

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



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Parashas YISRO | 5785 | Issue No. 569

## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

### The Merit to Observe the Events of the *Geulah* Properly

"וישמע יתרו כהן מדין חתן משה את כל אשר עשה אלוקים למשה ולישראל עמו כי הוציא ה' את ישראל ממצרים" (יה א)

**Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro**, rosh yeshivas Be'er Yaakov, explained:

At Krias Yam Suf and Matan Torah, all the nations of the world clearly saw the Kingship of Hashem in His world. During Krias Yam Suf "all the waters in the world were split" (*Mechilta Beshalach Masechta d'Vayehi* 4), and at the time of Mattan Torah "a bird did not chirp, birds did not fly, an ox did not low...the creations did not speak, rather the world was absolutely silent" (*Shemos Rabbah* 29:9). But while the rest of the nations of the world, which undoubtedly were very impressed by the miraculous wonders that occurred in front of their eyes, did not take heart to understand the message concealed behind them, Yisro did merit to open his eyes and his heart, and to look correctly at what had occurred and to draw the requisite conclusion.

For this reason, in *Shemoneh Esreh* we ask for the *Geulah* by saying "vesechezenah eineinu beshuvcha leTzion berachamim." We long that when the *Geulah* comes, our gaze will not be focused on the wondrous events that will precede it, but rather our eyes should be open to see and understand the revelation of the *Kavod Hashem* that will take place "when You return to Tzion with *rachamim*."

These open eyes are merited only through the power of learning Torah, and that is why we ask "*veha'er eineinu beTorasecha*" – that from the power of learning Torah we should merit such eyes that through them we should be able to look at all the events of life through the lens of Torah.

*Zahav Mishva Vayechi*

## Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### Answering Amen Is a Foundation for Keeping All the *Mitzvos*

The middle *brachah* in Mussaf of Shabbos, *Tikanta Shabbos*, begins in the order of the *aleph-beis*, but in reverse שבת תכנת תפילה... The *meforshim* on *tefillah* explained the reason for this, and delved into the significance concealed in this *tefillah*.

This order ends with the word אז and those who arranged the *tefillah* then added the words מסיני נצטוו. The acronym of these three words – *az miSinai nitztavu* – is amen. This is not coincidental, of course. This allusion comes to make us aware that we were already commanded about amen at Har Sinai.

So what is the *chiddush* about that? Didn't *Chazal* say (*Yerushalmi Peah* 2 4): "The *Mikra*, the *Mishnah*, the *Talmud* and *Aggadah* – even what a *talmid vasik* is destined in the future to rule before his *rebbe* was already told to Moshe at Sinai." If so, isn't amen certainly included in this?

I thought to explain based on the words of Rabbeinu Bechaye in the previous *parashah*, *Beshalach* (*Shemos* 14:31), who writes that *Chazal* instituted for us the answering of amen so that we should fulfill *k'halachah* the first mitzvah of the *Aseres Hadibros* – the mitzvah of *emunah* in Hashem. From his words it emerges that answering amen with *kavanah* is not a mitzvah established by *Chazal* but rather a *mitzvas aseh* from the Torah – which is

the mitzvah of *emunah*.

In light of this we can say that saying אז מסיני נצטוו comes to allude to us that by answering amen we merit to fulfill all the *mitzvos* that we were commanded at Sinai, because the mitzvah of *emunah* that we fulfill, *halachah lema'aseh*, by answering amen is the basic fundamental for accepting all the *mitzvos*, as it says (*Tehillim* 119:86): "*Kol mitzvascha emunah*."

I thought to add further that the previous words: "*to'ameha chaim zachu vegam ha'ohavim devareha gedulah bacharu*" can also be explained to apply to amen. Because those who answer amen "merit life" as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 47a): "Anyone who prolongs their amen has his days and years prolonged," and "*gedulah bacharu*," they have chosen greatness as *Chazal* say (*ibid* 53b): "the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*!"

