

Ve chol Maaminim

A Weekly
Pamphlet
From
"Bney
Emunim"



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah
in the Parashah

Get Used to Davening with *Yishuv Hada'as*

“ואמר אלהם שמע ישראל אתם קרבים היום
למלחמה על איביכם אל ירך לבבכם אל תיראו ואל
תחפזו ואל תערצו מפניהם” (כ ג)

Rashi cites the words of *Chazal* (*Sotah* 42a) that the warnings of the *Kohein* of “do not soften your hearts do not be afraid...of them,” are meant against the various actions that the nations of the world take during war in an effort to cast fear and terror in the hearts of their enemies.

The *Avnei Nezer* explains that the “*kohein mashuach milchamah*,” who is anointed especially only to carry things ahead of the nation when they go to war, was given a special strength “that his words should be so effective in the hearts of the listeners that they will not be afraid and they will not get confused, rather they will stand and fight calmly with all their strength.”

His son, the **Shem MiShmuel** added that this is the purpose of blowing the shofar in the month of Elul: On Rosh Hashanah, we have to daven with *kavanah* and with *yishuv hada'as* in order to prevail over all the hostile prosecutors that want to prevent our *tefillas* from being answered. Therefore, from Rosh Chodesh Elul, as we get closer to the war, we are called with the shofar that we blow each day to calm our minds during davening, because the concept of the *tekiyas* is *yishuv hada'as* as it says (*Tehillim* 89:16): “*Ashrei ha'am yodei teruah*” and not “*tokei teruah*”. Thus, we will enter Rosh Hashanah used to davening with *yishuv hada'as* and *kavanah*, and through this we will defeat the hostile elements that rise up against us.

Shem MiShmuel 5678

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

On Guard to Answer Amen

This *parashah* begins with the *passuk*: “*Shoftim veshotrim titen lecha bechol she'arecha*,” which instructs us to appoint judges to administer justice to the nation, and policemen to be in charge of carrying out the rulings of the judges.

This is indeed the simple meaning of the *passuk*, but in the *hesped* for someone who volunteered to arouse the public to be strict about answering amen, the Ga'avad of the Eidah Hacharidis, Harav Moshe Aryeh Freund, explained that this *passuk* is about the obligation to appoint in each shul people like the *niftar*. He said:

“*Shoftim veshotrim titen lecha*” – appoint in each shul faithful people whose job will be to supervise and to urge the people not to speak during davening, but rather to listen to the *brachos* and to answer amen them. These people cause the opening of “*kol she'arecha*” all the gates of Gan Eden to the *mispallelim*, and thus they will be able to go in and merit the share “that Hashem Elokecha gives you” in Olam Haba, as *Chazal* say (*Shabbos* 119b): “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength – has the gates of Gan Eden opened to him.” (*Ateres Yehoshua Parashas Shoftim*)

Indeed, it is fitting for every shul and every *minyán* to have one person who volunteers on a regular basis to rise early to come and answer amen. Many volunteer for all types of *chessed* initiatives, and help the public in an array of ways, so why should this type of volunteerism be lacking? With answering amen after *brachos* of others, we do a *chessed* with him by completing his *brachah* and

fulfilling it. Moreover, the power and *segulah* of amen are very well known, and if so, raising awareness and being strict about this mitzvah will undoubtedly serve as protective umbrella for us all, and will prevent the need for other types of volunteering.

The concept of volunteering to answer amen is an early one, and it is mentioned in *Shiras Devorah*: The meaning of the *passuk* (*Shoftim* 5:2) “*behisvadev roshei am barchu Hashem*” is explained by *Chazal* (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabba* 11) as referring to those who volunteer to rise and bless HaKadosh Baruch Hu by answering amen.

