

# VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

## Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

### Daven With Compassion and Pleading

“ואבא היום אל העין ואמר ה' אלקי אדני אברהם אם ישך נא מצליח דרכי אשר אנכי הלך עליה” (כד מב)

**Harav Shlomo Yom Tov Pollak**, Av Beis Din of Landsberg-Brooklyn, explained:

When Eliezer describes what he has experienced to Rivka's family, he emphasizes that he did not insist in his request and prayer that Hashem should give him success and show him to Yitzchak's true *zivug*. But he pleaded and asked for compassion “*Im yeshcha na matzliach darki*,” and as *Onkelos* explained: “If there is a desire before You to grant me success.”

This fits in with the concept established by **Harav Nachman of Breslov** in *avodos hatefillah* (*Likutei Mohara*’n, Vol. I, 196): “A person must not stand on something specific, meaning it is forbidden for a person to insist in his *tefillah* that HaKadosh Baruch Hu should do this specific request for him, because it is like taking something forcefully, stealing. One should daven and plead to Hashem with pleas for compassion, that if Hashem will give then He will give, and if not, not. Mohara’n added that this is the intention of the Tanna who says (*Avos* 2:13): “*Al ta'as tefilascha keva* – do not make your *tefillah* habit, but rather *rachamim vesachanunim lifnei haMakom*.” The verb “קבע” can also be explained as coming from the root of *gezeilah*,

stealing (see *Mishlei* 22:23); do not insist in your *tefillah* that Hashem should grant you your request, because then it is like you are forcefully taking something from Him. Rather, daven in a way of “*rachamim vesachanunim lifnei haMakom*.”

*Shalmei Yom Tov*

### The Curse of Lavan Becomes a Brachah

“ויברכו את רבקה ויאמרו לה אחתנו את היי לאלפי רבבה ויירש זרעך את שנאיו” (כד ס)

There is a custom to *bentsch* the *kallah* after the *badeken* before she walks to the *chuppah* with the *brachah* of “*Achoseinu at heyi l'alfei revavah*,” (see *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 147 3). And this needs an explanation: Why was this lofty moment selected to be given a *brachah* that was uttered by Lavan?

The **Chasam Sofer** explained:

As is known, Rivka gave birth to two children, who were stark opposites, Yaakov and Eisav. When Lavan gave her a *brachah*: “*Achoseinu at heyi l'alfei revavah*,” he meant to bless the ‘unity’ element that he would have with her children, meaning the children of Eisav. In order to thwart his intentions, we give the *kallah* a *brachah* before the *chuppah*, but have different intentions when we say “*achoseinu*” – as we have in mind the unity between us - the descendants of Yaakov – should be blessed and become “*alfei revavah*.”

*Toras Moshe*

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### A Segulah for a Zivug

Answering amen is a mitzvah that is very beloved to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. It is no wonder then, that so many *segulos* have been attributed to it. I am moved time and again by letters that I receive from people detailing the various *yeshuos* they merited because they strengthened their observance of the mitzvah of amen.

About ten years ago, during the early years of Bney Emunim, I received a letter that touched me deeply, and which remains etched in my memory to this day. The letter was sent by a *bochur* who finally married after a number of years in *shidduchim*. He wrote:

“Just recently, after years of waiting, I had the *zechus*, *bechassei Hashem*, to establish my own Jewish home. It is a clear fact that the *shidduch* came to be three months after I took upon myself to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* each morning. As such, I feel a deep debt of gratitude to you, and therefore, as soon as I got a chance, I sat down to write this thank you letter.

“The reason I attribute my *yeshuah* to this *kabbalah* is not just a gut feeling; I received an affirmation of it from one of the prominent *rabbanim* in our generation, and he even gave me a sign and a *remez* for it: The Torah says about the creation of a woman (*Bereishis* 2:18), “*Lo tov heyos ha'adam levado, e'eseh lo ezer kenegdo*.” The acronym of אעשה עזר כנגדו... is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the same as amen. We can learn from this that being strict about answering amen is a *segulah* for finding his ‘*ezer kenegdo*.’”

It is not for naught that I chose to mention this *segulah* in this particular *parashah*.

The *parashah* describes the mission of Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, to find a wife for Yitzchak Avinu. We have found in many early *seforim* who learned many concepts in *shidduchim* from this *parashah*. It turns out that the principle that being strict about answering amen is a *segulah* for finding a *zivug hagun* is alluded to in this *parashah*:

The Torah relates that when Eliezer asked Avraham (24, 5-7): “Perhaps the woman will not want to come after me,” he replied, “Hashem Elokei Hashamayim, Who took me from my father's home and from the land of my birth...will send His angel ahead of you to take a woman for my son from there.” We notice something remarkable: In the words of the *brachah* of Avraham Avinu “שלה מלאכו” הוא ישלה מלאכו” the acronym is numerically equivalent to amen.