On this Shabbos, when we read about our ancestors' declaration at Har Sinai: "*Kol asher diber Hashem na'aseh*," it is fitting that we should also declare that נעשה – כל אשר דבר ה' – we will be strict to hear the *brachos* and answer amen properly, and the mitzvah of *emunah* that we will fulfill with this will be the basis for all the *mitzvos* in the Torah – "*kol asher diber Hashem*!"

**Good Shabbos**  
**Yaakov Dov Marmurstein**

Siberia. The dreadful ice desert.

It was enough to just mention its name to arouse fear in the hearts of Jews who lived in the Soviet Union during the years of the Communist regime. That frozen, isolated region in Russia served as a massive prison for people who had been marked by the Communist regime as dissidents.

Millions of people, among them many Jews, were exiled there for no good reason. In labor camps, known as “gulags” in Russian, prisoners suffered under horrific, subhuman conditions, working in slave labor while being tortured, while coping with fierce cold, hunger and disease. Many did not withstand it and met their deaths after suffering unspeakably.

The Communist party opposed any vestige of religion, and therefore forbade Jews from observing the *mitzvos* of their religion. It saw Jews who worked to preserve the Jewish embers as “opponents of the regime” and they were sentenced to harsh punishments. In order to capture these Jews, the Russians established the “Yevseksia”

those who fell victim to the brutal machinations of the Yevseksia. He was known as a pious and G-d fearing Jew, who had served as a Rav in Kyiv until the Communist revolution broke out. Fearing for his life, he left his job and began to work in a flour mill.

Reb Yitzchak did not serve as a rav, but that did not mean he stopped serving his Creator. The many dangers did not deter him and he continued to fulfill the *mitzvos* with *mesirus nefesh*.

Once, Rav Yitzchak came to shul when a member of the community risked his life and gathered a few children to teach them Torah secretly. That Jew was aware of the fact that if he would be caught, he'd be sentenced to some fifteen years in prison in one of the labor camps in Siberia, but he was not deterred.

Suddenly, a Yevseksia member burst into the shul. He noticed what was going on, and quickly grabbed a *sefer kodesh* from one of the children to serve as evidence of the “crime.” That Jew paled and looked like he was about to faint. He knew very well the meaning of being caught and the punishment that awaited him. Reb Yitzchak, with unbelievable courage, grabbed the man by his collar, plucked the siddur from his hand and yelled at him loudly to “get out of here, you cursed man!”

A short time later, Reb Yitzchak was arrested. In a lightning fast trial, he was sentenced

to a long exile of sixteen years and three months in Siberia. His sentence was based on groundless accusations, including the incident in the shul, which was classified as “using force against a representative of the law.”

In Siberia, Reb Yitzchak found himself cut off from any human life. He received scant food, was constantly in a freezing cold environment and he was completely isolated. He was exiled to such a desolate and remote place, that even birds could not survive there.

As a result of his lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables, the inmates of the camp contracted the terrible scurvy disease, to which many succumbed. They died after suffering the ravages of the disease for some time. In order to survive, the inmates made every effort to capture a deer and to drink its blood, and thus to provide their bodies with a

bit of Vitamin C to spare themselves from this terrible disease. But Reb Yitzchak, who observed the laws of Torah with *mesirus nefesh*, even in the valley of death, refrained from doing this. And indeed, he was afflicted with scurvy, and grew weaker every day.

One day, towards sundown, Reb Yitzchak's eyes closed in weakness, and he fell into a fitful sleep. Suddenly, in his dream, he saw his father, Reb Avraham Yehoshua:

“My Yitzchak,” his father called to him, “you are in terrible distress. Why do you not turn to Hashem to send you salvation?”

“I have no strength,” Reb Yitzchak replied feebly in his dream.

“Nu,” his father tried to urge him, “at least daven *Shemoneh Esreh*.”

“I can't,” his son replied.

“And if I read the *tefillah* with you, will you repeat it after me word after word?” his father insisted.

