

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly
Pamphlet
From
"Bney
Emunim"



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Resting L'Shem Hashem

"דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם כי תבאו אל הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם ושבתה הארץ שבת לה" (כה ב)

Rashi explains that the words "*Shabbos L'Hashem*" mean "*L'Shem Hashem*," and notes that these words are also said regarding the mitzvah of Shabbos (*Shemos* 20:10). **Harav Yaakov Yosef Ginz** the Rav of Bussermin (Hajdúböszörmény), explained the reason why it is emphasized specifically in these two mitzvos that they should be fulfilled *l'Shem Shamayim*:

The mitzvah of resting on Shabbos also has a natural reason, because after working the whole week, a person needs to rest. Even the other nations of the world, *l'havdil*, chose a day for themselves during which they rest from their work.

But as Jews, we are commanded to ignore the natural reason and to keep Shabbos solely *l'Shem Hashem*. And indeed, while tens of thousands of people were *moser nefesh* over the generations to keep Shabbos, we never saw a non-Jew be *moser nefesh* to rest from his work. Because, as noted, they are resting from their work purely for the sake of their body, while we rest on Shabbos to fulfill the commandment of Hashem.

This is the deep significance of the *tefillah* we say in *Minchah* on Shabbos: "Your children should recognize and know that their rest is from You, and that they will sanctify Your Name for their rest." We can recognize and know that the Shabbos rest "is from You" – because of the mitzvah You commanded and not for natural reasons, because "they will sanctify Your Name for their rest." If their rest was not *l'Shem Shamayim* they would not be *moser nefesh* and would not sanctify Your Name to keep it.

The same is true for the rest of the Land. It is customary among farmers that from time to time, they let the land lie fallow because it makes the ground give forth better produce in coming years. Therefore, we were commanded regarding this as well, "*Veshavsah ha'aretz Shabbos l'Hashem*," to make the land rest because this is what Hashem commanded, and not for the benefit it brings to the land.

Harei Besamim

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Amen with *Mesirus Nefesh*

As Shabbos ends, the holy day of Lag BaOmer will begin - the day of the *yahrtzeit* of the Tanna Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, *zy" a*.

Throughout the *Sefer Hazohar*, the *Toras HaSod* of Rashbi, there are many references to the lofty virtues and the power of answering amen and of a *brachah* answered by amen. In this segment, I chose to focus on a wondrous story that appears in the *Zohar* on *Parashas Terumah* (166 1):

Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yosi were once in an inn, and late at night, they arose to learn Torah. As they were learning, they noticed the owner of the inn and his daughter crying bitterly.

Rabbi Yosi turned to the innkeeper and said: Perhaps your daughter has not merited a *chassan* who is a *ben Torah* and that is why you are crying? The father affirmed this, and even continued to explain why he had taken this *chassan* for his daughter: One day, I saw him jumping off the roof to answer amen after *Kaddish*, and because it was clear to me that he was a *bochur* who is *moser nefesh* to answer amen, and as a result, he is very strong in his Torah learning, I decided on the spot to give him my daughter as a wife. But, the father continued sadly, right after the wedding, we discovered that he is not a *ben Torah*, and that he doesn't even know how to recite *Birchas Hamazon* or *Krias Shema*...

But right after that, the talked-about *chassan* appeared in front of the sages, and it quickly became clear to them that the innkeeper had made no mistake in his choice. It was the son of Rav Safra, and he was indeed a giant in Torah, but had taken upon himself to conceal his greatness – even from his wife and family!

This story teaches us how great and lofty the mitzvah of answering amen is, to the extent that one should be *moser nefesh* for it, plain and simple. This story seems to be the source for the words of the author of *Derech Moshe* (Day 11) who writes that the practical *halachah* is that each person should be *moser nefesh* to answer amen, and adds that the word אמן itself indicates this, as it is an acronym for the words אנו מוסר נפשי.

Moreover, from this story we learn that there is a direct connection between answering amen and greatness in Torah, as the innkeeper understood and which turned out to be correct. It is for this reason, we ask in *Birchas HaTorah*: "And we, and our children should all be *yodei Shemecha* and learn Your Torah *lishmah*." The words "*yodei Shemecha*" allude to answering amen, which is meant to make the Name of Hashem mentioned in the *brachah* even greater. We also know that amen is numerically equivalent to the holy Names of Havay-h and Adnus, and that is the secret of its virtue. In light of the words of the *Zohar*, that dedication to answering amen necessarily proves greatness in Torah, we can also understand why these two requests – יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך לשמה – are placed next to one another.

A person who rises regularly and comes to davening each day to answer amen is like someone who declares "I am *moser nefesh*" for answering amen, and without a doubt will merit to see the fulfillment of the request: "And may we and our children and our children's children all know Your Name and learn Your Torah *lishmah*."

