

Vechele Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"

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ת.ד 102 בני ברק
פקס: 03-5055919
9139191@gmail.com

Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Pischu Shearim

Open the Gates

The Tone of the Words Is Decisive

“ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר בי אדני ידבר נא עבדך דבר באזני אדני ואל יחר אפך בעבדך כי כמוך כפרעה” (מד יח)

Why did Yehuda begin his words with the request of “*yedaber na avdecha*, let your servant speak a word in my master’s ears...” Who was he speaking to until now that he asked to be allowed to speak?

The **Dubno Maggid** explained:

Until this point, the conversation with Yosef took place through a translator (*Rashi* ibid 22:23), but now, he wanted to include threats in his words, and due to the honor of the royalty, he could not say them explicitly. Instead, he had to cloak them in the tone of his words. It is only possible to discern the tone of the words when someone hears the voice of the speaker, and picks up on the tune and tone with which the words are said. Therefore, Yehuda asked to speak directly to Yosef, because he knew that that was the only way Yosef would understand the implicit message of Yehuda’s words.

This concept is the basis of the directive of the *Mishnah* (*Avos* 2:13): “And when you pray, do not make your *tefillah* rote, but rather pleas for compassion before HaKadosh Baruch Hu.” A ‘*tefillas keva*’ that is not said in a pleading tone (*Brachos* 29b) indicates the pride and boastfulness of the *mispallel*, who is convinced that he is asking for what is coming to him. In contrast, *tefillah* that is said in a pleading tone indicates the humility of the one who is praying, because, understanding that he is deserving of nothing, he is asking for nothing but a *matnas chinam*, a pure gift.

Ohel Yaakov

A Say Only for One Who Recognizes His Lowly Value

“ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר בי אדני ידבר

נא עבדך דבר באזני אדני ואל יחר אפך בעבדך כי כמוך כפרעה” (מד יח)

Rashi explained that this is what Yehuda said to Yosef: Although I am standing and speaking to you harshly, please do not be angry with me, “*ki kamocha kePharaoh*” – that you are important in my eyes like a king. But if so, then on the contrary, specifically because Yosef was important to him like a king, shouldn’t he have spoken to him with respect and fear?

Harav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, the Rav of Krakow, explained that this is what Yehuda said to Yosef: When a simple person mocks a lofty, respected person, the latter will pay no attention to his words. You as well – because you are as important as Pharaoh, you should not be angry when a simple person like me speaks to you harshly. When we come to daven and ask Hashem for our needs, likewise, although we often stumble, unfortunately, and are offensive to Kavod Shamayim, we can defend ourselves with this claim. Because what is our status compared to the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, that we should be taken to task for the sin of offending Malchus Shamayim?!

And because this claim can only be used by someone who indeed, recognizes his own minimal value, *Chazal* have instructed us (*Brachos* 10b): “A person should not stand in a high place to daven, but rather he should daven in a low place” – because only one who is standing “in a low place,” meaning that he recognizes his minimal value, can defend himself and say that his deeds are not considered a violation of Kavod Shamayim. This idea is what *Chazal* referred to (*Bereishis Rabbah* 93 6) when they explained the words of the *passuk* “*Vayigash*” – he approached for *tefillah*, because from the words of Yehuda to Yosef we can learn how one should approach *tefillah*.

Chiddushei Rabbeinu Yosef Nechemiah

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Answering Amen in the ‘Years of Plenty’

In this *parashah*, there is a description of the seven difficult years of famine that came upon Egypt after the seven years of plenty. Indeed, these were difficult years, but they could have been much harder if Yosef Hatzaddik had not been in charge of preparing for them during the years of plenty.

Anyone who knows that in the near future, years of famine might be coming, understands that he must prepare for them and stockpile food. Still, in order to prepare properly, there needed to be a wise man like Yosef to take charge of the situation, because that is the way of the world. When a person is basking in abundance, he does not worry sufficiently for his future. In the years of plenty, the Egyptians were ‘drowning’ so to speak in such an abundance of crops, and although they knew that the party would soon be coming to an end, and a great famine would come, they were not sufficiently prepared. That is because a regular person pays attention to the present, and pushes off what is in the future; only a wise person can see the future as a tangible thing, and as *Chazal* say (*Avos* 4 1): “Who is the wise man? He who sees what is going to be.”

