

# 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

### Kavod Hatefillah Warrants a Special Trip

”ויוצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך הרנה; ויפגע במקום וילן שם כי בא השמש” (כה י-יא)

The ‘makom,’ the place that Yaakov reached and slept in was Har Hamoriah – the site of the Mikdash (*Chulin* 91b). But from the *passuk* “*Vayeilech Charanah*” it seems like Yaakov had already reached Charan. How then did he return and reach Har Hamoriah? *Chazal* explain (*ibid*) that after Yaakov reached Charan, he said: “Is it possible that I passed the place where my forbears prayed and I did not pray?” Immediately when he decided to return, the way was shortened for him and he reached Har Hamoriah.

But why did he decide to return to daven at Har Hamoriah only after he reached Charan? Why didn’t he stop to daven there when he passed by initially?

The **Maharal of Prague** explained: On the way from his father’s house to Charan, Yaakov was very fearful, as he was fleeing from his brother Eisav who wanted to kill him. He was not able to concentrate properly on the *tefillah*. Only after he reached Charan, and was able to see that Eisav was not pursuing him, did he calm down and he was then able to return to daven in the place where his forbears had done so.

The **Chiddushei Hari”m** further explained that Yaakov did not daven when he passed Har Hamoriah on his way to Charan because davening in the place where his forbears had prayed warranted a trip in its own right, not something done by the way. The *sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh* added that this concept was the basis of the practice of the eminent *chassidim* not to greet their Rebbes when they happened to pass by the place for their own needs; rather, they would dedicate a special trip whose purpose was exclusively to bask in the presence of the Rebbe – a *nesiah*.

Gur Aryeh; *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* Vol. III 162

### The Difference Between the Tefillos of Yitzchak and Yaakov

”ויהר אף יעקב ברחל ויאמר התחת אלקים אנכי אשר מנע ממך פרי בטן” (ל ב)

*Rashi* explains (based on *Bereishis Rabbah* 71 7) that Rochel demanded of Yaakov to plead in prayer for her until she would have children, just like his father Yitzchak had pleaded for his mother Rivka (*Bereishis* 25:21, and *Rashi* *ibid*). But Yaakov replied to her: “...Who withheld from you children,” meaning: My father had not yet merited children at the time and therefore, he pleaded in prayer, but I have already been blessed with children, and Hashem has only withheld offspring from you.

The commentaries expound on these words, which cannot be understood in their simple explanation – can we think that because he already had children, Yaakov would reject Rochel’s request and refuse to daven for her?

**Rabi Moshe Galanti**, the first of the *Rishonim* LeTzion, explained:

*Chazal* say (*Yevamos* 64a) that “why were our Avos barren? Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu desires the *tefillos* of *tzaddikim*.” And Yaakov replied to Rochel: Yitzchak my father, who like Rivka my mother, was not blessed with children, realized that his *tefillos* were desired Above, and therefore, he davened and was answered. I, in contrast, have already been answered, so HaKadosh Baruch Hu no longer desires my *tefillah* – He desires your *tefillah*, as you were not yet blessed. So if I will daven for you, I would be violating the Will of Hashem, as He desires your *tefillah*. Not only will I not be answered, I will anger Hashem by doing so.

The **Ksav Sofer** explained that this is what Yaakov claimed to Rochel:

*Chazal* (*Bava Kamma* 92a) say: “One who asks for mercy for his friend, and he needs the same thing, is answered first.” The basis of this *segulah* is that this person proves with his deeds that for himself, he accepts the decree of Hashem love, because he is not davening for himself, but rather for his friend, whose distress touches his heart, and therefore his *tefillah* is answered. My father Yitzchak merited to have his *tefillah* answered because although he was barren, he accepted the decree of Hashem, and only davened for his wife’s pain. But I, who am not barren, cannot use this *segulah*, and who can guarantee that my *tefillah* will be answered?!

Zevach Hashlamim; *Ksav Sofer*

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### Amen – The Key to the Gates of Heaven

In this week’s *parashah*, Yaakov revealed to us where the “*Shaar Hashamayim*” is.

