

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



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

Parashas MISHPATIM | 5785 | Issue No. 570

Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Fulfilling the *Nedarim* Upon Seeing Success

"מלאכתך ודמעך תאחר בכור בניך תתן לך" (כב כח)

Rashi explains (based on *Temurah* 4a): "מלאכתך" – these are the *bikkurim* and "דמעך" – is the *terumah*. And the *passuk* warns that they should be separated in order, and one should not separate *bikkurim* after *terumah*, or *terumah* after the *maasros*.

Rav Chaim Yirmiyahu Flansberg, the Rav of Sakiai, Lithuania, added that by calling *bikkurim* and *terumah* the *passuk* seeks to teach something else that a person must separate when he merits to harvest his crops:

The way of the world is that when a farmer walks through his plowed land and sows the seeds in it, he carries an emotional and tearful prayer in his heart, as it says in *Tehillim* (125:6): "*haloch yelech uvacho nosei meshech hazara*" – and while doing so he vows that if his work will bear fruit, he will separate from his wealth to give money to the poor. But the nature of the person is that when success does smile down at him – he forgets his promise. Therefore, the *passuk* cautions: מלאכתך ודמעך לא תאחר – when you are harvesting, do not delay paying the obligations and the vows that you made when your eyes were filled with tears of tefillah.

Divrei Yirmiyahu

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Answering Amen Is *Kavod Malchus Shamayim*

I often find myself thinking about the deep significance of answering amen. This wondrous word that is so beloved On High, that Chazal testify of it (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1) that there is nothing greater than it to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Answering amen is a tremendous merit. Every amen is significant and important, and that is also why it is so severe to refrain from answering. We have to be careful not to miss out on this mitzvah and not to enable a *brachah* that is said in our vicinity not to be answered by amen.

In *sefer Kad Hakemach (Emunah)*, Rabbeinu Bechaye explains why refraining from answering amen is so serious, based on a *mashal*: A distinguished king came to a town and all its residents – led by the mayor – came out of the city to welcome him with great honor. The residents stood excitedly outside the city as they waited for the royal convoy to appear on the horizon. When the convoy arrived, the mayor approached respectfully and blessed the king in the name of all the residents. Everyone answered amen loudly, but one person was quiet and did not answer. Is that not an overt belittling of the king's honor? Is he not considered to be treasonous?

The *nimshal* is self-understood: The *brachah* glorifies and coronates HaKadosh Baruch Hu. When a person is quiet and does not answer amen *k'halachah* after a *brachah*, it is not only the nullification of a mitzvah, it is also a slight to the honor of the King of kings. It is possible that this is what the *passuk* alludes to (*Tehillim* 29:2): "*Havu l'Hashem kevod Shemo*," meaning, be careful with the honor of the Name of Hashem by being strict to answer amen after each and every *brachah*.

With this we can understand the

piercing words of the *mochiach* Rav Moshe Kahana, who wrote: "Every person in Am Yisrael who hears a *brachah* is obligated to answer amen, even if he hears it from a woman or a *kattan*. And if he hears and does not answer – he is *chayav misah*!" (*Derech Moshe* for Day 11)

One who sees his words should wonder: Is that possible that one should be punished by death for not answering amen?! To such an extent? But in light of the words of Rabbeinu Bechaye that not answering amen is offense to *Kavod Shamayim*, *chalilah*, then the severity is understood, as it is like he is treasonous.

I chose to write about this particular topic this week, because according to the *Sifsei Kohein al haTorah*, the *parashah* of "*ki yimkor ish es bito l'amah*" that is at the beginning of this *parashah* alludes to the Torah – the beloved daughter of HaKadosh Baruch Hu – which was given to Am Yisrael, and to the obligations that we have towards it. Included in this, the *Sifsei Kohein* writes, the Torah alludes to us especially about answering amen, saying (*Shemos* 21:10): "*V'onasah lo sagra*" – the that one should not miss out answering amen to the Name of Hashem even one time.