Another allusion, in conclusion: In the *piyut* of *Ish Chassid Hayah* on Motzaei Shabbos, we ask: “*Borei Olam bekinyan hashlem zeh habinyan*.” The acronym of “בורא עולם בקנין השלם זה הבנין” is numerically equivalent to amen. In addition, the acronym of the final letters of the words “בורא עולם בקנין” is the word אמן. So we have a double allusion that one who is strict to answer amen will merit to establish a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*.

It turns out that answering amen opens so many gates, as *Chazal* write (*Shabbos* 119b) from the words of the Navi (*Yeshayah* 22:2): “*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*” – “do not read it שמר אמנים but rather שאומרים אמן” is *mesugal* also for opening the gates of a good *zivug*.

**Good Shabbos**  
**Yaakov Dov Marmurstein**

### ———— Dovid Hamelech Was Revealed in Me'aras Hamachpelah ————

All her life, the mother of the *tzaddik*, Harav Tzvi Hirsh of Kaminka, one of the leading *talmidim* of the Baal Shem Tov, desired to move to Eretz Yisrael. But she could bring her deepest wishes to fruition because the journey was long and expensive, and she barely eked out a living as it was. She had no way to obtain such a huge sum of money.

One day, a poor gentile knocked at the woman's door wearing tattered clothes and heavy boots. He had a request: He had come to the town to beg for alms, but the sun had suddenly come out, and because of the heat, he could not walk with his heavy, warm boots. He preferred to walk barefoot in the streets than to walk with his boots, so he asked if he could leave his boots in the Rebbetzin's home until he returned.

The Rebbetzin agreed; the beggar placed his boots at the entrance to the

reached Eretz Yisrael in dire poverty. She needed a source of income, and because during her years in Kaminka she helped poor mothers during childbirth, she decided to spread the word in Eretz Yisrael that she was an expert midwife. *Bechasdei Hashem*, her name quickly became known.

One day, the evil sultan, who ruled Jerusalem on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, sent an urgent message to the heads of the community in Yerushalayim with a firm demand: The sultan's wife was experiencing terrible pain in childbirth, and her life was in danger. Because he had no doubt that the Chosen People could effect salvation for her, he was demanding that the Jewish community find a solution to her suffering. Otherwise, they would all be banished from the city immediately.

It was clear to all that the first address they needed to turn to was the Rebbetzin who was a midwife. The Rebbetzin heard the request and agreed. She offered a heartfelt *tefillah* to Hashem to help her save the residents of the city from this dangerous situation. Indeed, a short time after the Rebbetzin reached the palace, sounds of congratulations could be heard through the window. The sultan's wife had given birth to a boy.

The sultan was overjoyed and wanted to reward the Rebbetzin for saving the lives of his wife and newborn son. When she was asked what she wished to have as a reward, her answer was surprising: Please allow me to enter Me'aras Hamachpelah, to pray at the gravesites of our ancestors.

As per the order of the Ottoman Empire, entry to Mea'aras Hamachpelah was absolutely forbidden to Jews. The Muslims controlled the site, and made sure that no Jews were allowed access. But having no choice, the sultan agreed to grant the Rebbetzin a one-time entry. Right after the approval was given, a ruckus broke out in the sultan's palace. The ministers and advisors of the sultan could not bear the fact that the sultan had been compelled by a Jewish woman to transgress Ottoman law, and together with him, they came up with a plot. The guard at the cave would get an order that right after the Rebbetzin entered the cave, the gate would be locked behind her and she'd be left there to die of hunger and thirst.

The Rebbetzin hurried from the sultan's palace to set out for Chevron. She presented her unusual permit to the guard at the site. The guard, who had already been updated, allowed her to enter, and then complied with the rest of the sultan's orders. As the Rebbetzin stood immersed in her davening, he locked the gate and disappeared.

A few hours later, the Rebbetzin concluded her *tefillos*, and prepared to leave so that she could return home before dark. She groped her way up the darkened stairs, but when she reached the gate, she discovered, to her horror, that it was locked.

She tried to knock at the gate with her meager strength, and began to scream and cry, but was answered with horrific silence. It took a few moments for her to realize that a cruel trap had been laid for her, and that her life would end here, in this holiest of places.