When Yaakov awoke from his sleep on Har Hamoriah – the Makom HaMikdash, he called excitedly: (*Bereishis* 16:17): “*Mah nora hamakom hazeh ein zeh ki im Bais Elokim, vezeh Sha’ar Hashamayim*, how awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of Hashem, and this is the gate of Heaven.”

“*Sha’ar*” is the opening through which our *tefillos* and requests pass through and are accepted Above, as *Rashi* says: “A place of prayer, where their prayer rises up to the Heavens.”

Apparently, just like each gate has a key, so, too, the *Sha’ar Hashamayim* also has a “key” that opens it. Because if not, then what will knowing the place of the gates help if they are locked, *chalilah*?

You surely ask, what is that key? There is a clear answer to this in the *Zohar* (Vol. III, 285, 2): “When Am Yisrael are careful to answer amen properly, then when they daven to HaKadosh Baruch Hu about their troubles, a Voice declares in all the worlds: ‘*Pischu she’arim veyavo goy tzaddik* שמר אמנים’ (*Yeshayah* 26:2) – do not read it אמורים but rather אמנים.”

We are all looking for *segulos* and seek *brachos*, but here, there are clear and piercing words: We have a clear *Zohar* that states: Being strict about answering amen according to *halachah* is the key to opening the *Sha’ar Hashamayim*, through which the *tefillos* are received!

When he was at the *Sha’ar Hashamayim*, Yaakov Avinu saw in his dream: “Angels of Hashem going up and down.” A מלאך is numerically equivalent to אמן and it is possible that the Torah thus alluded that the ‘amen’ is what propels the *tefillos* to the *Sha’ar Hashamayim* and brings down for the person the abundance that is granted to him in the merit of those *tefillos*.

After learning that amen is the key to having our *tefillos* accepted, we need to come early to shul to be able to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar* recited before davening. Being strict about this will grant us the merit of starting to daven with a ‘ring of keys,’ as is fitting for the gates of *tefillah* that we are trying to open.

Even when we invest so much energy in the *tefillah* itself, if we allow ourselves to be lax about the keys that make those *tefillos* endure and open gates for it, then we will be like that person who won a beautiful palace filled with luxuries, but he does not have the key to the front gate. What benefit does he have from this palace?! Let’s answer amen, and be *zocheh*!

Good Shabbos  
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

### The Check Reached the Right Destination

Only after Reb Ephraim and his wife landed back in Israel were they able to relax a bit and reflect on the storm they had been through over the past two weeks. The moment their world caved in was when the doctor told them that their young son was sick with a rare illness and needed to be taken urgently for emergency surgery in a New York hospital that specialized in the disease. From then until their safe return home, it was a tumultuous whirlwind.

The costs of the flight and treatment, along with the other expenses involved in such an operation, amounted to an astronomical \$100,000, at a time when they didn't even have enough money to get themselves to the airport. But the members of their community, along with some friends and acquaintances, galvanized to help them with an emergency appeal. *Baruch Hashem*, within a short time, they were able to raise the necessary sum.



Mount Sinai Hospital in New York

At the *kiddush* that he made the Shabbos following their return, Reb Ephraim offered his effusive thanks to Hashem for orchestrating the miraculous salvation for his son in such a wondrous way, and to His faithful emissaries, the *askanim* and community members who brought them this far. Later, he recounted how it had all unfolded, and pointed out the unbelievable *Hashgachah* that he had experienced during his stay in America. He related:

“About half hour into the surgery, as we were deeply immersed in our *tefillos*, the door to the operating suddenly opened, and the doctor emerged looking tense. ‘What happened?’ we asked urgently. The doctor reassured us right away: ‘Everything is fine, the surgery is proceeding as planned, but there’s a problem: We discovered, during the surgery, that the problem that brought your son here was concealing a different problem, unrelated to the original one, but no less severe. We can treat it during the surgery, but it will extend the time of the surgery by a few hours. Do you want us to

deal with it now, or with another surgery that will be done as soon as is feasible?’

