

Vechele Maaminim

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

One Should Thank Hashem for the King's Favor

"וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה" (מז)
(לא)

"Yisrael prostrated himself – when it is the time of the fox, bow to him. At the head of the bed – he turned toward the Shechinah." (*Rashi*, according to *Megillah* 16b; *Tanchuma* 3)

From the beginning of *Rashi's* words it appears that Yaakov bowed to Yosef, while later it appears that he meant to bow to the Shechinah. To whom did Yaakov bow?

Harav Shlomo Kluger explained:

One who receives a favor from a regular person must express gratitude to his benefactor, because the benefactor had the choice of whether to do the favor or not. But the one who receives a favor from a king only has to express gratitude to Hashem, as Hashem put it in the king's heart to do him this favor. As the *passuk* says (*Mishlei* 21:1): "A king's heart is like rivulets of water in Hashem's Hand; wherever He wishes, He turns it."

Thus the words of *Rashi* can be understood: Yaakov "turned himself to the side of the Shechinah" in order to thank Hashem for putting it in the heart of his son Yosef, the king of Egypt, to agree to his request to bury him in Eretz Cana'an. As to why he

did not thank Yosef himself, with regard to his father, he was considered a regular person, therefore *Rashi* preceded by saying that Yaakov treated his son like a king and as such, he directed his thanks to Hashem, as one does when receiving a favor from a king.

Imrei Shefer

When It Is the Time of the Fox - In Avodas Hashem

"וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה" (מז)
(לא)

Chazal say (*Megillah* 16b) that the reason Yaakov bowed to his son Yosef was because he was the viceroy of Egypt, and therefore, the rule is that even with a fox, if his time comes, one should bow to him.

The Raavad **Harav Moshe Sternbuch** learns a beautiful lesson from this: Sometimes, a person receives inspiration from On High, and he feels emotions that arouse him to *avodas Hashem*. He must know that at this time, he is in a state of 'when it is the time of the fox' – there is an *eis ratzon* that has been ordained from Above for him. Therefore, he should not miss the opportunity he was given, and should awaken to take advantage of it to pour his heart out to Hashem, and draw close to Him. Through that, he will merit to bring upon himself abundant *rachamim*, compassion.

Ta'am Veda'as

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Amen – A Small Investment with Huge Results

Often, I find myself delving into the deeper meanings of answering amen. 'Amen' means 'emes,' it is true, but if a person answers the word 'emes' after a *brachah*, he does not fulfill the mitzvah of answering amen according to *halachah*. He has to specifically say the word 'amen.'

We can compare this to a payment or withdrawal of cash using a credit card. Before using the card, the cardholder has to insert a PIN code, accurately, without changing the order of the numbers, and certainly without changing any of the digits. The word amen is also a 'code word,' and we don't understand exactly why it is so beloved On High, to the extent that *Chazal* say (*Devarim Rabbah* 7a): "There is nothing greater before Hashem than the amen that Am Yisrael answer."

'Amen' is the wonder password that opens all gates. When we come to Shamayim, we will need it to open the Gates of Gan Eden, as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 119b): "Anyone who answers amen with all his might has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him as it says (*Yeshayah* 26:2) '*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.*'"

And if it opens the Gates of Heaven, then how much more so in this world can it open gates and effect wonders. Amen is a very small investment with incredibly high yields. In the world of investments, the most desirable investments are those with profits that are immeasurably greater than the investment. If that is the case, is there a better investment than answering amen?!

Countless *brachos* are said around us throughout the day and night. If we believe in the words of *Chazal* about the power of answering amen, we must not forfeit even one amen. We should ask everyone who makes a *brachah* around us to do so out loud, so they can give us the greatest merit of all – answering amen.

Good Shabbos,
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Blessed Is He Who Returns a Lost Item to its Owner

This remarkable story was submitted by one of the pamphlet's veteran readers, and it contains a wonderful lesson:

"Several weeks ago, I traveled to Europe on business. I was in Prague for Shabbos, at the King David Hotel, which is kosher mehadrin. The hotel is located near the ancient Jewish Quarter, home to the renowned Altneshul, the oldest shul in Europe that still has regular *tefillos*. According to tradition, the Maharal of Prague davened in the shul.

Every time I am in Prague, I try to daven at least one *tefillah* in this shul. It is enveloped in an aura of history, and the age-old inscriptions that adorn its high walls always touch my emotions and make me feel a sense of awe. The *tefillos* uttered within the shul's confines are commensurate with its elevated status.

As someone who carries the subject of amen close to his heart, I will note one of the inscriptions on the western wall of the shul: גה"א – ימ"ה. This seems to be some type of secret code, but it is actually the acronym of the well-known words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 53b): "גדול העונה אמן יותר מן המברך."