The Rebbetzin mustered up the bit of energy she had and began to cry and plead with Hashem to have compassion on her and to save her from such a brutal death. She cried until she was sapped of strength and she slumped to the ground in a faint.

Suddenly, the Rebbetzin felt someone standing next to her. She opened her eyes and saw a venerable elderly person standing beside her. He was holding a parchment scroll in his hand. The older man spoke reassuringly and said, 'My daughter, do not be afraid; I am your ancestor, Dovid Melech Yisrael, and I will help you get out of here safely. But, because the evil person who sought to kill you will surely not be quiet when he will see you walking safely after your escape, right after I take you out of here, you need to board the first ship and return to your home in Kaminka.'

As he spoke, Dovid Hamelech handed her the *Sefer Tehillim* that he was holding as a *segulah* for protection, and in no time, the Rebbetzin found herself standing far from Chevron, the *Sefer Tehillim* still in her hand.

She hurried to travel to the port of Jaffa, and set sail to her hometown on the first ship that departed.

The story may never have become known, if not for the fact that a short time before the passing of her grandson, Harav Shmuel of Kaminka, he related this story about his righteous grandmother to those around him.

*Bais Shmuel*

[about Rav Shmuel of Kaminka] p. 40



house, and set off, barefoot.

When one day passed, and then another, and the gentile did not return to take his boots, the Rebbetzin decided them to put them away in the house until he would come to get them.

The summer passed and winter came; she almost forgot about the boots, until she came across them while cleaning for Pesach. She picked up the boots to move them to a different place, but the heavy boots slipped out of her hands, and fell to the floor. To her astonishment, they split open and she discovered that there was a stash of gold coins hidden inside the boots!

Now the Rebbetzin realized that the strange beggar was a messenger from Above to bring the sum of money she needed to finance her trip to Eretz Yisrael, her life's wish. Indeed, she went right away to purchase passage on a ship and set out on the difficult journey.

After an arduous journey, which exhausted all her money, the Rebbetzin



### A Woman Who Makes a Brachah on a Time-Conditioned Mitzvah

**If a woman makes a brachah on a mitzvas aseh that is contingent on time, even though she is exempt from this mitzvah, the listener is allowed to hear her brachah and answer amen, but is not obligated to do so. Some say it is an obligation to answer amen to her brachah.**

#### Sources and Explanations

The *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 589 6) differ as to whether women who makes brachos on the mitzvas aseh shehazman gerama; according to the *Shulchan Aruch* they should not make the brachah and according to the *Rema*, the custom is to recite a brachah. The *Pri Megadim* (*Orach Chaim* 124 *Eshel Avraham* 14) wrote that because according to the *Rema*, this brachah is not obligatory, answering amen after it is optional and not obligatory, and the *Mishnah Berurah* ruled this way as well (124 47). But *Shu"t Binyan Olam* (*Orach Chaim* 5) and *Shu"t Shevet Halevi* (Vol. X 45) both hold that even though women are not obligated to make brachos when they fulfill a time-conditioned mitzvah, once they do make a brachah, then one who hears is obligated to answer amen (and see more in *Shu"t Mishneh Halachos* Vol XVIII, 90).

### Amen After the Brachah of 'Al Mitzvas Tefillin'

**Some wrote that those who have a custom of saying a brachah on tefillin shel rosh should do so in a whisper so that the listener is not obligated to answer amen after it. But if it is recited aloud, then one should answer amen after it. And there is an opinion that in any case, one should not answer orally, and should think 'amen' in his heart.**

#### Sources and Explanations

The *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 25 5) differ regarding the brachah of tefillin: According to the *Shulchan Aruch*, one recites "*Lehaniach Tefillin*" on the *shel rosh* and

*shel yad* together. There is no special brachah for tefillin shel rosh. According to the *Rema*, one goes on to recite a special brachah on tefillin shel rosh, the brachah of "*Al Mitzvas Tefillin*." But the *Rema* added that after this brachah, the *mevarech* should say "*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso L'Olam Va'ed*," in the *din* of one who says a brachah levatalah (see *Orach Chaim* 206 6), because one should take into account the opinion of those who say not to recite this brachah (*Magen Avraham* 25 10. And see *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid* 21). In light of this, the *Pri Megadim* (*Eshel Avraham* *ibid* 10) questioned if the person who hears this brachah should answer amen after it, because it is a safek brachah levatalah, and one must not answer amen to a brachah levatalah (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 215 4). As such, the *Shu"t Rama"tz* (6 6) was mechadesh that one should recite this brachah in a whisper, so that his friend should not hear it and have question about answering amen. The *Rama"tz* concluded: "And shelo kein, a few people make this brachah out loud and it is correct to warn them about this." The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* ruled this way (10:4), and likewise it is brought that the *Chozeh of Lublin* (*Ohel Harabi, Ohr Haniflaos* 42) also had this practice. But in the *Shu"t Ha'alef Lecha Shlomo* (57), he wrote that there is no doubt that one needs to answer amen to the brachah of tefillin shel rosh, and it is not similar to one who makes a brachah that is not needed. Because the *mevarech* did not act appropriately and the one who answers after him is considered to be supporting those who transgress a sin.

