

# VeChol Maaminim

A Weekly  
Pamphlet  
From  
"Bney  
Emunim"



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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

### Placing Shirah Before Teshuah

”כי תצא למלחמה על איביך ונתנו ה' הק אלקיך  
בידך ושבת שבינו” (כא י)

**Rabbeinu Ephraim** explained: The previous *parashah*, *Shoftim*, concludes with the words “*ki sa'aseh hayashar b'Einei Hashem*.” The letters of הישר are the same as שירה, and from the fact that that *passuk* is placed next to this one teaches us “that we need to say *shirah*, praise, for *teshuah*, salvation.”

**Harav Yehonasan Binyamin Cohen, Av Beis Din Solish**, explains the intention of Rabbeinu Ephraim that the placement of these two *pesukim* teaches us that the song should be said before going out to war, in the order the *passuk* arranges them – song and then war. This is because preceding the *yeshuah* by song indicates the validity of the *emunah* of the one who is singing, and leads to the arrival of the *yeshuah*, as the *passuk* says about King Yehoshafat (*Divrei Hayamim* II 20:22): “And at the time they commenced with song and praise, the Hashem placed liers-in-wait against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who were coming to Yehudah, and they were struck down.” And the *pesukim* are explained: “*Ki sa'aseh hayashar*” – when you first say “*shirah*” at the time “that you go out to war,” then it is guaranteed that for this, you will see the fulfillment of “and Hashem will give him to your hands.”

Rav Yehonasan adds that he saw something his Rebbe, the Yitav Lev of Sighet, did on Shavuos 5642. The Jews of Hungary were going through

a notorious blood libel; it took place in the village of Tisa Aslar, but threatened all of Hungarian Jewry. When they sat down for the Yom Tov meal with the Rebbe in the *beis medrash*, a person came in and told them joyfully that the disgusting plot had been proven a lie. The Rebbe, who sensed that the *yeshuah* was still far away, replied, “Let us say *shirah* for the *yeshuah* that is destined to come.” Indeed, the libel grew and branched out, and the danger mounted for the incarcerated, accused Jews, and Hungarian Jewry in general, for more than another year. But ultimately, at the end of a long and exhausting trail, the accused were acquitted of all the charges.

**Rav Tzvi Yitzchak Abramowitz**, the Rav of Chatzor Haglilit, added another explanation for the closeness of these two *pesukim*:

הישר is numerically equivalent to תפלה alluding to the words of Chazal (*Brachos* 3b, based on Rashi and *Meromei Sadeh* *ibid*) that even though Am Yisrael would go out to war based on the Urim Vetumim, before they went out they would go to the sages of the Sanhedrin and ask them to daven for their success.

*Peirush HaTorah leRabbeinu Ephraim; Nefesh Yehonasan; Ta'am Hatzvi*

### 100 Brachos for the Ba'al Teshuvah

”וענשו אתו מאה כסף ונתנו לאבי הנערה כי הוציא  
שם רע על בתולת ישראל” (כב יט)

The **Ohr Hachaim** *hakadosh* explains this *passuk* to refer to the one who sinned by being lax in Torah learning – which is betrothed

to Klal Yisrael like a woman who is betrothed (*Pesachim* 49b) – with the claim that the Torah does not bring enough *parnassah* to those who learn it, and therefore, he is *motzi shem ra* on the Torah. When he repents with complete *teshuvah* for his sin, the Torah instructs: “*V'anshu oso meah kesef*” – he has to be very strict to recite 100 *brachos* a day. The Ohr Hachaim proves that the *ba'al teshuvah* has to be especially strict about keeping this quota of one hundred *brachos* a day by the fact that Chazal (*Menachos* 43b) attributed the obligation of the *meah brachos* to the *passuk* (*Devarim* 10:12): “*V'atah Yisrael ה [א] מ Hashem Elokecha sho'el m'imach*,” and in this *passuk* there is a special appeal to *ba'alei teshuvah*, as Chazal say (*Bereishis Rabbah* 21:6): “The word ‘*v'atah*’ denotes *teshuvah*.”

