

# Ve chol Maaminim

A Weekly  
Pamphlet  
From  
"Bney  
Emunim"



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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

### The Woodcutter Who Converted

”טפכם נשיכם וגרך אשר בקרב בחניך מחטב עציך עד שאב מימיך” (כט י)

There was a story about a gentile woodcutter in the city of Prague who happened to be doing his work near the window of the room of the Noda B'Yehudah who was saying *Tehillim* with great fervor. The *pesukim* of *Tehillim* said with holy fire penetrated the heart of the woodcutter to the extent that he decided to convert.

Harav Menachem Mendel Shapiro, the Rav of Dragomirești, offered an allusion from this *passuk* regarding this: “*Vegercha asher bekerev machanecha – meichotev eitzecha....*, and the convert that is among your camp – from your woodcutters.”

Moaznei Tzedek

### Weakness Is the Root of Failure

”חזקו ואמנא אל תיראו ואל תערצו מפניהם כי ה' אלקיך הוא ההלך עמך לא ירפך ולא יעזבך” (לא ו)

Simply, “*lo yarpecha*” means that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will not weaken His guarding of us. But Rashi explains: “Hashem will not give you [cause for] weakness [resulting] from your being forsaken by Him.” The *Minchas Elazar* explains the meaning of this:

When weakness and despair spread through the heart of a person, he actively brings upon himself abandonment. It can be compared to a sick person whose doctor diagnoses him with a severe and terminal disease, and the patient may deteriorate simply from the despair that envelops him as a result, even if it turns out in the end that the doctor was mistaken in his diagnosis and his disease is curable.

This is what the *passuk* is saying: Not only will HaKadosh Baruch Hu be with you, and will not leave you *chalilah*, but He will not allow you to reach the state of weakness that will cause you to harm yourself, actively and “be forsaken by Him.”

Imrei Davash [Rav D.B. Schwartz] p. 149

## Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### May Our Merits Be Multiplied Like the Pomegranate

We are on the threshold of a new year, and our hearts are filled with hope that it will be a year of an abundance of goodness and *brachah*. “May the year and its curses end, may the new year and its blessings begin.”

We have been through a difficult year. Our enemies – and from day to day we realize how many there are – are determined to annihilate us. On the approaching Days of Judgement, let us all gather in the shuls, raise our eyes Heavenward, and pour our hearts out with the confidence that “*v'Atah tishma min haShamayim*, and You will hear us from Above.”

In order for our judgement to be decided for the good, we must multiply our *zechusim*, and our request on the night of Rosh Hashanah is “that our merits should be multiplied like the pomegranate, the *rimon*.” During these days, like throughout the year, it is in our hands to multiply the merits easily. And not just regular merits - but merits of amen, of which there is nothing greater before Hashem, as the *Midrash* says in *Parashas Ki Savo* (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1): “There is nothing greater in front of HaKaodsh Baruch Hu than amen that Am Yisrael answer.”

There is something special about answering amen during these holy days, when we coronate HaKadosh Baruch Hu as our King. Because what more suitable merit is there ahead of the Yom Hadin than

the *zechus* of answering amen, whose essence is coronating HaKadosh Baruch Hu, as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 119b): “א-ל מלך נאמן – What is amen –”

Dear Yid! Tomorrow morning, when you go into shul, open your eyes and look around at the many Jews reciting *Birchos Hashachar*. Why should you not also lend an ear to hear the *brachos*? Treasure troves of amens are scattered all around you, and with a small investment you can add merits and tip the scales in your favor because of those many amens.

If that is not enough, then the fact that you have mustered up the “*oz l'Elokim*,” and approached a friend to ask him to say his *brachos* for you, causes a great *chizuk* in the circle of people around you. As a result, others will be inspired to do the same, and there is no more significant meaning to the request of “*sheyirbu zechuyoseinu*” than this, because how many amens will be said in your merit, over the coming years – there is no end to it!

