According to the Gra, the *kavanah* when answering amen to the brachos is singular: Halevai, may it be that the words of the *mevarech* should be fulfilled that HaKadosh Baruch Hu should be blessed.**

Explanations and Sources:

In *Imrei Noam* (*Brachos* 60b), the Gra wrote: “Amen means fulfilling the thing that blesses Hashem, and not like some wrote that there is a difference in the *kavanah* of answering amen, as this is not so. Rather, when saying amen there is only one *kavanah*.” This is also brought in *Kesser Rosh* (55), and the *Chayei Adam* concurred (6 1). The *sefer Hatzaddik Reb Yosef Zundel MiSalant Verabosav* (p. 113) says that he said in the name of the Gra: “If I wouldn’t be afraid, I would say that the *kavanah* of amen is only *halevai*, may it be.”

The explanation is as follows: According to the Gra, the word “*baruch*” said at the beginning of the *brachah*

## The Kavanah of Amen

is not praise and glorification (see *Sefer Hachinuch* 430), but rather a request that the Name of Hashem should be blessed, as the *Chayei Adam* wrote (ibid) in his name. When answering amen, the *oneh* joins the request of the *mevarech* and hopes that *halevai*, may it be that Hashem’s Name should be blessed. With this the Gra differs with the agreement of the *poskim* (see *Shulchan Aruch* 124 6 and the *Nosei Keilim* ibid) that answering amen applies to the content of the *brachah* and its closing words, and in this view, answering amen applies to the request that is said [in his view] at the beginning of the *brachah* only (see *Birchas Avraham, Sanhedrin* 111a).

The *Mishnah Berurah* (124 24) wrote in the name of the *Chayei Adam* that one should have in mind **also** this *kavanah*. And from his words (see there 25) it seems that he holds that the *ikkar* is like the words of the *poskim*, that the *kavanah* of amen is based on the subject – *emes*, or *yehi ratzon*, or both. And he cites the *Chayei Adam* as an additional *kavanah* in answering amen.

## Otzros Emunim

Amen With Kavanah

### The *Ikkar* of Amen Is the *Kavanah*

From the words of the *Tur* (*Orach Chaim* 224) that expounded on the great obligation of the *kavanah* in answering amen, the *Yesod Veshoresh Ha’avodah* (*Shaar Hakorban* Chapter 5) learned “that the *ikkar* of answering amen is in the *kavanah* of it and not in just answering the word.”

It is brought in the name of Harav Chaim of Volozhin regarding answering amen without *kavanah*, that because the word amen doesn’t have any meaning when it stands alone, and the whole point of it is only affirming the words of the *mevarech*, therefore, if a person does not have *kavanah* when answering it, it is considered as if he said nothing.

### The Obligation of Caution in the *Kavanah* of Answering Amen

The *Yesod Veshoresh Ha’avodah* added (*Shaar Hakorban* Chapter 6) that anyone who sees how strict the *Zohar HaKadosh* is (*Vayeilech* 285 2) with the *din* of someone who does not answer amen with *kavanah* “Rivers of water will run from his eyes for not guarding the answering of amen properly, by day he will not lay and at night he will not rest, from the fear of his heart that he will be afraid and from the sight of his eyes that he will see...” In this context, the *Yesod Veshoresh Ha’avodah* says of himself in his will (15): “I would be very careful in answering amen after each *mevarech*, with the *kavanah* that I wrote in my compilation, meaning that I had in mind when saying amen the *kavanah* for the praise in that *brachah* and I did not just utter the word amen without *kavanah*, and you should be very, very careful about this.”

## Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma’aminim*, who work tirelessly each week *b’emunah*, may you be blessed and rewarded,

I thought to share with you a beautiful idea that I had, and I will ask that you place it in your wonderful platform for strengthening and answering amen.

As is known, the Chida brings in his *sefer, Nachal Kedumim*, on this *parashah*, in the name of the disciples of the Arizal, that the first word in the Torah, “*Bereishis*” is the acronym for *תמיד שם רם אברך שם* and added “that from here we have an allusion that one should make a *brachah* aloud so that others can answer amen.”

In the *tefillah* of *Aleinu Leshabeach* we say: “*Laseis gedulah leYotzer Bereishis*.” I thought that this can be an allusion that anyone who wants to “praise the Adon Hakol *laseis gedulah leYotzer*” – properly and completely, he has to grasp the custom of “*Bereishis*” – to make *brachos* and answer amen aloud.

