

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



ת.ד. 102 בני ברק | פקס : 03-5055919
9139191@gmail.com

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Yosef Cast His Lot Only on Hashem

"ויאמרו איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים אנחנו על אחינו אשר ראינו צרת נפשו בתחנונו אלינו ולא שמענו על כן באה אלינו הצרה הזאת" (מ בכא)

If indeed Yosef pleaded for his life when they sold him, why did the Torah not mention this in the description of the sale? And moreover, why did the brothers console only for not listening to Yosef's pleas, and not about the actual sale?

Rav Menachem Mendel of Vorka explained this *passuk* beautifully, and based on his explanation these questions are reconciled:

When the brothers saw the suffering and pain that came upon them from the ruler of Egypt, they introspected into their deeds and realized that they were being brought to task for the sale of Yosef. Through this, they reached the conclusion that Yosef's behavior towards was not, as they had thought, the result of bad intentions, and that on the contrary, he was a *tzaddik*. And they said, "but we are to blame for our brother" that we sold him because we thought he was trying to cause us trouble, and now we understand that we erred and that he is a great man, because although we stood next to him during his sale "and we saw the pain of his heart" and still "when he pleaded with us we didn't hear," we didn't hear from his mouth any requests or pleas that were directed at us. So it emerges that Yosef's *bitachon* in Hashem was so strong that even though he had the possibility during his time of trouble to ask for help from a human being, he did not do so, and instead, turned and prayed solely to his Creator.

Sheloshah Seferim Niftachim [Rav Y. Mandelkorn, copied from the manuscript of Harav Y. Levinstein, the Rav of Stryck] p. 20

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

The Yevanim Battle the Answering of Amen!

During Chanukah, we thank Hashem for the great victory of Mattisyahu and his sons over the evil Greek Empire, which wanted to totally uproot the *emunah* in Hashem and His Torah from Jewish hearts. The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 2 4)* describes that their aspiration to do this was so strong that they decreed upon Am Yisrael: "Write on the horns of your oxen that you have no share in the G-d of Israel."

In the writings of the sages of Yemen (*Eitz Chaim Tefillas Ein K'Elokeinu*) there is a *Midrash* that the Greek Empire also decreed on Am Yisrael not to answer amen. One who studies this will see that these two decrees are the same. Answering amen is a public declaration of *emunah* in Hashem and a declaration that He is the "K-l Melech Ne'eman." In their attempt to sway Am Yisrael from *emunah* in Hashem, the Greeks forbade them from declaring their faith in public – by answering amen, and even commanded them to do the opposite – to declare in public that they are denying it, *chalilah*: "Write for yourselves on the horns of the oxen that you have no share in the G-d of Israel."

I thought that the name "Chanukah" alludes to answering amen and the victory of *emunah* that we thank for in these days. Because the Rishonim write that the meaning of the name "Chanukah" is that on 25 Kislev, Am Yisrael, they camped in their war with the Greeks – hence חנו כ"ה (see *Tur Orach Chaim* 670). The numerical value of the words חנו כ"ה is the same as amen – 91. Because on these days,

the sons of the Chashmonaim camped from their war against the Greeks and once again proudly held up the banner of *emunah*, by declaring their *emunah* – which is answering amen.

The *Midrash* cited by the sages of Yemen then continues to reveal that as a result of the decree not to answer amen, *Chazal* composed a lofty *piyut* – "Ein K'Elokeinu" – which we say each morning after *Shacharis* to this day. As is known, this *piyut* is comprised of five stanzas, each of which has our praises. In the first three stanzas that begin with מ...י...נו...ה - the acronym of them is amen, while the stanzas that follow start with ברוך... This *tefillah* was instituted at a time when the Greeks decreed not to answer amen, so that amen should not be forgotten, and it remains with us to this day.

From this *piyut*, in which it was instituted to mention the Name of Hashem in various ways [Elokeinu, Adoneinu, Malkienu, Moshienu] corresponding to each one of the letters of amen, we can learn how deep is the meaning and significance of answering amen!

The days of Chanukah in which we thank Hashem for the victory of the Chashmonaim over the Greeks, and for raising the banner of *emunah* in Hashem and His Torah, are surely worthy times that are *mesugal* for re-strengthening "*lehodos ulehallel leShimcha hagadol*" – by answering amen properly.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

A European airport. Huge halls filled with passengers dragging heavy suitcases behind them. Tourists from all over the world filling the place, rushing to the gates that would take them to their destinations.

Every few minutes, another departing flight was announced, and through the gleaming windows, one could watch the large, impressive planes taking off or landing on the runways, with the air traffic control tower rising behind them in the background. Noise, tumult, a transit stop for a huge crowd making its way to countries around the globe.

Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus was also in this airport, on a stopover between flights. His plane was to take off in ten minutes. Most of the passengers were already seated on the plane, and whoever was not – was hurrying to make their way over.

Suddenly, the Rav noticed a venerable looking Jew standing in the corner of the hall swaying slowly as he davened *Minchah*. From the window to his left, the reddening sky was visible, heralding the impending sunset, right behind the plane that was about to

him – even the shouting and the sounds of loads being dragged – were not enough to distract him. When the loudspeaker announced that the plane was taking off in three minutes, Rav Don continued davening as if he hadn't heard it at all. He was davening to his Creator and that was his whole world right now.

Rav Pincus stood rooted in his place, unable to move and to tear his eyes away. If the *Mashgiach* is standing here, he resolved, I'll stay with him and whatever happens to him will happen to me as well...

Three minutes passed, and Rav Pincus realized that the chances were that the plane had departed without them. The loudspeaker was directing passengers to other flights, and their suitcases moved along on the conveyer belt that carried them to the luggage compartments. Only the *Mashgiach* still stood in the corner of the bustling hall, continuing *tefillah* despite the ticking clock. And the plane...it had probably taken off quite a few minutes ago into the darkening sky.

Ten minutes passed before the *mashgiach* finished davening, detached himself from the Upper Worlds where he had been, and landed back to the current reality. He glanced at his watch, and when he realized there wasn't much to lose, so he continued to say *Aleinu* with such sweetness.

Only after that did he raise his eyes and see Rav Pincus

standing next to him. The *mashgiach* grasped his arm and they walked together to the place where the plane had been standing, and had most likely taken off...

To their utter surprise, the plane was still standing in place, gleaming white against the runway lights. It seemed to be waiting just for them...in their honor!

The rabbanim hurried down the jetway, and reached the door. All the seats were already full, and the passengers studied them in surprise. Of course, they were asking

themselves why the lateness, and how it was that the flight had not taken off until these two had boarded after the last minute.

As soon as the Rabbanim sat down, the doors closed and the plane began to move.

The passengers told them that a short time before takeoff, one of the people on the flight discovered a bag on the shelf above him that seemed suspicious. The flight crew called security, which came to deal with the bag and to guarantee the safety of the passengers. The procedure took time...and while the passengers waited for the matter to be resolved, the *Mashgiach* was deeply immersed in his *tefillah*. It turned out that those moments of delay were the minute he needed to finish his davening!

When the plane was already high in the sky and the stars twinkled through the small windows, Rav Pincus approached Rav Don and asked: "Is that how one should conduct themselves? Stand in the airport and daven slowly without paying attention to the hands of the clock? This is not a question of whether one should daven or not, but whether one should prolong his *tefillah* at such a time, or perhaps one should daven a bit shorter so as not to miss the flight? If the Rav would have missed his flight, it would have involved a significant monetary loss and aggravation, which also lead to *bittul Torah* and extra exertion..."

The *mashgiach* listened to Rav Pincus's question, and when he finished, his smile grew wider and his face was suffused with a special light. "And what can I do my friend," he replied with one short, remarkable statement, "it was so pleasant for me as I davened that I didn't notice that the time had passed..."

How sweet and pleasant is the *tefillah* when we are able to imagine how we stand in front of the King of kings like an only son. We pour our hearts out to Him, thanking Him and asking from Him and bonding to Him with cords of love. He is our Father, and we turn to Him directly. Fortunate is one who is able to connect to *tefillah*, to the Creator of all, the Master of the world, and to feel a tremendous closeness to Hashem that cannot be compared to anything else in the world.

Tefillah Dilea, p. 149



.Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris

take off.

It looked like the Yid did not realize how late it was and that the plane was about to leave. Rav Pincus approached the Yid, whose eyes were closed in concentration and with tranquility on his face, as if the whole hustle and bustle around had nothing to do with him. It was the *mashgiach*, Rav Don Segal, *shlita*.

Time was running out, but Rav Pincus could not tear his eyes away from the sight of Rav Don davening to his Creator, uttering each word slowly and with *dveikus*. Everything around

Spending time with Reb Amnon Sklar was a truly uplifting experience. His face lights up as he describes the lofty virtues of answering amen. It is evident that answering amen is the source of his vitality. There are those who have said that amen is numerically equivalent to יהלום a diamond, and indeed, spending time with Reb Amnon illustrates this. Just like a diamond dealer knows how to appreciate every diamond that lands up in his hands, likewise Reb Amnon knows how to appreciate every single amen, and is always looking for opportunities to merit them.

