

## Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### The Purim Miracle – In the Merit of Answering Amen!

Purim is a time of joy and gratitude for the wondrous miracle that was performed for our ancestors in those days at this time. The Purim miracle is unique in that we merited to see the perfect miraculous salvation, where not a single Jew was harmed by Haman's evil plans. On the contrary: Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, from young to old, children and women, on one day, and ultimately, his decree was turned on its head – *venahafoch hu* – and the Jews killed tens of thousands of their enemies and not a single one of them was harmed.

I have mentioned many times the words of Eliyahu Hanavi (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah* 10) about the power of answering amen to protect us and spare us from those seeking our souls: **"In the merit of who does HaKadosh Baruch Hu take revenge for Am Yisrael on the non-Jews? In the merit of people who go to the *beis knesses* and *beis medrash* morning and evening and answer amen..."**

The miracle of Purim, in which, as we said we saw how Hashem "took revenge for Am Yisrael on the non-Jews in such a perfect way, can also be attributed to the power of answering amen. The *passuk* (*Esther* 2:7): "*Vayehi omen es Hadassah he Esther*," is explained by Rabi Eliyahu Hakohein Ha'itamari, author of *Shevet Mussar*, as follows: The *passuk* uses the word "*omen*" without the *vav*, written the same way as *אמן* to teach us that Mordechai taught Esther to be

strict to answer amen (*Minchas Eliyahu Chapter 32*).

I would like to add based on his words that the *passuk* (ibid 20): "*V'es ma'amar Mordechai Esther osah* כִּאֲשֶׁר הִתָּה בְּאִמְנָה אֹתָהּ" – indicating that even after Esther was taken from Mordechai's house, she continued to be strict about answering amen.

Based on his words we can say that this is why the *passuk* mentions answering amen at the beginning of the words about Mordechai and Esther, to teach us the root of the salvation of Am Yisrael. As Eliyahu Hanavi taught us about the war of Sisera, likewise, the great miracles that they merited in the times of Mordechai and Esther were from the power of answering amen. One of our loyal readers also shared a *remez* to this in the word amen itself, because it is an acronym for *אסתר* [א]סתר [נ]ס מרדכי [א]סתר.

Indeed, it is remarkable to see that in the *Yotzros* for *Parashas Zachor*, the songster emphasizes the power of answering amen, staying "לְדוֹעֲרִים וּלְשׁוֹמְרִים מְמוּנִים כֹּל" הַיּוֹם וְכֹל הַלַּיְלָה מוֹזְמָנִים, לְהַזְכִּיר קְדוּשַׁת נוֹצֵר אֱמוּנִים, לְהַעֲרִיץ זְכִירַת גּוֹי שׁוֹמֵר אֱמוּנִים, וּבִשְׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתְחַנֵּם."

In light of this it is possible that the HaKadosh Baruch Hu here is called the "*Notzer Emunim*," and Am Yisrael "*Goy Shomer Emunim*" in order to allude that the miracle of Purim took place because of the power of answering

amen, as HaKadosh Baruch Hu preserved the power of Mordechai and Esther's amen for Am Yisrael, and this merit helped them be spared from Haman.

In light of this, we can understand the words of the Kav Hayashar, whose *yahrtzeit* falls on Purim, that those wondrous *oros* that one who hurries to answer amen merits – are the ones that illuminated for Mordechai and Esther and saved Am Yisrael, and it is in their merit that we have a custom to light a lot of candles on Purim (see the *yahrtzeit* segment). Because the light and the abundance of answering amen is the root of *hatzalah* that advocated for our ancestors in the times of Mordechai and Esther.

Dear Brothers! We need so much Heavenly compassion in our times to be spared from the nations of the world that rise up against us! If we are faithful to the words of Eliyahu Hanavi, that in the merit of those who rise to answer amen, HaKadosh Baruch Hu takes revenge for Am Yisrael against the nations of the world, let us rise early each day to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar*, and we will also merit to see the fulfillment of the *passuk* (ibid 8:16): "*Layehudim haysah orah vesimchah vesasson viyekar*."

A Freilichen Purim

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Birchos Hashachar k'halachah

Aloud

With kavanah

Bechavrusa

### A Brachah That Created Nefashos

After the Holocaust, in which he lost almost all of his family, the Rebbe Rav Shlomo of Bobov returned to his home town seeking survivors of the glorious *chassidus* that, until the war, had been led by his father, Rav Bentzion of Bobov, *Hy"d*. The *chassidus* was almost entirely wiped out during the Holocaust.

All the Rebbe found in his town were 13 young orphans who somehow, had managed to survive. The Rebbe, who had lost his parents, siblings, wife and two children, and remained alone with his young son, and eventual successor, Rav Natfali Tzvi, decided to take those orphans under his wing and to serve as both father and mother to them.

