

VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly
Pamphlet
From
"Bney
Emunim"



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

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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

For His Piety, Grant Us Water

”זרם משה את ידו ויך את הסלע במטהו פעמים ויצאו מים רבים ותשת העדה ובעירם” (כ יא)

In *Tefillas Geshem*, we ask in the merit of Moshe: “Remember the one who was drawn in from the water in the *teivah*... give water to the sheep... he hit the stone and water emerged – in his piety please grant us water.” From the words “*al hasela hach*” it appears that the intention of the poet was the Mei Merivah in this *parashah*, and not the hitting of the *tzur* in Refidim, which was commanded by Hashem. And the question is asked: Wasn’t hitting the *sela* considered a sin by Moshe, for which he was punished that he did not enter the Land? Why then do we mention this incident when trying to evoke the *zechus* of Moshe Rabbeinu when we ask for water?!

Harav Yitzchak of Vorka explained: The reason Moshe did not speak to the rock, the way he was commanded, was in order to prevent a *kitrug* on Klal Yisrael. HaKadosh Baruch Hu instructed Moshe to extract the water from the rock with the power of his speech, so that Bnei Yisrael should learn a *kal vachomer*: Just like this rock that does not speak or hear and does not need *parnassah* fulfills the command of Moshe, how much more so must we” (*Rashi* 20:12). Afraid that Am Yisrael would not learn this *kal vachomer*, and thus a *kitrug* would arise against them, Moshe chose to hit the rock, a sin for which he was not allowed to do what he wanted most – to enter Eretz Yisrael. For such *mesirus nefesh*, it is worth it for us to ask – “*betzidko chon chashras mayim*, for his piety, grant us water.”

Tiferes Shmuel [Alexander] Va'eira

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Pay Attention – I’m About to Make a *Brachah*!

There is no need to emphasize the importance of making sure to answer amen whenever we hear a *brachah*. Everyone knows that the obligation to answer amen is an explicit *halachah* in *Shulchan Aruch* (215 2): “One who hears any person in Am Yisrael making one of the *brachos*... must answer amen after him.” At the same time, sometimes, the *brachah* is heard when we are doing something, and without realizing, we do not answer amen to it. This can happen more than once or twice throughout the day.

But lack of attention does not exempt us from the obligation to answer amen. There is a famous story about Harav Mordechai Yaffeh, the Baal Halevushim, that is brought in *Derech Moshe* (Day 11). When he inadvertently didn’t answer amen to the *brachah* of the young son of a certain wise man, the sage excommunicated him and rebuked him for the severity of what he had done – not answering amen to a *brachah*, even one recited by a child.

I thought to suggest, therefore, that anyone who is going to make a *brachah* should first call the attention of those around him to the fact, and thus he will invite them and encourage them to answer amen to his *brachah*. As a matter of habit one can say, even in the middle of a conversation or while he is doing something: “I’m going to make a *brachah*...” and then immediately launch into the *brachah*. It is unbelievable how

many amens will get added by doing this, and of course, that will also elevate the *brachah* itself to *shleimus* as it will be answered by amen!

The idea is not my own. *Chazal* also instituted in the *nusach* of *Kaddish* that the *chazzan* should instruct the *tzibbur*: “*V'imru amen!*” These words are not part of the requests in *Kaddish*. Rather, it is a directive to the *tzibbur* to answer amen after the requests uttered by the one saying *Kaddish*. Just like the one saying *Kaddish* urges the *tzibbur* time and again “*v'imru amen,*” likewise, the *mevarech* should make sure to update those around him that he is about to make a *brachah* and that they should listen and say amen.

By way of *remez*, we can advise the words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 6b): “Any person who has *yiras Hashem* has his words heard,” in other words, every *yerei Shamayim* makes sure that his *brachah* is heard by those standing near him, so that they should answer to his *brachah*.

Let us be strict to make all our *brachos* when they are heard by those who are around us and completed by them with amen, and may this *zechus* advocate for us that we see much *brachah* and *hatzlachah* in all our affairs.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Reb Yosef, a tremendous *talmid chacham* and *yerei Shamayim*, lived in the city of Beshankovichy in the Vitebsk district of White Russia.

