

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

Parashas VAYEILECH | 5782 | Issue No. 452



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## Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### The Aseres Yemei Teshuvah Are a Time to Repent

A spirit of purity envelopes every Jewish home in the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It's the beginning of a new year, when the atmosphere of renewal characterizes all the world's creations, and it is a special opportunity for each person to renew his *avodas Hashem* and to carry out the aspirations and holy goals that until today have been contained in his heart.

In the period when our entire being cries out "Our will is to do Your Will!" – between the 'Coronation' that we had on Rosh Hashanah to when we stand in front of Him on Yom Kippur like Heavenly angels, purified of sin and cleansed of all wrong – we have been given the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. During that time, Hashem's Hand is open to accepting our *teshuvah* with love and His Eyes gaze out with compassion to see us improve our ways.

There is no better time for introspection about all matters – serious and more minor - and to deal with the most significant question: Are we indeed scrupulous about performing the *mitzvos* with all our heart and soul?

The *Rambam* gave significant weight specifically to *mitzvos* that seem to be light in the eyes of people, and among the twenty-four things that delay *teshuvah* that he lists in the fourth chapter of *Hilchos Teshuvah*, he listed: "Five things that the one who does them is not likely to repent for them, because they are light in the eyes of most people, and he sins but he imagines that it is not a sin..."

This point is especially relevant to one beloved mitzvah – the mitzvah of answering amen – as anyone who seeks the truth, and who has learned more about it in the *seforim*, realizes quickly that it is indeed a precious gem. Despite its value, it is readily available for every person to perform. With a bit of effort, a person can gather all these 'amen diamonds' and answering them will multiply his *zechusim* and will increase his reward in this world and the next.

The fact that the entire essence of the mitzvah of amen is coronating the Creator, as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 119b): "What is amen – א-ל מלך נאמן –" ties between it and the holy days that we are in the midst of.

If so, there is no time more suited than these days to present to our readers a little bit of the tremendous wealth found in the *seforim* about the mitzvah of answering amen. In the coming lines, I will present some of *Chazal's* words on the subject, with an emphasis on things that have a special connection to the requests we make during these days – *Avinu Malkeinu*. It is our hope that the words will have an effect and hearts will feel awakened as a result, to bring about more insights to the loftiness and holiness of answering amen.

#### Avinu Malkeinu Hafer Atzas Oyveinu

Answering amen causes the advice of our enemies to be violated, and they receive the punishment they deserve. As *Chazal* say (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah* 10) on the *passuk* (*Shoftim* 5:2): "*Bifroa pera'os b'Yisrael behisnadev am barchu Hashem*" – "In whose merit does Hashem punish the nations of the world on behalf of people who go to the *beis knesses* and *beis medrash* morning and evening and answer amen..."

#### Avinu Malkeinu Kera Ro'a Gezar Dineinu

In *Maseches Shabbos* (119b) it says: "Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said: 'Anyone who answers amen *yehei Shemei Rabba mevarach* with all his might – has his decree torn up.'" The holy *Zohar* says this applies to every amen, and not necessarily for '*amen yehei Shemei Rabba*,' as it states (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1) "One who answers amen with all his might has a decree of seventy years torn up" (*Shomer Emunim, Ma'amar Pischu She'arim* 1). Hence, if we are consistent about answering amen then all the difficult decrees will be torn up.

#### Avinu Malkeinu Kasveinu Besefer Chaim Tovim

*Chazal* say (*Brachos* 47a): "Anyone who extends his amen, has his days and years extended." This promise for a long life to one who is strict about answering amen is brought in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* as well (*Brachos* 8 8) with the addition of one special word: "One who answers amen has his days and years extended *betovah*." So answering amen makes a person merit "*chaim tovim*."

