

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly  
Pamphlet  
From  
"Bney  
Emunim"



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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah  
in the Parashah

### Yosef Hatzaddik Was Mehader in Answering Amen

"והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלמים בתוך השדה והנה קמה אלמותי וגם נצבה והנה תסבינה אלמתיכם ותשתחוין לאלמתי" (לו ז)

Harav Nosszon Shapiro, the author of *Megaleh Amukos*, reveals that the *shoresh*, the root of Yosef Hatzaddik was the *sod* of amen, and he explained: "Yosef is the gatekeeper, and the gates are opened with amen, as it says (*Yeshayah 26:2*): '*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.*'" This is alluded to in the fact that it says regarding Yosef (*ibid 37:3*): "בן" – the final letter of each word is an acronym for amen, and the fact that when he was born, Yaakov Avinu was 91 – numerically equivalent to amen. And based on this is the vision he saw in his dream: והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלמים - it comes to teach us that with the power of answering amen, the hostile forces are quieted, and they become like *ilmim*, mute.

*Megaleh Amukos Vayeishev 43b and 48b*

### 'Lashalom' and Not 'Leshalom'

"ויראו אחיו כי אתו אהב אביהם מכל אחיו וישנאו אתו ולא יכלו דברו לשלם" (לו ד)

Why does it say "*dabro leshalom*" even though it would seem more correct to write "*dabro shalom*"?

Harav Uri Halevi of Druya explained:

The *Magen Avraham* (582 4) says that the reason we say *Zachreinu Lechaim*, with a *shva* under the *lamed*, during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, even though according to the rules of grammar, we should have said "*lachaim*," with a *pasach*, is because saying "*lachaim*" may have sounded like a request of "*lo chaim*," not life. We need to be careful not to daven during the *Yemei Hadin* in a language that might be interpreted in a bad way. This *passuk* alludes to that: The brothers of Yosef, because "they did not speak one thing with the mouth and another with the heart" (*Rashi*), could not speak to Yosef "*leshalom*," with a *shva*, but rather "*lashalom*" with a *pasach*, in other words "*lo-shalom*," not in peace.

*Ben Ori [Zhalkova 5489]*

## Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder  
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### It Includes All the Requests

In the *tefillah* of "*Veyehi Ratzon*" said in the last *brachah* of *Birchos Hashachar*, we ask for a long series of requests, and then conclude with a special request that includes all the requests and that is: "*Vesigmeleinu Chassadim Tovim.*"

With these three words, the Sages who formulated the *nusach* of *tefillah* included every type of request; it is one that is needed in times of peace, and how much more so in times of trials and tribulations.

Many have wondered about the emphasis on "*vesigmeleinu chassadim tovim.*" Are there any *chassadim* that are not good?! Why is it not enough to just ask for *chassadim*, like we say in the *Breisa* of *Eilu Devarim*, said after *Birchas HaTorah*: "*ugemilus chassadim*"?

The *gedolim* have explained that with this emphasis, we have in mind to ask Hashem to grant us *chassadim* that even humans can discern as good. We are accustomed to saying "*gam zu letovah*," this too is for the good, even for things that appear to us to be bad, because every action that Hashem does is for the good. But a *chessed* in such a fashion is a test for us, and that is why we are asking: "*V'al tevi'enu ...liyedei nisayon.*" There is nothing more suited than to ask at that time "*vesigmeleinu chassadim tovim*" – *chassadim* whose good is revealed and which are not a *nisayon* for us.

I thought to add that the expression of gratitude that concludes the *brachah* of "*Hagomel Chassadim Tovim L'Amo Yisrael*" includes all the gratitude and thanks, meaning all the good that we have thanked for in *Birchos Hashachar* until now, and all the good things we will express gratitude for throughout the day, as well as the tens of thousands of good things that we do not merit to specify with words.

If we merit such an overall gratitude, then surely, we will be pained to see that it is this one that we forgot to say properly. It is distressing to see that even among those who understand that they merit to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* each day, there are those who lose their patience specifically ahead of this *brachah*, and they run away before amen is answered to it. The calculation is simple: If this request includes all the gratitude and requests, then how much more so does answering amen after it, because as we know, "one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*."