But based on this we need to understand why the *passuk* called the obligation to say *meah brachos* a punishment – “*v'anshu oso meah kesef*”?

**Harav Baruch Shimon Schneerson, Rosh Yeshivas Tchebin**, explained:

When the one who repents is strict to thank Hashem, he brings his heart closer to all the blessings that Hashem bestows on him and blesses Him for it a hundred times a day, and right away, his innards afflict him and he is filled with shame and regret for sinning against the One Who was so benevolent to him, and rejecting His Torah, and these *yissurim* are his punishment.

*Birchas Shimon*

Like the *brachos* that Chazal instituted for us to bless Hashem are completed and fulfilled by answering amen, likewise, every good wish and blessing said from one person to another is fulfilled by answering amen. Even when we receive a *brachah* that appears to be impossible according to nature, we have to quickly answer amen to it, with the faith that Hashem can do anything, and if He wants, then even a *brachah* that contravenes nature can be fulfilled.

The Ramban says on this subject (*Bereishis* 18:15) that even though Sarah Imeinu did not know that those telling Avraham about the birth of Yitzchak were angels, Hashem told Avraham (*ibid* 13): “Why did Sarah laugh...” because she should have answered amen after their words even if they seemed to her to be impossible.

Therefore, aside for the many times each day that we merit to fulfill our obligation to answer amen with *kavanah* to the *brachos* said around us, we have the practice of being strict to answer amen to every *brachah* and

Reb Kasriel was very scrupulous about the mitzvah of answering amen and as stated, not only to *brachos* and *tefillos*, but also to *brachos* that he was blessed or that others were blessed.

When Rav Kasriel reached the age of 80, HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave him the privilege of seeing a fourth generation of his offspring. When he heard the news of his great-granddaughter’s birth, he could not contain his excitement, and he began to murmur words of gratitude: “*Hodu l’Hashem ki tov*, what am I and what is my life! Who would have been able to hope and pray that after the horrible terrible years, I would merit to establish such a beautiful family, and *baruch Hashem* to see a fourth generation!”

On Shabbos, the *kiddush* was scheduled to take place, and Reb Kasriel could not allow himself to miss it. He made great effort to participate, and to be there when the name was called. When his bent over figure appeared at the entrance to the shul, he was showered with *brachos* – “have lots of nachas”, “merit many more good years”, “health and abundance until 120,” and such *brachos* and good wishes, and after each one, Reb Kasriel took care to answer amen with *kavanah*, as he was used to doing.

The same thing happened during the *kiddush* that took place after *Mussaf*. Reb Kasriel was strict to answer amen after all the *brachos* that the guests and *mispallelim* showered him with. Towards the end, when a few of his grandchildren began clearing the tables and putting the

*shtiebel* back in order, an old friend, a distinguished and elderly Jew, came over, shook his hand warmly and said, “Reb Kasriel, I have special *brachah* for you: I give you a *brachah* that you should merit to participate in the wedding of this new great granddaughter, and you see her led to the *chuppah* with joy and good health!” Reb Kasriel, who had received multitudes of *brachos* over the day, listened, but for some reason, instead of answering amen, he smiled kindly and waved his hand in dismissal, as if to say: this is a *brachah* that is not valid. The old friend did not give up. He repeated the words of the *brachah* with sincerity, and with a slightly different wording, but this time, as well, Reb Kasriel did not pay too much

attention to the *brachah*. He wasn’t so healthy anymore, and he’d been through so much suffering in his youth, which was taking a toll, that his friends’ wishes seemed detached from reality.

Later, when Reb Kasriel came to the Shabbos meal, he was filling his cup to wash, and thought again about his friend’s *brachah*, and suddenly he was filled with regret. He did not understand what had happened to him this time, and why he had not answered amen as he usually did, after this friend’s heartfelt *brachah*!?