If we are all strict to answer amen with all our strength, we will merit to have the *passuk* “*goy tzaddik shomer emunim*” said about us, and through that we will merit to be sealed in the book of *tzaddikim geumurim* for a good and sweet year. Amen.

With wishes for  
a *kesivah vachasimah tovah*,  
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

Harav Yaakov (Jacob) Joseph, *ztz"l*, was known as the Rav Hakollel, the Chief Rabbi, of the city of New York, and his fame spread far and wide. Even before he was chosen to serve as the Rav of New York, he was known as a giant in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. Already as a *bochur*, when he learned in Volzohin Yeshivah, the Netziv referred to him as a 'charif' and from then, he was known as Reb Yankele Charif.

As one of the eminent *talmidim* of the father of the *mussar* movement, Harav Yisrael of Salant, Rav Yaakov Joseph invested a lot of energy in imbuing the importance of learning *mussar*. His riveting *drashos* attracted large crowds, and they were filled with deep *mussar* thoughts as he had learned from his rebbi.

Rav Yaakov Joseph served as Rav in prominent *kehillos* in Europe, until he was appointed to serve as the Rav and *maggid* in Vilna, the largest Torah center of Lithuanian Jewry.

About five years later, there was a turnabout in Rav Yaakov's life.



The matzeivah of the Chief Rabbi of New York Rabbi Yaakov Joseph in Union Field Cemetery in Queens



The Chief Rabbi of New York Rabbi Yaakov Joseph, *ztz"l*

The *parnassim* of the fifteen central communities in New York united and sought a Rav who could lead their communities at a time when spiritual decline was spreading. They wanted to bring a notable Torah figure from Europe who would draw the Jews of New York to him and would establish religion on its feet in their city, much in the fashion of other communities throughout the world.

Upon the recommendation of the *gedolim* of that generation, the Jews of New York reached out to Rav Yaakov Joseph, who, despite his young age, had already become famed as a *gaon* and a gifted speaker – which was a vital trait for the complex position of leading the new Jewish world in America.

Rav Yaakov Joseph agreed to leave his position in Vilna, and forego his

lofty status, to take upon himself this prominent but weighty position. He thought that by doing so he would be able to influence the Jewish community in Greater New York, and to prevent the spiritual decline that was gnawing away at its hundreds of thousands of Jews.

Rav Yaakov Joseph's acceptance thrilled the Jews of New York. Upon his arrival at the port, he was welcomed royally, as masses came out to greet him and escort him from the port to the beautiful home that had been prepared for him.

At first, he was treated with utmost respect. His *drashos* draw large crowds, and were even published in the media at that time, to great acclaim. But when he wanted to make necessary changes in religious issues, and to supervise the *shechitah* and *kashrus*, which were being managed in a very lax manner and needed extensive reforms, he began to absorb a lot of criticism.

At first, the ones who came out against him were those called "rabbis" but in reality were derisive people who

until then had felt like the patrons of all Jewish issues in New York. Now they were afraid for their *parnassah* and their honor. Later, many laymen joined them, as they wanted to continue their lives as they had been, without the burden of

Torah and *halachah*.

The fire of discord was kindled and spread to huge proportions, until Rav Yaakov Joseph clearly saw that he was not able to effect anything. He closeted himself at home, humiliated, and his physical health declined from day to day. During those bitter times, Rav Yaakov Joseph once burst into weeping and said to those close to him: "Know, that the Bais Halevi of Brisk, aside for being a tremendous *gaon* in Torah and a *tzaddik* in all his ways, was also very wise and was able to foresee things. Woe to me that I did not heed the words of this *gaon* and *tzaddik*, when he advised me not to go to America and not to take upon myself this position as Rabbi of New York."

However, it was hard for the people of New York to give up the Rav's wonderful *drashos*. They kept urging

him to return to giving his speeches, but his health precluded him from doing so.

Then came Shabbos Shuvah. The *gabbaim* of the central shul of New York came to him and asked the Rav to please delivered a *drashah* to the community.