“Yes...” Reb Yitzchak agreed.

“*Hashem sefasai tiftach*,” the father began *Shemoneh Esreh*, and Reb Yitzchak repeated after him word for word, all in the dream.

From his place On High in Gan Eden, his father uttered the holy words of *Shemoneh Esreh* together with his suffering son somewhere in the remote ice tundra of Siberia. His body was broken, his soul was suffering, but his *neshamah*, deep in the dream, continued to plead to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, perhaps He would have mercy.

When they reached the words: “*Re'eh na b'anyeinu...ki Go'el chazak Atah*,” Reb Yitzchak awoke. Soldiers were standing next to him and forced him to get up right away: “Take your things and come with us!” they ordered harshly.

With difficulty, Reb Yitzchak got to his feet weakly, still stunned from his dream, and dragged himself outside with fear, following the soldiers. And then, he discovered the unbelievable – he was being transferred to a different labor camp! A camp with somewhat humane conditions!

Reb Yitzchak Weiner experienced many miracles during his difficult years in exile, but the dream – that awesome dream in which his father revealed himself to him and davened the first seven *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh* with him word for word – is something he never forgot. For the rest of his life, he told those around him about the dream that saved him from death, and the *tefillah* that gave him life.

*To Remain a Jew [Rav Y. Zilber]  
p. 286 [Hebrew edition]*



The Trans-Siberian Railroad that crosses the width of Siberia

– the Jewish department of the party, which was made up of Jews who had turned their backs on their people and collaborated with the evil regime and operated on its behalf.

The Yevseksia members, who were filled with hatred toward their brethren and their heritage, worked mercilessly to destroy shuls, Jewish schools and to persecute Torah observant Jews. They hunted down Jews who had violated the laws of the regime and continued to observe *mitzvos*.

Tragically, this department did its work well. With their brutal persecution, they succeeded in capturing many Jews who had secretly tried to maintain Jewish community lives. They were all placed on trains and exiled to a labor camp in Siberia.

Rabbi Yitzchak Weiner was one of



For many years, Reb Meir Gutman has served as the gabbai amen in the Gerrer Shtiebel on Harav Dessler Street in Bnei Brak, a job he fills with uncompromising dedication. As one of the *mispallelim* in the *vasikin* minyan, he spends many hours sitting and listening to *brachos* from other *mispallelim* so that he can answer amen to them.

There's a holy fire of chassidus burning in Reb Meir's heart, reflecting the spirit of chassidim from previous generations. A conversation with him is an inspirational and spiritual experience, and it went on longer than planned, revealing deep understandings about the lofty virtues of answering amen and the obligation of every Yid to fulfill his *shlichus* in this world with determination, responsibility and dedication.

**As usual, we first ask to hear a bit about Reb Meir's schedule each morning.**

Reb Meir is very modest, and doesn't like speaking about himself. But out of appreciation for the importance of the mitzvah that he is so devoted to, he agrees to share his practice.

"For many years, I have been *zocheh* to rise early and daven *vasikin*," Reb Meir begins. "As is known, the time of *neitz* is an *eis ratzon*, when *tefillos* are accepted with love and the Gates of Heaven are open. But for me, it's enough that I have the *zechus* to fulfill the simplest meaning of the first passage in *Shulchan Aruch*: 'One should overcome like a lion to stand up in the morning to serve his Creator, and he should arise with the dawn.'"

Later, Reb Meir shares his daily schedule: "I come early each day so that I can be *zocheh* to answer amen to the *brachos* of those who daven with the *neitz*. After the *tefillah* ends, I stay in the *shtiebel* until after nine in the morning. In order not to disturb the *mispallelim* of the later *minyanim*, I sit in a side place, and anyone who is interested – comes to me to make the *brachos*."

Reb Meir then adds, surprisingly: "Aside for the *mispallelim* of the *shtiebel*, there are numerous people who regularly come only to make *Birchos Hashachar* for me, and then they continue on to the regular shul where they daven."