The western wall of the Altneshul upon which the acronym appears for the words "*gadol ha'oneh amen yoser min hamevarech*."

The plan was to return to Israel on Sunday night. Due to the circumstances, I had to leave the hotel early on Motzaei Shabbos, to go take a corona test before the flight. In addition, I planned to make a purchase at a large store located near the testing area; the store was a branch of a large European chain. I deliberated whether to first do the test or first make the purchase, and ultimately decided to first do the test.

After making my selections in the store, I took out the envelope in which I kept my money, paid, and then walked back to the hotel.

When I returned to the hotel, I suddenly gasped. I realized that the valuable envelope was not with me. Aside for the monetary loss, as there was a large sum of money in the envelope, I was very worried about being in a foreign land without a penny to my name. How would I pay my hotel bill tomorrow, and any other expenses I would have until the flight?

At the late night hour, the store was already closed and the streets were dark. Because I had no idea where the envelope had fallen – whether on the way to the hotel or in the store, or perhaps it had been purposefully removed by a pickpocket – I saw no point in retracing my steps at that moment.

To the best of my knowledge there were no identifying details on the envelope that could have pointed to me as the owner, and that's why I virtually gave up hope of ever seeing it again. As a believing Jew, I accepted the decree of Heaven, and after reciting *Krias Shema*, I went to sleep, hoping for the best.

The next morning, as I went down to *Shacharis* in the hotel, I deliberated about the appropriateness of asking in my *tefillah* for the money to be returned. Such a large sum of cash, without identifying details, so many hours after it was lost – could it even be returned? It seemed certain to be a *tefillas shav* – a *tefillah* that would be for naught... In the end I decided to daven simply that from Shamayim, I should be sent reprieve and salvation.

I recited *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, as I regularly do, and when saying the *brachah* of *Hameichin Mitzadei Gaver*, I had in mind an additional *kavanah* that Hashem should direct my steps today for good and for *brachah*. I especially had this in mind when answering amen to the *brachah* of my partner, because I was still under the impression of the letters I had seen inscribed on the walls of the ancient shul nearby, which stand for: "The one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*."

After breakfast in the hotel, my wife urged me to go to the store where

we'd made a purchase the night before, and ask if they had found my envelope. I didn't think there was any chance that they would give it to me, and I was sure that it had fallen on the way or been stolen, but I said I'd go to the store and fulfill my obligation of *hishtadlus*.

When I reached the store, it was full of shoppers, and I had a hard time finding an employee who would hear me out. Even after I found someone, I struggled to explain that I'd lost an envelope, and when the employee finally understood, he told me to wait until he asked the person in charge of security. A few minutes later, he came back with the security officer.

I was surprised when the security officer asked my name. I knew that it wasn't on the envelope, but I told him my name. I was even more surprised when he asked me to show him my passport. I complied, and he looked at it closely, and then without a word, handed me my envelope. I took it with trembling hands, and thanked him sincerely.

I hurried back to the hotel, my heart soaring with gratitude. Only when I arrived at my room, and looked into the envelope, did I realize how the security officer knew it was mine. Inside the envelope was the official paper with my name and the code of the corona test I'd done the night before. I had unintentionally placed it into the envelope with the money. Hashem had planted the remedy before the illness...

Only now did I realize that in the *brachah* of *Hameichin Mitzadei Gaver* that I had made that morning, I should have also thanked Hashem for preparing my steps, that I went to the corona test before the store, so that when my envelope got lost, it already had an identifying sign inside that would be instrumental in getting it back to me.

Of course, the next morning, when I returned to Eretz Yisrael, I thanked Hashem emotionally for my personal salvation. But the lesson that I learned from it will remain with me forever: Who knows how many times Hashem prepares our steps for the good without us even knowing to thank Him for it? How many times is it the case that "*gavar aleinu chasdo*" and we don't even realize...

The Brachah of Ahavas Olam

The Source of the Brachah

The *brachah* of *Ahavas Olam* is the second of the *Birchos Krias Shema* of *Arvis*. The words of its introduction were instituted *al pi Dvar Hashem* through Yirmiyahu Hanavi (*Yirmiyahu* 31:3) "*Ahavas olam ahavtich*." (*Brachos* 11a)

Chazal placed this *brachah* right after *Ma'ariv Aravim*, in which we mentioned the Heavenly lights, because the *brachah* of *Ahavas Olam* is about Torah, which illuminates more than the *me'oros*, the Heavenly lights. The order of these *brachos* is as Dovid Hamelech listed them in *Tehillim* (Ch. 19): "*Yom leyom yabia omer velaylah lelaylah yechaveh da'as*" – corresponding to *Ma'ariv Aravim*, and then "*Toras Hashem temimah*" – corresponding to *Ahava Rabbah*. Finally, there is "*Eidus Hashem ne'emanah*" – corresponding to *Krias Shema*. (*Siddur Hayavetz, Tefillas Ma'ariv*)