To their surprise, the Rav acceded, and the news spread rapidly that this coming Shabbos, the Rav, the gifted orator, would be speaking in the shul.

Thousands of people streamed to the shul that Shabbos. Many of them had not seen the Rav for a long time, and were shocked at his appearance. The Rav was carried on a chair up to the stage.

They expected to hear a fiery *drashah*, but were very surprised when he began to speak in a feeble voice: "The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* says..." And then he tried again: "The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* says..." He said this a few times and then fell silent.

Rav Yaakov was horrified to discover that he could not remember the Rambam, and he remained sitting on his chair, and then suddenly, as if infused with strength, he burst out in a heart-wrenching wail:

"Rabbosai, I have forgotten what the Rambam says! Even though I was famed as a *baki* and *charif* in all parts of Torah, I have forgotten the words of the Rambam that everyone knows.

"Look! Look at how a person ends up! I am a living example for you – take this *mussar* and do *teshuvah* while you still can – it is not yet too late! Repent before you get to days when – despite wanting to remember and wanting to do *teshuvah* – you will not be able to!"

Rav Joseph finished his short words and burst into bitter tears, which swept up with it the masses that had come to hear him. It was said that Rav Yaakov Joseph effected more in that one short Shabbos Shuvah *drashah* than in his entire tenure as Chief Rabbi of New York.

That same year, on 23 Tammuz 5662, Rav Yaakov Joseph passed away. Tens of thousands of Jews from New York gathered to pay their final respects.

He served as the first and last Chief Rabbi of New York, and his memory remained in the hearts of the city's Jews – and they even established a yeshivah in his name, Rabbi Jacob Josef, RJJ, which exists to this day in New Jersey.

### Teshuvah for Not Answering Amen

One of the obstacles for one seeking to repent is his natural focus on the sins that in his eyes appear to be very significant, and ignoring the sins that in his eyes seem minor (see Rambam, *Teshuvah* 4 4). An example of this is the sin of being lax about answering amen, as some perceive this as being a minor sin.

But we have to know that considering not answering amen a minor sin is a mistake. The holy *Zohar* in this *parashah* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) expounds on the punishment of one who is lax about answering amen, and as a result, the *mekubal* Rabi Meir Hakohein Papirash wrote that one should do “*teshuvah gedolah*” for this sin. He wrote (*Ohr Hayashar* 7:18-19):

**“One needs *teshuvah gedolah* for not answering amen – and even if he only did not answer one time – meaning when he heard a *brachah* even for a fruit, or that his friend made a *brachah* on a mitzvah, and certainly in the *tefillah* of the *sha”tz*...and in *Viduy* of *Ashmanu* that he says each day he should shed tears for those amens that he did not answer.”**

### Teshuvah Nefesh

Some 350 years ago, in the year 5437, a *kuntress* was published in Lublin entitled *Teshuvah Nefesh*, and the content was a *tikkun* of *teshuvah* for someone who has missed answering even one amen. The identity of the author is not known because he concealed his identity and signed: Teshuvah Nefesh ben Dovid of the *kehillah* of Vogliev. Only one single copy of this *kuntress* survived, and it is in the library at Oxford University, and even that copy is only a partial one. Even if it is hard to follow the *tikkun teshuvah* that the author lays out, from the few pages that remain of this compilation, we can derive how serious the sin of not answering amen is, to the extent that the loss of even one amen requires a special *tikkun*. (*Kesser Meluchah* p. 47)

### Amen – The Beginning of Teshuvah

The Rosh Yeshivah Harav Aharon Kotler would say that the beginning

of *teshuvah* needs to be specifically with the good actions that we already do – by being strict to do them properly. This is possible by paying a bit of attention, especially to things that a person tends to trample with his heel and be lax about, even though they are very serious. For example, answering amen: there are so many *halachos* about this, and everyone knows how strict *Chazal* are (*Brachos* 47a) about answering amen improperly, and it is possible to understand from this how serious is the sin of one who completely neglects answering amen. (*Mishnas Rav Aharon, Ma’amarim* Vol. II p. 80)