We then reiterate this gratitude in the *brachah* of *Avos* in *Shemoneh Esreh*: "א-ל עליון גומל חסדים טובים" – one who peruses this will find that the numerical value of the acronym of these words is 91 – which is equal to amen. This teaches us that answering amen is what opens the gates of *brachah* and in that merit, may we all be *zocheh* to see only "*chassadim tovim*" always, *venomar amen*.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

It was midday on Thursday, 27 Iyar 5766, somewhere in the skies over the Atlantic Ocean. The private flight that had departed two hours earlier from Sao Paulo, Brazil towards Tel Aviv was going smoothly. Gerald, the experienced captain, navigated the plane skillfully. At his side, the veteran copilot, Harvey, was dozing. They had a long flight ahead and they were well prepared.

When the plane entered the airspace over the ocean, the internal lights on the small, luxurious craft were dimmed, and the thirteen passengers retired to their seats. Some of them reclined their chairs, hoping for a nap that they really needed after their two very busy weeks of doing holy work. Others began to learn, to make up for lost time, which they had been spending working on behalf of the *tzibbur*.

The monotonous hum of the engine was accompanied by a pleasant, quiet

After two weeks, the Rav was exhausting from going from one Torah center to the next. His voice was hoarse from the dozens of *drashos* he had delivered to all kinds of audiences. His hands ached from shaking so many hands of those who sought his *brachos*. His thin body yearned for some rest, but for the umpteenth time, once again, his *neshamah* prevailed – in its thirst for *divrei Torah*. Instead of resting, or at least leaning back and relaxing, the Rav sat bent in his place, satiating his soul with the sweet words of Torah.

When it came time for dinner, the lights were switched on and the passengers awoke. As is the case on luxury flights, despite the small number of passengers, they were treated royally. There were three flight attendants at their service, ready to provide almost anything they wanted. With a tie and elegant suit, and gripped by awe and respect, Jack, the head flight attendant, approached Rav Steinman. He placed before him

a tray with a kosher *mehadrin* meal, and then offered his services politely:

“I am here to serve you, honored Rabbi, with whatever you may want,” the flight attendant said formally. Then he added some details: “Our plane offers passengers all kinds of amenities. We have delicious cakes, kosher *mehadrin*; top quality kosher whiskey, delicious

fruit and anything else the Rabbi might like...”

One of the passengers offered to translate for Harav Steinman. He was embarrassed to repeat the whole list for someone who was so detached from anything relating to the materialism of this world, and who subsisted for most of his life on very plain food, bread, water, and a bit more. But he was surprised when the Rav did not wave off his words. “He is offering to give us anything we ask?!” the Rav repeated. “If so, tell him that indeed, I have a very important request...”

The flight attendant heard this and tensed; who knew what the elderly rabbi could be asking...But the Rav

didn't give him time to think. “My request is that the pilot should please land the plane in the closest place that he can...”

“What?” the person close to the Rav said. And Harav Steinman explained:

“We davened *Minchah* and the *tefillah* of Yom Kippur Kattan in Brazil. We will daven *Shacharis b'ezras Hashem* in Eretz Yisrael, but now it's almost time for *Maariv*. I don't want to daven on the plane, because it is not going to be a *mehudar tefillah*, whether because of the frequent turbulence, or because it is a small place which does not contribute to *yishuv hada'as* and *kavanah*. Please ask the pilot, that when it comes time for *Maariv*, he should land the plane for a short time in the nearest airport, so we can daven in a *mehudar way*...”

“Tell the flight attendant that for me, there is no greater treat and amenity than davening properly, with *yishuv hada'as*,” the Rav pleaded, when he realized that his request was not simple at all. His heartfelt words were effective however.

At seven that evening local time, just before *shkiyah*, the plane landed in the Canary Islands, the picturesque islands off the coast of Morocco, which belong to Spain.

The passengers used the short time left until it got dark to get off the plane and view the gorgeous scenery spread before them - deep blue seas on one side, and a green expanse on the other side. But Rav Steinman wasn't busy with the scenery at all. He sat down right away to use his time to learn.