Chaim Bergman,  
Bnei Brak

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## Shaarei Yeshuah

The Segulah of Answering Amen

## A Long Life in the Amount of Amen

**This story took place decades ago, and it was heard firsthand from an American Yid who witnessed it while he was a youth and a resident of the East Side, the central Jewish neighborhood in Manhattan where the Jews lived at the time:**

In those years, an elderly Jew who lived in the East Side devoted his life to strengthening the mitzvah of answering amen. This Yid was known as a walking role model for this mitzvah, and the children in the neighborhood fondly called him “the amen man.”

The powerful amen that he uttered whenever he heard a *brachah* in shul was, for the listeners, a confident declaration that this is how one should answer amen according to *halachah*: aloud, slowly and with *kavanah*. With his wonderful ways, this man drew after him the rest of the *mispallelim*.

By the time he reached the age of 75, he had multitudes of *mitzvos* and good deeds to his credit. Then, suddenly, he was struck with severe heart ailment. Those were the years when medicine wasn't as advanced as it is today, and patients of his kind didn't have chances of living long. The specialist he went to with his son did comprehensive tests and then gave the man two choices: one was bad, the second was worse...

The first option was to undergo complicated heart surgery where the chances of recovery were slim, while the other option was to give up and wait for the end, which, according to the doctor would be within a short time.

The doctor, who was used to seeing people panic and despair in his office, was absolutely surprised that when he finished speaking, the patient thanked him and turned

to leave, appearing very calm. He declared that he would not be doing the surgery no matter what!

Outside the doctor's room, the son could not contain himself, and cried, “Why?! How did you take upon your shoulders this heavy responsibility with life and death consequences? Wouldn't it be wise to get a second opinion before deciding?”

The confident reply of the father was surprising and moving:

“My dear son, you know that for all my life, I was very active about the mitzvah of answering amen. Regarding this mitzvah, *Chazal* promised (*Brachos* 47b) that “Anyone who prolongs his amen has his days and years prolonged.” We learn from here that the word amen is numerically equivalent to 91, so I can be calm at least until I reach my ninety first year...” The father then smiled: “Why should I agree to surgery that might shorten my life?!”

The son of that man related:

Contrary to the predictions of the doctor, my father recovered miraculously, and lived a very long life in good health.

On his ninetieth birthday I asked my father, “Do you remember how you told me that you'd live until at least 91?! You are now entering your ninety first year, so what's next...?” And he jokingly replied that he had begun to make sure to say “*amen selah...*”

A few months later, while still in his ninety first year, my father passed away peacefully.

Heard from Mrs. A. Stern, author of Just One Word – Amen

## Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



בית הקברות און בוטשאטש

### The Eshel Avraham of Butchatch 29 Tishrei 5601

Rav Avraham Dovid was born to his father, Rav Asher Anshel Wahrman in 5531 in the town of Nadvorna, Galicia. Already as a youth he became known as a genius, and the Rav of Butchatch, Rav Tzvi Hirsch Kara, author of *Neta Sha'ashuim*, took him as a husband for his daughter.

When he was twenty, he was appointed Rav in Yazlovitz, Galicia, and that's how he first met Harav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev; after that he became very close to him.

After the passing of his father-in-law in 5574, he was appointed to succeed him as Rav of Butchatch, a position that he filled until his final day. He became renowned as one of the eminent *poskim* of the generations, and hundreds of *talmidim* studied Torah and *chassidus* under him.

He passed away on 29 Tishrei 5601 and was laid to rest in Butchatch. Rav Shlomo Kluger of Brod revealed in his *hesped*: “He was paid respect with his death because he did not die the way all people do; he was informed of the day of his death prior, and he gave up his soul to Hashem as was His will, and it was almost like a *misas neshikah*, and he died like a *melech Yisrael*” (*Ein Dimah, Hespelim* from the years 5574-5601, *Hesped* 50).

He authored *seforim* on the four parts of the *Shulchan Aruch*: *Eshel Avraham* on *Orach Chaim*; *Daas Kedoshim* on *Yoreh Deah*; *Kesef Hakodshim* on *Choshen Mishpat* and *Ezer Mikodesh* on *Even Ha'ezer*.

### Birchos Hashachar in Front of Two People

In his *sefer Eshel Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 487 4) Rav Avraham Dovid of Butchatch wrote that one who makes a *brachah* should raise his voice at the time of the *brachah* so that those standing around him can hear and answer amen. He adds that he heard that Rav Yosef Hollis, the Rav of Tisemenitz [the Rav of the Pnei Yehoshua] would recite *Birchos Hashachar* each day in front of two people, who would answer amen. [And see *Zohar Hakadosh* (*Vayeitzei* 160 1), that we learn from this that answering amen to the *brachah* is derived from the *passuk* (*Devarim* 32:3): “*Ki Shem Hashem ekra, havu godel l'Elokeinu.*” From this it is evident that two need to answer amen after the *mevarech*, because the *passuk* says “*havu*” in the plural.]