

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah
in the Parashah

Parashas Haketores – A Tikkun for the Neshamah

“ועשית מזבח מקטר קטרת עצי שטים תעשה אותו” (ל א)
The *Kli Yakar* explains that the two *mizbechos* are *mechaper* on the sinner: The *mizbei'ach hanechoshes* atones for the material and physical part, and therefore, animals are brought upon it. The *Mizbei'ach Hazahav* atones for the part of the lofty *neshamah*, and therefore the *ketores* is sacrificed upon it, because the cloud of the *ketores* rises on High like the soul of a person (see *Brachos* 43b).

Thus the *Teshuvos Vehanhagos* explains he great virtue of saying *Parashas Haketores* before davening: One who says this *parashah* discovers that the main goal in his *tefillah* is to do the *Ratzon Shamayim* and to be *mesaken* his *neshamah*, and therefore, he merits that his *tefillah* is accepted.

Ta'am Veda'as

Parashas Haketores Binds the Tefillah

“ועשית מזבח מקטר קטרת עצי שטים תעשה אותו” (ל א)

The description of the work of the Mishkan closes out with *Parashas Mizbe'ach Haketores*, and we also conclude the *tefillah* with *Parashas Haketores*. **Rabi Avraham Saba**, author of *Tzeror Hamor*, explained that this is intentional. He writes:

“And that is why he concluded all the *divrei haMishkan* with the *Mizbei'ach Haketores*, because it connects all the things in the Mishkan and binds the lower things with the Higher things and the Higher with the lower. That is why it is called “*ketores*” – a term of “*kishur*” like (*Zohar Bo* 38a): “שרי קטרי” – untying knots, because it connects all the things...And that is the actual reason why we say the *ketores* each day in the morning and evening, after each *tefillah*, because the *ketores* is what seals it all and connects it all. And the seal of the *tefillah* is the *ketores*, which connects every *tefillah* and makes from it a crown that is bound to his Creator, *yisbarach*.”

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

The אפוד in Our Times

In this week's *parashah* the Torah commands the preparation of the *Bigdei Kehunah* that the Kohanim wore in the Mishkan and the Bais Hamikdash. These garments, which were for Aharon and his sons “*lechavod ulesiferes*”, sanctified the Kohanim and made them suited for the service in the Mikdash, as it says (*Shemos* 28:3): “*V'asu es bigdei Aharon lekadsho lekahano Li*.”

The *Bidger Kehunah* contain deep and esoteric secrets, and the commentaries expound on the spiritual significance of each and every garment. At this time, I want to address the *eifod*, one of the eight garments of the Kohein Gadol, which, as Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg pointed out, is numerically equivalent to amen (with the *vav*.)

On the upper edge of the *eifod*, it was woven together with a belt that was called the “*cheishev ha'eifod*” through which the Kohein would tie the *eifod* to his body. The *חשב האפוד* Rav Shmelke says, alludes to the thought that a person must have when he prepares to fulfill the mitzvah of answering amen (*Divrei Shmuel Parashas Tetzaveh*).

Indeed, planning and thought are basic conditions for answering amen according to halachah. When a person dedicates thought to the great virtue of answering amen, he pays attention to answering amen according to halachah for every *brachah* said around him. He even rises early to merit to answer amen after those who recite *Birchos Hashachar* in shul. A person who does this

is sanctifying himself like the Kohein Gadol who dons the אפוד, and also wraps himself in a protective layer that envelops his body like the *eifod*.

I thought to add that the חשב alludes not only to the unique thought that precedes the answering of amen, but also the importance of answering amen, of which Chazal said (*Devarim Rabbah* 7a) that there is nothing greater than this to Hashem. Moreover, the fact that one of the *begadim* of the Kohein Gadol alludes to the obligation of answering amen according to halachah indicates its importance.

We can also learn from another one of the *bigdei* Kohein Gadol – the *choshen* that was connected to the *eifod* – about the importance of answering amen. The sixth of the twelve stones that were embedded in the *choshen* was the יהלום which is also numerically equivalent to amen. Indeed, the amen is like a diamond – just like a diamond is small in size but great in value, so, too, amen, a word of just three letters, has inestimable value.

All that we can do is internalize these concepts, and on a practical level, hold each amen very dear. We will rise to answer amen to those who recite *Birchos Hashachar* in shul, and by doing so we will be sanctified like the Kohein Gadol wearing the *eifod*, and we will even envelop ourselves with a protective layer that will wrap us like a protective vest.

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

This story was heard from the Sanz-Klausenberger Rebbe, the Shefa Chaim, zy"ta, during a Chumash Rashi shiur on Parashas Matos that he delivered in 5738. The Rebbe heard the story from Rav Avraham Yehoshua Freund of Năsăud, who heard it from the Divrei Yechezkel of Shinovah.