Egypt had the abundance, but they needed a ‘wise man’ like Yosef to get themselves properly organized for the famine.

Each person needs to have a similar sentiment with regard to answering amen in this world. His days in this world are like the ‘years of plenty,’ while the days of Olam Haba, when he cannot add to his merits, are similar to the ‘years of amine.’ Each and every day, he is presented with countless opportunities to accumulate amens, which will open the gates of Gan Eden for him, and will accompany him through the ‘years of famine,’ – in Olam Haba. Will we be wise enough to take advantage of this?!

The *Mishnah* tells us about this (*Avos* ibid 16): “Rabi Yaakov says: This world is compared to a corridor before Olam Haba; prepare yourselves in the corridor so that you can enter the banquet hall.”

A wise person who sees what is coming in the future will prepare himself in the corridor, and will amass many amens for himself. Because in the ‘years of famine,’ in Olam Haba, even if he pays millions to answer just one more amen, nothing will help him. Then, he will long for the days of his life, and he will berate himself: ‘Why didn’t I grab some more merits for myself?!’

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The Tefillos Offered Ten Years of Protection

This amazing story that illustrates the power of tefillah was related by Harav Yitzchak Silberstein, shlita; one of those who were present put it down in writing and sent it to us so the public can benefit:

It was morning in one of the shuls in Manhattan. Davening was just over and the *mispallelim* had mostly left the shul, on their way to learn or to work. When the shul was almost empty, Reb Menashe stood up from his place; this was his time. He looked around, and quickly found what he was looking for – a middle-aged man with a dignified appearance, standing in the corner of his shul and rolling up his *tefillin* calmly, as if he had nowhere pressing to go.

For years, Reb Menashe, a Yid with



Central Park, the famous park in Manhattan

a warm, compassionate heart, had acquired a regular practice of making sure that in the shul where he davened, there would be no “transparent” people, in other words, guests that no one paid attention to. He took it upon himself to make sure that they had what they needed, whether it was a place to stay or food, or anything else.

As is known, Manhattan draws thousands of Jews each year seeking care in the city’s big medical centers. Reb Menashe had decided to spend some time each day taking an interest in these people, and helping them in any way he could.

So, each day, Reb Menashe stayed in shul after davening, looking for those people who did not seem to have a place to eat. When he noticed someone new and unfamiliar, he went over to him, asked why he was there, and if he had where to eat and sleep.

Then Reb Menashe tried to help him, or directed him to the address that could provide what he needed.

That day, Reb Menashe noticed an unfamiliar person who looked like didn’t have where to be. He approached, and first asked the person’s name and what he was in town for. The guest, who introduced himself as a resident of Eretz Yisrael, told Reb Menashe that he had come after being recently diagnosed with a rare heart condition. He had been referred to a doctor who worked in the nearby hospital, and who was considered the biggest expert in the world on this particular condition.

Reb Menashe provided encouragement to the Yid, and when he learned that he had a place to stay and food, he offered at least to help him out by davening for him. He verified the patient’s name, his mother’s name, and his exact age, and promised to try to daven for him each day for a *refuah*, and to recite the chapter of *Tehillim* that corresponded to his age, an ancient chassidic custom practiced by *gedolei olam*.

Reb Menashe bid the man a heartfelt *refuah sheleimah* and much *hatzlachah* on the surgery, and then sat down to recite

Chapter 51 in *Tehillim* for the sick man, who was in his 51st year.

Weeks passed, and then months, and Reb Menashe continued to fulfill his pledge. Each day, he dedicated a few minutes to reciting Chapter 51 in *Tehillim* for that Yid who he had met only once in his life. After saying *Tehillim*, Reb Menashe mentioned the sick man’s name for a *refuah*.

After a year passed, Reb Menashe assumed that the man was already in his 52nd year, so he decided to continue davening for him, but changed to Chapter 52 in *Tehillim*.

This continued for ten whole years. But after that time passed, Reb Menashe decided that he had fulfilled his obligation. His time was precious, and he did not know if that surgery that the Jew was supposed to have had succeeded, and if he was still among the living.

