

Ve chol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

The Tefillah That Resolved the Doubts

“ויתרצנו הבנים בקרבה ותאמר אם כן למה זה אנכי ותלך לדרש את ה'; ויאמר ה' לה שני גוים בבטןך ושני לאמים ממעיך יפרדו” (כה כב-כג)

The **Ramban** explained that the word ‘*lidrosh*’ is explained as *tefillah*, as the *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 34:5): “*Darashti es Hashem v'anani.*”

The **Ksav Sofer** explained that Rivka had a very deep *kavanah* when she went to daven:

When Rivka felt the sons wrestling inside her, both when she passed “the entrances of Torah of Shem and Ever” and when she passed “the entrances of *avodah zarah*” (*Rashi*) she had a doubt in her heart: Were there really two sons inside her whose natures were essentially different, with one being a wicked person who sought to serve *avodah zarah* and the second a *tzaddik* who wanted to dwell in the *bais medrah*? If that was the case, at least she would find comfort in her righteous son. However, perhaps there was only one child, and because he did not have *Yiras Hashem* in his heart, and his purpose was only to boast, then immediately when he emerged from the *bais medrash* he would run to this world and its temptations. When she thought about this possibility, she cried, “If so, *lamah zeh anochi?!?*” As **Chazal** say (*Yerushalmi Brachos* 1 2) “One who learns with no intention to do would be better off not having been created.”

In order to clarify this, she went “*lidrosh es Hashem*” – to daven in the shul, saying, if also when I go daven I will feel that the child is wrestling to emerge, that is a sign that indeed there are two children inside me, because if it would have been only one son learning for show, then what does he need *tefillah* for?! Indeed, when she went in to daven and still felt one wrestling to come out, she understood that there are “two nations within you,” and she calmed down.

Shu"t Ksav Sofer, Introduction to *Chelek, Orach Chaim*

Yitzchak Loved Eisav for the Benefit of Yisrael

“ויהאב יצחק את עשו כי ציד בפיו ורבקה אהבת את יעקב” (כה כח)

Many have asked: Is it possible that a *tzaddik* like Yitzchak should love his son only because he gave him to eat from what he hunted?

The Rebbe **Harav Meshulam Feivish of Bradshin**, the grandson of the author of *Yosher Divrei Emes*, explained the meaning of this *passuk* based on the custom of his Rebbe, the Be'er Mayim Chaim:

The Be'er Mayim Chaim had a son who strayed from the straight and narrow path, and did not conduct himself in a way that befit his prestigious lineage. Still, his great and compassionate father drew him close, and supported him, and provided for all his needs. Each morning, the Be'er Chaim Chaim davened for Am Yisrael with a request: “*Ribbono shel Olam*, look please at the good and compassion that I give my son, even though he is not following the right path. And I am only a human, and how much more so You are our Compassionate Father Who is a *tov umeitiv verav chessed*, surely it is fitting that You should treat Your children with goodness and *chesed*, even when *chas veshalom* they do not do what You want...”

From here, we can explain that this was the reason for Yitzchak's love to Eisav: “*Ki tzayid befiv*” – so that he would have this claim and *limud zechus* on Am Yisrael if they *chalilah* would sin. When he would say to Hashem: If I, a human being, can forgive my son and love him despite his sins, how much more so You – the Master of compassion and forgiveness. Indeed, **Chazal** said (*Shabbos* 89b), *l'asid lavo*, when Hashem will turn to each one of the Avos and tell them “your sons have sinned,” only Yitzchak will be *melamed zechus* on them.

[*Divrei Meir* | Bardejov 5669

Pischu Shearim Open the Gates

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Amen with ‘Kol Yaakov’

The power of *tefillah* is what has always made Am Yisrael unique. As the *passuk* says (*Devarim* 4:7): “*Ki mi goy gadol asher lo Elokim kerovim Eilav k'Hashem Elokeinu bechol kera'einu Eilav*, For who is a great nation that has G-d close to it as is Hashem, Elokeinu, whenever we call to Him?”

If we peruse this *parashah* we will discover that this difference was apparent already in the times of the holy Avos.

