

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly
Pamphlet
From
"Bney
Emunim"



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Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Baruch Hashem, we are *zocheh* to be going from strength to strength, and from the holiness of the Yemei Hadin, we enter Chag Hasukkos, to bask under the Wings of the Shechinah, as a continuation of the days when we prayed fervently to be remembered for goodness and *brachah*.

Although our decree is already rendered on Yom Kippur, the holy *Zohar* teaches (*Vayikra* 32 1) that the final decree is still in our hands, and we can change it for better, until the last day of the *chag*, Hoshana Rabbah, during which the "notes are given" to the angels who are in charge of carrying out the *din*.

This can be compared to a person who was put on trial before a king for a great sin that he sinned, and he has the threat of a death sentence hanging over his head. Throughout the proceedings in the court, witnesses were brought for both sides, and at the end the judges sat down to write their verdict. As long as the verdict is not issued to those tasked with executing the punishment, the man can still plead and cry for his life, "*lehashiv es haseforim*, to return the books" (*Esther* 8:5). But after the notes are given over to the executors, he no longer has hope. That is Hoshana Rabbah, when the notes are given to the ones in charge. As long as they are not given over, the person can work to have his decree torn up so that it can be improved.

How, then, can we have our decrees torn up and changed for the good? The holy *Zohar* reveals (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1) that one who answers amen is called by the *passuk* (*Yeshayah* 58:9) "*az tikra v'Hashem ya'aneh*" – and amen

has the power to tear up a person's decree. If so, if we will only strengthen our answering of amen during these days - we will merit to have Hashem answer our call, and the executors will be given good decrees to carry out – for the *klal* and for each individual.

How pleasant are words that are so fitting for the time, as Succos comes upon us and we enter the sukkah, which is the shelter of *emunah*. *Gedolei Yisrael* in past generations have said that סוכה is equivalent to אמן because during the days of the *chag* – named for the mitzvah of sukkah, Chag Hasukkos –we have to be strict to answer as many amens as possible. This is because amen has tremendous power to protect us and shelter us, like a sukkah, of which the *passuk* says (*Tehillim* 27:5): "*Ki yitzpeneinu besukko beyom ra'ah ya'stireinu beseiser ohalo*." The sukkah arouses us to the mitzvah of answering amen, as it tears up the decree that is given with finality on the final day of the Yom Tov – Hoshana Rabbah.

There is a remarkable similarity between the mitzvah of answering amen all year round, and the mitzvah of sitting in sukkah all the days of the Yom Tov. Just like the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah can be fulfilled at any minute of the seven days of the *chag* – day and night, likewise there is no limit or measure to the number of times we can fulfill the mitzvah of answering amen during every day of the year. While the *brachos* we have to make have limits, and they have to be said only at the right time, without being a *brachah levatalah*, regarding amen, the

An Easy Mitzvah Called Amen

strictness is the opposite – not to miss a single amen, and to seek out as many opportunities as possible to answer amen.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Avodah Zarah* (3a) describes what will happen *l'asid lavo*, when the nations of the world will see the reward that Am Yisrael receives for fulfilling the *mitzvos* of the Torah. At that time, they will complain to Hashem that they also want to do the *mitzvos*, and Hashem will tell them, "I have a very easy mitzvah, and it is called sukkah, go and fulfill it." But the *Gemara* then describes that at that time, Hashem will bring out the sun and shine down its heat "and each one of them will kick their sukkah and leave," and that's how the claims of the nations will be shut down...

Baruch Hashem, we love the mitzvah of sukkah very dearly. We make the effort to build it, we spend a lot of money to put it up according to halachah, and then we continue to adorn and decorate it, each one as they see fit. But, regarding the mitzvah of amen, which we said is numerically equivalent to סוכה and it is similar in the opportunity to be able to do it more and more – do we actually do it? It does not require resources or special conditions, but rather that we be a "*shomer amenim*"! It behooves us to make sure to be strict and to fulfill it with *hiddur*, so that we should not *chalilah* be considered one who "kicks the sukkah and leaves..."

And after our decree is rendered for good and handed over to those in charge, for a year of success, consolation and *yeshuah*, with the

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This remarkable story illustrates the virtue of reciting Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa what a powerful segulah it is. The story is based on a letter that we received, and we have the names and full details on file.