Simcha, an evil and uncouth person living in Pressburg during the days of the Chasam Sofer, had chosen a cruel profession. He would track the actions of the Jews of Pressburg with a discriminating eye, and when he caught someone transgressing a law, he hurried to update the authorities.

The members of the community tried to speak to him and pleaded with him to desist from his unsavory behavior, which wrought

bochurim, and they did everything they could to evade the draft.

The *bochurim* of Pressburg Yeshivah found a clever tactic to avoid being drafted. They registered in the population registry with erroneous information. They altered their names, ages, or any other detail that would lead their names to be omitted from the list of eligible draftees.

Putting deceptive information down in records was considered a serious crime, but the *bochurim* did not hesitate and chose to take the risk, as long as they could continue learning in the yeshivah under their beloved Rav. They truly desired to learn Torah and nothing could stand in their way.

But it didn't take long until Simcha the informer discovered their secret. He didn't waste a minute and took immediate action. He sent a threatening letter to the leaders of the community in which he detailed everything he knew about the tactics the *bochurim* used to evade the draft, and declared that he planned to report these activities to the military authorities.

In alarm, the community leaders came to Simcha's home and pleaded with him not to carry out his plans. But his blind hatred for Torah and all those who learned it made him irrational. He told the community leaders that nothing would change his mind – he would not back down from his decision to inform on the yeshivah *bochurim*, and they would see how quickly all the *bochurim* would be donning Austrian army uniforms.

The community leaders were familiar with Simcha and his plots, and they knew his threats were not empty. They were appalled at the impending catastrophe that would strike the yeshivah *bochurim*, and decided to turn urgently to the rosh yeshivah, the Chasam Sofer.

At the time, the Chasam Sofer was in the middle of giving a *shiur* in the yeshivah. In light of the severity

of the situation, the community leaders decided that this could not be postponed, and they came into the yeshivah and sat down in front of the Chasam Sofer. When he saw their unusual behavior, the Chasam Sofer realized it was something urgent, and motioned with his hand, as if asking what had brought them there.

The community leaders approached, and with tears in their eyes, told him about Simcha the informer who was threatening to go to the authorities about the yeshivah *bochurim*. The danger was immediate if he made good on his threats; it was like a sword hanging over the heads of the yeshivah students.

"And what do you want from me?" the Chasam Sofer asked the community leaders.

"We tried to speak to Simcha and pleaded with him not to raise his hand against the *lomdei Torah*, but he rejected all our entreaties. Now, we are at a loss, and we came to ask the Rav's advice about what to do now," the *askanim* replied.

"I am doing it," the Chasam Sofer said, pointing to the Gemara in front of him, and continued saying the *shiur*. Upon hearing this, the community leaders stayed there and waited for the *shiur* to be over.

At the end of the *shiur*, the Chasam Sofer stood up and said: "Now I will go and speak to Simcha and I will warn him against carrying out his plans and harm the yeshivah students."

Right away, the *roshei kahal* stood up to escort him. Some of the yeshivah students also joined the distinguished delegation, out of respect for their Rav.

When the Chasam Sofer entered Simcha's home, the latter remained sprawled on his couch, and looked derisively at the venerable figure of the Chasam Sofer who was standing in the doorway.

The Chasam Sofer paid no attention to his mocking behavior, and began to speak to Simcha not to be tempted to carry out his plans. He explained calmly about the importance of the *lomdei Torah*, who help sustain the world, and who promise the eternal



The large shul that stood in Pressburg until World War II

tremendous damage upon his Jewish brethren. But he closed his ears and refused to listen. His hatred for the traditions of his ancestors, as well as the benefits showered upon him by the authorities, blinded him, and he sold his soul to the enemies of the Jewish population.

During that time, the Austrian authorities required all young men to enlist in the army. This service was spiritually dangerous for Jewish

One who wishes to discover a bit of the deeper meaning of answering amen should delve into the commentaries of the rabbanim through the generation on the words of Rabi Yosi, which are brought in two places in the Talmud, in *Brachos* 53b and in *Nazir* 66b: “*Gadol ha'oneh amen yoser min hamevarech.*”

One who studies these might wonder: Isn't the *mevarech* the one who initiates and begins the mitzvah, and the one who says the praise, while the *oneh amen* just joins in and agrees with his words by saying one word? What is concealed in this one word, amen, that makes it of equal value to the *brachah* that it is affirming?

Many Rishonim and Acharonim through the generations have asked this question, and in an effort to explain this Gemara they discover, each according to his way, the wondrous secrets that the word amen contains.