Yitzchak Avinu expresses surprise to Yaakov his son (*Bereishis* 27:22): “*Hakol kol Yaakov vehayadayim yedei Eisav.*” In other words, even though externally, Yaakov Avinu was able to disguise himself as Eisav, his inner essence is manifested by the way he spoke, and he could not conceal that. **Chazal** (*Gittin* 57b) say that Yitzchak's words contained a prophecy for generations: the uniqueness of the descendants of Yaakov will be the “*Kol Yaakov*” – the voice of *tefillah*.

We also read in the *haftarah* of *Lech Lecha* the promise of Yeshayahu Hanavi (41:14): “Do not fear, worm of Yaakov... I have helped you, Hashem says.” The *Rada"k* cites the *Midrash* there, and says just like the worm's power is in the mouth, so, too Am Yisrael's power is in their mouth – the power of *tefillah*!

I would also like to add, and emphasize, that a central part of the power of the “*kol Yaakov*” is answering amen. Proof of this are the words of the early sages that the name “יעקב” is numerically equivalent to twice אמן. Likewise, the *Kli Yakar* at the beginning of this *parashah* says that the name alludes to the fact that he was strict about things that others tend to grind with their heel, so to speak. (Yaakov comes from *eikev*, heel.) So we find that the prophecy of “*Hakol kol Yaakov*” places special emphasis on the answering amen that is heard in the shuls.

We can even add another dimension, based on the emphasis of **Chazal** (*Shabbos* 119b) that the אמן needs to be answered “*bechol kocho*” with all his strength, and **Tosafos** says this means ‘in a raised voice.’ Perhaps this means that this mitzvah symbolizes the “*kol Yaakov*” and therefore it needs to be answered aloud, proudly. As the descendants of Yaakov, we must see *tefillah* in general, and amen in particular, as a central part of our lives, and based on that, to be strict about them accordingly.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The Brachah That Overturned His Existence

Last winter, Reb Avigdor, a scholarly and well-respected Yid, fell ill with the flu. As a result, he suffered severe shortness of breath, and he needed to be hospitalized in a facility in central Israel for observation and some rest.

Reb Avigdor was not alarmed, because he knew that it was a relatively mild illness, and *b'ezras Hashem*, with the help of the treatment, it would pass within a few days. He used his time in the hospital to rest, review his learning and to help patients around him.

Reb Avigdor's condition improved rapidly, and on the third day of his hospitalization he felt well enough to return home. He went over to the doctor in charge of the ward and asked if he could be discharged, but the doctor refused, for some reason. "You



must stay here for observation at least until tomorrow morning," he declared.

Reb Avigdor tried to plead and argue; as a very active person, the hospitalization was a strain for him, and he longed to return home to his routine. He explained to the doctor that he felt perfectly healthy and there was no reason to keep him in the hospital; but his pleas did not help. For an inexplicable reason, the doctor was insistent that according to regulations he needed to stay at the very least until the next morning no matter what.

Reb Avigdor had no choice but to stay in the hospital against his will. The next morning, he rose early, and immediately went to do the series of tests needed as part of his discharge. After the doctors' rounds, the doctor in charge signed his discharge, and Reb Avigdor felt like he had been released from prison. He hurriedly took his things and set out for home.

Before leaving the ward, he had to recite *Asher Yatzar*. Reb Avigdor was very scrupulous about saying *brachos* aloud and with *kavanah*. After washing his hands, he stood across from a small sign hanging over the sink, and began to recite *Asher Yatzar* slowly. Naturally, in his situation, he had even more *kavanah*, and as he said the *brachah* he pondered the myriad *chassadim* of Hashem manifested by the normal function of the body's systems.

While saying the *brachah*, Reb Avigdor sensed that someone was standing behind him and observing him. He hoped that as soon as he finished, the other person would answer amen. But to his surprise, instead of amen, he heard the echo of the other man's footsteps receding.

Reb Avigdor turned around to see who had listened to his *brachah*, and he was surprised to see that it was one of the staff members on the ward, a doctor with a clear Arab appearance, named Dr. Youssef.

This made him very curious; he could not fathom what had made the Arab doctor so curious about the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, and he decided to ask the doctor what it was about. He hurried after the man, but the doctor seemed

displeased by this and picked up his pace to widen the gap between them.