“‘What’s the problem?’ we asked. ‘Surely it is better to deal with the problem during this surgery; why should we cause more suffering for the child and for us?’

“‘Okay,’ the doctor replied, ‘we’re ready to do that, but it’s going to cost you an additional \$30,000...’

“‘Another thirty thousand dollars... Where are we going to get such a sum of money, in such a short time, in a foreign country?! But the child’s benefit was paramount, and that compelled us to agree. We signed the relevant forms, and a commitment to pay the sum in the coming days, while our son was still hospitalized.

“The doctor went back into the operating room, and we went back to our *tefillos* with redoubled fervency. In addition to our worries for our son, we also pleaded that Hashem would send us a way to raise the additional funds in a short amount of time. *Bechadshei Shamayim*, after many long hours, the doctor emerged looking exhausted but smiling broadly. The surgery had succeeded beyond expectations.

“As I whispered words of *tefillah*, I left the area of the operating rooms feeling a great burden on my shoulders. I didn’t know who to turn to and from where to start.

“Someone directed me to the home of a certain *gvir* who lives nearby. ‘Try, maybe he’ll give you something,’

he told me. So late that afternoon, I found myself ringing the doorbell of the wealthy man, as an uninvited guest... When I was asked in Yiddish on the intercom ‘who is it?’ I replied, ‘A *yungerman* from Bnei Brak.’ I heard the buzzer and the door opened.

“Upon entering the office of the wealthy man, I began to tell him my story, but he stopped me with the wave of a hand. ‘No need to expound,’ he said with a smile, and handed me a closed envelope. I thanked him sincerely and he wished me well.

“Only when I arrived back at the hospital did I open the envelope and notice the sum written on the check. I was stunned: The check was made out for exactly \$30,000...

“My wife and I immediately began to weep with gratitude to Hashem for not abandoning us for a minute, even in this foreign land, and for sending us a miraculous *yeshuah* that has brought us back here with our son, safe and healthy.”

The second half of the puzzle was only

completed years later.

In Teves 5773, the founder of the Torah community in Zichron Yaakov, Harav Shalom Meir Youngerman, *zt”l*, passed away in Bnei Brak. Some time after his passing, his family printed a booklet in his memory, which was circulated only among the family, and it included a story that solved the mystery.

The story that was related in the booklet described that in addition to his success in raising funds for his institutions, he also experienced numerous difficulties and disappointments, which he accepted with equanimity; he was always full of *emunah* that he would get what he was deserving of.

As an example, there was a story that happened while he was in America: For a long while he had made the effort to solicit the assistance of a wealthy donor who was known for his love of Torah. After extensive efforts, he made up with the *gvir* that he would come to his home on a certain day, at four in the afternoon, to get the donation.

Due to an unexpected delay, Rav Shalom Meir only arrived to the meeting at half past four. Huffing and puffing, he rang at the doorbell of the wealthy man, and was happy when he was ushered in respectfully. “I am Youngerman from Bnei Brak,” he introduced himself, but was met with an expression of surprise: “Youngerman from Bnei Brak?” the wealthy man asked. “At four o’clock someone knocked here and identified himself as ‘Youngerman of Bnei Brak,’ and took the envelope that I had prepared.”

Apparently, a distressing mistake had occurred. The envelope designated for Rav Youngerman was given to that ‘*yungerman*’ from Bnei Brak, and because the wealthy man had no idea who that ‘*yungerman*’ was, he had to send Rav Youngerman off with a much smaller donation than planned, of just \$2,000.

Rav Youngerman left the home of the wealthy man rather disappointed, but as always, his *emunah* was strong even then, and he continued with his efforts to fundraise.

This was the story brought in the booklet. Some time after it was printed, the booklet landed up in the hands of one of the young men who had participated in the abovementioned *kiddush*, and when he read this story, he remembered the story that the one who had made the *kiddush* had related. He called the man and compared the information and thus resolved the longstanding mystery.

So once again, it was clearly shown, that the power of heartfelt *tefillah* can upend the natural course of things, and can lead to wondrous *yeshuos*.