Reb Yosef was one of the eminent disciples of the Baal Hatanya, and he would visit the court often, first in Lyozna, and later in Liadi, both of which are in White Russia.

For many years, Reb Yosef sat and learned undisturbed. In time, he was widowed, leaving him alone, as they did not have children.

When Reb Yosef came to Liadi after his wife's passing, the Rebbe asked him if he was proficient in *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah* by heart. Reb Yosef responding in the affirmative. Learning *Mishnayos* by heart was one of his regular *sedarim*. Upon hearing his response, the Rebbe raised his eyes, looked at Reb Yosef and said: "*Mishnah* has the same letters as *neshamah*... marry a wife and you will merit a son." Then the Rebbe added something that was hard to understand: "For the sake

Without realizing it, he found himself murmuring to his visitors: "I don't want to. I have to be a wagon driver." The guests opened their mouths in shock, and hurriedly departed. "Reb Yosef has lost his mind," they said to one another worriedly and continued on their way.

A few days passed before Reb Yosef mustered up the courage to go from his house to the wagon driver market. He stood there, ashamed, in one of the corners, and was almost ready to go home, but with tremendous fortitude, he remained standing in his place. Suddenly, one of the wagon drivers noticed him. "Oh, Rebbi!" he called, "where would you like to go?"

Reb Yosef stammered weakly: "I don't want to travel anywhere. I came here to learn how to be a wagon driver." The wagon driver gaped at him: "What do you mean, Rebbi?"

"I've decided to become a wagon driver," Reb Yosef answered in a small voice.

"A wagon driver?" the man guffawed. "Hey everyone, have you heard? Reb Yosef wants to be a wagon driver!!"

Reb Yosef, who had never exchanged more than a few words with a wagon driver from the market, found himself standing in the middle of the group of rowdy drivers, who were joshing loudly about the best show in the city. Ultimately, after sustaining tremendous humiliation, Reb Yosef

was able to find a quiet, older driver, who agreed to teach him the work. And so, he had to wallow in the mud, to dirty his hands with tar, to exert his meager energies in unsuccessful attempts at changing wheels, and bruising his body as he tended to the horses.

But Reb Yosef remained firm. In exchange for his pious wife's string of pearls, he bought a wagon and a horse, and after he was able to hold the reins in a decent fashion, he set out on his new job.

Reb Yosef's life changed drastically. Although he did not waste a moment of time, and even while driving he continued to learn *Mishnayos* by heart,

still, he replaced his regular seat in the *beis medrash* with the seat of the wagon driver, and he spent his days plying the muddy roads.

The mouth that had never been used to idle speech had to talk about subjects relating to the ways, to the prices. His hands that had learned only to turn pages of holy *seforim* had to tend to animals. His ears, used to absorbing *divrei Torah* and deep Chassidic concepts, had to hear the nonsense of the passengers he carried.

One day, Reb Yosef happened upon an inn, where the owner connected him to a Jewish merchant staying at the inn who was heading to the same destination as Reb Yosef.

"Tomorrow morning, I will depart after *Shacharis*," the wagon driver, Reb Yosef, said to the merchant. The man ignored him. "What time?" he asked, and meant to allude: I don't daven and your *tefillah* is not my business. "I have to know what time you want to leave so that I should have time to eat and drink beforehand," he added.

Reb Yosef, who sensed the mockery of the merchant, asked: "And davening?" "I leave the davening to you," the man answered indifferently. "I manage fine without it." Reb Yosef looked at him in reproof. "How is that possible? A Jew who does not daven?"

The merchant pointedly ignored his question. "Wake me up an hour before we have to leave," he asked the innkeeper and headed for bed. His sleep did not last long... At midnight, he woke up from cries heard in the next room. The cries gave him no peace, and he got up and went to check what the issue was. The cries came from behind the door to the wagon driver's room. The light of a small candle danced in the corridor, and through the door, he could hear the words of *Tikkun Chatzos*. The elderly wagon driver was weeping over the *galus* of the Shechinah... Understanding dawned in the merchant's mind.