Countless *brachos* are said around us, from the early morning hours until the late night hours. Let us be careful with each and every one of them and make sure that we do not refrain from answering amen. On the contrary, we should ask every person who makes a *brachah* near us to recite it aloud and to give us the *zechus* and the greatest merit of all – answering amen.

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

America. The land of opportunity. Since the continent was discovered, and to this day, people migrate there seeking to get rich, or to find a suitable source of income that might make it easier for them to earn a living.

The *maggid* Rav Shlomo Levinstein, *shlita*, related that when Rav Yechiel Bar Lev was a *bochur*, he decided to fly to the United States in search of *parnassah*. Reb Yechiel knew that there were many risks on the way to achieving his goal – the spiritual traps that lay in wait at every corner, threatening to ensnare anyone who crossed their path.

Even when traveling far away, Reb Yechiel wanted desperately to preserve his spiritual level. Toward that end, he made a *kabbalah* that he pledged to keep at all times, and in every situation: to daven with *minyan* three times a day. This way, three times a day he would stand with a plea before his Creator together with a group of Yidden, and he would not

the card that permitted the holder to live in the United States and to work there for a long period of time. Without the green card, Reb Yechiel was technically an illegal alien, and if he would be caught, he'd have to leave the United States immediately.

The Rav of the shul where Reb Yechiel davened advised him to reach out to HIAS, which specialized in helping immigrants. He followed this advice and filed an application asking for help. After waiting for a few months, a lawyer from the organization contacted him and told him that he had succeeded in making an appointment with a federal agent to issue the document.

The lawyer warned him: "This meeting will determine the fate of your green card. You must come on time, and look respectable!"

The meeting was scheduled for four p.m. and it was not meant to last too long. The last minyan for *Minchah*

was at five o'clock at the time, and Reb Yechiel figured that he would have enough time to get to davening after the meeting.

But things didn't go quite as expected...

Reb Yechiel came at the appointed time to the office, accompanied by a lawyer. The secretary told them that there was a

slight delay because the agent had gone to an urgent meeting.

Reb Yechiel and his lawyer nodded in understanding, took seats in the waiting room, and waited patiently. The minutes ticked by and the agent did not come. Reb Yechiel looked at his watch; its hands were unstoppable regardless of the circumstances. He watched the time tick by and at 4:30 he stood up and turned to leave.

"Where are you going?!" his lawyer asked in surprise.

"To daven," Reb Yechiel replied calmly.

"To daven?!" The lawyer was dumbstruck. "This is not the time! You have to wait for the federal agent to accept your request!"

"I'm sorry..." Reb Yechiel said, "but I have to daven *Minchah*. If I want to get there in time to daven with a *minyan* I have no choice but to leave right now..."

The lawyer was shocked and angry. "No such thing!" he retorted furiously. "The agent is supposed to be back any minute! He will be very offended if he discovers that you left without waiting for him. You certainly won't get a green card, and that is so important to you! You need it!"

"Indeed," Reb Yechiel conceded calmly as he turned towards the exit. "The green card is very important to me, but *Minchah* with a *minyan* is much more important to me!"

"I don't understand," the lawyer tried to argue with Reb Yechiel. "You can daven *Minchah* in a shul every day, but we worked hard to arrange this meeting with a federal agent for you. You won't have another chance so fast!"

Reb Yechiel saw no point in continuing the argument. "Excuse me," he apologized again, and left.

He managed to hear the lawyer's call echoing behind him: "Fine, go pray, you really need Heavenly mercy now..."

When *Minchah* was over, he came back to the office, but was not surprised to find it locked. He was overcome with disappointment. He'd lost his chance. Had he done the right thing by insisting on davening with *minyan*? Maybe he should have deviated from his *kabbalah* and davened *b'yechidus* this once?!

These thoughts flashed through Rabbi Bar Lev's mind, but then he strengthened himself and said: "I kept to my *kabbalah* and for that I should feel satisfaction and pride!"