It is also brought in the name of *Rav Avraham of Chechanov* (*Siddur Tzelosa D'Avraham* Vol. I, p. 31) and in the name of the *Minchas Elazar of Munkacz* (*Darkei Chaim Veshalom* 47). The *sefer Zohar Chai* (*Vayigash* 205 1) sharply rejects those who have the custom of making the brachah "*Al Mitzvas Tefillin*" in a whisper and wrote "and I saw some senseless people reciting this brachah in a whisper, so no one should answer amen after them, and this is foolishness..."

But the *poskim* wrote that even according to those who think that this brachah should be said in a whisper, if a person made the brachah aloud, the one who hears has to answer amen after him (*Misgeres Hashulchan* on *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* *ibid*; *Mishnas Hatefillin* p. 245 in the name of *Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv*). But the *Kaf Hachaim* (*Orach Chaim* 25 40) wrote that one who hears this brachah should not verbalize an amen, and rather, should think it in his heart.

### Gadol Ha'oneh

#### Words of Chizuk in the Name of Those Who Said Them

Answering amen, aside for being an important mitzvah and an important component of tefillah, has many segulos, and protects a person from troubles. In order to explain the tremendous strength concealed in answering amen, let us first explain a passuk in the parashah.

The Torah says (*Bereishis* 24:22) that when Eliezer met Rivka at the well, he gave her two gold bracelets weighing ten gold pieces. *Rashi* there cites the words of *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 60 6) that this gift was given to Rivka to correspond to the two luchos habris, in which the *Aseres Hadibros* are written. These words

of *Chazal* contain a deep concept. By giving her two bracelets, Eliezer made it clear to Rivka that Avraham Avinu was very wealthy, however, his wealth was not manifested by money, but rather by spiritual things. She had to know that she would be entering a home where there was nothing aside for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos. Eliezer had learned from Avraham Avinu that there is no 'Olam Hazehe,' and all the abundance and blessings that a person merits are in order to help him earn *Olam Haba!*

That is the purpose of every person, and that is also the explanation of the great

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Rosh Yeshivas Ponevezh



segulah of answering a m e n : When we say amen, we declare that there is nothing in our world aside for HaKadosh Baruch Hu – ein od Milvado! And that is the purpose of the creation of every being. And when a person recognizes, through answering amen, Who granted him so much blessing, then he is deserving of all brachos.

*Kinus Bney Emunim Av 5776*

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

## Otzros Emunim

Answering Amen – The Foundation of Emunah

### A Ma'amin Must Answer Amen with Kavanah

In his *sefer Kad Hakemach (Emunah)*, Rabbeinu Bechayei writes very strong words about the obligation of one who is a *ma'amin* to be strict about answering amen, and he wrote: "A person must be careful with *tefillah* and *brachos* to answer amen after them, as the word is derived from the term '*emunah*.' And anyone whose ancestors stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah, which is called *emunah*, and he is a descendant of Avraham Avinu, who is the *rosh emunah*, as it says (*Bereishis* 15:6): '*Vehe'emin bah*,' must focus his heart and mind to answer amen. It should not happen that the *shaliach tzibbur* says the *brachos*, and he, like a deaf person does not hear, and like a mute person does not open his mouth, or is talking with his friend as if he was in the streets of the town, as is the practice of some people in our nation, who are very lax about this."

### Amen Is Testimony to Emunah

Regarding the words of the *Gemara (Shabbos* 119b): "What is amen? Rabi Chanina says: *K-l Melech Ne'eman*." *Rashi* explains (*ibid ad loc. 'K-l'*): "This is how he testifies of his Creator, that He is the *K-l Melech Ne'eman*." So we find that by answering amen a person declares and testifies to his faith in the existence of Hashem, and His Kingship. Thus wrote Rav Yaakov Emden in his *sefer Sulam Beis K-l* (printed at the beginning of *Siddur Bais Yaakov*, p. 6), that the *kavanah* of answering amen is "sealing and validating the matter, to believe in Him with *emunah sheleimah*, the *emunah* of *omen*, that it is true that *Baruch Hu uBaruch Shemo uBaruch Ta'amo*, because the Source of life is with Him, as are the *brachos* of *Shamayim*, and it is sealed with the ring of the King..." A person who feels this way waits with anticipation for every opportunity to answer amen, because *emunah* is the basis and fundamental of the work of a person in this world, and it is the purpose of everything.