I am familiar with the human mosaic of 6:45 in the morning like the back of my hand, even if my eyelids are still sticky with sleep...

For more than twelve years, I have been following the same route, each and every morning, with the smell of dew and the morning chill, from my home on the main street of the city of Bat Yam, to the small shul on the outskirts of the city. Dozens of people come to the *minyan* from the whole neighborhood, and they are also familiar with the scenery at this particular hour. The trucks are unloading merchandise, the vans are picking up students, and gardeners are trimming hedges. It's all stable and familiar, and it runs smoothly without much change. And it could have continued this way.

But in the merit of twenty pivotal minutes, it all changed drastically, and that is what I want to tell you about.

On one routine morning, when it was not too hot, and also not foggy or cloudy, the angel of sleep parted from me earlier than usual. I decided to follow suit and to get up! I ended my night and began the day, and set out for shul twenty minutes earlier than usual. It was close to 6:30 in the morning, and the scene was different. The gardeners were not on the boulevard, the sprinklers were

not spraying and there weren't any student transportation vans quite yet. But the smell of the morning, I sensed, was clearer than usual.

When I entered the shul, I noticed a group of five people who had come early and were saying *Birchos Hashachar*, one to the other. Each member of the group recited the *brachos* slowly at his turn, and they all answered amen after him. It was a very interesting scene that surprised me. Even when davening was over, it still stuck in my mind. I approached one of the five and asked, 'Why do you do this? What's your story? Since when? For how long?' and in answer to my hail of questions he told me about one of the *mispallelim* in the shul whose daughter had been very ill. When the doctors had discussed her case, they could not muster up even cautious optimism... That Yid did not get drawn into the abyss of despair that could have readily drawn him in, and decided to revive the ancient custom of answering amen after *Birchos Hashachar*.

Now I was even more curious. 'And?' I asked, 'did she recover?'

'Yes!' the man grinned, 'completely!'

Amazing. I swallowed a lump of emotion and folded my tallis, and turned to take some water from the new cooler on my way to the door.

'Wait,' the man ran after me, before I merged into the human stream beyond the gate as I got ready to begin the rest of my day... 'As you've seen today, even after the girl's recovery, we have continued

this practice, and honestly, I can tell you that since then, I begin my day with answering amen after *Birchos Hashachar* from my friends – and my life has changed for the better, in every way.'

My cheeks twitched with a slight shudder, and the man continued excitedly: 'My wife and children have also seen clearly that my whole day has taken on a different, more positive dimension. I see *siyata diShmaya* in every step that I take in my business, and not only that, but also in every *chinuch* decision regarding my children. I will not be exaggerating if I tell you that I feel the Hand of Hashem accompanying me every step of the way.' I saw the nose of the bus reaching the stop, and my friend took a deep breath and began to run. He made the bus... of course!

I continued onwards, waiting patiently for the light to turn green. My thoughts were flashing around in my mind, red, yellow, orange and dismal black... Searing painfully in my mind's eye was the image of a parking lot with three silent buses, covered with a layer of dust. For the last five months, my *parnassah* has struggled mightily. I sweat and toil to keep my head above water, and I'm hardly able to get over the line to the end of the month.

Since the beginning of the war in the south and the north, and due to the precarious safety situation, the stream of tourists to Israel has more or less dried up. The demand for bus service has faded almost entirely. Local tourists have also



reduced their outings to a minimum. Suddenly I found myself facing emptiness – my schedule dwindled to almost no orders, no trips. I was devastated when I had to fire two of my veteran drivers, and I have one driver left, a remnant of my staff. But even then, I struggled to pay his salary. Some months, my expenses even exceeded my income.

And so, the whole way home I pondered my dire situation that has been going on for a long while now. By the time I arrived at my house, I had made a firm resolution and I planned to begin the very next morning.

When night fell, I saw the stars twinkling in the sky and the moon seemed to glow with pale hope. ‘In the morning,’ I knew as I got into bed, ‘I would part from the angel of sleep early and go to shul twenty minutes before davening.’

6:25. I walked to shul, my heart heavy with emotion. I joined the five *mevarchim* reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, and they now became six. I made the *brachos* one after the other, aloud, and gave the others the merit of answering amen. Then I listened to their *brachos* and answered amen. I felt overcome with a good feeling, and I let myself bask in the feeling.