Reb Menashe decided to stop davening for that Jew, but was not aware of the direct outcome of his decision on the fate of the man.

About three months later, at the end of davening, when Reb Menashe looked around for guests who may need a place to stay or eat, he was surprised to discover a familiar face. He thought hard, until he remembered. This was the Yid for whom he had been davening for the past ten years!

He became very excited and he ran over to the man, introduced himself and told him that he had pledged a decade earlier to daven for him. He then related that for ten years after that, he hadn’t missed saying *Tehillim* for him even a single day, until three months prior, when he had decided to stop.

The man, who looked like he had aged twenty years, was very surprised; he had no idea about this, and suddenly, he looked startled: “You said that you stopped three months ago?” he asked, with a shocked look on his face.

“Yes!” Reb Menashe replied, and then asked: “And why did you come here after so many years?”

“Apparently for that very reason...” The man looked pale as he spoke, and then sighed deeply. He told Reb Menashe in a broken voice: “As you know, I came here ten years ago for an operation that was supposed to save my life. *Baruch Hashem*, it was successful, and after that I was able to go on living as I had before. But three months ago, unfortunately, that same condition was diagnosed again. So I had to return here, to the same professor, hoping that he could rectify the problem once again.”

Reb Menashe shuddered when he heard this. Only now did he realize what a tremendous *chessed* he had done for the Yid, who was in essence a stranger, without even knowing. Apparently, those chapters of *Tehillim* that he said each day for this person are what protected him and preserved his health; the day he stopped – the man’s health began to fail once again.

Answering Amen After the Whispered *Shemoneh Esreh*

When one hears the *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esreh* from a person who raises his voice when davening the whispered *tefillah* – some say that one does not answer amen after him, because he is not in keeping with *halachah*. But some differ, and think that even though the person did not follow *halachah*, one should answer amen after him.

Sources and Explanations

Chazal say in *Masheches Brachos* (24b) that “one who makes his voice heard in his *tefillah* – he is one of minimal *emunah*; one who raises his voice in his *tefillah* – he is from the *nevie’ei sheker*.” That is why the *poskim* wrote that a person should not make his voice heard during the *Amidah tefillah* (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 101 2 in the *Nosei Keilim* *ibid*). As such, the *poskim* question as to whether one should answer amen after someone who makes his voice heard during the quiet *tefillah*.

The *Chochmas Shlomo* (*Orach Chaim* 124 4) attributed this subject to a dispute cited in *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Yeshayah Remez* 428) regarding the meaning of the word ‘amen’ – and whether it is the acronym for “*Kel Melech Ne’eman*” or “*Atah Melech Ne’eman*.” For those who think that amen is an acronym for “*אתה מלך נאמן*” – answering amen is instituted even for *brachos* of the *tefillah* that is whispered, because then, the *mispallel* is like one who stands before Hashem, and one should answer amen to his *brachos* in the second person. But for one who thinks that amen is an acronym for “*א-ל מלך נאמן*” – in the third person form, then answering amen was not instituted for the whispered prayer.

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, who was asked about this by Harav Isser Zalman Meltzer, ruled that one should not answer amen after someone who raises his voice in the quiet *Shemoneh Esreh*, even if he does so out of *oness* – in a situation where he had no choice. This is because *Chazal* did not institute to answer amen to these *brachos*, because in contrast to the other *brachos*, their *halachah* is not that they are supposed to be heard (*Halichos Shlomo – Tefillah* p. 112). The *Shu”t Shevet Halevi* (Vol. III, 15) also ruled that one should not answer amen after a person who makes his voice heard in the *tefillah* that is quiet, because these *brachos* were instituted to be recited in a whisper, and one who makes his voice heard is acting against *halachah*. See *sefer Siach Zekeinim* (Vol. III, p. 228) that Harav Aharon of Belz thought this way as well.

But the *Shu”t Afrakasta D’Anyah* (Vol. II, 17) wrote that because one who makes his voice heard in the quiet *Shemoneh Esreh* is *yotzei* his obligation for *tefillah*, therefore, there is no doubt that one should answer amen after his *brachos*, even if it was not meant to be heard.