Later, when the Rebbe acceded to the call of a group of chassidim that had managed to escape to the United States before the war to come and lead them, and to reestablish the Bobover empire in America, the Rebbe took these 13 orphans with him.



Rav Shlomo of Bobov ztz"l

The Rebbe aspired to establish a yeshivah that followed the Bobover *derech*, and it was only natural that the first *talmidim* in the yeshivah would be his 13 orphans. The first native born American student who joined the yeshivah was a 16-year-old *bochur* named Zusha. He was the son of one of the Bobover families who had settled in America shortly before the outbreak of the war. Until then, Zusha had learned in Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, and when the Rebbe's yeshivah opened, his

parents transferred him there.

Zusha was the first, and he was followed by many others. And so, the chassidic yeshivah that at first seemed like a strange phenomenon on the secular soil of America, grew and thrived.

In its first years, the Rebbe used to eat together with the *talmidim*, and was a partner to all their problems and deliberations. That's how a warm bond was forged between him and his early students, especially the very first ones – Zusha among them. Many years passed.

The Bobover Rebbe had a special practice of celebrating Shushan Purim with his chassidim with great joy, as if it was Purim itself. On the morning of Shushan Purim, after davening, the Rebbe visited his close family, and later, he visited the homes of a few chassidim, accompanied by a few select chassidim.

The Rebbe was very familiar with the needs and struggles of his chassidim, and on these rare visits, he would shower them with *brachos* and encouragement. Many of the recipients saw great *yeshuos* after these visits.

When the Rebbe entered each home, he would excitedly call, "Gut yom tov! Gut yom tov!" and he shone with inner joy and love. While he kept repeating "A gut yom tov, a gutten Purim," he would sit down at the table. The host would serve cake and some liquor, and when he finished, the chassidim who had joined the Rebbe sat down around the table as well. The Rebbe would slice the cake, pour some of the liquor into cups, and each one of the chassidim was called by name to receive his portion.

After the Rebbe finished distributing the portions to all those present, he would make the *brachah* out loud and the chassidim answered amen with *kavanah*. The Rebbe would take a small sip of the drink – so as not to have a *safek* if he was obligated in a *brachah acharonah*. After calling 'l'chaim,' everyone present would burst into song and dance for a few

minutes. Then they moved on to the next address...

That year when this story took place, after finishing his visits, the Rebbe quietly turned to his *gabbai* and asked if they could pay one more visit. The *gabbai* asked, "Where to?" And the Rebbe replied, "To Reb Zusha."

At that time, Reb Zusha was already serving as *rosh yeshivah* in Bobover Yeshivah, and when the chassidim heard that the Rebbe was going to visit him, they became very curious. They knew of Reb Zusha's plight, that nine years had passed since his wedding and he had not yet been blessed with children. When the Rebbe stated his intention to visit Reb Zusha's home, the chassidim realized that he wanted to draw a *yeshuah* to the house.

Again, the chassidim sat down around the table. This time, as well, the Rebbe sliced the cake that had been put down in front of him and his face was suffused with a special light. When Reb Shmiel, the devoted *gabbai* of the Rebbe, came to get his portion, the Rebbe asked him to please prepare a cup of tea.

The request was unusual, because, as noted, the Rebbe was usually strict to sip just a bit in each home. The *gabbai* hurried to comply with the Rebbe's request.

After the Rebbe finished distributing a slice of cake to each person present, he called Reb Shmiel again. The chassidim thought that the Rebbe had forgotten that Reb Shmiel had already received his portion, and pointed it out to the Rebbe, who said, "He needs more..." Indeed, the *gabbai* needed more...He had just one son, and he yearned to be blessed with more children.

Now the Rebbe turned to his cup of tea, which had already cooled down. He picked up the cup, made a *brachah* and sipped half of it. Then he looked at Reb Zusha and Reb Shmiel and loudly and with great joy recited the *brachah acharonah*.

"*Borei nefashos rabbos...*" The words echoed through the room, touching the hearts of all those present.

The Rebbe was in a different





### One Moment of Tefillah Is Better Than 1,000 Hishtadluyos

”ותבואנה נערות אסתר וסריסה ויגידו לה ותתחלחל המלכה מאד ותשלח בגדים להלביש את מרדכי ולהסיר שקו מעליו ולא קבל” (ד ד)

We need to understand Mordechai’s actions: One would think that the best *hishtadlus* he could do to nullify the decree would be to apprise Esther about Haman’s plans so that she could influence the king to cancel them. But not only did Mordechai not do this, even when Esther asked him to take off his sackcloth so that he could come before her – he refused. Why?