One day, another. One week followed another, and onward...

One evening, after five weeks, as I

teetered on the boundary between coping with my struggles and hopefulness, my phone rang. On the line was a work acquaintance with an interesting piece of news. He told me that there was a public bus company that had been operating an additional network of intercity lines, and was not managing with the weekend overload. He made a nice, but not dazzling, offer, that I augment the bus service on Fridays and Motzai Shabbos. It was a reasonable, albeit not very promising, opportunity, but I saw the glimmer of salvation and I accepted the proposal.

I signed up to augment a few bus trips on weekends, but very quickly, the company won a bidding tender for another set of routes, and again, they were facing an overload. Again the owner turned to me to ask for help in supplementing their service, this time for routes during the week... Things began to snowball from there, and soon enough I was invited to the offices of the company to sign a contract employing my services on a daily, fixed basis.

Today, my parking lot is empty, because all my buses are on the move, serving public transportation routes round the clock. I rub my eyes with emotion every tenth of the month, when I see the generous, regular payment, and I am overcome with peace of mind and gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.



Continued section Derech Emunim

power of *emunah* that we merit on Succos, we then ascend higher and open a new cycle of learning the holy Torah on Shabbos Bereishis, which falls this year immediately after Succos, and [out of Eretz Yisrael] is actually connected to the *chag*.

It is remarkable to see that the name of this Shabbos, like the name of Succos, also alludes to the importance of answering amen. We have been taught by early sages that בראשית is an acronym for בקול רם אברך את שם ה' תמיד and if so, Shabbos Bereishis also continues to serve as an important reminder of our obligation to recite each *brachah* aloud, and to give those around us the merit to answer amen.

Similarly, we can explain that

the second word in the Torah, ברא, completes the previous one as it alludes to the obligation of answering amen after the *brachah*, as it is an acronym for בקול רם אמן.

Aside for the benefit of answering amen, saying the *brachah* aloud elevates the recital of the *brachah*. When a person mumbles the *brachah* to himself, he may not enunciate the words *k'halachah*, or may even forget to make a *brachah*, *chalilah*. In contrast, one who makes the *brachah* aloud benefits both a *brachah* according to halachah and a *brachah sheleimah*.

Based on this we can connect the end of Torah to its beginning, as the sages of *drush* would do: Each morning in shul, without being ashamed or deterred, we must

be strict that “*l'einei kol Yisrael*” we fulfill the words alluded to by “*bereishis bara*” – to recite *Birchos Hashachar* aloud and to answer amen after *Birchos Hashachar* of other people, aloud.

Succos and Shabbos Bereishis teach us about the importance of reciting *brachos* aloud and completing them with amen. There is no better expression for this call of awakening than the final phrase of the *nusach* of the ceremonial “*Reshus*” with which we call up the *Chassan Bereishis* to the *aliyah l'Torah* on Simchas Torah: “*Amen ya'anu acharecha hakol meheirah!*”

**Wishing you a *chag same'ach*
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein**

The scene is captivating, emotional, and sent a tremor through the heart of any Yid, even though it repeats itself each morning for decades. It's early morning, the Pinsk Karlin shul in Yerushalayim. At the entrance to the shul sits a venerable looking Yid; on the table in front of him is a small velvet satchel, similar to a tefillin bag, but there are two words embroidered on the front [in Hebrew]: "Candy Man."

Reb Mordechai Shlomo Shaffer, *shlita*, is the name of the chassid sitting at the table. He is a distinguished resident of Yerushalayim, who has been wearing the crown of amen for many years. Each morning, he dedicates a lot of time to say amen after *Birchos Hashachar* of many Yidden from across the spectrum, with patience, slowly and with a heartwarming smile that invites them to come back tomorrow morning, to merit to say the *brachos* for him yet again.

Rabbi Shaffer, *shlita*, sees this as his spiritual life mission and he invests energy not only in answering amen each day, but also in learning the *halachos* and studying the halachic *sugyos* relating to answering amen. He is a role model for many for how an "amen Yid" looks.

Reb Mordechai, what brought you to dedicate yourself to this mitzvah and to be *mehader* so much in answering amen?