The merchant stood rooted to his place. The pleasant voice penetrated the depths of his heart, and awakened dormant memories of his father's house. He did not move from his place until the morning, and even after *alos hashachar*, he remained standing behind the door, listening to the *Birchos Hashachar* and the fiery *tefillas Shacharis*.

When the innkeeper awoke early in



The Jewish cemetery in Beshankovichy, Belarus

of your *neshamah*, you would be better off being a wagon driver than a Rav." He did not explain.

Reb Yosef returned home, and when a suitable *shidduch* was suggested, he hastened to agree, as his Rebbi had instructed. His joy was indescribable, when, as the Rebbe had promised, he merited to have a son.

About ten years passed, and the Rebbe passed away. One day, a delegation knocked at Reb Yosef's door; they had come from the community of Lyepyl, and they bore a *ksav rabbanus*. At first, Reb Yosef was going to accept the offer, but suddenly the Rebbe's words from the distant past began to hammer in his head: "For the sake of your soul, I advise you to be a wagon driver..."

Words of the *Mevarach* Are Accepted With Answering Amen

Rav Moshe Yakar Ashkenazi explained the virtue of the one answering amen, and the reason why he is greater than the *mevarach*, as *Chazal* say (*Brachos* 53b):

When a person seeks to convey a message to a group of listeners, they might doubt his words, and not accept them. But when there are those in the audience who join him and confirm his words, the words are accepted by the listeners without a doubt. So we find that affirmation of the words is effective in getting them accepted by the listeners, moreso than just saying them.

This is what answering amen does. With the *brachah*, the *mevarach* seeks to increase the *kavod* of Hashem, to bless Him and coronate Him. But accepting the words in the hearts of the listeners depends on their confirmation, meaning the amen after the *brachah*. Therefore, the virtue of the one answering amen is greater than the *mevarach*. Rav Moshe adds that just like a person is happy to see that there is someone who joins in his words and affirms them, likewise, when a person answers amen to the *brachah*, there is *simchah* generated in *Shamayim*, because through this, the words of the *mevarach* are better accepted and affirmed. Therefore, in the *tefillah* of *Yehi Kevod*, the *passuk* “*Yehi kevod Hashem l’olam yismach Hashem bema’asav*” (*Tehillim* 104:31) was placed next to the *passuk* “*Yehi Shem Hashem mevorach mei’atah v’ad olam*” (ibid 113b), to instruct: When will “*yismach Hashem bema’asav?*” When “*Yehi Shem Hashem mevorach*” – when the listeners fulfill the *brachah* through answering amen after it. (*Pesach Einayim* [Constantinople 311] p. 7).

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the morning, he was stunned to see his guest standing in the corridor, his hair mussed, and his eyes filled with tears. After the davening, the merchant abandoned his plans. “Show me the path to *teshuvah!*” he fell at Reb Yosef’s feet pleadingly.

Answering Amen Is Compared to a Pinch of Salt

In order to bring the person’s heart closer to the determination by *Chazal* that one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarach*, even though amen is merely one word, in contrast to the *brachah* that has many words and praises, Rav Moshe compares the amen to a pinch of salt added to a dish. He says that “the

Rav Moshe Yakar Ashkenazi

We have very little information about the life Rav Moshe Yakar Ashkenazi, author of *sefer Pesach Einayim* and *Marah Lekeshet Haneshamah*. He was apparently a member of a family from the sages of Ashkenaz that traveled to Turkey, where he printed his works in the year 5311. It should be noted that the Rema mentions *sefer Pesach Einyanim* in his *sefer Darchei Moshe* (*Orach Chaim* 25 3).

brachah without answering amen is like a bland dish without salt.” Much like the pinch of salt makes a large dish worthy of eating, and without it, the dish will be bland and tasteless, likewise, the amen – despite being just one word – it completes and fulfills the *brachah*, even if the latter has many words. Therefore, “Just like the salt is the *ikkar* despite being so little, the amen is small yet it is the *ikkar*.” (*Pesach Einayim* ibid)