Reb Kasriel felt bad, but he could not undo that which had been done.

Years passed. Reb Kasriel grew older, but he did merit *arichus yamim*. He remained sharp and lucid as always and continued to attend *simchos* of great grandchildren born one after another. His oldest granddaughter grew older, and became *bas mitzvah*, and received a warm *brachah* and a gift from her emotional great grandfather.

In the years after that, his physical condition declined steadily: his legs no longer carried him. One day, when he felt that his end was nearing, he mustered up his energy and asked to call his children and grandchildren so that he could part from them and give them a *brachah*.

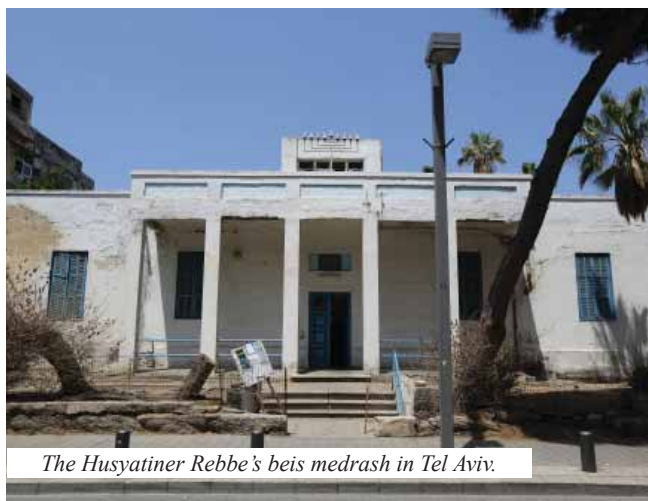
His dozens of offspring came from all over the country. The room was packed, and Reb Kasriel opened his tired eyes and studied each of his children and grandchildren with a *nachas*-filled gaze, until his eyes rested on his oldest great granddaughter.

Suddenly, he turned to his son, and said: “Tell me, how old is your oldest granddaughter?”

“She’s sixteen,” the son replied, somewhat puzzled. He had no idea why his beloved father was thinking about his great granddaughter’s age at particularly this time.

“Ach,” Reb Kasriel sighed quietly, “and my friend blessed me that I should merit to be at her wedding...My heart tells me that if only I would have answered amen after him, despite the fact that the *brachah* didn’t sound realistic to me, I would have been *zocheh*...”

Some time later, Reb Kasriel left this world, leaving a rich expansive spiritual legacy to his descendants, along with a tremendous message: When one receives a *brachah* from another Yid, even one that seems to be completely unreasonable, answer amen with *kavanah*, because amen has the power to change the reality and upend nature.



The Husyatiner Rebbe's beis medrash in Tel Aviv.

good wish that others bless us with. This story, told to us by the family of the person it happened to, shows us to what extent answering amen is important even to the blessing of one to another, and even to a *brachah* that appears impossible according to nature.

Reb Kasriel, a G-d fearing Yid and a *talmid chacham*, was one of the dignified *chassidim* in Tel Aviv, which at the time was filled with scholars and scribes. Reb Kasriel davened in one of the Chassidic *shtieblach* established in Tel Aviv after the Holocaust, and quickly became the live spirit in the place.

We have the privilege in this column of speaking to the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein. In addition to spearheading the Bney Emunim revolution in Israel and around the world, he himself serves as a *gabbai amen* in the Brizdovitz Shul in Brooklyn, NY.

Readers of this pamphlet are used to reading his message that appears on the first page each week. But this week, in honor of his father's *yahrtzeit* – the man who Bney Emunim is named for – we asked him to share with us the sense of mission that has accompanied him since his father's passing 21 years ago on 13 Elul 5763.