A person who is on guard each morning to listen to *Birchos Hashachar* of *mispallelim* and to answer amen after them accumulates for himself countless amens, and at the same time, arouses the public to be strict about answering amen. Such a person is crowned by *Chazal* with two crowns of greatness, because aside for saying: “There is nothing greater in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu than the amen that Yisrael answer” (*Devarim Rabbah* 7 1), they also add about him “*gadol hame'aseh yoser min ha'oseh*,” one who causes others to perform [*me'aseh*] a meritorious act is greater than one who performs that act himself (*Bava Basra* 9a).

Fellow Jews! Hundreds have already jointed the guard to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar*! Join them and you will merit to be crowned with two crowns of greatness!

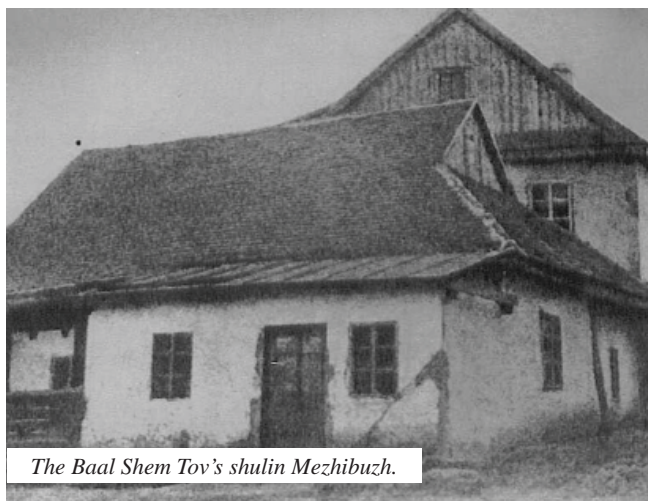
Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

The small town of Mezhibuzh, Ukraine, has become famous for being the cradle of *chassidus*, and the home of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement. But why did the Baal Shem Tov settle specifically there? The surprising reason was heard by Rabbi Yoske of Mezhibuzh from his grandfather, the Degel Machaneh Ephraim, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, and he related it to those who followed him.

In the town of Mezhibuzh lived a tremendous *talmid chacham* named Reb Berish Byelaus. Reb Berish was both learned and erudite, as well as wealthy.

He learned full time, and his great wealth came from his wife's work, as she successfully managed a large textile business. The businesses' reputation spread far and wide, and all the residents of the area would purchase their fabrics there.

One day, the position of Rav of Mezhibuzh became available. At the



The Baal Shem Tov's shulin Mezhibuzh.

time, the districts in each region were controlled by noblemen and *poritzim* who did what they wanted, and the *poritz* in that district had his eye on this position and he wanted to put it up for auction and sell it to the highest bidder.

Reb Berish's Rebbetzin knew that her husband was worthy of filling this position, and she unhesitatingly hurried and deposited a large sum of money with the *poritz*. In exchange, the *poritz* gave her a document that he signed that the right of the *rabbanus* in the city was granted to her husband, and all the Jews of the city had to submit to his authority.

With the signed document in her hand, she hurried to the *parnassim* of the city, and they knew that there was no one more worthy of Reb Berish, and quickly appointed him Rav of the city.

The *hachtarah* took place in pomp and ceremony, and the new Rav delivered a beautiful *drashah*. At the end of his words. The new Rav surprised his community by announcing that very soon, they would begin building a new shul, funded by the Rebbetzin. This shul would replace the old crumbling shul in which the *mispallelim* of Mezhibuzh had been davening in for centuries.

A few months passed after Reb Berish's *hachtarah* as Rav, and the building of the new shul was completed. The *tzibbur* began to daven there. But then, suddenly, Reb Berish fell deathly ill and the doctors in the town found nothing to cure his ailment.

The Rebbetzin did not give up. She reached out to top doctors in the country and paid them a fortune to travel to Mezhibuzh to her husband's besides. But they were also not able to do anything and they clasped their hands helplessly.