The Essence of the Brachah

Harav Shlomo of Worms explained the connection between the *brachah* of *Ahavas Olam* and *Krias Shema* (*Siddur Rabbeinu Shlomo* 49). In the *parshiyos* of *Krias Shema*, we are instructed to learn Torah and fulfill the *mitzvos* of the Torah, therefore, before reciting it, we make this *brachah* in which we thank Hashem and praise Him for the Torah and *mitzvos* that He gave us. The *Shelah Hakadosh* also explained (*Siddur Hashelah, Tefillas Ma'ariv*) that when we say "*Beshochbeinu uvekumeinu nasiach bechukecha*" – we mean the *mitzvah* of *Krias Shema*, which we are commanded to recite twice a day – "when we retire and when we rise."

The *sefer Brachah Meshuleshes* (1 4) states that the *brachos* of *Ahava Rabbah* in *Shacharis* and *Ahavas Olam* in *Arvis* are considered the *Birchos HaTorah* with regard to the three *parshiyos* of Torah we say in *Krias Shema*. Indeed, the *poskim* write that *bedieved*, a person has fulfilled the obligation of *Birchos HaTorah* with the *brachah* of *Ahava Rabbah* and the *brachah* of *Ahavas Olam*, if he learned right after the *tefillah*. (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 47 7; *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 13)

The Meaning of Amen

It is true that we must praise Hashem for loving us, and may it be that His love for us should never be removed. According to the Sephardic *nusach*, that this *brachah* does not contain a request, one should have in mind only to praise Hashem for loving us. (See previous segment on 'Structure of the Brachah')

The Structure of the Brachah

This *brachah* does not begin with '*Baruch*' because it is adjacent to the *brachah* of *Ma'ariv Aravim* (*Tur Orach Chaim* 336), and every *brachah* that is *semuchah lechavertah*, right next to its friend that concludes with *Baruch* does not begin with *Baruch*, because the opening of the previous *brachah* exempts this *brachah* as well. (*Brachos* 46a; *Rashi* ibid, b ad loc. *Veyesh*)

According to the *nusach* of Ashkenaz, we conclude this *brachah* with a request that is somewhat surprising: "*Ve'ahavascha al tasir mimenu l'olamim*." Weren't we already promised by the Navi "*Ahavas Olam ahavtich*," and we also declared this at the beginning of this *brachah*? If so, why do we need to ask for it? The Mashgiach Harav Chaim Friedlander explained that we are not asking for the actual love, but rather about its level. There are many levels of *ahava*, and our request is that the intensity of the love of Hashem to us should always remain at its highest, and should never be diminished (*Sifsei Chaim, Biurei Tefillah*, p. 385)

But the Sephardic *nusach* is "*v'ahavascha lo tasur mimenu l'olamim*." This is not a request, but rather a determination and an expression of confidence that Hashem's love for us will continue in full force, for eternity. (*Bad Kodesh, V'eschanan*)

A Brachah at the Entrance and a Brachah at the Exit

The content of this *brachah* would seem to be the same as that of the *brachah* of *Ahava Rabbah*, which we recite before *Krias Shema* of *Shacharis*. But one who looks carefully will discern a significant difference between them. The *brachah* of *Ahava Rabbah* includes also a request and a plea to understand and become wise from the words of Torah. But the *brachah* of *Ahavas Olam* only includes the praise and gratitude for the privilege of learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*. Harav A.M. Horowitz (in his *hagahos* on *Brachos* ibid) explained it as follows:

The *Mishnah* in *Maseches Brachos* (29b) relates that Rabi Nechunya ben Hakanah davened a short *tefillah* when he entered the *beis medrash*, and a short *tefillah* upon leaving. When he was asked about these *tefillos*, he replied: "When I entered, I davened that no mishaps should take place through me, and when I leave I thank Hashem for my lot." Chazal also instituted these *brachos* according to this order. In the morning, in the *brachah* of *Ahava Rabbah* is said before we enter the *beis medrash* we ask that we should succeed in our learning and should not fail, *chalilah*, and in the evening, in the *brachah* of *Ahavas Olam*, said before we leave the *beis medrash*, we thank Hashem for the Torah and *mitzvos* that were given to us.