Reb Mordechai smiles, and then shifts his gaze, as if he is flashing back decades in time:

"The truth is it began in my childhood. When I was a little boy, there were Yidden in our shul, *chassidim* and elders from the previous generation, and people stood in line to recite *Birchos Hashachar*, and they answered amen and right after that, they would give out a small candy, a *tzukerel*, to anyone who recited *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* for them. This made a deep impression on me, and when I grew older, I decided that I'm going to follow in their path, and that's how, *baruch Hashem*, each day I stand in shul and answer amen for dozens of *mispallelim*.

"Over the years, Hashem has given me the *zechus* to learn and delve into the *halachos* of answering amen, and I also compiled a special *kuntress* with all the halachos of amen and an explanation of *Birchos Hashachar*."

How do people react when you turn to them and ask them to make brachos for you?

"I don't turn to anyone. I have a fixed place at the entrance to the shul, and right when I come, I put down my two

beautiful velvet bags – my tefillin bag, and another similar one, but it says on it that I give out candies...

"People come to me and ask about the candies that I keep in such an elegant bag, as if they were an object used for a mitzvah. And I pleasantly explain that the real candy is the completion that I give their *brachos* when I answer amen after them. But at the same time, each person who says *Birchos Hashachar* from me gets a small candy, in the same way that those elder *chassidim* did..."

I need to understand – you do this for children or adults?

"Adults, of course. There are also elderly people who come to me to say *Birchos Hashachar*. In addition, our *bais medrash* is near the Mir and our *minyán* starts a bit before the *minyán* in yeshivah, which means many *bochurim* from the yeshivah can come and make *Birchos Hashachar* for me before they go daven in yeshivah.

"This is all during the week. But on Shabbos an even greater crowd joins the long line of people who get *Birchos Hashachar* candies at my table, and they are the youngsters of the *chassidus* who come to say *Birchos Hashachar* and to get the promised candy."

Is there something else that causes people to come and make the *brachah*?

"I'll tell you something interesting. We in Karlin have a *nusach* of *Birchos Hashachar* that is different to what is printed in the *siddurim*. As such, I printed the *Birchos Hashachar* in our *nusach* onto a card, and any chassid can make the *brachos* from the written text of our *nusach*. Over the years, I learned that this special page, with *Birchos Hashachar* in the Karliner *nusach*, is something that attracts many people who come to the shul and are curious to become more familiar with the *nusach* of our *Birchos Hashachar*. Ultimately, I gain from it, because then they stay to recite *Birchos Hashachar* for me.

Why do you think people are lax about this lofty mitzvah?

Remember that already the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 6b) explains the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 12:9): "*Kerum zulus livnei adam*" – "these are the things that are at the height of the world, and people are lax about them." So already in the time of the *Gemara*, it was the nature of the world. The way of a person is to be lax about things that are truly important. Likewise, people are not sufficiently aware of the words of *Chazal* about the power of answering amen. If they >>>>



Rav Shaffer on his shift at the Pinsk Karlin shul in Yerushalayim



Rav Shaffer's sack of candies

HaKadosh Baruch Hu Is Happy When Am Yisrael Prevail With Tefillah

“הושע נא למען נצחך”

An early commentary to one of the Rishonim explains this request based on the words of Chazal (Pesachim 119a) on the words in Tehillim (13:1 and others): “*Lamnatzei’ach Mizmor leDovid*” as follows: “Sing to the One Who is won over and happy about it. Come and see that HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s *middah* is not like that of a human being; a human being when defeated is sad, but HaKadosh Baruch Hu is happy when others prevail over Him.”

Here as well we ask “*hosha na lema’an nitzchacha*” – send us salvation in the merit of the *tefillah* that we pray in whose strength we are able, *kaviyachol*, to win over You and annul the difficult decrees, and You are happy about that.

Kovetz Chayei Olam [Paris 5639]
Choveres Aleph p. 48

Dveikus to Hashem Through 100 Brachos

“הושע נא חבוקה ודבוקה בך; הושע נא טוענת עלך”

Harav Uri Landman, the Rav of Vishnovitz, explained that the two virtues of “*chavukah udevukah*” and “*to’enes alach*” are dependent on one another:

Regarding the *passuk* (Devarim 4:4): “*V’atem hadveikim b’Hashem*

upon which the expression “*udevukah bach*” here is based, the Baal Haturim writes that the tags on the letter ק in the word הדבקים allude to the recital of 100 *brachos* a day. He explains that when a person is strict to recite one hundred *brachos* according to *halachah* throughout the day, then he is always cleaving (*davuk*) to his Creator, and as the Rambam wrote (*Hilchos Brachos* 1 4): “We find that all the *brachos* are...in order to remember the Creator always and to fear Him.”