When it came time for *Maariv*, the whole group gathered in a room that was given to them by the airport staff for a warm and emotional *Maariv*, in a place that is unlikely to ever have been the site of *tefillah* by G-d fearing Yidden, certainly not the *tefillah* of such a great sage.

When the davening ended, the passengers returned to the plane. The Rav took his seat and continued learning. The passengers had all gained a valuable lesson that will accompany them for the rest of their lives, a lesson that teaches them the value of *tefillah* and how important it is to say it according to *halachah*, with all its details, to the point of *mesirus nefesh*.

Leromem, p. 103



humming noise. It was the sound of the Rosh Yeshivah, Harav Aharon Leib Steinman, *zt"l*, learning. Instead of leaning back in the luxurious seat, on the plane that had been hired specially for him and his entourage by one of the Torah world's leading philanthropists, he leaned forward over a small *Gemara*, learning aloud in the dim light.

The Rav was returning from a journey that he had taken with *mesirus nefesh*. He had spent two weeks giving *chizuk* to the communities in America, a trip that began in North America and ended in South America. It was exhausting for someone many years his junior, how much more so was it for someone as elderly and weak as he, at the age of nearly 90.

### The Obligation of the *Mevarech* to Answer Amen

Because answering amen after the *brachah* is an integral part of the *brachah*, the *mevarech* needs to have in mind to be *yotzei* his obligation to answer amen from the one who answers amen to his *brachah*. The *oneh amen* should also have in mind to be *motzi* the *mevarech's* obligation to answer amen. But there is an opinion that the *mevarech* does not need to be *yotzei* the obligation of answering amen to his *brachah*.

#### Explanations and Sources:

The *Yerushalmi* (*Brachos* 7 3) says that Rabbi Ze'ira asked his *talmid* Rabbi Abba bar Zemina to make a *brachah* on the wine and to be *motzi* him. Rabbi Abba replied: "Just like I have in mind to be *motzi* you with my *brachah*, you should have in mind to be *motzi* me in my **obligation** to answer amen. Based on this, the *Ohr Zarua* (Vol. I, 160) and the Maharam Rittenburg (*Shu"t Lvov Edition, Teshuvah* 466) wrote that one who answers amen to a *brachah* needs to have in mind to be *motzi* the *mevarech* in his obligation to answer amen. *Sefer Darchei Noam*, written by the Gra, (*Brachos* 47a) cites the *Yerushalmi* and explains that just like one who answers amen needs to have in mind to be *motzi* the *mevarech* when answering amen, likewise, the *mevarech* should have in mind to be *yotzei* when amen is answered. This is like the *din* of anyone who is *yotzei* his obligation by hearing from another person, that it is necessary for both the listener and the one saying it to have *kavanah* (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 213 3). The Rema (*Orach Chaim* 167 2) ruled *l'halachah* like the *Yerushalmi*, and the *Ben Ish Chai* (*Masei* 14) and the *Kaf Hachaim* (ibid 27) concur. See also *Ben Ish Chai* (ibid) that for this reason, the one who answers amen should do so out loud, so that the *mevarech* can hear.

The *Darchei Moshe* (ibid) and the Gra (*Biur Hagra* ibid) wrote that the reason for this *halachah* is because answering amen is part of the *brachah*. The *Mishnah Berurah* (ibid 20) explains this as well:

"Because answering amen is also part of the *brachah*, and although he already made the *brachah*, still, by having others answer amen to it, it gains importance, and therefore, it is correct *lechatchilah* to have in mind to be *yotzei* by answering amen through the *oneh* who answers." However, the commentary of *Pnei Moshe* on the *Yerushalmi* (ibid) explains that the reason for this *halachah* is not because amen is part of the *brachah* but because the virtue of "*gadol ha'oneh yoser min hamevarech*" (*Brachos* 53a) also exists for the *mevarech*. And therefore, his *kavanah* is to be *yotzei* the obligation of answering amen from the one who heard his *brachah* and answered amen, is greater than the actual saying of the *brachah*.