From there, the two traveled to Lubavitch, to Rav Duber, the older son and successor of the Baal Hatanya. The Rebbe spoke with the fresh *baal teshuvah* for many hours, and then called Reb Yosef and said to him: “You merited to bring back an errant

From Answering Amen to the Rest of the *Mitzvos*

Aside for the *sefer Pesach Einayim*, Rav Moshe Yakar Ashkenazi also printed words of *hisorerus* on a large placard, with the heading “*Marah Lekashet Haneshamah*.” This remarkable page was meant to be hung on the walls of the house, and its name alludes that in contrast to a glass mirror, which is meant to adorn the body, this “mirror” is meant to adorn the soul. At the end of the “*Marah Lekashet Haneshamah*,” Rav Moshe Yakar writes that just like a person seeking to become wealthy can achieve his goal only if he acts wisely, and takes step after step, in a measured way, so, too, one who wants to ascend the Har Hashem, and to submit himself to the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*, must do this in a slow, calculated manner. Therefore, at the beginning of his path he must be strict about answering amen according to halachah, because this is a *mitzvah* that can be fulfilled easily, without any monetary outlay. “And he should be persistent at this *mitzvah* for some time, until it is as sweet to him as honey and nectar,” and then he can advance to be strict in other *mitzvos*, one *mitzvah* after another.

This is what Shlomo Hamelech referred to in *Mishlei* (2:4-5): “If you seek it like silver, hunt for it like treasure, then you will understand *yiras Hashem*.” When the quest for acquisitions matches the quest for money – step after step, only then “will you understand *yiras Hashem*.”

And Rav Moshe concludes his words with a question about those who are lax about answering amen: “How is it possible that he should negate such great *avodah*, which takes no effort and costs no money?!”

Jewish soul to its Source, and you have fulfilled your role as a wagon driver. Now you can go back to the *beis medrash*...”

Hachozrim B'Teshuvah [Rav Y. Klapholtz] p. 345

Shaarei Yeshuah

The Segulah of Answering Amen

Moshe W. experienced wondrous *Hasgachah pratis* in the merit of answering amen. Following is his story, as brought in the *Hashgachah Pratis* pamphlet (*Re'eh* 5780):

In my parents' home, we were very strict about answering amen. My mother, *shetichyeh*, absorbed this practice from her parents, and she instilled it in us, her children, at every opportunity. My mother often enjoyed telling her grandchildren and grandchildren, *kein yirbu*, that one of the first words that their parents taught them to say was the word 'amen.' I, their youngest child, was also raised this way, and I try to convey the tradition to my children, among other ways by recounting this story that happened to me when I was a child.

That morning, the regular rotation between my siblings who would take me to preschool, got messed up. My sister was supposed to take me, but for some reason, she mistakenly thought it

was a different sister's turn. In addition, everyone had gotten up late that day. So with the pressure and confusion that characterize the daily routine of getting out to school, I remained sleeping peacefully in my bed.

My mother, who obviously wasn't aware of the fact that I was still sleeping, also got ready to leave the house. But suddenly, she turned back, filled a cup with water, and began to make the *brachah* with *kavanah*: "*Baruch Atah... shehakol nihiyeh bidvaro.*"

She just about put the cup to her lips and from the other side of the house she heard a thin voice reply, "Amen!"

Apparently, I had just woken up, and when I heard my mother's *brachah*, I answered amen right away, as she'd taught me to do at a very early age.

At first, she was alarmed. She wasn't expecting anyone to be home at this hour – least of all me. And it quickly dawned

on her that Moishe'le, her little two-year-old, had almost been left alone at home!

She hurried to my room and gave me a warm hug, with tears of relief flooding her eyes.

Just the thought of what could have happened if not... She shuddered. A little rambunctious boy who loved to climb up and look at the street from the window, and had been caught doing so numerous times... This child would have been left alone at home for hours, with the windows open and unbarred – it would have been a recipe for disaster, *R"l*.

