

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly
Pamphlet
From
"Bney
Emunim"



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Each One in His Camp and His Nusach

"והנו בני ישראל איש על מנתו ואיש על דגלו לצבאתם"
(א נב)

The *Shelah Hakadosh* cites the Arizal that just like in the desert, Am Yisrael were divided to four *degalim*, likewise in Am Yisrael there are four *nuscha'os* of *tefillah* and different customs: Sephard, Ashkenaz, Catalonia and Italy, and each person should adhere to the ways of his forbears – "*ish al machaneihu v'ish al diglo.*"

Harav Meir Shapiro of Lublin was known to have said:

At the beginning of davening there are various *minhagim*. Some say *Baruch She'amar* before *Hodu*, and some do it the other way around, but everyone together thanks and praises Hashem in *Yehi Kevod Hashem L'Olam*.

Shelah Derech Chaim Tochechas Mussar 35;
Ta'am Veda'as, Bamidbar 2 2

A Lament Over the Loss of the Avodas HaLevi'im

"ולקחת את הלויים לי אני ה' תחת כל בכר בבני ישראל ואת
בהמת הלויים תחת כל בכור בבהמת בני ישראל" (ג מא)

In the *kinnah* of "*Eilai Tzion V'areha*", said in the communities of Ashkenaz on Tishah B'Av, we lament: "*Ali zivchi temidecha upidyonei bechorecha.*" Many have asked: Doesn't this lamentation mention things that were nullified because of the Churban? Why is the mitzvah of *pidyon haben* mentioned here if it is still practiced in our time?

Harav Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik of Brisk explained: The *kavanah* of the lamenter is not the nullification of the mitzvah of *pidyon haben*, but rather the loss of the *avodas haLevi'im*, which are referred to by him as "*pidyonei bechorecha*," as explained in this *parashah* that the holiness of the firstborns was redeemed and transferred to the Levi'im.

Toras Zev p. 82

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Birchos Hashachar to Complete Meah Brachos

On Shavuos, we remember Dovid Hamelech, who was born and passed away on this day.

As believing Jews, the figure of Dovid Hamelech, *a"h*, is deeply embedded in our memories all year round. He is the one who established the eternal kingdom in Eretz Yisrael, for which we daven three times a day, "*Es tzemach Dovid avedecha meheirah satzmiach...*" The Melech Hamashiach, whose arrival we await every day, will come from Dovid Hamalech and will resurrect the kingdom.

Dovid Hamelech left us spiritual treasures that accompany us throughout our lives. His name is mentioned countless times in the *Nevi'im* and *Kesuvim*. His *sefer*, *Tehillim*, has been recited by Am Yisrael since time immemorial. And in addition to all that, I would like, in this segment, to call attention to the well-known *takanah* of Dovid Hamelech: Instituting a quota of one hundred *brachos* that each person should recite every day.

On this subject, I was intrigued by a *chiddush* that I am not sure too many people know about. The *takanah* of Dovid Hamelech not only institutes the quota for the *brachos*, but rather, it is what brought *Chazal* to institute *Birchos Hashachar*! In other words, as the result of his *takanah*, and so that we should be able to fulfill it, *Chazal* instituted *Birchos Hashachar*, through which each Jew can reach the quota of one hundred *brachos* with his regular daily schedule.

The *Tur* writes at the beginning of *Hilchos Birchos Hashachar* (*Orach Chaim* 46): "Each day, one hundred people would die in Klal Yisrael and they didn't

know why, until Dovid Hamelech clarified it with *Ruach Hakodesh*, and instituted for Am Yisrael *meah brachos*. That is why *Chazal* instituted these *brachos* [*Birchos Hashachar*] on the *sefer ha'olam* and its practices, in order to complete the one hundred *brachos* each day."

From this it is evident that the point of the *Birchos Hashachar* was to make it possible to reach the quota of one hundred *brachos* that Dovid Hamelech instituted. That is the reason that the Gaonim and the Rishonim called the *Seder Birchos Hashachar* by the name of "*Seder Meah Brachos*," because they were instituted for the purpose of reaching the quota (see *Hamaspik L'Ovdei Hashem*, Ch. 30).