#### Avinu Malkeinu Kasveinu Besefer Geulah Veyeshuah

*Chazal* explain (*Midrash Tehillim* 31) on the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 31:24): "*Emunim notzer Hashem*," – "These are Am Yisrael who say '*baruch mechayeh mesim*,' and answer amen with *emunah* – as they believe with all their might in HaKadosh Baruch Hu that He is a *mechaeyh meisim*, and still, *techiyas hameisim* has not come. They say '*Go'el Yisrael*' and they have not yet been redeemed. They say, '*Baruch Boneh Yerushalayim*,' and it has still not been built. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said: Am Yisrael were only redeemed for an hour, and then they were enslaved again, and they believe in Me that I am destined to redeem them. That is "*emunim notzer Hashem*" – they believe and answer amen, *notzer Hashem* – that in the merit of answering amen with *emunah*, we will merit "*geulah* and *yeshuah*."

#### Avinu Malkeinu Kasveinu Besefer Parnassah Vechalkalah

The *Shelah HaKadosh* (*Maseches Tamid* 80) wrote something beautiful about the fact that all the abundance in the world is bestowed in the merit of amen. He wrote: "Anyone who has *kavanah* for every single *brachah* that emerges from the mouth of the *mevarech* and answers amen with *kavanah*, as is the *halachah*, generates a lot of *kedushah* On High, and brings about an abundance of good to all the worlds, because he opens the Higher Source, the *Mekor Mayim Chaim*, like he opens a spring to water all those that need watering..."

With blessings of  
תהיה שנת פתיחת גן עדן,  
And wishes for a new year with  
many *brachos*,

Yaakov Dov Marmorstein

## Mesirus Nefesh for a Mitzvah Brings Divine Assistance

It was days after Pesach 5538/1778, in the home of the holy Rebbe, Harav Shmelke of Nikolsburg, zy"ta. The Rebbe was weak and bedridden, aware of the fact that these were his final days. His family and students stood around him, all enveloped with a Divine holiness.

At that time just before his soul departed, those standing around the Rebbe's bed listened attentively. Their holy Rebbe's

*One day, I was invited by a wealthy person from a nearby town to where I lived, to serve as the sandak at a bris that he was holding of his son. On the appointed day, the baby's father sent a carriage driven by an uncouth Jew to bring me to the place where the bris was.*



mouth constantly murmured words of Torah, and intermittently, he conveyed to them *mussar* in how to lead their lives and conduct themselves. They did not want to lose out on even one utterance of their revered Rebbe.

At the height of this holy hour, the Rebbe turned towards his disciples and said:

"I want to tell you a wondrous story that happened to me. The story took place many years ago, and since then, there have been a number of opportunities when I wanted to tell it to you, however, I was afraid that perhaps you would not see it in its entirety and you would doubt that it happened. Thus, I would

have caused you to stumble [in sin] instead of bringing about some benefit. Now, as I feel that my end is near, I would like to tell you this story, so that you should learn a lesson from it, and learn that when a person is *moser nefesh*, and wants with all his being to fulfill a mitzvah, he is guaranteed to be aided from Above to fulfill his wishes."

After this introduction, Rav Shmelke continued to relate the story:

You surely know the practice that I have cautioned about for a very long time, to this day, not to make a *brachah* without having a Jew standing beside me who could answer amen to the *brachah*. I have already emphasized to you a number of times, that every *brachah* creates an angel, but its form is not completed unless there is an amen answered after it. Therefore, I am strict that my *brachos* should be answered with amen so that the angel that is created from them should be a complete one.

One day, I was invited by a wealthy person from a nearby town to where I lived, to serve as the *sandak* at a *bris* for his son. On the appointed day, the baby's father sent a carriage hitched up to horses to bring me to the place where the *bris* was. The carriage was driven by a wagon driver who, while a Jew, was a very coarse and uncouth person, and very distant from Torah and *chassidus*.

In the middle of the way, when I stopped for a short rest, it became necessary for me to recite the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*. *Bechasdei Shamayim*, there was a spring of water near me where I could wash my hands before the *brachah*. But when I wanted to implement my longstanding practice and I wanted to ask the Jewish wagon driver to answer amen me, I realized that the man was so bereft of any depth, that there was no way to include him in anything holy.