**Rav Avraham Yisrael Moshe Salamon**, the Rav of Kharkov, explained:

Mordechai was afraid that when his Jewish brethren would see him removing his sackcloth to speak to Esther, they would pin their hopes on Esther and would desist from their *tefillah* and *teshuvah*. Therefore, he chose to convey the information to her in secret, via Hasach.

The Mashgiach, **Rav Chaim Friedlander**, further explained:

Mordechai knew that in order to nullify the decree – one moment of *tefillah* is better than the best *hishtadlus* and efforts, and therefore he declined to remove his sackcloth even for a short time to come before Esther and speak to her. The Gra indicates this in his explanation of the *passuk*, on the words “*velo kibel*” to mean “he did not want לבדול משקו to separate from his sackcloth for even one minute.”

*Nesivos Hakodesh al HaTorah Umoadim p. 125; Sifsei Chaim Moadim Beis, p. 180*

### Strengthen in Tefillah Until the Yeshuah Is Complete

”אם מזרע היהודים מרדכי אשר החלות לנפל לפניו לא תוכל לו כי נפול תפול לפניו” (ו יג)

The Malbim explained that Haman said to his wife Zeresh and his supporters the following:

Because Mordechai was descended from the Jews, he is watched over with *Hashgachah pratis*, and if so, then surely “*asher hachilosa linpol lefanav*” did not happen coincidentally, but rather because he is engaged in praying and fasting. Therefore “*lo suchal lo*,” unless “*nafol tipol lefanav*” – make yourself as if you have capitulated to him completely, and when he will think that he has seen salvation from his troubles and will desist from his *tefillah*, then you will be able to prevail over him again, “**but as long as you fight against him, he will raise his arms in prayer – and when Mordechai raises his hands then Am Yisrael prevails.**”

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The *tzaddik* **Rav Zev Edelman** related:

“It was at the height of the War of Independence in 1948. One day, there was a pause in the fighting between the two sides. **Harav Yitzchak Zev of Brisk** used the break to go out of his house and breathe some of the fresh air of Yerushalayim.

On his way, he met my brother. When the Rav asked about the situation in the city, he was told that although the day before had been especially difficult, because the shelling was stronger than ever, today, *baruch Hashem*, was better...

When the Brisker Rav heard this he said: ‘Indeed, yesterday the situation was very bad, but specifically today

we need tremendous *rachamim*. Because while yesterday everyone was galvanized to daven due to the difficult situation, the calm today distracts people and causes them to return to their routine. And that’s something to worry about...’

The Brisker Rav then added: ‘That is the way of the world. When a person sees some reprieve from his troubles, he calms down and rejoices, but really, he should not be happy before the entire *yeshuah* is complete. Because this is what Mordechai Hayehudi did – although he had some reprieve when Haman began to fall before him, still, he did not rejoice, and continued davening with his sackcloth and fasting until the *yeshuah* was complete, as Chazal explain (*Megillah* 16a) on the *passuk* (ibid 6:12): “*Vayashav Mordechai el sha’ar hamelech*” – “he returned to his sackcloth and his fasting.”

*She’al Avicha Veyagedcha Vol. III p. 100*

### Mordechai’s Tefillah Was Answered Right Away

”אם מזרע היהודים מרדכי אשר החלות לנפל לפניו לא תוכל לו כי נפול תפול לפניו; עודם מדברים...” (ו יג)

**Rav Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sedlikov** explained:

In *Maseches Taanis* (25b) it is explained that it is a praise for the *tzibbur* when their *tefillah* is answered right when it ends, and this is what Haman’s wise men and Zeresh said: “*Im mizera haYehudim...lo suchal lo*,” why? Because he is so beloved by Hashem that “*ki nafol tipol lefanav – odam medabrim*” – their *yeshuah* comes to them as soon as they finish their *tefillas*.

*Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Drush LePurim*

world. His face burned with an otherworldly glow and his eyes were closed tightly. The chassidim’s eyes were fixed on the Rebbe as he said the words of the *brachah* one by one, with great emphasis.

When he finished, all those present answered a resounding and heartfelt

amen.

Then the Rebbe went on to the rest of his tasks for the day, but the chassidim did not forget this incident.

A year later, Reb Shmiel and his wife had another son, and not long after that, Reb Zusha and his wife

had their first daughter.

About twenty years later, Reb Smiel and Reb Zusha became *mechutanim*, when Reb Shmiel’s son married Reb Zusha’s daughter. And the Rebbe was honored with *siddur kiddushin*.

*Just One Word – Amen, p. 165*

### Mordechai Instilled in Esther to Answer Amen

“ויהי אמן את הדסה היא אסתר בת דוד כי אין לה  
אב ואם והנערה יפת תאר וטובת מראה ובמות  
אביה ואמה לקחה מרדכי לו לבת” (אסתר ב.)