But Reb Avigdor did not want to give up. After a quick 'pursuit' he stopped the doctor and asked him directly: "I saw that you are interested in my *brachos*," Reb Avigdor said to the doctor. "I'm curious to know why."

At first, the doctor tried to be evasive; he was clearly in a state of heightened emotion. But Reb Avigdor pressed and urged the doctor to tell him why he was interested; the man finally gave in, and related the following unbelievable story.

"I'm an Arab, as you surely have noticed. When I saw you going over to the sink and washing your hands, and reading the text that you called *Asher Yatzar* from the sign, I suddenly remembered a distant memory from my childhood. I remembered that my elderly grandmother used to do the exact same thing. Each day, she stood

up a few times and read something from a paper hanging on the wall in her kitchen. That is why I stood next to you and listened quietly until you finished."

"Your grandmother??" This time it was Reb Avidgor's turn to shiver. "Where does she live?" he asked.

"Near my parents' house in one of the mixed cities in the center of the country," the doctor replied. "And for many years now, she's been living in the cemetery..."

"From which side was this grandmother?" Reb Avigdor asked carefully.

"What do you mean?" the doctor was puzzled. "She was my mother's mother."

Reb Avigdor felt faint. "You are a Jew!" he cried excitedly and felt an urge to hug the other man, but naturally, the other man recoiled and did not know what he was talking about.

"In Judaism, lineage is determined by the mother," Reb Avigdor explained. "If your mother's mother recited *Asher Yatzar*, it's likely she was Jewish, and if so, your mother is also Jewish, and so are you. You, Dr. Youssef, are actually Yosef Hatzaddik, assimilated among the non-Jews."

The doctor was stunned; he needed some time to make some inquiries, and then to digest the fact that landed on him like a thunderbolt. He asked for Reb Avigdor's contact information, and later reached out to him; he slowly began the long process of returning to his roots.

"If that doctor would not have insisted on keeping me in the ward until the morning," Reb Avigdor told his friends after sharing this story, "and if I would not be strict about making *brachos* with *kavanah*, from the text, and if that doctor's grandmother would not have been strict about the same thing, then it's possible that this distant Jewish soul would have never found its way back to its roots."

This story, related by the maggid Rav Yaakov Shayish, *shlita*, teaches us that aside for the obligation to recite each *brachah* properly, when we do this in public, we cause an awakening among those around us, to the extent that it can return a Jewish soul to its source.

Answering Amen to the *Brachos* of a *Kattan*

1. Children who review the *nusach* of *brachos* in order to learn them are allowed to mention the Name of Hashem in their *brachos*. However, we do not answer amen after them, because their intention is to learn, not to make *brachos*.

Sources and Explanations

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 215 3) and *Mishnah Berurah* (ibid s"k 13-14). The *Even Ha'ezel* (*Brachos* 1 15) extrapolated from the words of the *Rambam* (ibid) that although there is no obligation to answer amen after children who are learning the *nusach* of *brachos*, one who wants to answer amen may do so. But *sefer Notrei Amen* (Vol. II, p. 117) wrote that from the fact that the *Biur HaGra* (ibid 4) compared this *din* to the one of answering amen after a *brachah she'einah tzrichah*, it seems that reviewing the *nusach* of the *brachos* has the same *din* as a *brachah* that is not necessary, after which is it forbidden to answer amen.

2. One who hears a worthy *brachah* from a child who has reached the age of *chinuch*, such as the *brachos* of *tefillah*, *birchos hamitzvos* and *birchos hanehenin* – should answer amen after them. Some hold that even when a child has not reached the age of *chinuch*, if he knows how to make a *brachah* – one should answer amen after it.