**How did you begin this practice**

**of dedicating so many hours each day to hearing *brachos* from *mispallelim*?**

"There was a wonderful figure who influenced me deeply," Reb Meir shares. "In our *shtiebel* there was a remarkable chassid, a carryover of a previous generation, Reb Yosef Dovid



Reb Meir Gutman, doing his work

Lapa, who was miraculously saved from the Nazis, *ym"l*s. He would come to *shtiebel* each night at around 1 a.m., and sat engrossed in his learning until *Shacharis*.

He had a special *hakpadah* not to speak or engage in anything before davening, but there was one thing that he did not desist from – answering amen after *Birchos Hashachar*. He would plead with *mispallelim* to make their *brachos* in front of him, and the *mispallelim*, seeing how important it was to him, would accede and come to make the *brachos*.

I had the *zechus* of sitting next to him, and I joined him in answering amen, day after day. So, in his merit, the virtue of this mitzvah became deeply imbued in me, and after his passing, I continued in his ways."

**Did you ever ask Reb Yosef Dovid what his reason for cleaving to this practice was? Why did he pursue people to say *Birchos Hashachar* for him?**

"The truth is that I didn't ask him," Reb Meir replies honestly. "I knew I wouldn't get an answer, because the words of the Mishnah (*Avos* 1:15) 'say little and do much' were his guiding light. Yidden like him were busy with action and less with talk..."

He also hardly spoke about his experiences in the concentration camps. He maintained a deep silence, except for one remark that he would say each year: In the death camps the Nazis had etched the number 611 into his arm. On the day that the *neitz* was at 6:11, he would show the number on his arm, point to it with a smile, and say: "This is my day."

**And yet, perhaps you once heard an explanation for his adherence to this practice?**

"It is known that the Bais Yisrael of Gur, *zy"l*a, would urge that every *brachah* should be said aloud, to give the listeners the merit of answering amen. It is possible that Reb Yosef Dovid, inspired by the Rebbe, adopted the practice of urging people to say *Birchos Hashachar* aloud and to merit to answer amen.

I'll add regarding the leadership of the Bais Yisrael, that in *sefer Yagdil Torah* (*Parashas Bereishis*), the *mechanech* Reb Moshe Ludmir brings that he heard from the Rebbe that 'the first thing you have to demand of *talmidim* is to make *brachos* out loud.'"

**And what gives you the strength to be consistent about this practice day after day?**

Upon hearing the question, Reb Meir raises his voice passionately: "What do you mean? Anyone who sees the words of Chazal and the of the *gedolim* through the generations about the virtues of answering amen cannot remain indifferent. Take for example the words of Chazal in the *Midrash* (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1): 'There is nothing greater in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu than the amen that Am Yisrael answer.' If answering amen is the most important thing in *Shamayim*, how can I be lax about it?!"

"In addition, the *Shaarei Teshvuah* (*Orach Chaim* 6:5) brings that the Arizal would answer amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* of many people, and even if there were a hundred people – he would answer them. The *hanhagah* of the Arizal indicates the tremendous importance of answering amen to *Birchos Hashachar*!"

"I was taught," Reb Meir concludes decisively, "that what is incumbent upon us to do – we have to do!"

## A Way to Intensify the Middas Harachamim on Klal Yisrael

“עתה שמע בקלי איעצך ויהי אלקים עמך היה אתה לעם מול האלקים והנבאת אתה את הדברים אל האלקים” (יה ט)

**Harav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev** once made an effort to nullify a bad decree that was hovering over the Jews of his generation, but he was not able to. He was then walking in the street and he met a poor woman who was broken and bitter. The *tzaddik* asked what was distressing her, and she replied: “We are so poor, and there is no meat in our house a whole week, but for Shabbos, I am usually able to buy a bit of meat so that my

young children can eat meat at least in honor of Shabbos. But this week, the price of meat went up and I was not able to get even a small piece for Shabbos.” The *tzaddik* suggested that perhaps she should try that week to purchase *treif* meat, whose price was much lower. The woman, who did not know the *tzaddik*, burst out at him angrily: How do you speak – even if my children die of hunger I will not bring *treif* meat into my home!” The *tzaddik* heard this, and raised his eyes to the Heavens and said: “Ribbono shel Olam – look! Even the simplest people in Your nation are ready to be *moser nefesh* not to transgress the *mitzvos* of Your Torah.” And the decree was nullified.