## Rav Yaakov Dov, how did it all begin?

“It all began at home! My father, *ztz”l*, was a man who was infused with a sense of mission and *mesirus nefesh* of *kavod Shamayim*. Nothing could subdue his love of and *dveikus* to Torah and *mitzvos*. His *emunah* in his Creator was deep and strong, despite all that he went through in his life. These traits all were manifested in the special practice that characterized him – his scrupulous adherence to the *mitzvah* of answering amen, which is the fundamental of *emunah* and an uncompromising expression of *mesirus nefesh*, because as we know, amen is an acronym for: *Ani Moser Nafshi*.

“Throughout his life, my father urged his children and grandchildren to recite *Birchos Hashachar* in his presence so that he could answer amen to them. This practice was very precious to him and he did not desist from it until his final day.”

## Did your father, *ztz”l*, explain the reason why he cleaved to this *mitzvah*?

“The truth is that for years, I didn't really delve into it. We were born into this practice, and we accepted it at face value. But after his passing, I learned the secret. It was about twenty years ago, when we took a trip to visit the places we came from, as a family. We arrived in the town of Sec, in Romania, where my father's grandfather Rav Yaakov Dov

Marmurstein, who I am named for, is buried. When I saw the inscription on his *matzeivah*, the words jumped out at me: “He lived 91 years.”

The significance of 91 needs no explanation for anyone who has crossed the threshold of answering amen. So when I saw this, I presumed that the family at the time did not make the effort to add this random tidbit that this grandfather had died at the age of 91. At the time, it was not customary to mark the number of years that a person lived on his *matzeivah*. There is another reason, which is that apparently, the Zeide Reb Yaakov Dov was careful about answering amen, which, as per the words of *Chazal* (*Brachos* 46a)



Nasi of Bney Emunim Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, in the Brizdovitz shul in Boro Park.

extends the life of a person. His sons found a way to allude to this on the *matzeivah* for generations to come.

“Suddenly, in one minute, it became so clear...I understood where my father Rav Chaim Bentzion, *z”l*, the grandson of Rav Yaakov Dov, had drawn the awe and special holiness that he did for answering amen, and his strictness to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar*.”

## Your father's *yahrtzeit* is on 13 Elul. What is the significance of this day for you?

“This day is a time to delve into a lesson, to think about the power of one Jew's actions. The fire that burned inside him enveloped and continues to envelop tens of thousands of people to follow in his ways. Many who have this custom do not know perhaps that it is in his merit, but On High, everything is known. We can say that this is what *Chazal* had in mind when they say (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1): “Anyone who answers amen in this world merits to

answer amen in Olam Haba.” Being strict to answer amen is a practice that is public, because a person cannot answer amen behind closed doors. One who is strict to answer amen sets the path and conveys this to others, and they learn from him and follow his ways, and that is how he continues to answer amen in Olam Haba.”

## Each day, Rav Marmurstein spends nearly three hours answering amen to *Birchos Hashachar* of many *mispallelim*. We wonder how it happens, and how this dedication works in reality.

“I don't sit in one place, I go around in the shul from one *mispallel* to the next, from one Yid to the next, like a wealthy man running after business deals...Answering amen is my business, and as part of that business, I look for more and more people who have not yet said *Birchos Hashachar*, and give them a *zechus* by answering amen to them.

“People who are new to the shul, and do not know me, so I offer my services...I can say to one: The custom here is that I hear *brachos* from each person, and to another person I can say something else, all depending on who the asker is and what he is asking. Most of the *mispallelim* see me in action and they realize themselves that there's a Yid here who is collecting amen, so they approach me on their own...”

## Isn't it hard for you, day after day, to stand for long hours and answer amen?

“Hard?” Rabbi Marmurstein wonders. “I can't describe what I feel during those moments when a Yid says *Birchos Hashachar* so I can hear. I can't explain what amen gives me... These are moments of lofty spiritual pleasure, that I merit to be this direct 'pipeline' to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

“Sometimes, when I'm hearing *Birchos Hashachar* from someone, I shed a tear of emotion. I can't describe the feeling. Only someone who has merited to do it themselves knows what I'm talking about. Imagine, if I wouldn't be here to answer amen after him – the *brachos* of this Yid would not be complete! Can you imagine the greatness of this *zechus*?!”