Moreover, although *Chazal* condemned this, they did not write that it is forbidden to answer amen. He added that on the contrary, the power of answering amen after one who makes his voice heard in *tefillah* rectifies the *kilkul*, the bad thing that the *mevarech* caused. *Shu”t Even Yisrael* (Vol. IX 5) ruled likewise: “One who davens aloud, even in a way that is forbidden, still, the *din* of *tefillah* has [been fulfilled] ...and therefore it is right to answer amen.” Harav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Peninei Tefillah* p. 86), and Harav Chaim Kanievsky (*Da’as Noteh* Vol. I p. 387) ruled that one should answer amen after a person who makes a *brachah* from the *lachash* aloud [and see *Peninei Tefillah* that Rav Elyashiv conditioned this on that he does not disturb others with his *tefillah*.] But the *Mishmeres Shalom* (11 3) wrote that it is preferable to distance oneself from a person who raises his voice in the quiet *Shemoneh Esreh* “but if he must stand there, he should answer amen to the *brachos* that he hears.”

Shu”t Yagel Yaakov (*Orach Chaim* 42) wrote that according to the words of the *Bechor Shor* (*Brachos* 31a), that *me’ikar hadin* there is no *kepeidah*, a strict approach, for one who davens the whispered *tefillah* in a way that his voice is heard only within the *dalet amos*. Hence, if one is standing within the *dalet amos* of the *mispallel*, and hears his *brachos*, he can answer amen to them.

A *Sha”tz* Who Davens Against the Will of the *Tzibbur*

If a *shaliach tzibbur* davens from the *amud* against the will of the *tzibbur*, the congregation, then one doesn’t answer amen to his *brachos*.

Sources and Explanations

The *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 53 22) wrote: “A person should not pray without the will of the *tzibbur*. And when one davens with force and in a violent way, then amen is not answered after his *brachos*.” *Shu”t Even Yisrael* (Vol. IX 5) explained the reason for this *halachah*: because the *tzibbur* does not want this person to daven for them, he is not considered a *shaliach tzibbur*, their representative, “and therefore, his *brachos* are considered *levatalah*.” But the *Rema* himself cites the *Darchei Moshe* (*ibid*) in the name of *Shu”t Binyamin Zev* (163) that the reason for this *halachah* is that one who goes to daven with force, against the will of the *tzibbur*, is like making a *brachah* on something stolen, and his *brachah* is considered ‘*ni’utz*’ [a curse] as it says (*Tehillim* 10:3): “*Ubotzea* [a thief] *beirech ni’etz Hashem*.”

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

Otzros Emunim

Answering Amen – The Foundation of Emunah

‘Amen’ Corresponding to ‘Baruch Shem...’

Chazal say (*Taanis* 16b) that in the Bais Hamikdash, they did not answer amen to *brachos*; rather, they said: “*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso L’Olam Va’ed.*” Rabbeinu Bechayeï wrote that the amen that we answer “has the virtue of ‘*Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso l’Olam Va’ed*’ that was said in the times of the Mikdash” (*Kad Hakemach, Emunah*).

The *Chavas Yair* added that the word amen, which is an acronym for “*Kel Melech Ne’eman*” (*Shabbos* 119b) corresponds to “*Baruch Shem...*”: “*Kel*” corresponds to the words “*Baruch Shem.*” “*Melech*” corresponds to “*Kevod Malchuso.*” And the word “*Ne’eman*”, which indicates eternity and everlasting existence, corresponds to “*L’olam va’ed*” (*Mekor Chaim* 124 5. And see *Pardes Rimonim Shaar* 3 Chapter 4).

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

To the *mezakeh harabbim*, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*, director of Bney Emunim,

Thank you very much for the wonderful weekly pamphlet that you publish; may you see much strength in your efforts to be *mezakeh the rabbim*.

Because your pamphlet serves as a weekly platform that discusses the virtues of answering amen, I would like to add what I learned on this subject:

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeira* 106 1) discusses the way Noach, Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu addressed the sins of those in their generation. Noach did not daven for the people of his generation at all. Avraham, who did not believe that it was possible to exempt the sinners from judgment, prayed only for the *tzaddikim* who did not sin, as it says (*Bereishis* 18:23): “*Ha’af tispeh tzaddik im rasha*, will You destroy the righteous with the wicked.” But Moshe, after the sin of the *eigel*, davened for the sinners as well.