*Vavei Ha’amudim Vechishukeihem*

### Answering Amen After Those Who Are Exempt from the *Mitzvos*

**1. Someone who is an *onan* does not answer amen to the *brachos* of others, and some say that if he wants to be strict with himself and answer amen after *brachos*, then he should be allowed to do so.**

#### Sources and Explanations

When a person loses an immediate family member, and the deceased has not yet been buried, he is called an '*onan*,' and is exempt from all *mitzvos*. The Rishonim are divided on whether the *onan* is allowed to be strict with himself and fulfill *mitzvos* that he is exempt from: According to *Rashi* (*Brachos* 17a, ad loc. *V'eino*), the *onan* is permitted to be strict with himself, but *Tosafos* (ibid ad loc. *V'eino*, based on *Yerushalmi Brachos* 3 1) differ and hold that an *onan* is not allowed to fulfill *mitzvos* until after the *kevu'rah*, and that is the *halachah* (see *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 341 1; *Shulchan Aruch Harav Orach Chaim* 71 1; *Pri Migadim Orach Chaim Mishbetzos Zahav* 475 5; *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 12).

The *Yerushalmi* (ibid) brings two views in the explanation of the exemption of the *onan* from *mitzvos*. According to one view, the basis of the exemption is because the *mitzvah* of *kavod hameis* that obligates all who are required to mourn for him [the seven close relatives] not to distract himself from the deceased until after he is buried [irrespective of the actual amount he needs to be involved in the *kevu'rah* process]. According to this view, it is understood why the *onan* is exempt even from easier *mitzvos* like answering amen, because it causes distraction. According to the other view, the basis of the exemption of the *onan* is because of the *mitzvah* of *kevu'rah hameis* that he is obligated in then. In this view, the *onan* is exempt from answering amen, even though doing so does not distract him from attending to the dead, because in order to answer it properly, he has to stop what he is doing to hear the *brachah* in order to know which *brachah* he is answering amen to, so that it should not be an *amen yesomah*, an orphaned amen (*Tosafos Mo'ed Kattan* 23b, ad loc. *V'ein*; *Shulchan Aruch Harav* ibid).

**2. If an *onan* makes a *brachah*, then one does not answer amen to it.**

#### Sources and Explanations

The *Minchas Shlomo* (Vol. I, 91:5) ruled according to the *Tosafos* (*Mo'ed Kattan* 23b ad loc. *V'ein*, citing *Yerushalmi Brachos* 3 1), that one should not answer amen after a *brachah* made by an *onan*. In old handwritten notes on *Maseches Mo'ed Kattan*, Harav Shlomo Zalman explained that because an *onan* is exempt from making a *brachah*, his *brachah* is considered a *brachah levatalah*, which one should not answer (*Shulchan Shlomo, Erchei Refuah* Vol. I, p. 137).

**3. One should have a doubt about someone who is obligated to engage in saving lives, and is exempted at that time from making *brachos*, and he mistakenly is strict with himself and does make *brachos*, as to whether it is permitted to answer amen after him.**

#### Sources and Explanations

The *Minchas Shlomo* (ibid) expresses doubt about this *halachah*, and the reasons for the doubt are: On the one hand, we say that the distraction from the saving lives to make a *brachah* is more severe than the distraction of an *onan*, which is based on *kavod hameis*. If we do not answer amen to the *brachah* of an *onan*, then how much more so should we not answer to the *brachah* of one who is engaged in saving lives. On the other hand, we can say that the *onan* was given a special exemption by *Chazal*, and therefore, specifically the *brachah* of an *onan* is considered a *brachah levatalah*, to which we do not answer amen. See *Shulchan Shlomo* (ibid) in the handwritten notes on *Maseches Mo'ed Kattan*, where Rav Shlomo Zalman pointed out that we only do not answer amen to the *brachah* of an *onan*, but regarding the *brachah* of one who is saving lives, we should answer amen. He wrote there that even when "the doctor leaves the patient [in the middle of treatment] and recites *Birchas Hamazon*, even though it is certainly an *aveirah* and a case of murder, still, this is not considered a *brachah levatalah* and it proper to answer amen after it."