We can just imagine what would have happened if she would not have heard my amen. We can imagine what would have happened if she would not have ingrained in us the *halachah* stated in the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 124 7): "And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a child answers amen, he has a share in *Olam Haba.*"

The Amen Alarm That Saved Them from Catastrophe

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The gravesite of Rabi Eliyahu Meni in the ancient cemetery in Chevron

Harav Eliyahu Meni

8 Tammuz 5659

Rav Eliyahu Meni, the Re'em, was born to his father, Rav Saliman, in 5581 in Bagdad. As a youth, he was one of the select group of scholars in Yeshivas Midrash Abu Menashe, headed by his *rebbe muvhak*, Rabi Abdallah Somech, who in time became his brother-in-law when Rav Eliyahu married his sister. In addition to learning *Toras Hanigleh*, he set certain times to learn *Toras Hasod* together with Rav Eliyahu, the father of the Ben Ish Chai.

In 5617, he came to Yerushalayim, where he joined the *lomdim* in the Beis Medrash Lemekubalim Beis E-I. The Rosh Yeshivah, Rabi Raphael Yedidya Abulafia, referred to him as the "lion that came from Bavel."

In 5618, he moved to Chevron and in 5625 he was appointed Rav there, a position he held until the end of his life. In Chevron, he established the Bais Yaakov shul and *beis medrash*, where he conducted the *tefillos* according to the practices of the Ari Hakadosh.

The Re'em authored his first *sefer*, *Siach Yitzchak*, which includes *mussar* and *halachos*, in 5608, and from then, he kept writing prolifically. He merited to author 140 *seforim* in all parts of Torah, and he placed them for safekeeping in Yeshivat Porat Yosef in the Old City of Yerushalayim. In 1948, when the Old City fell into Jordanian hands, his manuscripts disappeared.

Among the *seforim* that were printed were: *Maaseh Eliyahu* and *Tanna Devei Eliyahu*; *Michtav M'Eliyahu* – an exchange of letters with his disciple the Ben Ish Chai; *Zichronos Eliyahu* – a collection of *halachos* in the order of the *aleph-beis*; *Me'il Eliyahu* – an explanation on *Sha'ar Hakavanos*; *Mazkir Shalom* – *chiddushim* on the Torah of the Arizal and *Kisei Eliyahu* – an introduction to the *chochmas haniSTAR*.

The Re'em passed away on Thursday 8 Tammuz 5659 in Chevron and he was buried in the ancient cemetery in the city.

Wait with Anticipation for Every Amen

In his *sefer Siach Yitzchak* (*Sha'ar Ha'ahavah*) Rabi Eliyahu Meni, the Rav of Chevron, dedicates a special chapter to the tremendous obligation to answer amen after every *brachah*. This is the first part of this chapter:

It says (*Yeshayahu* 26:2): "*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim,*" and the holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) explains: "Don't read it *emunim* but rather *amenim.*" And the *Zohar* explains that the reason the *passuk* says: "*Shomer amenim*" and not "*oneh amenim,*" is because the word "*shomer*" in this *passuk* is derived from the term of waiting and anticipation, as it says (*Bereishis* 37:1): "*V'aviv shamar es hadavar,*" meaning that Yaakov waited with anticipation for the realization of Yosef's dreams (as *Rashi* explains there.) And the intention of the *passuk* is to instruct that from when a person hears a *brachah*, he should abandon all his affairs, and he should not even be engaged in Torah, but rather he should stand and wait with anticipation to answer amen according to *halachah* for the *brachah*, the way a guard (*shomer*) does not do anything else.

A person must know that answering amen is not beneficial for someone who utters it without any *kavanah* and thought of his heart. Amen is also from the term *emunah*, and what value is there for someone who says he believes that what the *mevarech* is saying is the truth, without putting any thought into what his mouth is uttering?

The holy *Zohar* describes the punishment of one who does not have *kavanah* when answering amen, and certainly of one who is lax and scornful about answering amen. Therefore, a person should fear the day of judgement and should repent and be strict to answer amen according to *halachah*, and instead of being lax about amen, he should be strict not to lose even one amen, even for a *brachah* that is said by a small child.