### Amen Opens the Gates of Teshuvah

Harav Shlomo of Karlin said regarding the words of *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 119b) that “anyone who answers amen with all his strength has the gates of Gan Eden opened for him,” that the word “*poschim*,” open in the present tense, because the “gates of Gan Eden” are the gates of *teshuvah*, and *Chazal* taught us that in reward for answering amen with all his might, the gates of *teshuvah* are opened for him “and he tastes in this world the pleasure of Gan Eden and Oalm Haba.” (*Bais Aharon Bereishis, Haggadah Shel Pesach*, ad loc. *Halachma Anya*, for Rosh Hashanah, ad loc. *Kesiv veyashuv*.)

In his letter to the editorial board of this publication Harav Gamliel Hakohein Rabinowitz, author of *sefer Gam Ani Odecha*, alluded to the fact that amen opens the gates of *teshuvah* because the acronym of the words that open the *brachah* of *teshuvah* in *Shemoneh Esreh* סלח לנו אבינו are numerically equivalent to amen.

### Complete Teshuvah in the Merit of Answering Amen

The *Shomer Emunim* explained the *passuk* “*shuvah Yisrael ad Hashem Elokecha ki kashalta b’avonecha*” as follows: “שובה” is an acronym for “ברוך הוא וברוך שמו.” “ישראל” is an acronym for “יהא שמיה רבא.” And the Navi alludes that by being strict to answer amen, *baruch Hu ubaruch Shemo* and *yehei Shemei Rabba*, then you will draw down a great light that can reach, with your

*teshuvah* “*ad Hashem Elokecha*.”

That is also why the Navi calls (*Hoshea* 14:3): “*Kechu imachem devarim veshuvu el Hashem*.” “*Kechu imachem*” to your treasuries, “*devarim*” words of *kedushah*, that by being strict to say them aloud and with *kavanah*, the gates of *teshuvah* will be opened before you and “*veshuvu el Hashem*.”

The *Shomer Emunim* writes very moving words on this: “If a person will be careful about all the details of amen and *yehei Shemei Rabba* brought in this *ma’amar* (*Ma’amar Pischu Shearim*, in *sefer Shomer Emunim*), then without a doubt he will have a great *tikkun nefesh*, more than a few thousand fasts, without measure. And his soul will be tied to the *Shoresh Ha’Elyon*, and he will remove the rust and the detritus from his soul, his spirit and his *neshamah*.”

*Shomer Emunim, Ma’amar Pischu She’arim* Ch. 14

### Answering Amen That Led to Repentance

The famed *mashpia* Rav Eliyahu Roth, the close confidant of Harav Shlomo of Zhvill, would constantly galvanize his listeners about the importance of saying *Birchos Hanehenin* aloud. In one of his *shmuessen*, he spoke of a Yid who did *teshuvah* because of this practice:

Reb Eliyahu regularly went each day to a small kiosk near his home to have a drink and to make a *Shehakol* in a loud voice to the seller, a Jew who was far from Torah and *mitzvos*. After some time of doing so, the seller made a *cheshbon hanefesh*: If such an important Jew comes here each day and makes a *brachah* out loud, then it is not fitting that I should stand here with a bare head and I shouldn’t answer amen. He obtained a *yarmulke* for himself, and since then, whenever Reb Eliyahu made the *brachah*, he covered his head and answered amen. This practice had a great influence on his soul, and it didn’t take too long before he did *teshuvah sheleimah*. So there we have an example, Rav Eliyahu concluded, that by saying a *brachah* aloud we can change a Jew’s life completely and bring him closer to Hashem.

*Ish Chassid Hayah [Biography of Rav Eliyahu Roth]* p. 230



### The Mishnah Halachos

29 Elul 5771

Harav Menashe Klein was born in 5683 in the vicinity of Ungvar, Ukraine, to his father, Rav Eliezer Zev, who served as Rav in the town of Irlyava.