I was at a loss. Throughout my life, until that time, I had been able to observe this practice, and I was struck with dread at the thought that I would have to forfeit it at this time. I offered a fervent *tefillah* that I would merit this time, as well, to fulfill my practice, and that *chalilah*, a damaged angel should not be created from my *brachah*. *Bechasdei*

*Shamayim*, my *tefillah* was heard.

Suddenly, I heard a rustle in the bushes; I turned my head towards the sound, and I was surprised to see that two people, with very venerable appearances, were emerging from this forest. These people drew closer to me, without saying a word, and stood next to me. As such, I immediately made the *brachah*, with awe and trembling, and those two people answered amen with exceptional sweetness and enthusiasm. I wanted to thank them, but before I was able to, they disappeared from my view, as if they had never been there.

For a few long moments, I stood there, frightened and awestruck. I realized that Michael and Gavriel – the angels of Hashem – had been sent to me from Above to answer amen to my *brachos*, after it was willed Above that I should be able to uphold my holy practice. Needless to say, that lowly wagon driver did not see them arrive or leave, and right after that, I boarded the carriage again, and we drove off.

At that time, I thought of an explanation for the words of the *passuk* in *Iyov* (23:13): "*Vehu b'echad umi yeshivenu venafsho osah vaya'as*" – a *passuk* that we mention in the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah, with the added words "*Nora VeKadosh*." And I explained the words like this:

As is known, answering amen completes the words of the *mevarech*. Everyone wants to have their *brachah* completed by the answering of amen. But what can a person do when he is compelled to make a *brachah* when he is alone, either at home or on his way to a destination, and there is no one to complete the *brachah* with amen? The *passuk* answers: "*Vehu b'echad*" – when a person is forced to make a *brachah* while alone, "*umi yeshivenu*" – and there is no one to answer amen after him, then if "*venafsho osah*," if he deeply desires that his *brachah* should be answered with amen, then "*vaya'as – Nora veKadosh*" – he has the power to effect awesome things by having an angel sent to him from Above to answer amen to complete his *brachah*.

As we rode, I dozed off in the carriage, and from Above, it was revealed to me in a dream that my explanation had been correct, and indeed, these were Heavenly angels sent to me from Above to answer my *brachos*."

## A Brachah for Hearing the Shofar

### Weakness Is the Root of Failure

“הזקו ואמצו אל תיראו ואל תערצו מפניהם כי ה' אלקיך הוא ההלך עמך לא ירפך ולא יעזובך” (לא 1)

The words “*lo yarpecha velo ya'azveka*” are explained by *Rashi*: “Hashem will not give you [cause for] weakness [resulting] from your being forsaken by Him.”

The **Minchas Elazar** of Munkacz offered a beautiful explanation of *Rashi's* words:

When a person is sick, and he looks to doctors for the support, if the doctor despairs and says his condition cannot be cured, this may seal his fate, because the doctor's grim predictions caused his confidence to weaken, and then his strength will wane until the inevitable end. But when someone does not cast his lot with doctors, and instead, strengthens his *emunah* that it is in Hashem's Hands to heal him from any situation, then his chances of recovery are much greater.

This is what *Rashi* means: When a trouble befalls you, “He will not give you cause for weakness” that will cause you to “be forsaken by him,” rather, “strengthen yourselves and do not be afraid... because Hashem Elokecha is walking with you...” and that is how you will be extricated from the trouble.

*Imrei Devash* [Rav D.B. Schwartz], p. 149

### Forgiveness in Merit of the Children

“הקהל את העם האנשים והטף וגרך אשר בשעריך למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ויראו את ה' אלקיכם ושמרו לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת” (לא יב)

The *Gemara* asks (*Chagigah* 3a): “Men come to learn, women come to hear,” but “why do the children come?” And the answer is “to give a reward to those who bring them.” If Hashem wanted to give us a reward, why did He choose to do so in this way?

