

Vechele Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

A word from the founder
and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Praise That Leads to Brachah

"אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה בדרותיו את האלקים התהלך נח" (ו ט)

Rashi explains that the beginning of the *passuk* "Eileh toldos Noach" refers to the sons of Noach listed in the following *parashah*. The Torah then paused to describe Noach in a praiseworthy way because "Since [the text] mentions him, it tells of his praiseworthiness, as it says (*Mishlei* 1:7) 'Zecher tzaddik livrachah, the mention of a righteous person is a blessing.'" However, doesn't the *passuk* "zecher tzaddik livrachah" teach us that when we mention a *tzaddik*, one should bless him? When then did Rashi bring it as a reason for why He "spoke in praise of him"?

Harav Shmuel Dovid Walkin, the Rav of the Bais Aharon community in Queens, explained:

Praise and *brachah* are contingent on one another. The fact that we are speaking in praise of a *tzaddik* and mentioning his merits brings *brachah* upon him. He testified what he saw when he learned in the yeshivah of the Chofetz Chaim – when the Rosh Yeshivah, Harav Naftali Tropp fell ill with his final illness, the Chofetz Chaim spoke at length in praise of him in order to evoke Heavenly mercy for him.

Ramas Shmuel

Atone for the Annulment of a Mitzvas Aseh

"ויבן נח מזבחה לה' ויקח מכל הבהמה הטהרה ומכל העוף הטהור ויעל הלת במזבחה" (ח כ)

Why did Noach bring specifically 'olos'?

Harav Yehonasan Eibeshitz explained:

Noach annulled a *mitzvas aseh* by not davening for the decree of the Mabul, as the Ramban wrote (in the *hasagos* of *Sefer Hamitzvos* Mitzvah 5) that the *mitzvos* of *tefillah* that we were commanded in the Torah obligate a person to daven in a time of trouble. And as Chazal say (*Yoma* 36a), the *Korban Olah* atones for the *bittul* of a *mitzvas aseh*, which is why Noach brought a *Korban Olah* after the Mabul.

Tiferes Yehonasan

'For This, Every Chassid Should Pray'

"את קשתי נתתי בענן והיתה לאות ברית ביני ובין הארץ" (ט יג)

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Kesubos* (77b) explains that Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi merited to enter the life of Gan Eden because he protected his generation with his piety, to the extent that it was not necessary to display a rainbow in his lifetime.

Based on this Harav Pinchas Halevi Horowitz, the Baal Hafla'ah, explained the *passuk* in *Tehillim* (32:6): "Al zos yispallel kol chassid Eilecha le'es metzo rak lesheitef mayim rabim eilav lo yagi'u." The *tefillah* of "every *chassid*" is to be saved from the "eis metzo" –which is death (*Brachos* 8a). But only a *tzaddik gamur* will merit this, as he protects his generation with his piety that "a flood of many waters will not come to it," and it will not be necessary to have the rainbow appear in his times.

Panim Yafos

Amen – The Connection to the Creator

If we look in the whole Torah, we find that the only one who is called 'tzaddik' is Noach, of whom the Torah writes (*Bereishis* 6:9): "Noach ish tzaddik tamim hayah bedorosav." Even HaKadosh Baruch Hu thus testified when He said to Noach: "Ki osecha ra'isi tzaddik lefanai bador hazeh, I saw you as the *tzaddik* in front of Me in this generation" (7:1).

But if we delve further into the sources, we find that there is a clear formula, which is easy and available to all, through which we can attain the description of 'tzaddik.' The Navi Yeshayah prophecies (21:1-2): "On that day, this song will be sung in Eretz Yehudah...open the gates and a *goy tzaddik shomer emunim* will come." Chazal explain (*Shabbos* 119b): "Do not read it 'shomer emunim', but rather 'she'omrim amen.' Rabbeinu Bechaye (*Kad Hakemach, Emunah*) learned from this that in the merit of being strict about answering amen, a person merits to be called 'tzaddik.'

The *Siddur HaRama*"k (*Shaar* 4, 3) added in the name of the holy *Zohar* that the quota of holy things are alluded to in the word 'tzaddik' – 90 amens, 4 *Kedushos*, 10 *Kaddish* and 100 *brachos*. The *Rama*"k there concludes with the statement that "one who does this is undoubtedly a *tzaddik*."