Sources and Explanations

The *Shulchan Aruch* (215 3) wrote: "One does not answer amen after a child, especially at the time when he is learning *brachos* from his *rebbe*, but when they make a *brachah* to be *yotzei* for themselves, because they are *bnei chinuch* we answer amen after them." From these words, the *Pri Migadim* (*Rosh Yosef*, *Brachos* 53b; cited in *Mishnah Berurah* 215 17) notes that one answers amen only after the *brachah* of a *kattan* that has reached the age of *chinuch*, but when a child has not yet reached that age, we do not answer amen after his *brachah*. The *Piskei Teshuvos* (215 8) cited the *Shu"t Yabia Omer* (Vol. VIII, 25 8) that the age of *chinuch* for answering amen to *brachos* is when the child who makes the *brachah* understands to Whom we daven and make *brachos*. A child can reach this understanding from age five and up, in accordance with his level of understanding and knowledge. But Harav Y. Neuwirth, in his *sefer Chinuch Habanim Lemitzvos* (21) wrote that when a child knows to make the *brachah* himself, without being helped, then he has reached the age of *chinuch* for *brachos*, and one should answer amen after his *brachos*.

But *Shu"t Even Yisrael* (Vol. VIII, 14) wrote that as long as the child knows how to say the words of the *brachah*, even if he is only three years old, then that is the age of *chinuch* for *brachos*, and one should answer amen after his *brachos*. *Sefer Darchei Halachah* (*Birchos Hanehenin* 25) clarified that one must answer amen to *brachos* of a *kattan* of all ages, from the words of the Ben Ish Chai (*Masei* 16) who wrote: "And when children make *brachos* – a person must answer amen after them," and he did not condition it that the children should be the age of *chinuch*.

Gadol Ha'oneh

Words of Chizuk in the Name of Those Who Said Them

The words of *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 119b) are well known: "Reish Lakish said: Anyone who answers amen with all his strength – has the gates of Gan Eden opened to him, as it says (*Yeshayah* 26:2): '*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik* שמר אמנים.' Do not read it שמר אמנים but rather שאומרים אמנים." *Chazal* emphasize the importance of answering amen, which has the power to open the gates of Gan Eden, and the holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) even added to this that not only are the gates of Gan Eden opened, but all the gates of *brachah* are opened wide to the one who answers amen with all his strength.

If so, as noted, answering amen opens all the gates, and if we are used to always asking on Motzai Shabbos from HaKadosh Baruch Hu to open for us the "gates of *rachamim*, the gates of *ratzon*, the gates of *geulah*..." and

so forth, then surely we should rejoice with these wonderful words of *Chazal*, that reveal to us that the key to all those gates that we so long to walk through are contained in one word – amen!

From here to another point that is related to the above:

Reciting *Birchos Hashachar* together is an ancient *minhag* that used to be widespread among Jewish communities, and is often mentioned in the works of the *poskim*. It seems that in the *chinuch* of this mitzvah has a big role in helping to convey the value of answering amen among the students.

In *Birchos Hashachar*, there is a special virtue in the fact that it is a series of *brachos* through which each and every person can give his friend the merit of answering many amens. This is aside for

the virtue that the *mevarech* himself

has, because he merits through this to say the *brachah* more slowly and with more concentration. This is in addition to the fact brought down in *seforim* that answering amen adds strength and fulfillment to the *brachah*.

Those who are involved in *chinuch* of young children can mold the future character of the young generation on this subject. Therefore, every principal should try to infuse in the hearts of teachers and *mechanchim* the importance for them to convey to their students the virtues of answering amen.

From his words at a forum of principals –
Chanukah 5773



Harav Shmuel Eliezer Stern, *shlit'a*
Gaavad of West Bnei Brak

Otzros Emunim

Answering Amen – The Foundation of Emunah

Declaration of *Emunah* in the Principles of Faith

The Mashgiach, Harav Shlomo Wolbe (*Alei Shur*, Vol. II, Ch. 16) wrote: All thirteen of the Principles of Faith that the Rambam listed are contained in the three main *ikrim*, upon which all our *tefillos* are based. They are the three times of the revelation of the Creator: *Briyas Ha'olam*, the giving of the Torah and the future *Geulah*.

Answering amen is a “small act of *avodah*, that includes the *emunah* in these three revelations.” Because *Chazal* said that amen is an acronym for “א-ל מלך נאמן” – the Name K-I expresses the *middah* of *chessed* as it says (*Tehillim* 52:3) “*Chessed K-I kol hayom*,” and the world was created with *chessed*, as it says (*ibid* 89:3) “*Olam chessed yibaneh*.” So we find that mentioning it is a declaration of our faith in the Creation of the world. Hashem was called “Melech” at the time of Mattan Torah, when the nation accepted the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*. Ne’eman is the declaration that Hashem is faithful to His promise to bring the redemption and to bring the dead back to life, and about the fact that we are awaiting that. The Mashgiach concluded with a resounding message: “So by answering amen, we hear the resonation of all three of the revelations... Have you ever felt when you said ‘amen’ the tremendous significance and meaning of this small word?!”