**Harav Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz**, the Rav of Prague, explained:

The whole principle of the mitzvah of *Hakhel* was given in order to arouse the nation to repent, and therefore, the king would read before them *Chumash Devarim*, which is comprised mostly of rebuke. When Am Yisrael repent, and plead for forgiveness for their sins they also ask that although they are not worthy of forgiveness, the merit of their children who did not sin should advocate for them. As we say in the *tefillah* of *Avinu Malkeinu*: “*Chamol aleinu v'ale oleinu vetapeinu*.” For this reason, the Torah commanded us to bring the children to *Hakhel*, so that this way we could ask, “*Asei lema'an taf eilu*, do it for the sake of these children brought to

the House of Hashem.” So we find that the bringing them is the reward given to those who bring them, as their *teshuvah* is then accepted in this merit.

*Kli Yakar*

### One Hundred Brachos Protect from Curses

“והיה כי תמצאן אתו רעות רבות וצרות וענתה השירה הזאת לפניו לעד כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו” (לא כא)

It says in *Maseches Chagigah* (5a) that when Rabi Yochanan came to this *passuk* he would cry and say “a servant whose master creates for him bad things [is there] a *takanah* for him [the servant]?” Does *Parashas Ki Savo* not list 98 harsher curses than this? Why did he not cry until he reached this *passuk*?

**Harav Yaakov Yehoshua Fruman** of Lodz explained:

At the beginning of this subject it says (31:16) “and this nation will rise up and stray...” And the *Baal Haturim* explained: “there are *tagin* on the *kuf* to say that they will be disgusted by the 100 *brachos*.” From his words it is apparent that until then, the merit of 100 *brachos* protected Am Yisrael. As the *Rokeach* wrote (320) that the mitzvah of *meah brachos* was meant to spare Klal Yisrael from the one hundred curses, 98 written in *Parashas Ki Savo*, and two more alluded to in the *passuk* (*Devarim* 28:61): “גם כל הלי וכל מכה.” But now, after they rejected the *meah brachos*, Rabi Yochanan cried that once again, they would not have a merit to protect them.

*Nachalas Yaakov Yehoshua*

### Why Do We Not Make a Brachah on Writing a Sefer Torah?

“ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדו את בני ישראל שימיה בפייהם למען תהיה לי השירה הזאת לעד בבני ישראל” (לא יט)

In this *passuk* we are commanded with the final mitzvah of the 613 *mitzvos* – writing a *Sefer Torah* (see *Sefer Hachinuch* 613). Why did *Chazal* not institute a *brachah* for this mitzvah, as was instituted for the other *mitzvos*?

There are a few explanations:

1. The **Mordechai** explained that this mitzvah is not similar to other *mitzvos*

for which we do recite a *brachah*, because it is possible to fulfill it by a proxy, by hiring a *sofer Sta”m* to write a *Sefer Torah*. Therefore, no *brachah* was instituted.

2. **Mahar”i Beirav** explained this according to the *Gemara* (*Menachos* 42b) that we do not make a *brachah* on a mitzvah done as an introduction and a preparation for another mitzvah (see *Rambam Brachos* 11 8). Because this mitzvah does not conclude with the writing of a *Sefer Torah*, but rather, with reading it, and as explained in the commandment that the king was instructed to write a *Sefer Torah* (*Devarim* 17:18): “And it should be with him and he should read from it all the days of his life,” that is why we do not make a *brachah*.

3. The **Chasam Sofer** explained: Today, we do not have a way to be certain that we fulfill this mitzvah in its full sense, because *Chazal* say (*Kiddushin* 30a) that we are not expert enough to know which words in the Torah need to be written with the *ksav malei* and which with the *ksav chaser*. Because a *Sefer Torah* that is missing even one letter is not considered a *Sefer Torah* (*Menachos* 31a), it is possible that we did not fulfill this mitzvah properly, and therefore, we do not make the *brachah* on it.