## Gadol Ha'oneh

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

Answering amen and its related subjects are like a sea. There are many halachic fundamentals and secrets brought down in the works of our sages relating to this subject, and from all of them we can understand that we have been granted a great merit from Above to thank and praise our Creator by answering amen.

This word that was revealed to us by *Chazal* is very deep. The *Gemara* in *Maseches Shavuos* (36a) says that amen has three meanings: "It has an oath, it has an acceptance of the words, it has a belief of the words."

But the truth is that its meaning does not suffice with only these three things, because the amen actually expresses all of what the *mevarech* said as well. This small word contains within it both *emunah* – that we should believe the words, and the yearning

and the faith that the request will be fulfilled, that Hashem hears and will fill the requests.

Amen is not only part of the *brachah*, it is like saying the entire *brachah*, to the extent that we find that on Shabbos, we can complete the quota of *meah brachos* by answering amen on the *brachos* of those who have *aliyos* during *Krias HaTorah* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 284 3).

In addition, answering amen is part of the form and content of *tefillah betzibbur* – and when ten people stand together and one of them is the *shaliach tzibbur* and they all answer amen, that is *tefillah betzibbur*.

But we have to understand that amen does not stand on its own; it affirms and strengthens the words of the *mevarech*. A person who just utters a random amen and does not know what he answered to, does not only not add, he even detracts, because this amen

### Harav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, *shlit'a*

Rosh Yeshivas Ateres Yisrael



is an *amen yesomah* (*Brachos* 47a). And that is the reason that we wrote that it does not have a significance in its own right – only when it is said in context to the words of the *mevarech*.

We can derive from this how important it is to have *kavanah* when answering amen, because the *kavanah* is the cord that binds the amen to the *brachah*, and gives the amen its wondrous significance. Let us all strengthen ourselves in answering amen with *kavanah*, and that is how we will merit to add praise and adulation for our Creator.

Bney Emunim gathering Av 5776

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

## Otzros Emunim

Answering Amen – The Foundation of Emunah

### Emunah Is the Source of a Person's Strength

The Mashgiach, **Harav Yeruchem Halevi Levovitz**, said:

Chazal say (*Shabbos* 119b): “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him.” Let us take a closer look: Where can we get a ‘hammer’ that is so strong that we can open the gates of Gan Eden with it? Chazal revealed to us that the hammer that can open the gates of Gan Eden is answering ‘amen with all one’s strength.’ In other words – through *emunah!* “Not through wisdom and understanding, but specifically by foregoing the understanding – amen! I believe, I do not know anything, I just believe! That is the strong hammer that can open the gates of Gan Eden!”

Regarding the *brachah* of *Chonen Hada’as*, one does not need to author *Moreh Nevuchim*...one needs just one word – amen, I believe without knowing and without understanding! Regarding *Rofei Cholei Amo Yisrael*, there is no need to add anything, just to answer amen – I believe that He, and only He, is the Healer of all the sick in Am Yisrael!

It is possible that this is what Chazal intended when they said “He who answers amen **with all his strength**.” The *emunah peshutah* is the fundamental of the strength of a person, and it is what causes a person to be strong as iron and unmoved in his views and positions in the slightest (*Da’as Torah, Parashas Vayeitzei*).

## Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

Many warm greetings and *brachos* to...the respected philanthropist...who has the merit of disseminating the greatness of the reward of answering amen...Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*, chairman of Bney Emunim, and his family...

As someone who has been a member of Bney Emunim, I would like to thank you for the great merit I have. Although the members of Bney Emunim do not wear identification tags, the fact that they fulfill the words of the *passuk* “*chaver ani lechol asher yerei’ucha*” with great *hiddur*, and are strict to answer amen, both to *Birchos Hashachar* and the other *brachos* of the day, indicates like a thousand witnesses that they are Bney Emunim.