This is the place to note: Just like the daily quota of reciting *meah brachos* is completed by reciting *Birchos Hashachar*, likewise, the daily quota of answering ninety amens to *brachos* [aside for the obligation to answer amen to ten *Kaddish*] is completed by answering amen to *Birchos Hashachar* of at least three people, as the *Mishnah Berurah* explains (6 13) that this is the source of the custom of reciting *Birchos Hashachar* together.

We are in a world that is full of dangers. If we want to merit complete protection from *Shamayim*, we need to make good use of this opportunity that *Chazal* gave us to complete the daily quota of the *brachos* and amens, by reciting *Birchos Hashachar* each day, together.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The Maggid, Rav Meir Tzimroth, often speaks about the great virtue of answering amen, and he has recounted the story of how he answered one special, unforgettable amen many years ago, and which he still remembers very well to this day. He related:

Many years ago, while I lived in Yerushalayim, I was told one day about the passing of my grandmother, *a"h*. The *levayah* took place in Bnei Brak, and on the way back, as was the custom in those days, I headed for the shared taxi stand in the center of Bnei Brak, across from the Itzkowitz shul. I planned to ride a shared taxi van back to Yerushalayim.

The minute I got to the stand, the van filled up and set out for Yerushalayim. I was the first on line for the next taxi. As such, I was able to choose whichever seat I wanted and the most desirable seat was the one up front, near the driver. In the back, it was always crowded and hot, and the front seat was spacious and pleasant. The taxi filled up slowly, and the driver, who was in a hurry, decided to pull out even though there was one empty place.



The price of the ride, in the value of those days, was three and a half shekels. When the taxi reached the traffic light at the Coca Cola intersection, before turning out of the city, a young *bochur* suddenly stuck his head into the vehicle and asked: "Does anyone want to buy an ice pop?" I looked at the passengers behind me. It seemed that on such a hot day, no one would have objected to the cool treat...But we all preferred to refrain from eating in public.

The only one who unhesitatingly purchased the ice pop was the driver. He paid half a shekel for his ice pop, took off the wrapper and was about to take a huge bite. But before he could do that I stopped him, "Please my friend," I addressed him. "I think this is the first time in my life I'm meeting you,

and chances are that I'll never see you again. So this is a one-time request, I won't ask anything else of you..."

"What do you want?" the driver growled at me, in a rather unfriendly manner. "If I can do it, I will."

"Please make a *brachah*!" I requested.

"I will not do that!" the driver replied, and quickly took a big bite out of his ice pop.

"Why not?" I insisted. "Why are you so adamantly refusing my simple request?"

"Listen, my friend, you might be new here, but this line, this Bnei Brak-Yerushalayim route, is a problematic one as far as I'm concerned. Every hour, a different rabbi sits next to me, and takes me on as his personal project. One asks me to make a *brachah*, the other one wants me to put on *tefillin* and a third is persuading me to keep Shabbos...Tomorrow someone will come and suggest that I join a yeshivah for *baalei teshuvah*...Leave me alone, just let me live!"

The ice pop in his hand began to drip, but I still did not give in. I took a half shekel coin out of my pocket, and gave it to the driver and said to him. "I'm ready to pay you for the ice pop... just make the *brachah*!" At this point, the driver lost his cool. He swerved to the shoulder of the road, screeched to a halt and began to scream: "Mister! I never got involved in your life, don't you get involved in mine!"

"*Chalilah*, I'm not getting involved in your life," I answered calmly. "I'm just worrying about myself! If you make a *brachah*, I can answer amen afterwards, and our sages tell us that 'the one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*.'"

The driver grew even angrier. He threw the coin I had given him back at me and his voice rose even higher: "What do you think, you can buy me with half a shekel???"

"How much would you like me to pay you make a *brachah*?" I asked. I think that the guileless tone that I was speaking in had an effect. He thought for a minute, and then said, as he looked at the empty seat in the taxi: "If you give me three and a half shekel, the price that a passenger would have paid for that empty seat, I'll make the *brachah*."

His somewhat audacious request threw me off a bit. It was a sum of money

that, at that time, I would feel the loss of. I also knew that I could merit thousands of amens in an hour, for free, at Itzkowitz or Zichron Moshe...