But the **Sdei Chemed** asked: If so, then we have to be concerned that the *Sefer Torah* that we have today does not have the *din* of a *Sefer Torah*. How then can those who go up for an *Aliyah* recite a *brachah* on reading it?

The **Pnei Menachem** replied to this that there is a difference between the *brachah* of one who goes up to the Torah to the *birchas hamitzvah*. One who ascends to the Torah does not recite the *brachah* on the *Sefer Torah*, but rather on the fulfillment of the *takanah* of *Chazal* to read in the Torah at the times that were determined. For this, there is no difference as to whether the words are written *malei* or *chaser*, if their meaning does not change (see *Rema Orach Chaim* 143 4) But the *birchas hamitzvah* is recited for the writing of the *Sefer Torah*, and therefore, one should not make a *brachah* unless the *Sefer Torah* is written as stipulated.

4. Another reason is brought by the **Chasam Sofer** in the name of ‘a Rav’, that the reason that we do not recite a *brachah* on this mitzvah is because there is a concern perhaps it will not be ultimately be completed. The writing of a *Sefer Torah* takes a very long time, and if a *brachah* is made at the onset, it is possible that for some reason, it will not be completed, and then the *brachah* of the writer is *levatalah*.

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

## Otzros Emunim

Amen Round the Year – Yom Kippur

### Amen Out Loud

Rav Shlomo Ibn Virga, one of the expellees from Spain, wrote in his *sefer*, *Shevet Yehudah* an early description by ‘Virshurish the Roman’ about the ceremony of the Kohein Gadol going from his house to the Bais Hamikdash ahead of the *avodah* of Yom Kippur. Among the things he describes there are: “And when they reached the entrance of Har Habayis, they would pray there for the continued existence of the kings of Bais Dovid, and then for the Kohanim and the Mikdash. The voice was so strong and when amen was answered by so many people, the birds flying in the air would fall to the ground...” (*Shevet Yehudah* [Levin-Epstein Edition] p. 150)

### Four Times Amen

*Teshuvos Vehanhagos* (Vol. IV *Orach Chaim* 153) wrote that on Yom Kippur, when we fall short of the many *brachos* to complete the quota of one hundred *brachos*, a person can fulfill the obligation by hearing *Birchos Hashachar* from a friend and answering amen. This is on condition that the friend will have in mind to be *motzi* him [even though he already made the *brachos* himself] and he will have in mind to be *yotzei*. He added, “And I saw in the name of the holy Rebbe Harav Aharon Rokeach of Belz that he heard *Birchos Hashachar* four times on Yom Kippur and answered amen, and I heard that he was very strict about this and spoke about it.”

## Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

In the pamphlet of *Parashas V'eschanan*, you cited the *drashah* of Shabbos Shuvah given by Harav Yosef Steinhart of Furth, the Zichron Yosef. He proved from the fact that *Chazal* (*Brachos* 53b) called the matter of answering amen ‘*gibborim hanotzchin*,’ the heroes who win, that even though reciting a *brachah* creates a good angel, that angel does not have enough strength to prevail over the hostile *mekatregim*. But the angel that is created from answering amen is a “strong and firm one, who has the strength to win the *mekatregim*.”

I thought that perhaps we can find an allusion to this in the word ‘amen’ itself, which is an acronym for *נברא מלאך אמיץ*, a brave angel is created. It is possible that because of this, although each mitzvah creates an angel, it is specifically the mitzvah of amen that is numerically equivalent to *מלאך*, angel, to teach us that the angel created from answering amen is a special angel that helps a person against the *mekatregim*. The *passuk* that we say in *Mussaf* of Yom Kippur – “*im yesh alav malach meilitz echad mini elef lehagid adam yoshro*, if there is an angel over him, an intercessor, one out of a thousand, to declare for a man his uprightness,” (*Iyov* 33:23), alludes to the angel of amen. The word *מליץ* ends with the letter *צ* while the word *echad* begins with an *א* and together they form *אצ*, which is equivalent to amen.