"וכאשר תקום מן הספר, תחפש באשר למדת אם יש בו דבר אשר תוכל לקיימו"

Answering Amen Brings Down Abundance

The *Shelah Hakadosh* wrote (*Maseches Tamid*, 80):

"The *seforim* of the *mekubalim*, which draw on the living wellspring of the *Zohar*, expound on the secret of the word amen and its letters, and they wrote that upper and lower worlds are all dependent on the word amen, and that is the *ikkar* and the root and the foundation upon which all the worlds are based. And anyone who concentrates on each and every *brachah* that emerges from the mouth of the *mevarech*, and answers amen with *kavanah* as is the *halachah*, causes much *kedushah* above, and brings down an abundance to all the worlds, because it opens the Higher Source, the Source of *Mayim Chaim*, like opening a wellspring to water all that needs watering..."

The *Tiferes Shlomo* wrote that this is alluded to in the *passuk* (*Bamidbar* 11:11): "Like the *omen* carries the *yonek*." Through the *yichud* effecting by answering amen, we continue to nurture and bring down *shefa*, abundance to Am Yisrael. (*Tiferes Shlomo*, *Yisro*)

An Opening the Size of a Needle

The Gaavad Harav Moshe Aryeh Freund explained that the words of the *Midrash* (*Shir Hashirim* 5 3): "HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael: My children, open for me an opening... the size of a needle, and I will open for you an opening that carriages and chariots can go through." This refers to the gates of blessing that are opened in the merit of answering amen. HaKadosh Baruch Hu asks of us something small and easy like the opening of a needle – to be strict about answering amen *k'halachah* - and in exchange, He opens for us On High huge gates of blessing and goodness whose value is immeasurable. (*Ateres Yehoshua*, *Ha'azinu*)

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

Thank you for your wonderful pamphlet, especially its new look. For me it is a source of *chizuk* to reinforce my strictness about saying *brachos* and answering amen properly.

For years, the *minyán* in which I daven is strict to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*. This is to the credit of a dear Yid who insisted on this practice until it was adopted by everyone in the *minyán*. We have all become used to rising early and coming to shul a few minutes before davening to say *brachos* together.

The words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 6b) are well known: "Rabi Yochanan said, at the time when HaKadosh Baruch Hu comes to the shul and doesn't find ten people – immediately He gets angry as it says, 'Why did I come and there is no man...'" The question is asked: If the claim is that there is no *minyán*, then the *passuk* should have said, 'Why did I come and there are no people?' The answer is given that if there was one '*ish*', one man then who cared, then everything would look different.

In our shul, we have, *baruch Hashem*, merited this 'איש' which is an acronym for יהודי שמחשיב אמן, a Jew to whom amen is very important, who has taken the initiative and made a real revolution with regard to the way all the *mispallelim* now approach amen.

I will add that every so often, Yidden who do not daven with us regularly join our *minyán*. I once asked one of them, do you not live quite far from the shul? Don't you have a shul closer to home? Why did you come all the way here? His answer surprised me: He told me that the day that he feels that he needs *siyata diShmaya*, he makes the effort to daven in a place where the *mispallelim* come early to davening and are strict to answer amen, as he feels sure that the *tefillah* is more willingly accepted in such a place.

Thank you for all your work,

S.L. - Bnei Brak

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Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



The Keyer of the Rambam in Teveriah

The Rambam

20 Teves, 4965/1205

The great eagle, Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon, the Rambam, was born in Cordoba, Spain in 4905. His *seforim* are *Sefer Hamitzvos*, *Yad Hachazakah* and *Peirush Hamishnayos*, and they were printed

numerous times over the years and are studied throughout Klal Yisrael.

The author of *Seder Hadoros* (4927) wrote that the *Yad Hachazakah* took the Rambam 10 years to write, and he did not emerge from his room during that time. On the evening that he finished the compilation, his father, Rabi Maimon, appeared to him in a dream, with Moshe Rabbeinu. The Rambam became frightened. Moshe Rabbeinu said to him: I came to see what you have done, and when Moshe Rabbeinu saw his great compilation he said "*Yishar kochacha*." The Rambam was a famous doctor and served as the personal physician of the king of Egypt. He passed away in Alexandria, Egypt at the age of 70, and his *aron* was taken to Teveriah, where he was buried.

Answering Amen

"Anyone who hears another Jew reciting any of the *brachos*, even if he did not hear the *brachah* from beginning to end, and even if he is not obligated to hear that *brachah* – must answer amen" (*Rambam Brachos* 1:12) "Because this is *hiddur*, to praise and glorify and elevate for the great and Honorable Name- that we do not mention or hear His mention without attaching to it *romemus* or *ha'amanah* [answering amen]..." (*Shu"t Harambam* [Machon Yerushalayim edition] 63).