Even before we begin to speak, he looked at me and said: “You should know, that I see this actual conversation as a big *zechus*. Our goal is to arouse the *tzibbur* to seek after and take advantage of every opportunity to answer amen. Regarding such a conversation, we can advise the words of the *passuk* (Malachi 3:16): “*Az nidberu yirei Hashem*” – as a result of these words strengthening the answering of amen, undoubtedly the “*yirei Hashem*” will increase, and they will be strict to answer amen according to *halachah*.”

I'll begin with an unusual question. 'Amnon' is a rather rare name in our circles. Who are you named for?

“Truth to be told, I do not know! I imagine the source is Rav Amnon of Mainz, who composed *Unesaneh Tokef*, and who was killed *al Kiddush Hashem*. The well-known description appears in the *machzorim*, how he took upon himself terrible suffering for the sake of his faith, and it definitely stirs the heart of every Yid and illustrates the secret of our nation's survival.

But we have to know that even when we do merit to answer amen, we are fulfilling the mitzvah of “*Venikdashti besoch Bnei Yisrael*” (Vayikra 22:32), that one who answers amen declares in public that Hashem is the ‘K-I Melech ne’eman.’ Likewise, the word amen expresses *mesirus nefesh*, as you have brought a number of times in your pamphlets, that amen is an acronym for אני מוסר נפשי. It is possible that because of this, the word “amen” is included in the name of the person

who became a paragon of *mesirus nefesh* and Kiddush Hashem – Rav Amnon of Mainz.”

In light of your words, I think that the question of the source of your dedication to answering amen is superfluous. And yet, I'll ask what brought you to serve as a *gabbai amen* and to stand



in shul each morning to answer amen to the *Birchos Hashachar* of *mispallelim*?

“I learned it from a big Rebbe,” Reb Amnon recalls nostalgically. “It was many years ago, when my oldest daughter, who today *baruch Hashem* is a mother of two daughters, was born. We were in Maayanei Hayeshuah Hospital in Bnei Brak and a problem arose. It was three in the morning and I decided to go to the home of Rav Chaim Kanievsky for a *brachah*. I knocked lightly at the door. The Rebbetzin opened right away and motioned for me to come in and wait. It was known that Reb Chaim was strict to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechvarusa* each day with the Rebbetzin. First, the Rebbetzin would say the *brachos* and Rav Chaim would answer amen, and when she finished, Reb Chaim would say the *brachos* and the Rebbetzin would answer amen.

That same day, I came in just as the Rebbetzin had finished making her *brachos*. In awe, I stood on the side in the dining room and watched Rav Chaim recite *Birchos Hashachar*, one *brachah* after another, and the Rebbetzin answered amen after him. It moved me greatly. And at that moment I decided that this was going to be my ‘project’ as well.”

Could you describe how it works each day in your shul, how you bring the *mispallelim* to recite *Birchos Hashachar* for you?

“In our shul one does not need to turn to the *mispallelim*. Each one of them knows that when I welcome them with a ‘good morning’ it’s also a reminder to recite *Birchos Hashachar* for me and give me the merit of answering amen. The custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* plays a significant role in our *beis medrash*, and sometimes the chazzan is delayed a few minutes, even though it’s time to daven, so that he can allow the last of the *mispallelim* to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* before davening.”

Why then do we see people who are lax about answering amen?

“First of all, I don’t think the word should be “lax.” Klal Yisrael is not lax about answering amen. It’s clear that people do not fully internalize the power of answering amen. People think that in order to effect a *yeshuah*, they need to do some type of groundbreaking action, like going to the Kosel for forty days in a row, or at least saying all of *sefer Tehillim* in one sitting. But from the words of Chazal, especially the *sefer Hazohar*, we learn that it is possible to effect *yeshuos* easily – by being strict to answer amen. I appeal to every Jew to pay attention that through an easy and small action, he can effect a big *yeshuah*. Answering amen is a small act that has tremendous results.”

Reb Amnon then adds: “As is known, one should have in mind the amen based on the content of the *brachah*. Therefore, when answering amen to *brachos* of praise and gratitude, we should have in mind, ‘*emes*,’ and in *brachos* that also have a request, we should have in mind ‘may this request be fulfilled.’ But the *Chayei Adam* (6 1) writes that one who answers amen must also have in mind that he is joining the request of the *mevarech* that the Name of Hashem should be blessed. I think that when we answer amen to each and every *brachah* with this *kavanah*, it is a tremendous *Kiddush Hashem* that brings great *yeshuos*.”