Distraught, she decided to travel to Brod, where the Baal Shem Tov was living at the time; he had gained renown as a holy person who effects *yeshuos* in this world.

Reb Berish was not a *chassid*, but because, as part of her business, the Rebbetzin had visited Brod a few times, she had learned about the *tzaddik* who lived there, and had even been to his home to merit his *brachah*.

When the Rebbetzin arrived in Brod she hurried to the Baal Shem Tov's house. With tears rolling down her face, she shared her woes, and pleaded to the *tzaddik* to daven for a *refuah* for her deathly ill husband.

The Baal Shem Tov heard her words and said: I am ready to try on behalf of your husband, but in order to do that I will have to come to Mezhibuzh. The Rebbetzin quickly hired a special carriage and the Baal Shem Tov set

out on the long and tiring trip.

When the Baal Shem Tov came to Mezhibuzh, and was about to enter the sick man's house, he was told by the family that the Rav's situation had worsened, and these seemed like his final hours. The Baal Shem Tov was undeterred and hurried inside. When he came in and put his hand on the mezuzah, he called to the motionless patient: "Reb Berish, is this how you welcome guests? You need to come and greet a guest!"

Remarkably, the sick man proffered his right hand to the Baal Shem Tov. But the *tzaddik* did not take his hand off the mezuzah and continued with his questions: "Laying down? Is it polite to greet another while laying?"

The surprise mounted as Reb Berish, who was showing signs of death, began to slowly lift himself, until he was able to sit on the bed. Then, the Baal Shem Tov took his hand off the mezuzah and sat down near the bed.

A few moments passed before the *tzaddik* opened his mouth and said to the silent patient: Know Reb Berish, that there are two harsh prosecutions over your head right now. The first is that you accepted the position of Rav, even though it was not designated for you. You can fix that by forfeiting the rabbinate.

But the second one is harsher and harder, and that is because you brought about the abandonment of the old shul where the city's Yidden had davened for many years. Even though you built a new one in its place, the old shul did not forgive the offense, and came to complain to the Beis Din Shel Ma'alah that the old shul was still able to accommodate them for many years.

I have no solution for this *kitrug* – the Baal Shem Tov concluded – aside for moving from my own house in Brod to live here in Mezhibuzh, so that I can renew the *tefillos* in the old shul, as they had been.

Indeed, as the *tzaddik* said: Reb Berish gave up the *Rabbanus* right away and recovered. The Baal Shem Tov moved to live in Mezhibuzh and from the day of his arrival until his passing, the Baal Shem Tov davened in the old shul, and to this day it is called the "Baal Shem Tovl's shul."

Birchos Hashachar K'Halachah

Aloud

With Kavanah

Together

Eight Virtues Merited by Those Who Merit to Recite *Birchos Hashachar* in Shul, Together:



90 Amens for Brachos

The quota of 90 amens that need to be answered each day can only be accrued by amens answered to *brachos* and not for *Kaddish*. Because there is no one who hears ninety *brachos* a day in a regular day's routine, there is a practice to answer amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* said by other *mispallelim* as the right way to accrue ninety amens to *brachos* each day. (*Shu"t HaRema MiPano* 109; *Magen Avraham* 6:9; *Mishnah Berurah* ibid 13)



90 Amens Before Davening

From the holy *Zohar* (*Tikkunei Zohar Chadash Tikunah Kadma'ah* 41 2) it is evident that the quota of 90 amens that one must answer each day should be completed before *Shacharis*. Answering amen after *Birchos Hashachar* from other *mispallelim* is the most practical and convenient way to do this. (*Hagahos Bnei Abba* on *sefer Pesorah D'Abba* by the Maharch"u, *Inyan Birchos Hashachar* 6, in the name of the Ateres Tzvi of Zidichoiv)



Opening the Gates of Tefillah

The Rebbe Rav Aharon of Zhitomir wrote that when answering 90 amens before davening, a person opens "an opening for the *tefillah* to tender." He expounds that in order for the *tefillah* to rise On High, a person must open three gates, and by answering 90 amens before davening, these three gates are opened (*Toldos Aharon Shoftim*). As noted, the easiest way to meet this goal is to answer amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* of other *mispallelim*.