If we delve even further, we will discover that meeting the quotas of *Kaddish* and the *brachos* does not require particular effort, because someone who davens with a *minyan* three times every day will usually accumulate the quota. The word שומר, which means "waiting and anticipating" is most appropriate for the quota of amens, because in order to accumulate 90 amens on *brachos*, a person must await and anticipate the *brachos*. We can say with near certainty that someone who does not make the effort to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from a few people each day will not be able to meet the quota of answering 90 amens to *brachos*. So we find that the description of "tzaddik" indeed depends on completing 90 amens a day, as Rabbeinu Bechaye wrote.

By way of *remez* we can say that the reason that Noach was called an "ish tzaddik" was because he was strict about this, as the acronym of איש צדיק is א"צ" which is numerically equivalent to אמן and is also an acronym of אמנים.

Do you ever wonder why, of all the 613 mitzvos, this particular mitzvah of amen was selected to crown the one who is strict about it with the description of *tzaddik*?! We can say that the answer is: The description of *tzaddik* can also apply to someone who does more than is required of him. When we answer amen, we show that our goal is not to fulfill the mitzvah only to be *yotzei* our obligation, but rather, our desire is to praise and glorify Hashem in the complete sense – like children who want to praise their father. Like Bney Emunim!

Let's be strict about answering amen properly, and this way, we will surely strengthen our inner bond with the Creator, and undoubtedly this will have an effect, and will illuminate everything we do in our lives.

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The 'Chavrusa' That Ended after One Day

It was the beginning of World War I. The winds of war, the types of which the world had never seen, began to whip through the world, threatening the peace of millions of people. For those living in Eretz Yisrael, controlled at the time by the corrupt Ottoman Empire, the war was particularly critical. The Ottoman Empire, which was in the ongoing process of crumbling, was in a state of war with many of the nations of the world. As a result, the signs of war were very evident among those living in Eretz Yisrael.

The frum residents of the Land suffered more than most. Until that point, their meager support had relied mostly on donations from the Diaspora nations, which were transferred to them through the *Kollelim*, founded for the members of various communities



An ancient postcard of the kever of Rabi Meir Baal Haness and Yeshivas Ohr Torah built right next to it.

in Yerushalayim, Yaffo, Tzefas and Teveriah.

Naturally, the state of war led to severe disruptions in the contacts between nations. Aside for the fact that there was utter turmoil in Europe at the time, which led to a decline in donations by the residents for the poor of Yerushalayim, it was very difficult to dispatch the money that was collected to Yerushalayim. As a result, many of the *kollelim* struggled to struggle to pay their support stipends to the young men that they supported.

One of the institutions facing such a crisis was Yeshivas Ohr Torah, in Teveriah. In normal times, dozens of families were supported through the yeshivah. But now, due to a lack of funds, the yeshivah stopped giving the regular stipends to the *avreichim*, who had to find alternate ways of supporting their families.

One of the special young men who learned in the yeshivah was Harav Yitzchak Mattisyahu Luria, *zt"l*. At that time, he was a young man with small children; in an effort to support his family, he tried his hand at various endeavors. For the most part, he was not successful.

The situation at home was terrible, and, therefore, when a family member who had a flour mill in the nearby town of Tzemach reached out to him with an offer that he once would never have considered, Rav Mattisyahu reluctantly accepted it.

The job was to take a daily transport of a donkey laden with sacks of wheat from Teveriah to Tzemach, unload them at the mill, and then return them empty to Teveriah. The work was hard and exhausting, and it required hours of walking under a burning sun, alongside the laden donkey. But when the choice was that and hunger, Reb Mattisyahu had no question about what he had to do.

On the first day, after walking for a long time, Reb Mattisyahu stood to take a rest. He looked at the donkey, chewing apathetically on some grass growing on the side of the road, and pondered his dismal situation: Even now, he

was trying not to waste his time. He had managed to review dozens of *perakim* of *Mishnayos* by heart as he walked, but instead of doing it with his *chavrusa* who he used to learn with all day, he had to switch to a 'chavrusa' of a different kind...

Tears began to roll down his cheeks, and he wailed: "Ribbono shel Olam! What am I asking for already? To be able to go back to learning in the *beis medrash*, not more! I am not asking for wealth or honor; I have enough with the tiniest amount needed for my *parnassah*; please, help me return to my beloved *Gemara* and the *beis medrash* where I feel most comfortable!"