He didn't dare call the lawyer...after all, he had disobeyed his advice...

But it was the lawyer who called Reb Yechiel the next morning: "Listen," he began excitedly. "You won't believe what happened after you left yesterday! A few minutes after you left, the federal agent came. He asked where you were, and I explained that you'd gone to daven with a *minyan*. I stressed that I had tried to dissuade you but you insisted...The agent was quiet, but then he said: 'Tell this Jew to come again, and the faster the better. We need educators of this



Chicago

forget where he belonged and with who he wanted to be connected.

A short time after arriving in America, Reb Yechiel found what he was seeking: he was hired for a dignified teaching position in Chicago!

He began working with a deep fondness and awe. Teaching innocent children, inculcating them with Torah values and imbuing them with the sweetness of *mitzvos* is a job that had to be carried out carefully and with responsibility. Indeed, Reb Yechiel was worthy of this work. He invested his entire *neshamah* into it, and it seemed that the children lapped up what he said and accepted all that he wanted to convey to them.

One thing weighed on Reb Yechiel – he had not yet received a green card,

One Amen Saves from Gehinnom

"אם בגפו יבא בגפו יצא אם בעל אשה הוא ויצאה אשתו עמו" (כא ג)

Rav Yitzchak Sharim, one of the sages of Aram Tzova, explained:

The *passuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 4:3) "כחוט השני שפתתך ומדברך" "נאווה" is explained by Chazal (*Midrash Aggadas Bereishis* 79): "The *midbar* inside you is pleasant before Me...and what is a *midbar*? Those are the *amei ha'aretz* that do not know to read or learn or orate, like a desert that does not bear fruit, and they go into the shuls and the *batei medrash* and recite 'Baruch Yotzer Hame'oros' and 'Mechayeh Meisim' that He created and revives the dead, and they answer amen after the *brachos*, and say that we believe that He revives the dead and that He created the world. Even if they have only the reward of this amen, it is enough."

This is alluded to in this *passuk*: בגפו is numerically equivalent to amen. אם בגפו יצא – even if a person comes to his *din* with the merit of only one amen in his hand בגפו – in the merit of that amen יצא – he will emerge innocent from the trial.

The *passuk* in *Iyov* (33:23-24) alludes to this: "אם יש עלי" מלאך מליץ אחד מני אלף להגיד לאדם ישר; ויחננו ויאמר פדעוהו מלאך שחת." The word מלאך is numerically equivalent to amen: If a person has "one *malach meilitz*" – the merit of answering only one amen, this merit is enough to acquit him in the Bais Din Shel Ma'alah and to redeem him from going to Gehinnom. (*Likutim Mipardes* Vol. I, amen, 2)

An Orphaned or Widowed Amen

"כל אלמנה ויתום לא תענון" (כ בכא)

In his commentary on the Torah, Rabbeinu Ephraim wrote: "ויתום לא תענון" – the acronym of the final letters of each word is amen, an allusion to the prohibition of answering an *amen yesomah*.

The *poskim* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 124 2, and in the *Nosei Keilim* there) explain that there are three ways in which answering amen is forbidden because of the *halachah* of *amen yesomah*:

1. One who hears a *tzibbur* answering amen, and he answers with them without knowing which *brachah* they are answering, even if he is not *mechuyav* in this *brachah*
2. One who answers amen after a *brachah* that he is obligated to be *yotzei* with, without hearing the *brachah*, even if he knows which *brachah* the *mevarech* made
3. One who answers amen after a space of "*kedei dibbur*" has elapsed, which is the time it takes to say three or four words, after the *mevarech* ends the *brachah*

Rav Eliezer Horowitz of Tarnograd added that just like Chazal compared answering amen without a *brachah* to an orphan that has no father, and called it an "*amen yesomah*" (see *Smag Essin* 27), likewise, one should call answering an amen without *kavanah* an "*amen almanah*" a widowed amen. Because an amen without *kavanah* is like a "body without a soul" and the *neshamah* is compared to the husband because it influences life into the body, so we find that an amen that is said without the participation of the *neshamah* is like a widow without a husband.