Brachos Are Fulfilled

The holy *Zohar* (*Eikev* 271 1) writes that only a *brachah* answered by amen is a *brachah* that is properly fulfilled. The *Nitzotzei Zohar* (ibid) refers to the words of Rabbeinu Bechayei

(*Shemos* 14:31), who compared the *brachah* to the testimony said by one witness and answering of amen to the second witness that joins him, and in whose merit the testimony is validated. Based on this, the *Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avodah* (*Sha'ar Ha'ashmores* Ch. 10) wrote: "*Birchos Hashachar*...it is good to say them in order in shul together with the rest of the *tefillah* so that others should answer amen after his *brachos*, because the virtue of the *brachah* that is answered by amen is very great."



Premium Brachos

The *Yalkut Me'am Loez* (*Mishpatim* p. 731) writes: "Chazal's words (*Chulin* 87a) that the reward of a *brachah* is ten gold coins is specifically when he says it aloud, as he is *mezakeh* the *rabbim* who answer amen (see *Shach Choshen Mishpat* 382 10), and this is the honor of Hashem to bless Him in front of many people, as it says (*Mishlei* 14:28): '*Berov am hadras Melech*.' And from here a person should learn to say *Birchos Hashachar* and the other *brachos* in front of others aloud, so that the *kahal* should answer amen."



Complete Brachos

Because answering amen is part of the *brachah*, it is therefore fitting *lechatchilah* that the *mevarech* should have in mind to be *yotzei* by the answering of amen that he hears from the *oneh*, and thus he will merit to recite a complete *brachah* (*Rema* 167 2 and *Mishnah Berurah* *se'if kattan* 20). The one making *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* merits to be *yotzei* the obligation of amen to his *brachos*, either by hearing the amen answered to his *brachos*, if he has in mind to be *yotzei* by hearing the amen from the *oneh*, or if he answers amen after the *Birchos Hashachar* heard by others. (*Teshuvos Vehanagos* Vol. 17)



Zikkui Harabbim

Saying *Birchos Hashachar* together contains an element of *zikkui*

harabbim: One who makes *brachos* aloud gives the one who answers amen a *zechus*, and the one who answers amen gives the *mevarech* the *zechus* of reciting a complete *brachah*. The *Pele Yoetz* writes (*Mezakeh*) that because the reward of the *mezakeh* is in accordance with the lofty level of the mitzvah with which he is *mezakeh* the other person, we find that one who is *mezakeh* his friend with the mitzvah of answering amen, about whose greatness *Chazal* expounded, then his reward is also very great.

On the other hand, the *Sefer Chassidim* wrote (820, cited in *Biur Halachah* 139 6) that when a person makes a *brachah* in a whisper, aside from withholding the *zechus* from others to hear it and answer amen, there is also a real sin here, because he is robbing them of the mitzvah of answering amen.



Revenge on Am Yisrael's Enemies

The *passuk* in *Shiras Devorah* after the triumph of Am Yisrael in the war against Sisera says: "*Bifroa pera'os b'Yisrael behisnadev am barchu Hashem*," (*Shoftim* 5:2) is explained by Eliyahu Hanavi (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabba* 11) as follows: "What did Devorah prophesize to Am Yisrael? She said to them: In whose merit does HaKadosh Baruch Hu take revenge on Am Yisrael from the nations of the world? In people who go to the *beis knesses* and *beis medrash* morning and evening and answer amen..."