As he was immersed in his *tefillah*, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He opened his eyes and discovered an elderly Arab carrying a heavy sack filled with 'leather', a popular confection made of apricots; he offered Reb Mattisyahu to purchase his goods. The latter

apologized that he had only two small coins on him, but the Arab surprised him and agreed to sell the merchandise for the tiny sum. If that was not enough, he even offered to schlep the leather to the flour mill – his destination.

When he arrived, Reb Mattisyahu saw that the flour mill was not in operation due to a malfunction in one of the machines. The owner locked the door and went to bring a repairman from Teveriah. In the meantime, the Arab wheat dealers sat on the ground in the burning sun and waited.

An hour passed, then two, and the owner did not turn up. The dealers began to get hungry; they had used up the food they had brought with them, and were looking for something to satiate their hunger. "Maybe you have something to eat for us?" they asked Rav Mattisyahu. "Indeed," he replied. "I have a lot of fruit leather. But this is the price: Each piece of leather will cost one sack of wheat!"

The hungry Arabs agreed to the condition, and the sacks of wheat began to pile up next to Rav Mattisyahu. By the time the mill owner returned some time later, Rav Mattisyahu was able to inform him that he was no longer in need of the job. The price of wheat kept rising, as it was wartime, and with the money he earned from selling it, he was able to live comfortably for an entire year, and to return to learning as he had wished.

Many years after that day, Rab Mattisyahu often repeated this story to his descendants, and emphasized the valuable lesson that he wished to convey:

"That Torah learning that I merited to learn, specifically during those difficult war years, was unlike my learning at any other time. I knew that this learning was the direct result of a miracle, and therefore, I valued every single moment. I am not telling you the story to boast, but rather to teach you how close Hashem is to every one of those who call to Him, and when you ask something from the depths of your heart, He listens and answers the *tefillah*."

Shared by Rav Mordechai Weinstock, courtesy of the Moreshe Avos Institute

Answering Amen After *Birchas Hagomel*

Some have learned from the words of the *poskim* that amen should not be answered after *Birchas Hagomel*, because one is *yotzei* with saying “*Mi Shegemalcha kol tov Hu yigemalcha kol tov selah*,” which affirms and fulfills the words of the *mevarech* the same way as answering amen. But in fact, the Acharonim ruled that one should answer amen, like for the rest of the *brachos*, and only later, should say *Mi Shegemalcha*. This is because by answering amen, the one who answers joins the gratitude of the *mevarech* to Hashem, while when saying “*Mi Shegemalcha...*” he gives a *brachah* to the *mevarech* himself.

Sources and Explanations

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 219 2) wrote that after *Birchas Hagomel* “the listeners say (based on *Rambam Brachos* 10 8) *Mi Shegemalcha kol tov Hu yigemalcha kol tov selah*,” and the *Rambam* wrote something similar (*Brachos* 10 8). From the fact that they did not mention that one must answer amen before saying “*Mi Shegemalcha*,” the *Shaarei Ephraim* noted (in *Pischi She'arim* 4:30) that in their view, one should not answer amen to this *brachah*, because by saying *Mi Shegemalcha*, they affirm and fulfill the *brachah* as if they answered amen (see *Shu"t Hisorerus Teshuvah* Vol. I, 59). But practically, the *Shaarei Ephraim* ruled that one should answer amen after *Hagomel*, as the *Eliyahu Rabbah* (141 6) wrote. And the *Aruch Hashulchan* thus ruled in *Orach Chaim* 219 5.

The reason that in this *brachah* we do not suffice with answering amen like in the other *brachos*, and add a *brachah* to the *mevarech*, is because *Chazal* said (*Shabbos* 32a) that someone who has a miracle done for him has his merits deducted. As *Yaakov* said (*Bereishis* 32:11): “*Katonti* [my merits have diminished] *mikol hachassadim umikol ha'emes asher asisa es avdecha*” (see *Rashi* there), therefore, we bless someone who had a miracle performed for him, that from Above, he should continue to be blessed with “*kol tov selah*” without having any of his merits deducted (*Shalmei Nedarim*, Introduction).