Regarding the question from which age a small baby in Am Yisrael who passes away merits life in Olam Haba, the Tanna Rabbi Meir (*Sanhedrin* 110b) replies: “From when he says amen.” Therefore, the Rema 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.”

In light of this, Rav Eliyahu Hakohein of Izmir, author of *Shevet Mussar*, explained:

The *passuk* says “ויהי אמן את הדסה” – the *omen* is without a *vav* (*Esther* 2:7), to teach us that Mordechai taught Esther when she was very young to answer amen. And the *passuk* then explains that Mordechai did so “*ki ein lah av v’eim*”. Because

Esther did not have a father or mother to teach her to answer amen, Mordechai took their place – “*Vayehi omen es Hadassah*.” (*Minchas Eliyahu* Ch. 31, *Inyan Purim*)

*Sefer Notrei Amen* (Vol. II, p. 279) it says on the words of the *Shevet Mussar*: “And we should pay attention to the wonderful fact that Mordechai and Esther, when they wrote the *megillah* with *Ruach Hakodesh*, saw it correct to write the word “אמן את הדסה” without the *vav* in order to teach us that the pure and holy *chinuch* that Esther received from Mordechai was by habituating her to answer amen.”

*Notrei Amen* further explains why Mordechai put an emphasis on this *halachah*: Because he saw that in the *chinuch* of answering amen, he would be able to imbue pure *emunah* in Esther’s heart, which would have the power to help her withstand any *nisayon* that would

come upon her in her life. Indeed, Esther withstood many challenges that she encountered, and accepted the *Din Shamayim* with *emunah* in everything that happened to her.

*Notrei Amen* (ibid) further explained that Esther’s strictness to answer amen also protected her physically, in all the events that she experienced when taken to Achashveirosh’s house. This is what the Baalei Hatosafos mean (*Tosafos Hashalem Esther* 2:7) in their explanation of the words “*Vayehi omen es Hadassah*” as follows: “Amen is numerically equivalent to מלאך as if to say that an angel raised her.” In other words, those same angels that were created from Esther’s answering of amen are the ones that raised her and protected her every step of the way, as Chazal explain (*Midrash Tehillim* 31) the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 31:24): “אמונים נצר” to mean those who are strict to answer amen.

### Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The remains of the headstones in the Jewish cemetery in Frankfurt

### The Kav Hayashar

15 Adar 5472

Rav Tzvi Hirsh Koidenover was born around the year 5410 in Vilna, to his father Rav Aharon Shmuel, author of *Birchas Hazevach*. As a *bochur* he learned under his father, as well as from Rav Yosef of Dubno, the author of *Yesod Yosef*.

Due to the Cossack riots, he was forced to flee with his father, and when he returned to Vilna, he began to engage in business and was very successful. After being accused in a false libel, he was imprisoned for a short time, and when he was released, he moved to Frankfurt, where he was appointed Rav.

In Frankfurt, he authored his renowned *sefer Kav Hayashar*, which over the years has been printed in dozens of editions and is considered an important *mussar sefer*. In the introduction to the *sefer* he explains the meaning of the name he chose for it: “הישר” has the same letters as הירש and קב is for the 102 *perakim* in the *sefer*, and because it is numerically equivalent to his name צבי.

His proficiency in *Toras Hasnistar* is revealed in his *sefer*. The Kozhnitzer Maggid would say that learning a passage of the *Zohar* from the *sefer Kav Hayashar* is *mesugal* to arouse a person’s soul more than learning from the *sefer Hazohar* itself. (*Meir Einei Chachamim Parashas Emor*)

The Kav Hayashar passed away in Frankfurt on 15 Adar II 5472 and he was laid to rest there.

### The Light of Purim Is the Like the Light of Amen

The *mekubal* Rav Tzvi Hirsch Koidenover wrote in his *sefer Kav Hayashar* (Ch. 96) about the tremendous *shefa* a person who is strict about amen merits, and *chalilah* the converse: “Because anyone who answers amen with *kavanah* and hurries to the *beis knesses* to answer amen – merits the 370 *nehorin* by answering amen. And anyone who shames amen, and answering amen is light in his eyes – then his soul is preceded by 370 *klipos*, R”l. And he is taken to dark deathly rooms, and of them the Navi said (*Yeshayah* 50:9): “עשׂ אכלם”.

The *Kav Hayashar* goes on to explain that those 370 *nehorin* illuminated for Esther Hamalka, and as an allusion to that great light, we light a lot of candles on Purim to illuminate the shuls with the same precious light, and of this it is said (*Esther* 8:16): “*LaYehudim haysah orah vesimchah...*”