The Be'er Moshe of Ozherov explained that when we focus on the words of the *passuk* "*behisnadev am barchu Hashem*" it appears that the main *segulah* that we have in the power of answering amen to extract punishment for those who hate Am Yisrael exists in the merit of those who volunteer to hear *brachos* that they are not obligated in. They answer amen to these *brachos*, like those "people who rise to the *beis medrash*" to answer amen after *mevarchim*. (*Be'er Moshe Shoftim* p. 165)

Dear Yid!

This is the time to take the initiative! Be among the *mezakei harabbim*, and come early to shul to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from *mispallelim* and merit to accrue the seven lofty virtues listed here.

One who is in the middle of a perek in Krias Shema and its brachos should not stop even to answer amen after the brachah of the *oleh l'Torah*.¹ But some hold that one should pause and answer amen both to the brachah said before the reading and the brachah said afterwards.²

1. *Pri Migadim* (ibid *Eshel Avraham* 6) and *Chayei Adam* (20 4), and the *Mishnah Berurah* concurs (ibid 18).

In *sefer Tzeidah Laderech* (*Devarim* 32:3) brings a *chiddush* that according to the *Ramban* (*Shichechas Ha'essin Aseh* 15) that *Birchas HaTorah* is a mitzvah from the Torah, and answering amen after it is also *min haTorah*. Because the obligation of *Birchas HaTorah* is derived by *Chazal* (*Brachos* 21a) from the *passuk* (ibid) “*Ki Shem Hashem ekra havu godel l'Elokeinu*” (*Brachos* 21a) and *Rashi* explains (ibid ad loc. *Ki*) that before Moshe began *Shiras Ha'azinu*, he instructed Am Yisrael: “*Ki Shem Hashem ekra*” – when saying *Birchas HaTorah*, you should “*havu godel l'Elokeinu*” – by answering amen after it. And according to the *Ramban* that his *drashah* of *Chazal* is a *drashah gemurah*, and not just a proof, an *asmachta*, just like the obligation to recite *Birchas HaTorah* is from the Torah, then the obligation to answer amen after it, learned from the same *passuk*, is also from the Torah.

The *Pri Migadim* (*Teivas Gomeh, Parashas Ha'azinu*) explains that even though according to the *Ramban*, the obligation of answering amen after *Birchas HaTorah* is from the Torah, as noted, still, one who is up to a place where he is not allowed to stop to answer amen should not stop to answer amen to this *brachah* either. Because most of the *Rishonim* differ from the *Ramban*, and hold that the obligation of *Birchas HaTorah* is *d'Rabbanan*, and likewise the answering of amen after it is only *d'Rabbanan*, if so, then *halachah* it's important to take their view into account and to answer amen after this *brachah* the way one acts when answering the rest of the *brachos* (and see *Mishnah Berurah* beginning of 47).

The *Tzeidah Laderech* holds (ibid; *Be'er Sheva Sotah* 41a) that the words of the *Ramban* that *Birchas HaTorah's* obligation is from the Torah, was only said regarding the *brachah* recited by one who is *oleh l'Torah* before the *kriah*, but the *Ramban* also concedes that *Birchas HaTorah* said after the *kriah*, and *Birchas HaTorah* that an individual recites in the morning are obligated only *d'Rabbanan*.

But the *Magen Avraham* (139 5) differs from the *Be'er Sheva* and holds that according to the *Ramban*, a person is *yotzei* his obligation from the Torah in *Birchas HaTorah* that he makes in the morning before learning, and the *brachah* that he then recites when reading from the Torah in public is only a *takanah* of *chachamim*, and that's how the *Mishnah Berurah* rules (ibid).