The sages of the *Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21) say that the *takanah* of 100 *brachos* was instituted by Dovid Hamelech, as alluded in the *passuk (Shmuel II, 23:1)*: “*V’eileh divrei Dovid ha’acharonim ne’um Dovid ben Yishai une’um hagever hukam al.*” – על is numerically equivalent to 100. In light of this, we can explain that this is what he meant: “*Hosha na chavukah udevukah bach*” – by the fact that it is “*to’enes alach*” – strict to recite על *brachos* a day.

Ohr Yitzhar Yamim Nora’im Introduction p. 27

Fear of the Nations Brings to Yiras Shamayim

“הושע נא כבושה בגולה; הושע נא לומדת יראתך”

The *Bnei Yissaschar* explains the connection between these two descriptions:

The *talmidim* of the Baal Shem Tov taught that when a person has a

physical feeling of love or fear, this causes him to intensify in his heart the love or fear he has for Hashem. This concept is what the songster here is referring to: The fact that Am Yisrael is “*kevushah bagolah*,” captive in the exile, and is in constant fear of its enemies, is what reminds the nation to be “*lomedes yirasecha.*”

Bnei Yissaschar Ma’amarei Chodesh Tishrei 12:17

A Generation That Is All Guilty

“הושע נא דלותי ולי יהושיע”

Harav Eliyahu Schick, the Rav of Lida, explained:

Chazal say (*Sanhedrin* 98a) that “Ben Dovid only comes in a generation that is entirely innocent or entirely guilty.” The reason that HaKadosh Baruch Hu hastens to redeem Am Yisrael in a generation that is entirely guilty is because that is the way of the world. When a father sees his son mired in sin, he does not banish him from his presence. Rather, he hurries to offer him help, before it is too late. That is what Knesses Yisrael is asking for: Specifically because “*dalosi*,” we are poor in *mitzvos*, and are considered a “*dor shekulo chayav*,” that is entirely guilty, You should help me so that I do not sink into the depths of sin, because You are my Father.

Ein Eliyahu Pesachim 118b

would be more aware, they would be more careful.

What is the way to connect the *mispallelim* to the age-old practice of reciting *Birchos Hashachar* in front of others who will answer amen?

The truth is that this is such an important thing that it is no wonder that the *yetzer hara* literally fights against it and tries to get us to back off. In my view, the best way to connect people to the great virtue of answering amen is that more Yidden should join the ‘King’s legion’ and try to hear *Birchos Hashachar* from as many *mispallelim* as possible each day. This way, more people will join the ranks of those who recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa* and as Chazal say ‘הברך חברך אית ליה’ – it will ‘infect’ more Yidden to be *mehader* and make the *brachos bechavrusa*.

You have been involved in *zikkui harabbim* for many years. Have you encountered a special story that occurred following the recital of *Birchos*

Hashachar bechavrusa?

There are so many stories about the *segulah* of answering amen, and anyone who is strict about it can tell you. I can only tell you about a dear Yid who I knew in Yerushalayim. His name was Reb Yehoshua Cheshin, *ztz”l*. He was very strict about saying amen, and he had a special *hiddur*: He would answer amen and right after that, he would add the meaning of the word – “*emes.*” And remarkably, Reb Yehoshua merited to live a healthy life until the age of 91. In his final days he remarked that he was sure that Hashem gave him 91 years of life, which is numerically equivalent to amen, in the merit of his strictness with this *mitzvah*.

Later, I heard from Rav Dovid Kletzkin, *shlita*, who knew another Yid in Yerushalayim named Reb Zecharya Eisenbach, *ztz”l*, who was also very strict about answering amen and merited to live to 91 – the value of amen. May we merit to fulfill the *mitzvos* of answering amen with *hiddur*, until the arrival of Mashiach, may it be speedily in our day, amen.