While I was deliberating the driver continued munching on his ice pop. Fortunately for me, the passengers in the back were enthralled by this mini-drama and they decided to help me. Each one agreed to contribute, and within a few seconds I had the three and a half shekels. The driver smiled with satisfaction, covered his head with something and made the *brachah* very fluently: "*Baruch...shehakol...bidvaro*."

It's hard to describe with words what happened after that. The taxi literally shook...

We all answered amen, loudly and with *kavanah*, like we'd never answered before, not even during *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur.

"Amen!!!"

I looked in the driver's eyes. The defiant spark wasn't there anymore, and in its place, I was even able to see a small tear...He started the car again, and before he shifted into drive, he said, with his eyes lowered:

"You religious people...I don't know where you mustered up the courage – to pay three and a half shekel for one amen...I'll never understand it. But if I made the *brachah* already, I won't sell it for money.

"Take your money back, and now please, don't say another word to me until the end of the ride. In the end, you'll make me a *baal teshuvah*...."

We accepted. The taxi remained silent at least until I got off at the entrance to Yerushalayim, where I thanked the driver and continued on my way. I thought the story ended there, but it did not.

A few years later, I was invited to speak at a yeshivah for people who were growing closer to observance. As I spoke about the value of *mitzvos*, I related this story. Suddenly, one of the *bochurim* stood up and asked to speak.

"I've heard this story more than once," he said. "I'm the son of that taxi driver."

I was very moved to hear this, and the boy continued, "The Rav should know that since I started this process, every time I come and visit my father, he insists that I make a *brachah* in front of him so that he can answer amen, with *kavanah*, out loud – like only he knows how to do..."

Doresh Tov, Chanukah p. 527

The 'Eisek' of Torah

"אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה"

Why do we use the language "*la'asok bedivrei Torah*" and not "*lilmod divrei Torah*"?

The *Ta"z* (46 1) explains that when it was instituted to recite "*la'asok*," *Chazal* wanted to emphasize that the way to acquire Torah is by engaging in it with toil and effort, not learning with pleasure, as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 63b): "Torah is only fulfilled with one who puts himself to death for it."

However, the *Mahara"l Tzintz* explained that we say "*la'asok*" to include those who support the ones who learn Torah, because they are also engaged in fulfilling the Torah in Am Yisrael, even though they are not able to learn themselves. (*Shiyurei Kometz Haminchah Drush* 4)

The *Mishnah Halachos* further explains (*Shu"t*, Vol. VI 13): An integral part of the engagement in Torah is that his behavior in all that he does should be according to Torah. Therefore, we say "*la'asok*" because aside for engaging in learning itself, it also applies to everything we engage in, that we do it according to Torah.

Engaging in 'Divrei Torah'

"אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה"

Chazal offer a few explanations for why this *brachah* was formulated with the words "*la'asok bedivrei Torah*" and not "*la'asok beTorah*."

Rav Y. Ben Yakar explained that the term "*divrei*" includes *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, which is called "*devarim sheba'al peh*" (see *Gittin* 60b), that we are including in this *brachah* (*Peirush Hatefillas Vehabrachos* p. 22)

The *Chayei Adam* explained: Because the *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Orach Chaim* 47 4) that thinking about *divrei Torah* is permitted even before saying *Birchas HaTorah*, therefore it was established to say "*la'asok bedivrei Torah*." Until now, we were only allowed to think about Torah and saying the *brachah* permits us to also speak those words of Torah. (*Nishmas Adam* I, 9 4)

Harav Tzadok Hakohein of Lublin explained: "Torah" is from the term of *moreh derech*, showing the way, because the Torah protects the one who learns by making sure he follows a good path and does not stumble in sin (*Nazir* 21a). But this protection is only

merited by one who learns Torah *lishmah*. As such, one who learns not *lishmah* is not considered to be an "*osek baTorah*," because his learning does not guide him on the right path to take. In contrast, engaging in "*divrei Torah*," also includes what he learns that is not *lishmah*, because the term "*divrei Torah*" includes the learning that is called *פטטיא דאורייתא* (see *Yerushalmi Brachos* 9 5), that is learning that is not *lishmah*. Therefore, we say "*La'asok bedivrei Torah*" because who will guarantee that indeed we will merit to learn Torah *lishmah* (*Tzidkas Hatzaddik* 59)?