2. *Magen Avraham* (ibid 6). The *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (ibid 2) and the *Derech Hachaim* (*Dinei Krias Shema Ubirchoseha* 5) concur. Regarding the reason we pause to answer amen after the *brachah* of the *oleh l'Torah*, the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (ibid) explained that because the *oleh l'Torah* only makes a *brachah* if there is a *minyan* of ten, therefore, the *halachah* of answering amen after his *brachah* is like the *halachah* of saying *Kaddish* and *Kedushah*, which we stop for even in the middle of *Krias Shema* and its *brachos*. The *Tehillah LeDovid* (66 6) asked in light of this if one needs to stop to answer amen also after the *brachah* of *Asher Bachar Banu* said before the *kriah*, because there is place to say that it does not have the *din* of *Kedushah*, because even an individual says it each morning before learning, and he concludes that from the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* it is evident that we stop for this *brachah* as well, and the *Pekudas Elazar* (ibid 3) and *Piskei Teshuvos* (ibid 6) likewise ruled. The *Tehillah LeDovid* (ibid 3) also wrote that the *halachah* is that one should answer amen after the *brachos* of the *Haftarah*, which are also only said in a *minyan* of ten people.

Sefer Leket Hakemach Hachadash (ibid 12) explained that the reason that those who think that one stops to answer amen on the *brachah* of the *oleh l'Torah* is because there is an obligation from the Torah to answer amen to this *brachah*. But from words of the *Pri Migadim* brought in the previous comment it explained that one should not attribute to this the obligation of stopping to answer amen for the *brachah* of the *oleh l'Torah*.

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit

Virtue of Answering Amen

In his *sefer Mitzvos Hashem* (3:21), Rav Yonasan Steif speaks about the great virtue of answering amen:

“There is a virtue to answer amen after each *brachah*, as it says (*Brachos* 47a): ‘Anyone who prolongs their amen has their days and years prolonged.’ And they said (ibid 53b): ‘The one who answers amen is greater than the *mevarech*,’ because when answering amen after a *brachah*, he fulfills and strengthens the words said in the *nusach* of the *brachah*, as it says (*Shavuos* 36a): ‘*Amen bo ha'amanas devarim*,’ and likewise amen is an acronym for ‘*K-l melech ne'eman*’ (*Shabbos* 119b). *Chazal* also say (*Sanhedrin* 110b): ‘From when does a child go to Olam Haba? From when he says amen.’

“And it seems to me that there is a source for answering amen from what it says regarding the *Sotah* (*Bamidbar* 5:22): ‘And the woman says amen amen.’ And the holy *Zohar* was very strict not to nullify the answering of amen. And it seems that answering men is included in the mitzvah of ‘*v'Oso sa'avod*’ (*Devarim* 6:13).



The Jewish Cemetery in Shineva

Harav Yonasan Steif

9 Elul 5718

Rav Yonasan Steif was born to his father, Reb Tzvi, in the town of Gaya, Hungary (today in Slovakia) in Elul 5637. Already from an early age, he was known for his *hasmadah* and diligence. At the age of 11, he was sent to the yeshivah in Pressburg, led then by the Shevet Sofer, and he immersed himself in his learning there.

After his marriage to a girl from the city of Paksh, he moved there. Before the age of thirty, he was already appointed *dayan* in the town of Guta.

From there, he moved to Ungvar to serve as a *dayan*, and in 5683, he was appointed as the *Ra'avad* in Budapest.

After being spared the ravages of World War Two, he settled in New York, where he served as the *Rav* of *Khal Adas Yereim* – *Vien* and as vice president of the *Hisachdus Harabbanim*. Jews from New York streamed to him with questions in *halachah* and for guidance and counsel. His only son, Rav Tzvi Yehuda *Hy"d*, was murdered in the Holocaust, and Rav Yonasan learned 18 *perakim* of *Mishnayos* for his *neshamah* every day. Rav Yonasan authored *seforim* on all subjects of Torah: *Chadashim Gam Yeshanim* on *masechtos* in *Shas*; *Mahar"i Steif al HaTorah*; *Shu"t Mahar"i Steif*; *Mitzvos Hashem* on *emunah* and others.

On Monday 9 Elul 5718, he passed away and is buried in the Beth Israel Cemetery in Woodbridge, New Jersey.