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The following story was related by Rav Asher Kovalski, author of *Peninei Parashas Hashavua*, as heard firsthand:

It was close late afternoon on the eve of Lag BaOmer. There were fires prepared for lighting right when darkness fell, and tens of thousands of people were making their way to Meron, to daven at the *tziyun* of the holy Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, and to rejoice at the *tzaddik's hilulah*.

Reb Moshe, a refined young man from the center of Israel, was also planning to ascend to Meron. He ordered a seat on an Egged bus, which required advanced reservations to travel at a certain time.

Before leaving, Reb Moshe wanted to daven *Minchah*, and he hurried to the nearby shul. When he entered, he found that the *minyán* had already begun *Ashrei*. It would seem like a good time to join. But Reb Moshe had taken upon himself long before to make sure to daven *Minchah* according to its order, from beginning



The route leading to the *asra kaddisha* in Meron.

to end, in a serious state of mind. He told himself that *Minchah* is a *tefillah* like all others, and it should not be said hastily, nor should any part of it be skipped. *Minchah* begins with reciting *Korbanos*, followed by *Ashrei* and *Shemoneh Esreh*, in that order. Without skipping or moving around the order.

In normal times, Reb Moshe wouldn't have had any problem. He davened at a regular *minyán*, and he usually came early so that he could daven properly. But today, when he was in a hurry to make his bus to Meron, he had to find another *minyán* to daven with – and discovered it was not so simple. When he entered a different room in the same shul, where another *minyán* was being

held, he heard the *chazzan* beginning to recite *Kaddish*. In a different room they were in the middle of *Shemoneh Esreh*. Because of his *kabbalah*, Reb Moshe had no choice but to wait for a new *minyán* to gather.

And then the problem became clear: If he would wait for a new *minyán*, he might miss the time for his bus, stated on his ticket... He would have to get a new ticket for a different time – and of course, he'd have to pay for another ticket. Moreover, it was not at all certain that he could even obtain such a ticket – because it was possible that all the seats on the later buses had been sold already!

He felt a battle raging in his heart. One voice said the urgency of his trip to Meron, and preventing the loss of the ticket he had paid for and the uncertainty about whether he'd get another ticket – made this situation an exception and he could deviate from his regular practice and skip part of davening. But the second voice in his heart whispered to him that a *kabbalah* is a *kabbalah*, and the test is at these complex moments. Therefore, he should insist on davening *Minchah* according to *halachah*.

This battle took just a few seconds, and at the end Reb Moshe decided: A *kabbalah* is a *kabbalah* and he would keep to it no matter what! He forgot about his ticket, the cost, and the schedule he had planned. He waited patiently for another *minyán* to gather, and began to daven with *Korbanos*, in order, calmly, word for word, as he did every day. Only when he finished davening, did Reb Moshe go to the departure point to try to buy a new ticket. The ticket was purchased, at full price, and Reb Moshe didn't even feel bad. True, he was far from being well-off. He lived off his meager *kollel* stipend. But he did what he had to do to keep to his *kabbalah*, and that was the most important and valuable thing to him!

Reb Moshe calmly boarded the bus and found a seat. Beside him was seated a Yid that was obviously not a local. During the drive, they got into conversation and towards the end of the trip, there was a surprising

development: His seatmate turned out to be a guest from America, a relatively wealthy person. This man asked Reb Moshe a bit about himself, and was deeply impressed by him.

Suddenly, during the conversation, the man turned to Reb Moshe and said: "Do you want to make a deal with me?"

"I'm not a businessman, I'm really very far from that," Reb Moshe demurred. "I'm a *kollel yungerman*. That's all I do. I'm not the right person..." he replied politely. But the guest was very happy to hear that. "Well, that's the deal I'm talking about! I want to adopt an *avreich* who is sitting and learning, and I want to make a Yissachar Zevulun arrangement with him!

"I want to give you a generous monthly stipend, and to be a partner to your Torah... Would you make this deal with me?"

By the time the two arrived in Meron, the deal was closed. They exchanged phone numbers and made up to meet to sign an official document. It was the perfect Yissachar Zevulun arrangement! The guest from abroad adopted Reb Moshe with a monthly budget and became a partner to his Torah.

Only later did Reb Moshe internalize what had happened: It was so 'random' that he had met his new partner! If he would have given up his *kabbalah* and traveled on his original bus, the entire deal would have not come to be. It was only thanks to his firm commitment to stick to his *kabbalah* that he was able to sign on such a dream deal. To this day, nearly two years later, the deal is still in effect. Each month, a generous sum is transferred right into Reb Moshe's bank account.