# ”לדוד ודור נודה לך ונספר תהלתך”

The custom of saying *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* in a way that the *mispallelim* make the *brachos* aloud one after another, and everyone answers amen to the *brachos* of each and every one, was established in the days of the Bais Yosef (*Shaarei Teshuvah Orach Chaim* 6 5). From then on, throughout the generations, *gedolei Yisrael* have held this custom very dear. Following are selected quotes and practices in order of the generations, from the Bais Yosef until our generation:

## The Bais Yosef

“Some have the practice that after one recites *Birchos Hashachar* and the others answer amen after him, one of the *onim* amen then makes the *brachos* and people answer amen to him, and in this order, all those who originally answer amen do this [make the *brachos*.]” (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 6 4)

## The Ari Hakadosh

“It is written in the name of the Arizal (*Ohr Tzaddikim* 6 2) that he would hear *Birchos Hashachar* from the *mevarchim* in the shul, and even if there were one hundred, he would answer amen after them.” (*Shaarei Teshuvah* ibid)

## The Rema MiPano

“And it is good to institute that the *shaliach tzibbur* should recite *Birchos Hashachar* aloud...Not only that, but friends who sleep together in one room should rise early to recite *brachos*, each one for himself, and his friends should answer amen...And that is the *din* for those who make the *brachos* in the shul, and one after

another to give the merit to the many who are there to answer amen together.” (*Shu”t HaRema MiPano* 109)

## The Baal Shem Tov

“Each person in Am Yisrael, especially someone who has a precious soul, should say *Birchos Hashachar* in shul, in order to give Am Yisrael the merit of answering amen, and the Baal Shem Tov did this as well.” (Introduction to *Ohr Einayim*, Vol. II, *Klal* 21)

## Yesod Veshoresh Ha’avodah

“*Birchos Hashachar*...it is good to say them in order in shul with the rest of the *tefillah* so that others can answer amen after the *brachos*, because the virtue of the *brachah* is very great when amen is answered after it.” (*Yesod Veshoresh Ha’avodah, Sha’ar Ha’ashmores* Ch. 10)

## The Shevet Halevi

“It says in *Sefer Chassidim* (261) that a mitzvah that is neglected and there aren’t many people involved in it, and likewise a *masechta* that people do not learn

regularly, is like a *meis mitzvah*, and a person should strengthen and grasp onto this mitzvah and this *limud*, specifically.

“There was an ancient custom in Am Yisrael that they would say all the *Birchos Hashachar betzibbur*, and the order of *brachos* before ‘*Hanosein Lasechvi Binah*’ and onwards. And the whole *tzibbur* would make the *brachos* together, one made the *brachos* and his friend answered amen, and then they would switch, the second one made the *brachos* and the other one answered to them. This custom was forgotten in recent times, and our *chashuve* friend Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *Hy”u*, merited to grasp onto this tree of life of *zikkui harabbim* with his work to strengthen the answering of amen, and in his desire to review and reestablish this ancient mitzvah, and it is considered that ‘they have forgotten them and then reestablished them.’” (*Sefer Bney Emunim* p. 227, from his address to the Bney Emunim event Elul 5770)

# Birchos Hashachar K’Halachah

Aloud

With Kavanah

Bechavrusa

Join the  
revolution!

Fellow Yid! Join the hundreds of *mezakei harabbim* who come early to shul to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from other *mispallelim*.



*L’ilui nishmas* Rav Chaim Bentzion ben Reb Aharon Tzvi Marmurstein, *ztz”l*

Who was strict all his life about the *minhag* of *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*

On Monday, 13 Elul, the day of his *yahrzeit*, millions of amens said as part of Bney Emunim activities in his memory will be dedicated as an *aliyah* for his *neshamah*.