Thank you for your wonderful work,  
**Ephraim Langner, Yerushalayim**

Letters can be sent to fax number 08-9746102 or emailed to the *Vechol Ma'aminim* email address. 9139191@gmail.com

## Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahtzeit



The entrance to the Jewish cemetery in Verona.

### The Tzeror Hamor

9 Tishrei 5269

Harav Avraham ben Rav Yaakov Saba, who was born and worked in Castile, Spain, was one of the giants of the generation before the expulsion from Spain. Once expelled, he went to Portugal, but there, too, he found no peace. He was imprisoned and tortured for the ‘sin’

of adhering to Torah, and ultimately managed to escape to Fez, Morocco.

In his introduction to his *sefer*, *Eshkol Hakofer*, he bemoans his lost children and lost written works: “Jewish people came to me and said that someone who will be found with a *sefer* will be put to death. I immediately went and buried them under an olive tree, and I called it ‘*alon bechus*,’ because that is where I buried all that was precious to me – the commentary on Torah and *mitzvos*, which are more precious than gold and treasures, because with them, I would be comforted for my two sons who were the walls of my heart, and who were taken against their will to convert their religion.”

When he lived in Fez, he rewrote his commentary on Torah, which he compiled in the way of *drush* and *kabbalah*; it was entitled *Tzeror Hamor*. Likewise, he compiled *Eshkol Hakofer* on the *Megillos of Rus* and *Eshet*. Although he rewrote them, he noted (*ibid*): “I know that the main thing is lacking from the *sefer* from what was initially written.” His granddaughter, the daughter of his son Reb Yitzchak, married the Bais Yosef, *zt”l*.

The Chida (*Shem Hagedolim Ma'arachah* 1, 81) describes his passing: While he was sailing on a ship, there was a sudden storm that threatened to drown the ship with all its passengers. Recognizing his greatness, the captain pleaded with the Rav to pray for the sea to calm. The Rav agreed but conditioned it on a commitment that if he would pass away while still on the ship, he would not be tossed to sea, and rather, he would be brought to burial in a Jewish community. The captain promised, the Rav davened, and miraculously, the storm stilled.

Two days later, while still sailing, the Rav returned his soul to its Maker [on Erev Yom Kippur, 9 Tishrei 5269]. The captain fulfilled his promise and redirected the ship to pass the closest city – Verona, Italy. The members of the Verona community buried him in their city, with great respect.

### The Virtue of Meah Brachos

The Torah states (*Devarim* 10, 12-13) “*V'atah Yisrael mah Hashem Elokecha sho'el me'imach ki im leyira es Hashem Elokecha, laleches bechol derachav, ul'ahavah Oso... lishmor es mitzvos Hashem v'es chukosav asher Anochi metzavecha hayom letov lach.*”

The Rav asked: From the words of the *passuk* “*ki im*” it sounds like HaKadosh Baruch Hu is asking a person to do a mitzvah that is very easy, and does not require any effort. But right afterwards, the Torah lists numerous commandments, that include the fulfillment of the entire Torah. This needs explanation.

He explained: *Chazal* (*Menachos* 43b) derived from this *passuk* a proof of the obligation of a person to recite *meah brachos* each day, saying: ‘Do not read it *מה* but rather *מאה*.’” The mitzvah of *meah brachos* is one that is usually easy to fulfill, because one who prays three times a day and recites the *birchos hanehenin* according to *halachah* will reach this number with no difficulty. The *mitzvos* that are listed afterwards are not written by way of commandment, but rather the Torah writes them to teach us that the virtue of *meah brachos* is so great that anyone who is strict to recite them each day is considered to be serving Hashem from *yirah* and *ahavah*, and fulfills all the *mitzvos* and *chukim* of the Torah (*Tzeror Hamor* *ibid*).