They further explained: The Torah describes the birth of *Yehudah* as follows (*Bereishis* 29:35): “*Vatahar od vateled ben, vatomar hapa'am odeh es Hashem al kein kar'ah shemo Yehuda vata'amod miledes*, she conceived again and gave birth to a son. She said, ‘This time I will praise Hashem.’ She therefore named him *Yehudah*. She then stopped giving birth.” The *Tur* wrote in his commentary on the Torah (ibid) “like someone who gives gratitude to Hashem for giving her all of her share, and she did not ask for more, and therefore, she stopped giving birth.” We learn from here that one who thanks Hashem for the past, must also add a request for the future, and because *Birchas Hagomel* does not include a request for the future [in keeping with the *din* of a *brachah ketzarah*, a short *brachah*] therefore, the listeners make this request for the *mevarech*: “He Who has granted you all the good should continue to grant you all good” – in the future (*Shu"t Divrei Yatziv* Vol. VII, 25. See other explanations ibid).

Chinuch to Answering Amen

a. A person must teach his young children to answer amen, so that they should merit *Olam Haba*. But if he brings them to shul for this purpose, he should teach them to stand in fear and awe.

Sources and Explanations

In *Maseches Sanhedrin* (110b) the *Gemara* brings various opinions about from when a baby who passes away merits *Olam Haba*. The *Kolbo* (11) ruled like *Rabi Meir* there that a child merits *Olam Haba* from the time he answers amen. Based on this, the *Rema* ruled (*Orach Chaim* 124 7): “And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as the baby answers amen, he has a share in *Olam Haba*.” The *Rambam* writes (*Tefillah* 15:9): “A shul where everyone is *Kohanim*, and they all are *nosei kapayim*...who should answer amen after them, the women and children.” *Rabbeinu Manoach* wrote about this: “We can thus understand that every *yarei Shamayim* must teach his wife and children and all who are with him to answer amen after all the *brachos*.” *Rav Eliyahu Hakohein* of *Izmir* (*Minchas Eliyahu* Chapter 32) explained based on this the words in *Megillas Esther* (2:7): “*Vayehi omen es Hadassah hie Esther bas dodo ki ein lah av va'em*.” *Mordechai* would be “omen es *Hadassah*” – he taught her from a young age to answer amen, why? “Because she had no father and mother” – to teach her, as the *Rema* ruled.

The *Piskei Teshuvos* (ibid 13), extrapolated that the *din* of being *mechanech* youngsters to answer amen is practiced from when the child reaches the age of *chinuch* for *brachos*. But the *Avodas Dovid* (*Sanhedrin* 111a) clarified based on the words of the *Rema* “as soon as the baby answers amen, he has a share in *Olam Haba*,” that from when the child utters the word amen, even without understanding its meaning, he merits *Olam Haba*. As such, it seems that the intention of the *Rema* is to instruct that even a child who has not yet reached the age of *chinuch* should be taught to answer amen as soon as he can pronounce it, in order to bring him to a life of *Olam Haba*. This is also evident from the other *poskim* whose words are cited in the following *halachah*.

However, the *Magen Avraham* wrote (ibid 11, cited by the *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 24) that even someone who brings his children to inculcate them to answer amen “needs to be *mechanech* them to stand with awe and fear, and those who run around the shul and laugh and play should better not be brought.”

b. The custom is to be *mechanech* the young ones to answer amen by answering amen to their *brachos*, even before they reach the age of *chinuch*.

Sources and Explanations

Even though the *Mishnah Berurah* ruled (215 16) that according to the *halachah* of answering amen to a *brachah*, one should not answer to the *brachah* of a child who has not reached the age of *chinuch*, still, in order to be *mechanech* the child that amen needs to be answered to every *brachah*, the practice is to answer amen after even very young children. This is what the *Kehillos Yaakov* and *Divrei Yatziv* did (*Orchos Rabbeinu*, Vol. III, p. 223; *Darchei Halachah – Birchos Hanehenin*, 25).

Otzros Emunim

Answering Amen – The Foundation of Emunah

The Mitzvah of Amen to Strengthen Emunah

Rabbeinu Bechayei wrote that the *takanah* of Chazal to answer amen after the *brachos* was meant to strengthen a person's *emunah*, because the essence of answering amen is a declaration of *emunah* in the words of the *mevarech*. He wrote: "And because *emunah* is the fundamental of the entire Torah, Chazal instituted for us to answer amen to *tefillah* and *brachos*, as the word amen is derived from *emunah*, and as a term of admission, that he accepts the words of the *mevarech* [=emunah] and admits to them [=hoda'ah]."