Hashem illuminated for me, that the word amen is an acronym for משה, אברהם, נח. And one can say that this contains a *remez* that the *segulah* of answering amen, and the tremendous action that it achieves, as is known, began with Noach, Ish Tzaddik, continued to Avraham Avninu, and then was completed by Moshe Rabbeinu. It is possible that for this reason, Noach thought that he did not have the power to daven to save the people of his generation. Avraham, in contrast, already felt that he could daven at least to save the *tzaddikim* of Sodom, and only Moshe Rabbeinu, where the essence of the *kedushah* of amen was completed, felt that he had the power to exempt from judgement all those who sinned with the *eigel*. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu said (*Shemos* 32:32): “*V’atah im tisa chatasam v’im ein mecheini na*” – “איך מהני נא” is an acronym for amen.

With appreciation,
Yisrael Yechezkel Elbaum, Modiin Illit

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

Harav Shlomo Molcho, Hy”d

5 Teves 5293

Harav Shlomo Molcho was born in Portugal 5260 to a family of Anusim about three years after the forced conversion of the Jews of Portugal. He was raised as a non-Jew without knowing anything about Jews and Judaism.

In the year 5286, he learned about his Jewish identity, and performed his

own circumcision; due to fear of the Inquisition, he did not find anyone who would agree to do it. After he returned to his Jewish heritage, Rav Shlomo made strides in his Torah learning, and invested a lot of effort in the study of *Kabbalah*. He even merited Divine revelations that were published in *sefer Chayas Kaneh*.

Rav Shlomo fled to Salonika to escape the Inquisition, which wanted to kill him for returning to his faith. There, he learned Torah from Rabi Yosef Taitazak. He even met with Rav Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, who was deeply impressed by him.

Although he lived in constant flight from his pursuers, Rav Shlomo was unafraid, and wherever he came, he aroused his listeners to keep Torah and *mitzvos* and to await the Geulah. In 5289, he printed his *drashos* in *Sefer Hamefoar*, whose Kabbalistic content centers around the upcoming Geulah.

When he was thirty two years old, Rav Shlomo was caught, and put on trial by the Inquisition. On 5 Teves 5393, he was burned at a stake in an auto-da-fe in the center of the city of Mantua.

The cloak of Rav Shlomo Molcho, on display at the Jewish museum in Prague.



Answering Amen Influences Compassion and Chessed

Rav Shlomo Molcho explained the reason why Chazal say (*Brachos* 53b) that “the one who answers amen is greater than th emevarech.” When answering amen, the Name Hava-yah, which corresponds to the *Middas HaRachamim*, is combined with the Name of Adnus, which corresponds to the *Middas Hadin*. Because the numerical value of amen is the same as the value of these two Names of Hashem. Thus, the compassion is drawn from the Source of Rachamim onto Am Yisrael, and that nullifies the *Middas Hadin*. This is alluded to by the fact that amen in its full spelling [אלף מם נון] is numerically equivalent to 297 and when we add to that the three letters of amen, we get to 300 – numerically equivalent to the word ברחמים.

Rav Shlomo added that the power of answering amen exceeds even the answer that HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave to the *brachah* of Rav Yishmael ben Elisha, as Rav Yishmael describes (*Brachos* 7a): “I once entered to bring the Ketoress in the Holy of Holies...and He said to me [HaKaodsh Baruch Hu] ‘Yishmael My son bless Me.’ I said to Him: ‘May it be Your will that Your mercy should overpower Your anger and Your compassion and Your compassion should be revealed over Your *middos*, and You should treat Your children with *Middas Harachamaim...lifnim mishnas hadin.*’ And He nodded to me with His Head.” The words “ונענע לי בראשו” *Rashi* explains: “As if admitted to my *brachah* and answering amen.” When HaKadosh Baruch Hu answered the request of Rabi Yishmael that His *middah* of compassion should overpower His *Middas Hadin*, He answered amen, and from here that answering amen is what causes the compassion to be increased on Knesses Yisrael (*Sefer Hamefoar, Sod Aniyas Amen uBaruch Atah*).