Rejoice in Our Friend's Torah

"והערב נא ה' אלקינו את דברי תורתך בפנינו ובפניו כל עמך בית ישראל"

Harav Yosef Nechemiah Kornitzer, the Rav of Krakow, explained:

These words contain the request that both the *divrei Torah* that emerge from our mouths and those that emerge from the mouths of all of Bais Yisrael should be sweet for us, and we should not be like those who are stingy and only like those *divrei Torah* that they themselves utter. (*Chiddushei Rabbeinu Yosef Nechemiah, Vayeitzei*)

Chosen by Force

"אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים ונתן לנו את תורתו"

Maseches Avodah Zarah (2b) teaches that before HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave the Torah to Am Yisrael, He went around to all

the nations, and only after they all refused to accept it, did He give it to Am Yisrael. In light of this, the words "*asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim venasan lanu es Toraso*" is rather puzzling. Wasn't the Torah only given to us after no other nation agreed to accept it?

The *Maharsha* explained: Later in the *Gemara* there, it says that HaKadosh Baruch Hu held Har Sinai over their heads to force them to accept the Torah. So we find that while the other nations were able to refuse the Torah, He chose us because He forced us to accept it.

Harav Yehonasan Eibshitz further explained: The nations of the world are subject to nature and *mazel*, and therefore, even though they were offered the Torah, they did not have the ability to accept it, because it contravenes their nature and their *mazel*. But Hashem chose Am Yisrael and by doing so, elevated them above *mazel*, and that is how they were prepared to accept the Torah.

Maharsha Vol. I, Beitzah 25b; Ye'aros Dvash Vol. I Drush 8

Arouse the Merit of 'Amen' In the Morning

"וזהיה אנהנו וצאצאינו [וצאצאי צאצאינו] וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל..."

Why was this *brachah* instituted with the term "*tze'etzaeinu*" and not "*zareinu*", the term that is usually used?

The *Chasam Sofer* explained that we mention specifically "*tze'etzaeinu*" because the letters *צא* appear in it twice, and they are numerically equivalent to the two Holy Names of Havay-ah and Adnus. This is an allusion to the strengthening of the *koach hakedushah* that will be doubled *l'asid lavo*. (*Drashos Chasam Sofer*, Vol. I, p. 110)

Harav David Chai Abuchatzzeira, *shlita*, further explained: the letters *צא* are numerically equivalent to *אמן*. Therefore, we say the word "*tze'etzaeinu*" several times in this *brachah* in order to arouse the merit of answering amen right upon rising in the morning. (*Bnei Emunim* p. 88)

Answering Amen Saves from Gehinnom

"כי לא תעזב נפשי לשאול לא תתן חסידך לראות שחת" (מז י)

Tanna Devei Eliyahu (Zuta Ch. 20) says that *l'asid lavo*, the sinners in Am Yisrael who were thrown into Gehinnom will merit to be saved from it, and the gates of Gan Eden will even be opened to them, in reward for answering amen to the *Kaddish* that Dovid Hamelech will say. He writes: "...And Dovid says [*Kaddish* of] *Aggadah* in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and the *tzaddikim* answer *Yehei Shemo Hagadol Mevorach l'olam ul'olmei olamim* in Gan Eden, and the sinners of Am Yisrael answer amen from Gehinnom. HaKadosh Baruch Hu says to the angels: 'Who is answering amen from Gehinnom?' They say to Him: 'Ribbono shel Olam! They are the sinners in Yisrael who, although they are in Gehinnom, in dire straits, are still strong and say amen in front of You.' HaKadosh Baruch Hu says to the ministering angels: 'Open Gan Eden for them, and they will come and sing in front of Me,' as it says (*Yeshayah 26:2*): '*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim,*' – do not read it *emunim*, rather *she'omer amen*."