Answering Amen Fulfills the *Brachah*

In an answer to one who seeks to understand this statement, the Rashba writes (*Shu"t*, Vol. V, *siman* 53): “In this as well there is a concealed concept for the *baalei hachochmah*. And although in the simple meaning of the words, it makes sense that the term amen contains the fulfillment of something...and the *mevarech* only speaks words of gratitude...the *mevarech* is like a *me'orer* and the *oneh amen* is like the one who finishes it all.” So we see from his words that answering amen is not only a matter of joining the words of the *mevarech*, but it actually gives validity and fulfillment to the *brachah*, and therefore the *oneh amen* is greater than the *mevarech*.

A *Brachah* Without Amen Is Like Testimony from One Witness

Rabbeinu Bechaye (*Shemos* 14:1) compares a *brachah* without amen to a document that is not affirmed “and the *oneh amen* is the *mekayem* of the document and that is the *ikkar.*” But in addition, he compares saying the *brachah* to testimony given by one witness, while the *oneh amen* is like the second witness “and the testimony is completed by him.” Just like the testimony of the first witness has no validity until after the second witness provides similar testimony, likewise, the *brachah* is only fulfilled when it is joined by amen, and therefore the “*oneh amen* is greater than the *mevarech.*”

A *Brachah* Without Amen Is Like an Unsigned Document

Moreover, in his *sefer Amudei Shlomo* on the *Sma"g* (*Aseh* 27) the Maharshal compares the *brachah* to the body of the document, meaning the part where the details of what the document is coming to affirm are contained, while the answering of amen is like the signature of the witnesses, which affirms what is written in the document. “Just like the document is not considered to be anything until the witnesses sign it, likewise, the *brachah* is not [so] important until amen is answered to it, because then it is the signature, because amen signs off the *brachah.*” The Maharshal concludes with the words “*kach kibalti*” (his *talmid*, the *Kli Yakar*, in his *sefer Olelos Ephraim* Vol. III *Ma'amar* 460, compares a *brachah* without amen to a document without a signature).

continuity of the Jewish people, one generation after another.

But Simcha's heart remained as closed as it had been. The Chasam Sofer's piercing and emotional words did not move him one iota. While still lounging on his couch, Simcha impudently declared that he was a busy man and he had no time to listen to the Rav's explanations. “Either way, when morning comes, I will go to the office of the army commander in the city and I will tell him all that I know,” he said obtusely.

The Chasam Sofer heard this and emotionally exclaimed the words of the *passuk* (*Bamidbar* 16:5): “*Boker veyeida Hashem es asher lo,*” in other words, you think in the morning you will go to carry out your plans? We'll wait for morning and we'll see how things turn out, from Above.

The Chasam Sofer left Simcha's home, his face burning with a holy

fire. While he was still on the way back, Simcha's wife's screams could already be heard. She ran frantically to the Chasam Sofer weeping: “A few minutes after the Rav left, Simcha's tongue began to swell, and he's struggling to breathe. Please! Can the Rav have mercy on him and daven that he shouldn't die from choking?” she asked.

The Chasam Sofer replied firmly: “Indeed, I will daven for your husband the *tefillah* that is most befitting for him, and that is the *tefillah* of *Velamalshinim al sehi sikvah...*” I am sure that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will listen to my *tefillah* and to the cries of the whole city, and will pay the *rasha* what he is deserving of.” The Chasam Sofer finished his statement and turned towards his home.

Just a few minutes later, a messenger arrived from Simcha's home to inform the Rav that he had died a terrible death, with much suffering. Indeed, the *tefillah* had been

accepted, and the tongue that spoke too much grew and swelled until it left the cursed informer no air to breathe.

When the news reached the Chasam Sofer, he expressed a desire to attend the *levayah* and to say a few words. Needless to say, no one in Pressburg remained at home, and they all came to participate in Simcha's *levayah*.

Thousands of people stood silently and listened to the brief message from the Chasam Sofer: “In the *sefer* of *tefillah* on Rosh Hashanah we say, ‘*Simcha l'artzecha vesasson l'irecha,*’ and we can explain it in a witty way that when Simcha is buried in the earth – ‘*b'artzecha,*’ then there is rejoicing for the city of Pressburg...as they are all praising and thanking Hashem and saying *baruch shepetaranu mei'onsho shel zeh...* and the city of Pressburg rejoiced...”

Shefa Chaim Torah Umoadim,
Vol. 19, p. 375

אִפּוֹד Is Numerically Equivalent to אָמֵן

“ועשו את האפוד זהב תכלת וארגמן תולעת שני ושש משור מעשה חשב... וחשב אפדתו אשר עליו כמעשהו ממנו יהיה” (כח ו-ה)

Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg explained:

With the words “*v’asu es ha’eifod*” the Torah alluded that a person should be strict to answer amen, as אִפּוֹד is numerically equivalent to אָמֵן. “*Cheishev eifod*”, which was woven on the edge of the *eifod*, alludes that a person must concentrate ahead of answering amen (*Divrei Shmuel*).