At the bris, held on 8 Nissan, the Minchas Elazar was the *mohel*, and he suggested to the father to call his baby Menashe, for the Nasi of *shevet* Menashe who brought his *korban* on that day.

As a child, he learned under his father, and in 5692, he began to learn in the yeshivah of the Av Beis Din of Ungvar, Harav Yosef Elimelech Kahana, who also appointed him to deliver *shiurim* in the yeshivah.

On Erev Shavuos 5699, he was taken, along with his whole family, to Auschwitz, where he was separated from his parents, who were sent to the crematoria, while he was sent to labor, and that's how he was spared.

After the war, he traveled to America, and established the Ungvar community in Boro Park. In 5743, he initiated the establishment of Kiryat Ungvar in the Ramot neighborhood of Yerushalayim. He planned to make aliyah to Eretz Yisrael when it was finished being constructed, but he was delayed and only moved in 5769.

Aside for his role as rosh yeshivah in Bais She'arim, which he established in America, he was known as a *posek* and tremendous *gaon*. The Rebbe authored dozens of *seforim*, most notably the series of responsa *seforim* entitled *Mishneh Halachos*.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah 5772 he passed away, and in accordance with his will, he was laid to rest in the ancient cemetery in Tzefas, near the place where his grandfather Rav Amram Chisda, *ztz"l*, is buried.

### Answering Amen Is Like Making Two Brachos

Rav Avraham ben Shushan, a *talmid* of the Rosh, explained (*Avudraham Tikun Hatefillos V'Inyaneihen*) that with the power of *tefillah*, a person merits that from Above, all his sustenance is provided with abundance. A number of the *brachos* in *Shemoneh Esreh* allude to this *segulah*. In each one of the three *tefillos* of *Shemoneh Esreh* said each day there are 19 *brachos*, and together that makes 57 or 57 *brachos*. From here we learn that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is 57, He sustains a person in the merit of *tefillah*.

Rav Avraham Ben Shushan added that one who davens with the *tzibbur* can accumulate 57 *brachos* in each one of the *tefillos* of the day! How? When he davens in a whisper, then he has 19 *brachos*. In *Chazaras Hasha"tz*, he accrues another 19 *brachos*, according to the *din* of "*shome'a k'oneh*" (*Sukkah* 38b), and when he answers amen after the *sha"tz*, each *brachah* is considered another one.

Based on this, the *Mishneh Halachos* explains why *Chazal* said that "the *oneh amen* is greater than the *mevarech*," because the *mevarech* accrues only one *brachah*, while the one who hears the *brachah* and answers amen accrues two *brachos* – one according to "*shome'a k'oneh*" and the other through the strength of answering amen (*Shu"t Mishneh Halachos* Vol. II, 66)

### A Brachah Without Amen

In order to illustrate the words of the *poskim* that answering amen is what fulfills the *tefillah*, the *Mishneh Halachos* brings a comparison to sewing: "One who makes a *brachah* and there is no amen answered after it, is like one who sews a garment but does not make a knot at the end of the stitching. Just like in sewing, without the knot the stitches will unravel, and it is like he only did half a job, likewise with answering amen, which concludes the *brachah*. If amen is not answered after the *brachah*, it lacks the seal that holds it together." (*Shu"t Mishneh Halachos* Vol. 15, 42)

It's interesting to note in this context that *Sefer Hanavon* by one of the *chassidei* Ashkenaz explains that answering amen ties the *brachah*, literally: *Chazal* say (*Shemos Rabbah* 21:4) that the angel appointed to the *tefillos* makes crowns from the *tefillos* that Am Yisrael daven "and puts them on HaKadosh Baruch Hu's Head." The author of *Sefer Hanavon* adds that through answering amen, the *brachos* of the *tefillah* are tied to the Higher Crown and do not fall, as he says "and anyone who answers amen after the *brachah* of *tefillah* is making a knot to the *atarah* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. And if there is no knot, then every single letter of every word of the *tefillah* will fall from the *atarah*." (*Kovetz Al Yad* 16 [1] p. 220).