Based on this we can explain that aside for an "*amen yesomah*" the *passuk* also alludes here to an "*amen almanah*" and that is why the *passuk* says "*Kol almanah veyasom lo se'anun*" – make sure not to answer an "*amen almanah*" or an "*amen yesomah*." (*Noam Migadim*)

Don't Miss Even One Amen

"אם אחרת יקה לו שארה כסותה וענתה לא יגרע" (כא י)

The *mekubal* **Rav Mordechai Hakohein of Tzefas** explained from the words of this *passuk* "*onasah lo yigra*" an allusion to the obligation of a person to daven every single word at its right time. And he added that this is why the Torah wrote "ענתה" to allude to the obligation of answering amen, that a person should listen carefully to the *brachos* so that he should not miss even one amen. (*Sifsei Kohein al HaTorah*)

The *mekubal* **Rav Meir Papirash** wrote: "One who does not answer amen needs *teshuvah gedolah*. Even if he didn't answer only once, meaning that he heard a *brachah*, even on a fruit, or that his friend made a *brachah* on a mitzvah, and certainly in the *tefillah* of the *sha"tz*" (*Ohr Hayashar* [Mahara"m Papirash] *Amud Ha'avodah* 7 18).

The Inheritance of the Land in the Merit of Meah Brachos

"הנה אנכי שלח מלאך לפניך לשמרך בדרך ולהביאך אל המקום אשר הכנת" (כג כ)

Rav Aharon Tennenbaum, one of the scholars of Warsaw, explained:

The final letters of the words מלאך לפניך לשמרך בדרך ולהביאך – are numerically equivalent to one hundred, to teach us that in the merit of saying one hundred *brachos* each day, Am Yisrael will merit to ascend to the Land and to inherit it. (*Ketores Samim*, Warsaw 5628).

type in the United States! If he is so faithful to his beliefs, I have no doubt he will be faithful to his work, and will also teach his students to follow

in his ways!"

The lawyer was so moved. He had never experienced such a thing, especially not with a strident federal

agent. But Reb Yechiel wasn't surprised at all. It was clear to him that one does not lose out from observing *mitzvos*.

Yesodos Emunim

Fundamentals of Tefillah in the Parashah

כי הוא כסותה לבדה הוא שמלתו לערו במה ישכב
והיה כי יצעק אלי ושמעתי כי הנון אני" (כב כו)

Why did the Torah expand here to write "ושמעתי כי הנון אני" while previously (*Passuk* 22), regarding one who harasses an orphan or a widow, it only writes "*shema eshma tza'akaso*"?

The **Rashbam** explains: One who harasses an orphan or a widow is behaving against *halachah*, and therefore, the *passuk* does not have to give a reason for why their *tefillah* is heard. But here, the lender who holds onto the collateral seems to be acting according to *halachah*, because the borrower did not pay his debt. Therefore, the *passuk* explains that

because HaKadosh Baruch Hu is a "*chanun*," He hears even a cry that is emitted *shelo kedin*. Therefore, if the lender does not have mercy on the poor borrower, to give him back the collateral when he needs it, Hashem will hear the cry of the poor man...

During one of the decrees imposed on Poland's Jews, the **Rebbe, Rav Yechiel Meir of Gustinin**, went up to the front of the shul, and cited this commentary of the Rashbam and said: Even if our screams are not worthy of being heard, from the words of the Rambam we learn that a scream that is unjustified is also heard On High, and if so, let us scream, and undoubtedly Hashem will hear our cries and will

Even a Scream That Is Out of Place Is Heard

nullify the decree.

The Rebbe added at the same opportunity that this the intention of the request said in *seder Hoshanos*: "*Hoshana zo'akim hoshana*." Even if our cry is not justified, we ask HaKadosh Baruch Hu to hear our cries solely because we are crying out, as He promised in the Torah that He would hear also the cry that is emitted *shelo kedin*.