Meanwhile, this person also made some other beneficial arrangements for Reb Moshe. For example, he was able to get him into a prestigious *kollel*, as he is one of the patrons there, among other things – all because of Reb Moshe's commitment to keep his *kabbalah*.

His firm adherence to his *kabbalah* to daven *Minchah* according to *halachah* cost Reb Moshe a few shekels, but brought him tremendous financial reprieve. The Creator orchestrated events in a way that his commitment paid off many times over.

“וספרת לך שבע שבתת שנים שבע פעמים והיו לך ימי שבע שבתת השנים תשע וארבעים שנה” (כה ה)

From this *passuk* we learn that when *Yovel* was practiced, the Bais Din Hagadol would instruct that forty nine years be counted, orally, until the *Yovel* year, similar to the mitzvah of counting the *Omer*, which obligates a person to count forty nine days until Shavuot (*Rambam Shemittah Veyovel* 10 1)

The *Chizkuni* wrote that even though the counting of the years to the *Yovel* is a *mitzvas aseh*, the sages of the Bais Din would not make a *brachah* before fulfilling it, the way we do

before counting the *Omer*. This is because *Chazal* only instituted *brachos* for commandments that apply to everyone, and a mitzvah that was only imposed on the Bais Din Hagadol, such as this one, did not have a *brachah* instituted.

But the *Ra'avad* differs and holds that we do make a *brachah* on this mitzvah. He wrote: “And we recite a *brachah* on this counting at the beginning of each year, the way we make a *brachah* on the counting of the *Omer* at the beginning of each

night. At the first *shemittah* they would say: ‘*Baruch Atah Hashem... bemitzvosav vetzivanu al sefiras shnei hashmittah,*’ or ‘*Al sefiras shnei hayovel.*”

Sefer Aruch Hashulchan Ha'asid says that until the seventh year they recited “*Al sefiras hashmittah,*” and from the seventh year on they recited, “*al sefiras hashmittah vehayovel.*”

Sefer Hamitzvos LeRambam Aseh 140; *Biur HaRa'avad LeToras Kohanim Behar* 22; *Chizkuni; Aruch Hashulchan Ha'asid Zeraim* 30 7

Iggeres Emunim

A Letter from a Loyal Reader

of people who did this, today, *baruch Hashem*, there is hardly a shul where there aren't *mispallelim* who are strict to follow this practice.

One of your impressive initiatives is to institute a network of “*gabbyei amen,*” in the shuls. Reality has proven that in a place where there is a person who is dedicated to answering amen, this practice spreads among the *mispallelim*.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Brachos* (6b) brings the well-known words of Rabbi Yochanan: “At the time when HaKadosh Baruch Hu comes to the shul and does not find ten people there – He immediately gets angry, as it says (*Yeshayahu* 50:2): ‘Why I have come and there is no man here, I called and there is no one who answers.’” The question is well known: The *passuk* says “*Madua basi v'ain ish,*” while Rabbi Yochanan's statements are about a shul where there is a shortfall for a *minyan*. How did Rabbi Yochanan prove his statement with this *passuk*?

I thought of the following explanation: “איש” is an acronym for שמייקר אמן – a Jew that values amen. Because when there is one Jew who holds the mitzvah of answering amen in the greatest esteem, and he rises to come to shul to answer amen to those who recite *Birchos Hashachar*, that brings other *mispallelim* to also wake up early and come to the shul. Therefore, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu comes to a shul where there aren't ten people, He is angry that there isn't such an איש – and if there was – surely there would be ten people who rise early and come to recite *Birchos Hashachar* so he can listen.

With appreciation,
Shimon B., Elad

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Amen from Generation to Generation

“And he should teach his young children to answer amen because as soon as the baby answers amen he has a share in Olam Haba.”
(*Rema Orach Chaim* 124 6)

The Mekubal, Harav Emmanuel Chai Riki, author of *Mishnas Chassidim*, brought a *remez* for the fact that the young child merits life in Olam Haba from when he answers amen. The acronym of the final letters of the words בן עולם הבא is amen. (*Choshev Machshavos, Ma'amar Ruach Nevuah* 26).



— Pearls from the Sefer Hazohar HaKadosh on the Great Virtues of Answering Amen —

Answering Amen Opens Gates of Blessing

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) writes that from the power of answering amen with *kavanah*, the gates of blessing and goodness are opened On High, and they arouse joy in all the worlds. He writes:

And when Am Yisrael below listen to answer amen, and to have the right *kavanah*, how many openings of *brachos* are opened On High, how much good there is in all the worlds, how much joy there is in everything.