However, the *Mishnah Berurah* itself (*Biur Halachah* ibid) disputes the Rema with the claim that aside for the *Ohr Zarua*, there is no other mention in the Rishonim that the *mevarech* should be *yotzei* his obligation with the amen that is said to his *brachah*. Therefore, in his view: "A person who makes a *brachah* himself does not need the amen at all." Regarding the *Yerushalmi* that the *poskim* cite, the *Mishnah Berurah* notes (ibid) the commentary of the *sefer Chareidim* on the *Yerushalmi* (ibid) that explains that Rabbi Ze'ira himself was about to make the *brachah* on the wine and to be *motzi* Rabbi Abba, his *talmid*, of his obligation. One should interpret the words of the *Yerushalmi* that Rabbi Ze'ira said to his *talmid* Rabbi Abba as follows: "just like I have *kavanah* to be *motzi* you in your obligation of the *brachah*, you should have in mind to be *yotzei* with this *brachah* while you are answering amen to it. Because in order to be *yotzei* by hearing, there needs to be *kavanah* both on the part of the listener and the one who is saying the *brachah*. Based on this, the *Yerushalmi* makes no mention of the obligation of the *mevarech* to answer amen. See *sefer Birchas Avraham* (*Brachos* 47a) who commented on the words of the Gra (*Biur HaGra*, ibid and *Darchei Noam*, ibid) that he cited, and explained the *Yerushalmi* the same way as the *Ohr Zarua*. See more in *sefer Meir Oz* (Vol. VII, p. 391) who wrote that the *Derech Emunah* instructed that *l'halachah*, the *mevarech* should have in mind to hear and be *yotzei* answering amen from those who listen, in the simple explanation of the *Yerushalmi*, and according to the ruling of the Rema.

The *Seder Nehora Hashalem* (Ch. 15, in the *hagahos*) wrote that the *chazzan* who cannot answer amen in shul, should have *kavanah* when they same amen to the Sheimos Hav-ayah and Ad-nus which are numerically equivalent to amen, and he should envision them written in front of him with their letters in alternating order: אהדוהני.

## Iggeres Emunim

### A Letter from a Loyal Reader

To the editorial board of *Vechol Ma'aminim*, and its director, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*

It's a time of trouble for Am Yisrael, and we are all seeking to add more merits to protect us and all of Am Yisrael. Your work at this time to raise awareness about the lofty powers of answering amen is like a "*davar b'ito mah tov*," the right thing at the right time. Indeed, despite the fact that these things are well known, it is necessary to reiterate the words of *Chazal* time after time, that answering amen can tear up decrees, and the fact that its merit advocates for Am Yisrael in times of trouble to be spared from their enemies. Indeed, we are seeing and hearing wondrous miracles that are taking place every day.

With *siyata diShmaya*, I thought of a beautiful *remez* that alludes to this concept:

The *tefillah* of *Yekum Purkan*, in which we arouse Heavenly Mercy on Am Yisrael, concludes with the words: "*Maran di biShmaya yehei besadhon kol zeman v'idan*" – Hashem will assist you at every time and in every place. And see how wondrous it is that the numerical value of the acronym of these words is exactly 91- which is equal to amen. In fact, there is a double *remez* here, because right afterwards we say – "*venomar amen*" – meaning, that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will help us in the merit of answering amen.

If we always need Hashem to help us, wherever we are, how much more so is that the case at this time, and therefore, it is surely fitting that we should be strict especially now to answer amen. This way we will merit to hear *besuros tovos*, *yeshuos* and *nechamos* – *venomar amen*.

Shalom Dov Segal, Bnei Brak



The Rosh Yeshivah Harav Steinman speaking at a Bney Emunim event.

### The Ayeles Hashachar 24 Kislev 5778

Harav Aharon Leib Steinman was born in Brisk in 5675 to his father, Rav Noach Tzvi, who was one of the respected members of the community. In 5697, he moved to Switzerland to avoid a draft notice, and in 5705, he moved to Eretz Yisrael.

About half a year after arriving in Eretz Yisrael, he was appointed to lead Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim in Kfar Saba, and in 5715, he was appointed Rosh Yeshivas Ponevezh Letze'irim. In 5758, he established Yeshivas Orchos Torah in Bnei Brak, and later, established other *yeshivos* around the country, of which he was the *nasi*. He encouraged and supported Bney Emunim's work, and also participated in two large events that were held to strengthen the answering of amen.