Rav Chaim Meir Mizrachi, one of the sages of Izmir, explained this *gematria* to indicate that the אִפּוֹד represents the strong *emunah* in Hashem, like answering amen of which Chazal say (*Shabbos* 119b) is an acronym for נֶאֱמַר מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמַר. Therefore, Chazal say (*Erchin* 16a) the *eifod* atones for the sin of *avodah zarah* (*Ben Yair* 4).

One Hundred Brachos for a Rei’ach Nichoach

“והקטרת את כל האיל המזבח עלה הוא לה” ריח נִחוּחַ אִשָּׁה לֵה” הוּא” (כט יח)

The holy *Zohar* (*Eikev* 271a) explains that when saying the *brachah*, a person brings tremendous *shefa* upon himself and on the entire world. The *passuk* says (*Shemos* 20:21): “*Bechol hamakom asher azkir es Shemi*” – wherever I commanded to mention My Name in a *brachah*, if you do so, “*avo eilecha ubeirachticha*.” The *Zohar* continues that “*azkir es Shemi*” said regarding *brachah* connects to the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 20:3): “*Yizkor kol minchosecha*” – to teach us that every *brachah* is considered like a *minchah*.

An allusion to this that each *brachah* is considered a *minchah lere’iach nichoach l’Hashem* can be learned from this *passuk*: “*ריח נִחוּחַ אִשָּׁה לֵה” הוּא*” – is numerically equivalent to

“מאה ברכות” (*Hamevarech Yisbarech* [Rav Y.M. Schechter] p. 24).

‘Venishma Kolo’ – When Answering Amen

“והיה על הארץ לשרת ונשמע קולו בבאו אל הקדש לפני ה’ ובגאתו לא ימות” (כח לה)

Rav Chaim Ephraim Balaity, Hy”d, one of the dayanim of Tornala, Slovakia, explained from this *passuk* an allusion to the virtue of answering amen:

In reward for “*venishma kolo...lifnei Hashem*” – with answering amen, a person is guaranteed “*uvetzeiso lo yamus*” – when he departs from this world, the gates of Gan Eden will open for him, and there, his share will be among the *tzaddikim*, who are also called alive even when they are deceased, as we were promised (*Shabbos* 119b): “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him” (*Eshel Chaim*).

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The Chida 11 Adar 5566

Rav Chaim Yosef David Azulai was born in Yerushalayim in 5484 to his father Rav Raphael Yitzchak Zerachiah. In his approbation to his *sefer Shaar Yosef*, his father writes of him: “*בן שש כבן שבע*.” He learned Torah from his uncle Rav Yona Navon, author of *Nechpah Bakesef*, whose approbation for

the aforementioned *sefer* stated: “...when he emerged from the womb he was sanctified by Shamayim...even at night his heart did not rest and he grew greater, and I loved him endlessly.”

In 5513, he was sent to Europe by the sages of Chevron, and spent five years there. In 5518, he returned to Yerushalayim, where he served as a *dayan*, and was part of the group of *mekubalim* led by the Rasha”sh.

In 5524, he found himself in Cairo, and was appointed to serve as Rav in the city; he returned to Chevron in 5529.

In 5533, he departed on his final journey, from which he did not return. He settled in the city of Livorno, Italy, and refused to accept a rabbinical position. He devoted his time to writing and printing his *seforim*. The Chida authored more than 120 *seforim*, about 50 of which were published in his lifetime.

He passed away on Friday night of *Parashas Zachor* 5566 and was buried in Livorno. In 5720, his *aron* was brought to Eretz Yisrael and interred on Har Hamenuchos in Yerushalayim.

The Practice Spread

Regarding the practice of saying *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, the Chida wrote (*Birchei Yosef, Orach Chaim* 677b) “The practice has spread in the towns and the big cities...”

The Quota of Holy Things

In his *sefer Tziporen Shamir* (9 133), the Chida lists the quota of *devarim shebikedushah* that a person has to complete each day: “He should say each day 90 amens, 4 *Kedushos*, 10 *Kaddish*, 100 *brachos* – which is an acronym for קִדְּוִשׁ. And this is one of the *tikkunim* of “*tzaddik yesod olam*.”

Rescue in the Merit of 90 Amens

In his *sefer Midbar Kedmos* (1 33) the Chida brings something that he saw in an ancient manuscript from the *mekubal* Rav Eliezer Nachman Puah, a *talmid* of the Rem”a MiPano, that one who is strict to answer 90 amens a day is not harmed by *kishuf*, magic. This is known from the testimony of one woman, who heard from the mouth of a *mazik* who had been sent to harm her son, that he could not fulfill his mission and harm the son because she – the mother of the baby – had been strict to answer ninety amens that day.