With this we can also understand what the early *mussar sefer Derech Moshe* (Day 11) wrote: Amen is an acronym for *אני מוסר נפשי*, and he wrote that "each person in Yisrael is obligated to be *moser nefesh* to answer amen." Answering amen is one of the fundamentals of the *emunah* of Am Yisrael, and a person is obligated for *emunah* to be *moser nefesh (Notrei Amen, Vol. I, p. 33)*.

## Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

In your *Succos* pamphlet, in his beautiful segment, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein expounded on the connection between the mitzvah of sukkah and the mitzvah of answering amen.

Thank you for all the wonderful things that added content and depth to both *mitzvos* together. Throughout the year, we have the *zechus* to be strict about answering amen, but this year, during *Succos*, we had a redoubled awareness that made us even stricter about doing so.

I would also like to add a wonderful idea that I had that might be effective for this coming year. On *Simchas Torah*, we all merit to be *oleh* to the Torah, and each one of the *olim* merits to recite two *brachos* – before the reading and after. As such, it is possible for every Yid to accumulate ninety amens for *brachos* without making a special effort.

You often cite the method of the Rema MiPano (*Shu"t* 109) brought by the *Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim* 6 9) that a person has to answer ninety amens on *brachos* each day, aside for the amens that have to be answered when hearing *Kaddish*. *Simchas Torah* is special in the fact that it is possible in the regular schedule of a person to easily accumulate ninety amens for *brachos*.

With this practice, we conclude the days of the *Yamim Tovim* of *Tishrei*, which begin the new year, by being strict to answer amen. It is possible that this is one of the intentions of this *minhag*, and it is not for naught that we conclude the subsequent "*Reshus Lechassan Bereishis*" with the words "*Amen, ya'anu acharecha hakol meheirah*."

With deep respect,  
Yehuda Leib Goldman, Beit Shemesh

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## Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



An alley in the Jewish Quarter of Girona, Spain.

### Rabbeinu Yona Girundi

28 Cheshvan 5024

Hachassid Rabbeinu Yona Girundi, the son of Reb Avraham Girundi, one of the leading *Rishonim* in Spain, was born around the year 4970.

As a youth he learned from the sages of France and Provence. In France, he was influenced by the *derech halimud* of the *Baalei Hatosafos*, and from the *mussar shittos* of the '*chassidei Ashkenaz*.' He

primarily learned under Rabi Shlomo Min Hahar. He was in close contact with his cousin and contemporary, the Ramban, and later became his *mechutan*, when Rav Shlomo, son of the Ramban, married the daughter of Rabbeinu Yona.

Rabbeinu Yona was known for his *yiras Shamayim* and *chassidus*, and as such, was known as '*hachassid*.' He became most renowned through his well-known works, such as *Shaarei Teshuvah*, *Aliyos D'Rabbeinu Yona* on *Bava Basra* and more. He was *marbitz Torah* and established *yeshivos*, first in Girona and later in Barcelona.

He passed away in Toledo on 28 Cheshvan 5024 and was buried there.

### Double Reward for Answering Amen

Rabbeinu Yona wrote in *Iggeres Hateshuvah* (9) about the virtue of answering amen after *Chazaras Hashatz*:

"And when the *shaliach tzibbur* repeats the prayer, one is obligated to answer amen to each and every *brachah*. And he should concentrate on each *brachah* so that he should know which *brachah* he is answering amen to, and this gives him double reward, and it is considered as though he prayed two times, one after the other. *Chazal* say in the *Midrash* (see *Midrash Tehillim* 27) that if you prayed and did not have *kavanah* in your heart, and then you repeat your prayer, you will be informed that your *tefillah* is heard." (*Iggeres Hateshuvah* 9)

### Answering Amen Slowly

One should be careful to answer amen slowly and not to utter it hastily, because Rabbeinu Yona explained (*Brachos* 35a, *Midapei HaRif*) the words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 47a): "When one answers an amen *chatufah*, his days *yischatfu*, – '*chatufah*' means grabbing a word and saying it very quickly."