Harav Yechezkel Meir Mualem of Baghdad says that the words of the *Tanna Devei Eliyahu* are alluded to in the *passuk*: "נפשי לשאול לא תתן" as the last letter of each word combine for a numerical value of amen. (*Liktuei Imrei K-1, Parashas Noach*)

Only a Fool Is Lax About Answering Amen

"הבאישו נמקו חבורתי מפני אולתי; נעויתי שחתי עד מאד" (לה ו-ז)

Sefer Derech Moshe (Day 11) brings the story of a *chassid* who was killed by the king, and he came to his friend in a dream and told him that the punishment he received was because he did not answer amen to the *brachah* of *Hamotzi* that his young son made. The *Derech Moshe* derives from this that one who is lax in amen is punishable by death, but because HaKadosh Baruch Hu

In his *sefer Aleph Binah* (*Mizmor 34*), the Abir Yaakov explains that in Chapter 34 in *Tehillim* Dovid Hamemelch sang about the great virtue of *Kaddish* and answering amen. Following are some of his words:

Rejoice with Answering Amen

"בה' תתהלל נפשי ישמעו עונים וישמחו" (לד)

This *passuk* teaches us about the great virtue of answering amen after *Kaddish*, and that is why the final letter of the words 'תתהלל בה' is numerically equivalent to amen. The *passuk* is explained: "*B'Hashem tis'hallel nafshi*" – when I praise Hashem by saying *Kaddish*, then "*Yishme'u anavim veyismachu*" – the עונים [the words עונים and עונים have the same letters] rejoice with the mitzvah of answering amen that they have merited.

Protection and Salvation in the Merit of Amen

"חנה מלאך ה' סביב ליראיו ויהלצם" (לד ה) is numerically equivalent to amen, and the acronym of א-ד-ני סביב ליראיו is also numerically equivalent to amen, to allude to us that for answering amen, a person merits to special *shemirah* both in this world and in Olam Haba.

How Good Is Hashem

"טעמו וראו כי טוב ה' אשרי הגבר יחסה בו" "*Ta'amu ure'u*" – when you will be strict and you will see the tremendous virtue of *Kaddish* and amen, you will conclude from that "*ki tov Hashem*," Who gave them to you to protect you and watch over you. Therefore "*ashrei hagever*," praised is the man who will be strict to have faith in Him, and to do His will. An allusion that this *passuk* is about the virtue of answering amen is that the words "יחסה בו" are numerically equivalent to amen.

does not strike lives first (*Vayikra Rabbah 17 4*), the person is decreed to suffer poverty and a poor person is like a dead person, as *Chazal* say (*Nedarim 62b*), *ani chashuv kemeis*.

The Rav of Chevron, Rabbi Eliyahu Salman Manny, brought an allusion to this from the acronym of the words of the *passuk*: "מפני אולתי" – which form amen, as if the *passuk* is testifying about the harsh punishment that some who acts like a fool and ignores the obligation to answer amen brings upon himself. (*Kranos Tzaddik, Ch. 3:27*)

Be Strict to Answer Amen According to Halachah

"ולרשע אמר אלקים מה לך לספר חקי ותשא בריתי עלי פיך" (נטז)

Harav Avraham Naftali Hertz Scheir, the Av Beis Din of Mainz, explained:

The *Gemara* (*Brachos 47a*) explains that the life of a person is dependent on answering amen according to *halachah*, for better or for worse, as they say: "One who answers an amen *yesomah* [without knowing what the *brachah* is] – his sons will be orphans, a *chatufah* [not correctly pronounced] – his days will be snatched from him, and *ketufah* [that he swallows one of the letters] – will have his days plucked away." In contrast, one who is strict to answer amen according to *halachah* is promised that he will live a long life – "anyone who prolongs his amen has his days and years prolonged."

In light of this it emerges that it is better for a person not to answer amen at all than to answer not according to *halachah*. This is what the *passuk* is alluding to: "*Ulerasha amar Elokim mah lecha lesaper*," what do you have to say the praise of Hashem in the shul, when you go daven you do not make sure to answer amen properly, and you transgress "*chukai*" – My laws? The word חקי is an acronym for חטופה, קטופה, יתומה – and if so, it is better that you should not "*tisa brisi alei picha*," do not speak of My covenant on your lips. (*Turei Zahav Shir Hashirim 4:8*)