Razei Emunim

Allusions to Meah Brachos and Amen in the Parashah

Chinuch of Young Children to Answer Amen

“וְזֶאת אֲחֵיכֶם הִקְטִין תְּבִיאֻ אוֹלֵי וַיֵּאמְרוּ דְּבָרֵיכֶם וְלֹא תִּמְוָתוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כֵן” (מב כ)

Chazal place a special emphasis on being *mechanech* young children to answer amen, as the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 110b) says: “From when does a child receive Olam Haba? It is said in the name of Rabi Meir: From when he says amen, as it says (*Yeshayah* 26:2): ‘*Pischu she’arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*’ – do not read it ‘*shomer emunim*’ but rather ‘*she’omer*’

amen.” As a result, the **Rem”a** rules (*Orach Chaim* 124 7): “And he should teach his young children to answer amen because as soon as a baby answers amen he has a share in Olam Haba.”

Harav Yehosef of Kosson derived an allusion to this *halachah* from the words of this *passuk*: “And your little brother bring to me” – in what merit does the “*kattan*” come to Olam Haba? In the merit of “וַיֵּאמְרוּ דְּבָרֵיכֶם” – that they teach him to answer amen.

Likutei Bnei Shileishim

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The shul building in Shuran, Slovakia

The Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim

27 Kislev 5655

Rav Chizkiyah Feivel Plaut was born to his father Rav Chaim in 5578 in the city of Kolin, today in the Czech Republic. From an early age, he learned with diligence, and in 5594, when he was sixteen, he traveled to study in the prestigious Pressburg Yeshivah, where he studied under the Chasam Sofer until the Rav passed away on 25 Tishrei 5600.

Rav Chizkiyah Feivel was very close to his *rebbe* and conveyed his Torah and his practices in a series of *seforim* entitled *Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim*. With the name of the *sefer* he commemorated is father, Reb Chaim and his mother Rivka, because חב"ר is an acronym for Chizkiyah ben Rivka. Aside for the Torah of his *rebbe*, his *seforim* also included his *chiddushim* on Torah, on Talmud and on *Shulchan Aruch*, and his *teshuvos* in *halachah*, where he responded

to questions sent to him from across Hungary. After his marriage in 5609, he was appointed the Rav of Shuran in Slovakia, where he served for almost fifty years until his passing. As soon as he arrived, he established a yeshivah and many *talmidim* traveled to learn from him.

On 27 Kislev 5655, he passed away, and was buried in the cemetery in Shuran. Rav Chizkiyah Feivel did not have any children, but the words (*Yeshayah* 56:5) “*venasati lecha beveisi ubechomasi yad veshem tov mibanim umibanos, shem olam eten lo asher lo yichras,*” were fulfilled with him through his prominent *seforim*.

Amen – Immediate Acceptance of Emunah

The reason for the words of Chazal that the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech* is explained by Rav Chizkiyah Feivel Plaut, author of *Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim*, as follows:

When saying the *brachah*, the *mevarech* shows that the *emunah* in the Creator is ingrained in his heart, but the one who answers amen also expresses the way the *emunah* is accepted: He does not need time to deliberate and study it, there is no need to speak a lot to him, and to persuade him. As soon as he hears the *dvar emunah* from the *mevarech*, he accepts the words with the answering of amen. *Emunah* is so important in Shamayim and that is why Chazal say (*Brachos* 53b) that the *oneh amen* is greater than the *mevarech*.

The *Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim* adds that a Rav who instructs his son (ibid) “grab and make the *brachah*” admits that the virtue of the *oneh amen* is greater than the *mevarech*, but in any case, he thought that one who makes the *brachah* in the ears of one who answers amen to his *brachah* has a part in the answering of amen, because he caused him to answer. Therefore, specifically because of the virtue of answering amen, the reward of the *mevarech* who gave the merit to another person to answer amen is greater than the *oneh amen*. Therefore, it is fitting to seek out a *brachah* that will be answered with amen *k’halachah*. (*Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim* Vol. V, second part, page 60).

Amen to the Brachah of a Gentile

From the *passuk* (*Devarim* 7:14): “*Baruch tihyeh mikol ha’amim*”

Chazal explain (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 8 8): “If a gentile blesses you – answer amen after him.” In other words, “*mikol ha’amim*” is explained to mean “from all the nations” and therefore Chazal explain the *passuk* about a *brachah* that a gentile blesses Yisrael. But we still have to understand how we learn from this *passuk* that one should answer amen to the *brachah* of a non-Jew?

The *Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim* explains: In the *passuk* it is explained that HaKadosh Baruch Hu agrees with the *brachah* of the gentile, because it does not say “*kol ha’amim yevarchucha*” – but rather “*baruch tihyeh mikol ha’amim,*” and a *brachah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu agrees with surely needs to be fulfilled with the answering of amen. (*Likutei Chaver Ben Chaim*, Vol. I, p. 18)