The Rebbe's words inspired the listeners, and they began a fervent and tearful *tefillah*, and the decree was nullified.

Mei Hayam, Likutei Mahar"im, p. 19

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The Nasi of Bnei Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, visiting the home of Rav Yaakov Edelstein

Harav Yaakov Edelstein 26 Shevat 5777

Rav Yaakov Edelstein was born in 5684 to his father, Rav Tzvi Yehuda, the Rav of Szumiacz in western Russia. In Iyar 5694, the family traveled to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Ramat Hasharon, where his father was

appointed the Rav.

Because Ramat Hasharon did not have a Talmud Torah in those days, Rav Tzvi Yehuda himself learned with his children. In Elul 5702, he began to learn with his brother in Yeshivas Lomza, and when Ponevezh was established in the winter of 5704, they were among the first seven *talmidim*.

Rav Edelstein was a frequent visitor to the home of the Chazon Ish, and he was also close the *mekubal* Rav Moshe Yaakov Ravikov – known as the "*sandlar*" the shoemaker, because of what he did for a living – and from whom he learned *Toras HaSod*. In 5711, his father passed away, and he was appointed to succeed him as Rav of the city, a position he held for nearly seventy years, until his passing.

He spent his life being *marbitz Torah* to *talmidim*, and he served as the head of many yeshivos. He also served as a *dayan* on the *beis din* of Rav Nissim Karelitz, and as the Rav of the Na'ot Yosef neighborhood of Bnei Brak.

On 26 Shevat 5777, he passed away in Laniado Hospital in Netanya, and was laid to rest in the old cemetery in Ramat Hasharon, in his family's plot.

Amen – The Foundation of Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim

We received this letter from Rav Mordechai Shmuel Edelstein, Rav of the Ne'ot Yosef neighborhood of Bnei Brak, in which he shares something remarkable from his father, *ztz"l*, regarding answering amen:

To the editorial department of *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

The virtue of answering amen is well known, and Chazal have said (*Shabbos* 119b) on the *passuk* (*Yeshayah* 26:2) "*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*," do not read it שמר אמינים but rather "*she'omrim amen*."

It has been publicized in the name of *gedolei Yisrael* – I think the Maggid of Kelm – who heard someone say on the words of the Mishnah (*Avos* 4:17): "*Yafeh sha'ah achas shel koras ruach b'Olam Haba mikol chayei olam hazeh*," that for answering amen one time, which is an easy action, we do not merit a tangible reward, but rather "*koras ruach b'Olam Haba*." He is surprised about this and asks: And regarding answering amen, one gets only "*koras ruach b'Olam Haba*"? It is something so great that one deserves tremendous reward for it in the World to Come! And he explained that one receives "*koras ruach b'Olam Haba*" on far less important things, like a motion that is related to fulfilling a mitzvah.

And I will tell you what I know from my father, Adoni, Mori Verabi, *ztz"l*, that in his final years, it was very hard for him to speak, and nevertheless, he delivered his *shiurim* normally, with great effort. But in the last year of his

life, he needed to have surgery on his vocal chords, and then he was no longer able to speak at all, and he answered by writing notes, of which there were thousands, and they were ultimately printed in several of his *seforim*.

After recovering from that surgery, the doctors wanted to teach him how to speak in his condition, by learning to speak very slowly, word for word. When they asked him which words he wanted to start practicing with, he wrote that he wanted to start with two words: "amen" and "*today*," thank you. He felt that these two words contained the entire foundation for an *adam hashalem*, because by answering amen he thanks and believes in the Creator, as the early sages explained, that amen is from *emes*, and this includes the concept of *Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim* and *ol mitzvos*, while the word "*today*," which expresses a person's gratitude to anyone who is good to him, is the fundamental of all the *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro*.

May his great *zechus* advocate for us and for all of Klal Yisrael, and for anyone who strengthens himself with amen, and all its details, and may he be a *meilitz yosher* on us and on all of Am Yisrael, amen.

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