Amen – The *Ikkar* of Emunah

The *Megaleh Amukos* (*Parashas V'eschanan*) adds that amen and *emunah* are connected to one another: The *passuk* says (*Yeshayah* 26:2): "*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim.*" The word is read "*emunim*" from the term "*emunah*," while the word is written אמנים – without the *vav*, like amen. This teaches us that the "*ikkar* of *emunah* depends on answering amen." The *Aruch Hashulchan* wrote (*Orach Chaim* 124 11): "And the *ikkar* of *emunah* depends on amen, and that is why he should teach his young children to be careful to answer amen."

Amen With All His Strength

The *Maharal* (*Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Ha'emunah* 1) explained that because answering amen is an expression of a person's *emunah*, and through it he can reach great levels in *emunah*, therefore Chazal said that a person should answer amen "with all his strength" (*Shabbos* 119b). Just like a person must grasp his *emunah* with all his strength, likewise, the answering of amen must be "with all his strength." "And when he answers amen, he cleaves to the One Whom he believes in – Hashem Yisbarach, and that is the essence of *emunah*..."

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

Thank you very much for your wonderful pamphlet, which helps us fulfill the words of the *zemer* each Shabbos: "*Hayom nechbad libney emunim.*" Thank you especially for the wonderful *chizuk* that you constantly provide and that we are all strengthened with.

My father-in-law was a *mispallel* at the *beis medrash* of Harav Eliyahu Roth, *zt"l*, the renowned *meshamesh* of Harav Shlomke of Zhvill, *zy"l*. He often said that Rav Eliyahu said that by answering amen we banish all the diseases from the house, and bring a full basket of *brachah* and success.

Recently, I thought of a beautiful *remez* for this: In the last *brachah* of *Shemoneh Esreh*, we say: "*Sim shalom tovah ubrachah verachamim aleinu.*" The first letters of טובה וברכה ורחמים עלינו are numerically equivalent to 91.

With a *tefillah* that Hashem should bestow good and blessing on all homes in Klal Yisrael from now and forever.

S.M.G.
Yerushalayim

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Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



Harav Yosef Leib Bloch,
Rosh Yeshiva of Telz

Mahari"l Bloch, Rosh Yeshivas Telz

7 Cheshvan 5690

Harav Yosef Yehudah Leib Bloch was born on 21 Shevat 5620 to his father, Rav Mordechai, in the city of Raseiniai, Lithuania. From an early age, he excelled in his character traits and special talents.

When he became bar mitzvah, he traveled

to Kelm to learn Torah from Harav Eliezer Gordon, who later took him as a son-in-law. In 5641, when his father-in-law was appointed Rav of Telz, he brought his son-in-law, Rav Yosef Yehudah Leib, with him to serve as a *maggid shiur* in the yeshiva that he had established there. In 5662, Rav Bloch was appointed Rav of Varna and established a yeshiva there.

In 5670 with the sudden passing of Rav Eliezer while visiting London for the yeshiva, the community of Telz decided that his son-in-law Rav Bloch was worthy of serving as the rav of the city and rosh yeshiva.

He passed away on 7 Cheshvan 5690, and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Telz.

Amen – Evidence of *Shleimus Hamiddos*

Chazal say (*Brachos* 53b): "The one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*." Many have asked about these words in the *Gemara*: Isn't answering amen an agreement to the *brachah*? Why then, is its value greater than the *brachah*?

Rav Yosef Leib explained: By nature, a person has difficulty estimating and recognizing a good deed that someone else does. Even a person who is very benevolent, does not easily learn to appreciate the good deeds that their friends do. And because the traits of a person's soul are manifested in his behavior, one who refrains from answering amen to a friend's *brachah* indicates that it's hard for him to appreciate his friend's action. On the other hand, one who answers amen after a friend's *brachah* indicates that he has acquired this wonderful trait of genuine appreciation for the action of another, because answering amen requires a special trait and virtue that is not needed to recite a *brachah*. That is why Chazal said that the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*. (*Shiurei Da'as*, New Edition Vol. II, p. 212.)