Three *Kedushos* Correspond to Three Principles

”וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֵׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְדַגַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְבֵהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ” (א כו)

The *passuk* does not reveal the reason why Adam Harishon was thus named, but the sages of the Midrash explain (*Tanchuma* 96 14) that Adam was called this name because he came from “*afar min ha’adamah*” (*Bereishis* 2:7). But we find that the *Midrash Chachamim* (*Yalkut Shimoni* 943) explains the opposite, that the *adamah* is called so because Adam was created from its earth, and if that is the case, we need to explain why Adam Harishon was given this name.

In the introduction to his *sefer Shu”t Sefer Yehoshua*, **Rav Yehoshua Babad, the Rav of Tarnopol**, explains that the name “Adam” has a deep significance:

Of the thirteen *ikrei emunah* determined by the Rambam, there are three primary *ikrim* relating to the difference between the Creator and His creations, and their acronym is “אדם”. The first is *achdus* – to believe that the Creator is the Absolute One and there is none other like Him in the world. The second is *dmus* – to believe that the Creator has no body or any image of a body. The third is *metzius* – to believe in the *metzius haBorei*, and that His existence sustains all the others in the world. Because a person is created with a *Tzelem Elokim*, it was in place that at the time of his creation, to emphasize these principles, in order to hone in on the point that like the other creations, a person is also separated from his Creator with these three principles, and therefore he is called “*adam*” because this name alludes to these three principles.

For this reason, the ministering angels and Am Yisrael say “*kadosh kadosh kadosh*” three times, one after the other, because “*kadosh*” means separate distinct (*Rashi Vayikra* 19:2), and when saying “*kadosh*” three times, the angels declare – and we follow – the three fundamental differences between the Creator and His creations. Rav Yehoshua concludes his wonderful explanation with halachic ruling: “It is fitting for every simple person who is not engaged in hidden things [Kabbalah] to have this *kavanah* when saying *Kedushah*.”

Shu”t Sefer Yehoshua, Introduction

An Advantage That Is a Drawback

”וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֵל הַנַּחֵשׁ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת אֲרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה עַל גַּחֲזֵךְ תֵּלֵךְ וְעַפְרֹ

תֵּאכַל כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ” (ג יד)

From the punishment of the snake, *Chazal* learn (*Yoma* 75a) that even when Hashem punishes the sinner, He has mercy on him in the decree, because as a result of the curse of “and dirt you will eat all your life,” the snake’s sustenance is found everywhere – “he goes up on the roof, his food is with him, he goes down below, his food is with him.” But if so, then the snake seems to have gained – what is the curse here?

Harav Bunim of Peshischa explains that this situation where the snake’s food is found everywhere, is in itself a curse, because by doing this, Hashem cut off the snake. In contrast to other living beings who plead with their Creator when they do not find their sustenance, as it says (*Tehillim* 104:21), “*Hakfirim shoagim lataref ulevakesh meiKel ochlom*,” the snake, after the curse, never needs to pray for its food. By saying “and dirt you will eat all your life,” Hashem was ostensibly telling the snake: take what you want and remove yourself from Me, so that I never see you or hear your voice.

Based on this, the *dorshei reshumos* explain the *nusach* of the *brachah* of “*Borei Nefashos Rabbos Vechesronan*.” Despite the drawbacks, we must thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu because in their merit we have the privilege of being close to Hashem and connecting to Him with our *tefillos*.

Harav Yosef Pachenovsky of Lodz explained this differently:

The scientists have already determined that feelings of desire and wanting are vital for human life, as we can say that those very people who seem to be lacking nothing are mired in anger and sadness. So we find that this is the curse of the snake – because he lacks for nothing he never sees real joy and pleasure in his life.

In light of this we can understand the meaning of the praise: “*Borei nefahso rabbos vechesronan*,” the lack and want that the creations feel is a *brachah* for them, because it adds flavor and challenge to their lives.

Pardes Yosef; Bais Yisrael Toldos 5712; *Emes L’Yaakov*

Answering Amen Helps Prevail Over the *Mekatregim*

”וַיִּגְרַשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁכַּן מִקְדָּם לְגַן עֵדֵן אֶת הַכְּרִבִּים וְאֶת לֶחֶט הַחֹרֵב הַמֵּתְהַפְכֵת לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת דֶּרֶךְ עַיִן הַחַיִּים” (ג כד)

Chazal promise (*Shabbos* 119b) a wondrous reward for one who is strict

to answer amen properly: “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength – has the gates of Gan Eden open for him.”