Based on this, Rav Levi Yitzchak explained what Yisro advised Moshe: “I will advise you, and Hashem will be with you” – I will give you advice how to act at a time when *middas hadin* – expressed by the Name Elokim – is prevailing. “*Heyei Atah la’am*” – tell Am Yisrael to do things “*mul ha’Elokim*” – against the laws of Torah [because “*negged*” means “*mul*” like in the *passuk* (*Shemos* 19:2): “*Vayichan sham Yisrael negged hahar*”], “*veheivesa atah es*” – the response – “*l’hadvarim*” to these things “*el ha’Elokim*” and that is how the decree will be nullified.

*Imrei Yehudah [Brezhan] New Edition, Terumah 5672*

## Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The ohel over the tziyun of the Divrei Shmuel of Slonim in the cemetery on Gensha Street in Warsaw

### The Divrei Shmuel 19 Shevat 5676

The Rebbe Rav Shmuel Weinberg was born to his father, Rav Yechiel Michel Aharon, the son of the first Rebbe of Slonim, the Yesod Ha’avodah, in 5610. He learned primarily under his grandfather, but was also close to many of the *tzaddikim* in his generation, including

the Divrei Chaim of Sanz and Rav Dovid Moshe of Tchorikov.

It is related that in his youth, when he was in the court of the Avnei Nezer of Sochatchov, he managed to learn the entire Shas in just six weeks (*Marbitzei Torah M’Olam Hachassidus* Vol. I p. 116).

With the passing of his grandfather, the Yesod Ha’avodah in 5644, he took over as the leader of the community. His leadership was one of love and dedication to his flock. During his years as Rebbe, he worked tirelessly to raise the glory of Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, and he established Yeshivas Ohr Torah in Teveriah.

His *shmuessen* and *divrei Torah* that survived were compiled in *sefer Divrei Shmuel*, which was published by the Nesivos Shalom of Slonim. He passed away on 19 Shevat 5676 while he was in Warsaw for medical care, and was laid to rest there.

### The Oneh Amen Is Saved from the Yetzer Hara

The Divrei Shmuel said: One who answers amen is *zocheh* to be spared from the *yetzer hara*. An allusion to this can be brought from the *tefillah* of Yaakov, in his request to be saved from Eisav – who symbolizes the *yetzer hara* (*Bereishis* 32:12): “*Hatzileini na miyad achi miyad Eisav*” – the words נא מיד אחי are an acronym for amen. (*Divrei Shmuel Vayishlach*)

### When Answering Amen We Join the Tefillah of the Tzibbur

The Divrei Shmuel explains that the great power of answering amen is rooted in the fact that through it, a person connects to the *tefillas rabbim*. When he answers amen after the *shaliach tzibbur* together with the rest of the *tzibbur*, the *oneh* becomes part of the *tzibbur*, and therefore, the power of his answering is so great that *Chazal* say (see *Tikkunei Zohar* 40a) that it tears up the decrees on that person.

To illustrate the difference between a *tefillas rabbim* and a *tefillas yachid*, the Divrei Shmuel compares them to weapons that are used in war: “Just like one should not compare a small arrow that is fired from a bow to a cannonball fired from a heavy cannon, likewise there is no comparing the *tefillah* of a *yachid* to the *tefillah* of the *tzibbur*.” The *tefillas rabbim* generates a new and powerful force, and a person connects to that force through answering amen during the *tefillah* of the *tzibbur*. (*Divrei Shmuel* *ibid*)