He passed away on 24 Kislev 5778 at the age of 103. Hundreds of thousands accompanied him to his final resting place in the Ponevezh section of the cemetery in Bnei Brak. He authored the *Ayeles Hashachar* series on Torah and on *masechtos* in Shas.

### Birchos Hashachar Bechavrusa

Towards the end of his life, after one of the *shiurim* that he gave before *Shacharis vasikin* in his house, the Rosh Yeshivah suddenly turned to those present and said: "Let us take upon ourselves from now on that about fifteen minutes before the *tefillah*, each one will stand and say *Birchos Hashachar* and we will all answer amen after him. Just like a businessman does not suffice with a bit of money and he wants to increase his fortune, we, whose business is the *Melechtes Shamayim*, do not want to suffice with just a few amens, and we want to have as many amens as possible."

He added: "When we are in this world, we do not understand the importance of answering amen, which is worth billions. But in Olam Haba, a person sees that every amen helps him, and he feels the lack of every amen that he does not have. A person must know that even one amen can save him." (*Notrei Amen*, Vol. II, p. 26)



Harav Steinman reciting Birchos Hashachar in front of other mispallelim.

to Am Yisrael, so He gave them Torah and [many] *mitzvos*." The *Rambam (Peirush Hamishnayos* *ibid*) explains this Mishnah as follows: "One of the foundations of *emunah* in the Torah is that if a person fulfills just one of the 613 *mitzvos* properly, and he did not have any motivations relating to Olam Hazeh at all, and did it completely *l'Shem Shamayim* and out of love for Hashem, as I explained, then he merits life in Olam Haba. This is why Rabbi Chananya says that because of the many *mitzvos*, it is impossible that person should not do one mitzvah his whole life with *shleimus*, and he will merit to have his soul exist eternally

can be *zocheh badin*." (*K'ayol Ta'arog, Moadim* p. 361)

It should be noted that the Rosh Yeshivah mentioned this concept in words that he delivered at an event to be *mechazek* amen that was organized by Bney Emunim on 13 Elul 5770. He said: "Answering amen according to *halachah* has a tremendous and powerful virtue, that because of the fact that it is so simple and easy to fulfill, there is nothing to be prideful about when doing so!"

He continued: "We have another advantage of answering amen: it is such a lofty mitzvah and a person can reach unbelievable levels and *brachos* with it. At the same time, fulfilling it does not involve a shred of pride. That is the greatest virtue of all – to do something good that does not have any *ga'avah* mixed in!"

for this deed." From the words of the Rambam it seems that this great merit that a person has to merit Olam Haba is doing a mitzvah *l'Shem Shamayim* only and without any other objective. "In my view," the Rosh Yeshivah concluded, "the mitzvah of answering amen is a mitzvah that can easily be fulfilled *l'Shem Shamayim*. Because by answering it with *kavanah*, a person does not attain any material gain whatsoever. And because it is so simple and easy, there is no concern that there will be *ga'avah* when fulfilling it. So we find that answering amen according to *halachah* is the right way through which a person



Photocopy of the letter that the Rosh Yeshivah wrote for the Bney Emunim event

### A Holy Letter

This is a copy of a holy letter that the Rosh Yeshivah sent in honor of the *chizuk* gathering on the subject of answering amen, which took place

in Bnei Brak in Tishrei 5778:

BS"D

To all those gathered at the event for strengthening the answering of amen, through the Bney Emunim organization headed by Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein *shlita*,

*Chazal* have expounded very much on the great virtue of answering amen, and there is nothing to add to this. Maybe it be Hashem's Will that they succeed.

### A Mitzvah That Can Be Fulfilled L'Shem Shamayim

One year, when Harav Yitzchak Silberstein consulted with the Rosh Yeshivah about what he should be *mechazek* the *tzibbur* ahead of Rosh Hashanah, the Rosh Yeshivah surprised him with an original, and well explained, idea:

The *Mishnah Acharonah* in *Maseches Makkos* cites Rabbi Chananya ben Akashia: "Hashem wanted to give merits