Although I am sending this letter as a token of my gratitude and appreciation for the material gain that I had after winning a raffle held by the organization, which granted me a nice sum of money, in truth, I owe you much more appreciation for the spiritual reward I merit every single day, every hour, with every *brachah*. I am not expounding, and more than I have written – I have not written. Thank you and praised may you be, “*matzdeikei harabbim kekochavim*.”

I feel obligated by *hakaras hatov* to tell you about an interesting turn of events that led me to adhere to this practice of saying *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, which can indicate in general how great its influence is on every Ben Emunim:

I have the privilege of davening *Shacharis* for a number of years already in a special *minyán* established by a group of *avreichim* who wanted to daven according to a unique style of a *chassidic tefillah* with warmth, at a slow pace.

In the last two years, two eleven-year-old boys have joined the *minyán*. It was like a second nature to them, that each morning, without missing a single day, all those who came to the *minyán* saw the two of them standing side by side, saying the *brachos bechavrusa*, one making the *brachah* and the other answering amen, and then the opposite.

It was no wonder that out of ‘*kinas sofrim*,’ the adults in the *minyán* also began to practice this good *minhag*. From day to day, more people joined, and today, each morning, almost all the *mispallelim* of the *minyán* begin the *tefillah* with *Birchos Hashachar* and answering amen with *kavanah*, which, according to *gedolei hador*, was practiced in very ancient times. I clearly saw how these two children, these Bney Emunim, were able to infuse the concept of amen into an entire *minyán* of dozens of *avreichim*. Amazing!

With blessings of “*yafutzu ma’ayanoseichem chutzah*,”  
M.A.B.- Netanya

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## Tzaddik B'Emunaso

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of One Who Has Yahrtzeit



The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz

### The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz

13 Kislev 5681

The first Modzhitzer Rebb, Harav Yisrael Taub, the Divrei Yisrael, was born in 5609 to his father, Harav Shmuel Eliyahu of Zwolin, in the lifetime of his paternal grandfather – the Rebbe Harav Yechezkel of Kuzmir. From an early age, he was perceived to be an *illuy* in Torah.

After the passing of his father in 5648, he moved to Zwolin to succeed his father. A year later, he began to serve as the Rav and Av Bais Din in the city of Ivengrod (today Demblin), which was called Modzhitz by the *chassidim*. While he was in Modzhitz, the *chassidus* grew and thrived and served as a source of elevation for a large group of *chassidim* from all over Poland.

The Divrei Yisrael was blessed with rare musical talents and his many compositions became renowned. In 5673, he underwent an operation on his foot due to diabetes, and during the surgery, instead of using anesthetic, he composed his famous tune to *Ezkerah*. He was so engrossed he did not even feel the scalpel cutting into his skin.

Towards the end of his life he moved to Warsaw and passed away there on 13 Kislev 5681; he was buried in the Jewish cemetery in the city.

### Three Emphases of Amen in One Request

The request of “*HaRachaman Hu yevarech...*” that we say at the end of *Birchas Hamazon* concludes with the words: “*Kein yevarech osanu kulanu yachad bivrachah sheleimah venomar amen*.” The Divrei Yisrael of Modzhitz explained this conclusion in three ways, which clarify three important emphases in the mitzvah of answering amen:

1. This conclusion alludes to the words of the *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) about the great abundance and the gates of blessing that are opened in the merit of answering amen with *kavanah*. “*Kein yevarech osanu kulanu yachad bivrachah sheleimah*,” in the merit of being strict on “*venomar amen*” with *kavanah*.

2. Another allusion is to the words of the *Zohar* (*Eikev* 271 1) that answering amen is part of the *brachah* and completes it. When will there be “*brachah sheleimah*”? Only when “*nomar amen*” after it.

3. There is also an allusion here to the *halachah* that one should wait to answer amen until the end of the *brachah*, and one should not answer before the *mevarech* concludes his *brachah* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 124 8). Wait until it is a “*brachah sheleimah*” – that the *mevarech* should complete his *brachah*, and only then “*venomar amen*” (*Divrei Yisrael Parashas Noach*).