Based on these words of the *Zohar*, the *Shelah* writes (*Maseches Tamid* 80) the following: “In the *seforim* of the Mekubalim who draw from the living wellsprings of the *Zohar*, they expound on the secret of the word amen and its letters, and wrote that the Upper and Lower worlds are all dependent on the word amen, and that is the *ikkar* and the root and foundation for all the worlds. Someone who has *kavanah* on each and every *brachah* that emerges from the mouth of the *mevarech*, and answers amen with *kavanah*, causes a large amount of *kedushah* On High, and draws down much abundance to all the worlds, because he opens the Upper Source, the Mekor Mayim Chaim, like he opens the spring to water all of those that need watering.”

The *Rema*’z in his commentary on the *Zohar* (ibid) writes that amen in its full form [אל"ף מ"ם נו"ן] is numerically equivalent to 297, which is the value of the words ברכה, גילה [=שמחה]. From here, he alluded to the words of the *Zohar* that answering amen with *kavanah* opens gates of *brachah* and brings an abundance of goodness and joy to all the worlds.

Tefillah Is Accepted in the Merit of Answering Amen

The *Zohar* further writes (ibid) that from the power of answering amen, the gates of *tefillah* are opened, and the *tefillos* of Am Yisrael are accepted. He writes:

When the haters of Am Yisrael oppress and harass Am Yisrael, and Am Yisrael offers their *tefillah* before their Creator, the Voice emerges and declares in all the worlds: “*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*” (*Yeshayah* 26:2). Do not read it *emunim*, from the term of *emunah*, but rather *amenim*, from the term of answering amen. Because in the merit of answering amen “*Pischu she'arim*” is declared. This announcement is *middah kenegged middah*: Just like Am Yisrael open the gates of blessing On High by answering amen, likewise, they now declare On High: “*Pischu She'arim*,” open before Am Yisrael the Gates of Heaven, and their *tefillos* to be spared from those who oppress and harass them will be answered.

The *Remaz* (ibid) explains that the Gates of Heaven are opened to those who are strict to answer amen “because their mouths were sanctified by answering amen and with *kavanah*, therefore, their breaths rise On High and breach all the barriers.”

All the Gates Open for a Brachah Answered by Amen

Aside for the actual mitzvah and merit that answering

amen has, doing so is also beneficial to complete the *brachah* and fulfill it, as brought in the *Zohar* (*Eikev* 271 1):

When the *brachah* that is answered by amen rises from the lower world to the Upper World, there is no opening On High...that does not open ... for it, and they announce in all the firmaments: This is the gift that Ploni sent for the King, this is the gift that was sent after it was properly fulfilled. And what is that gift? A *brachah* that has amen answered after it, as every *brachah* that is answered by amen is one that is fulfilled, as it is worthy of being.

From the words of the *Zohar* it emerges that answering amen is what gives the *brachah* fulfillment and validity. Indeed, *Rabbeinu Bechayei* (*Shemos* 14:31) compared the *brachah* to testimony said by one witness, and the answering of amen to the second witness that joins him, in whose merit the testimony becomes valid. Similarly, the *Avudraham* (*Chazaras Hashatz*) compares the *brachah* to a document that is not yet affirmed and fulfilled in front of a Beis Din, and therefore, a person can deny it, and the answering of amen to the fulfillment of the document in front of the Beis Din, after which it cannot be appealed. The *Maharshal* uses a similar metaphor: The *brachah* is like the body of a document, while the answering amen is like the signature of the witness that gives the document validity (*Amudei Shlomo* on the *Sma*’g, *Aseh* 27).

Answering Amen Tears Up the Decree

In *Maseches Shabbos* (119b) it says: “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: ‘Anyone who answers amen, *yehei Shemei Rabba mevarach* with all his might – has his decree torn up.’” But the *Shomer Emunim* wrote (*Ma’amr Pischu She’arim* 1) that the holy *Zohar* promises the tearing up of the decree for anyone who answers amen, not only one who answers “amen, *yehei Shemei Rabba*.” As it says (*Tikkunei Zohar Tikkun* 19, 40 1):

“*Az tikra v’Hashem ya’aneh*” (*Yeshayah* 58:9) – What is “az”, then? These are the eight letters of the two holy Names of Havay-a and Adnus [because אז is numerically equivalent to eight], which are numerically equivalent to 91 – which is equal to amen.

And this is what *Chazal* say: One who answers amen with all his *koach*, his strength, meaning that with that *koach* of the *yichud* of the holy Names contained in amen, and of this the *Mishnah* says: One who answers amen with all his strength has a decree of seventy years torn up.

Harav Menachem Mendel of Visheva brought a *remez* from the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 116 3-4): “*Tzarah veyagon emtza ubeShem Hashem ekra ana Hashem maltah nafshi*.” אנה מלטה נפשי is an acronym for amen, that by answering amen, a person saves his soul from bad decrees (*She’eris Menachem Tehillim* ibid).