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Dear Bney Emunim!

We wanted to share with you a moving story that happened to our daughter – a miracle that we merited – and we feel that it was in the merit of being careful about answering amen.

Our eleven-year-old daughter is very strict not to make a *brachah* unless there is someone to complete it with amen, a practice she took on due to your extensive work in schools.

A number of months ago, a few days before Pesach, she left the house to go shopping. A few minutes after she went out, we heard the screech of brakes, and then a chilling silence. We dashed downstairs, and to our relief, while we were still in the building, our child ran towards us, sobbing hysterically.

When we reached the street, we saw the magnitude of the miracle: A bus stood near the crosswalk in front of our home; it had hit a little girl. The driver was pale and panicking, not grasping understanding how it was possible that after the blow she had sustained, the child had stood up and ran into the building.

We went upstairs to prepare to go to the emergency room with our child, to ensure she had not sustained an internal injury. We gave her a cup of water, and when she made the *brachah*, loud and clear as she always did so we could say amen, we realized the merit that had granted her this miracle.

At the *seudas hoda'ah*, one of the uncles spoke about the many miracles that those who answer amen merit. He added that amen is an acronym for *אין מספר*.

May you be blessed for your work,
The T. Family,
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 Yahrtzeit



The headstone of the Maharsha in the cemetery in Ostroh, Ukraine.

The Maharsha 5 Kislev 5392

Harav Shmuel Eliezer Eidel's, the Maharsha, was born to Rav Yehudah Halevi in 5315 in the city of Kazimierz, near Krakow in Poland, and was known as an *illuy* already as a child.

He married the daughter of the wealthy Mrs. Eidel Lipschitz.

For about twenty years, his mother-in-law supported him and the yeshivah he established in Posna, and that enabled him to learn and teach Torah. In gratitude, the Rav would sign his name ‘Shmuel Eidel’s.’ After her passing, he became Rav in various communities, until he was asked to serve as Rav and Rosh Yeshivah in Ostroh, Ukraine.

The Maharsha authored two works on Shas: *Chiddushei Halachos*, which explains the halachic part of the *Talmud Bavli*, and *Chiddushei Aggados*, explaining the *aggados* of the Talmud. These works were integrated with one another in the order of the *Gemara*, and became a fundamental commentary in the study of the Talmud.

He passed away in Ostroh on 5 Kislev 5392, and was laid to rest in the cemetery in the city.

All the Gates Open for One Who Answers Amen

Chazal say (*Shabbos* 119b): “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him.” The Maharsha (Vol. I, *ibid*) elucidated from the fact that the *Gemara* writes the “gates” of Gan Eden, in the plural, that one who answers amen has the gates to all the levels of Gan Eden opened for him, not only the special section that he deserves. For all the *mitzvos* that he does, a person merits a special level in Gan Eden, based on his deeds, as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 152a): “Every single *tzaddik* is given a level based on his level of respect.” But one who fulfills the *mitzvah* of answering amen with all his strength is an exception, as all the gates of all the levels of Gan Eden are opened to him, even if he is not worthy of receiving

that based on his deeds.

Wait to Answer Amen According to *Halachah*

The opening of the gates of Gan Eden for someone who answers amen with all his strength is explained by *Chazal* from the *passuk* (*Yeshayah* 26:2): “*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik* שמר שמר אמנים.’ Do not read it שמר שמר אמנים but rather שאומרים אמן.” The Maharsha explained that the word שמר is explained as waiting (see *Rashi Yeshayah* *ibid*). Each time a person hears a *brachah*, he must wait and hear which *brachah* it is so that he can answer amen after it, as per the *halachah*. Because *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 47a, based on *Rashi* there *ad loc. yesomah*) that when answers amen after a *brachah* without knowing which *brachah* it is, that is considered an amen *yesomah*, an orphaned amen, which should be avoided.