What is the nature of this reward for someone who answers amen with all his might?

Rav Yosef Steinhart, the Rav of Furth, offers a beautiful reason based on the words of Rashi that the “*כרבים*” mentioned in the *passuk* here are the hostile angels that HaKadosh Baruch Hu stationed “*mikedem leGan Eden*.”

In *Maseches Brachos* (53b), Rav Nehorai compared the *mevarech* to a simple soldier [גוליייר], while the *oneh amen* is like the heroic soldier that triumphs in the war. Rav Nehorai’s words are not merely a *maschal*, but that is the truth: The angel that is formed from reciting the *brachah* is compared to a simple soldier that does not have the power to overcome the *kitrug* of the hostile angels that are created by our sins. That is in contrast to the angel created by answering amen, who is the heroic angel who has the power to prevail over those hostile forces. In light of this, the words of *Chazal* are very clear: Because by answering amen, a person causes that the hostile angels around Gan Eden should be subdued, therefore, when the time comes, the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him, without the hostile angels having the power to prevent him from entering!

The **Maggid of Wilkomir** explained the reason why specifically the mitzvah of answering amen has the power to open the gates of Gan Eden:

Chazal say (*Koheles Rabbah* 7:31) that Gan Eden and Gehinnom are separated by a wall. And the *Middas Harachamim* hovers over Gan Eden, and *Middas Hadin* hovers over Gehinnom, and over the wall that separates them is a combination of both. For this reason, only the power of answering amen – which includes the numerical value of both the *Shem Hav-yah* that symbolizes *Middas Harachamim*, and *Adnus*, which symbolizes *Din* (*Baal Haturim Devarim* 27:26) – to open the “gates of Gan Eden” that are in this wall. Therefore, even a person who has many merits and has acquired a share in Gan Eden, will not have the gates opened for him and won’t be able to enter easily, if he is not strict about answering amen.

Shu”t Zichron Yosef [Furth 5533] p. 102a; *Einei Yitzchak Shabbos* 119b

The Obligation to Answer Amen Aloud

A prior condition to answering amen according to halachah is to utter the *brachah* aloud. When a person makes a *brachah* aloud and does not murmur it with half a mouth, aside for the benefit of actually having said the *brachah* properly, he also gives another person the merit of the mitzvah of answering amen. In this segment, we will bring a collection of insights from *gedolim* through the generations regarding the great obligation to make each *brachah* aloud.

Stealing the Amen

From the *passuk* (Tehillim 103:1): “*LeDovid borchi nafshi es Hashem vekol krovai* [my internal organs] *es Shem kodsho*,” Rav Yehuda Hachassid learns: “When he makes a *brachah* to Hashem he needs to do

so in a loud voice, because in a loud voice, all the inner organs move and are drawn after the voice.” (*Sefer Chassidim* 820)

Aside for the obligation to share the recital of the *brachah* with one’s inner organs, Rav Yehuda Hachassid and brings another reason (ibid 254) that obligates a person to make the *brachah* aloud: When a person makes the *brachah* in a whisper, he prevents the listeners from having the merit of answering amen, and this is a real sin, because he is stealing from them the mitzvah of answering amen. (Cited in *Biur Halachah* 139 6).

Bereishis –Make Brachos Aloud

An allusion to the obligation to recite the *brachah* aloud so that amen can be answered after it is brought by the Chida in his *sefer Nachal Kedumim* (*Bereishis*) in the

name of the disciples of the Arizal: The first word in the Torah is *בראשית* and it is an acronym for “*בְּקוֹל רִם*” and it is an acronym for “*אֲבָרַךְ שֵׁם ה' תְּמִיד*.”

Sefer Yagdil Torah (*Bereishis*) adds that he heard from the Bais Yisrael of Ger: “The first thing that one must demand from *talmidim* is to recite the *brachah* aloud.” And he wrote that based on this we can explain that this is why the allusion to this obligation is in the word *bereishis*.

One Who Whispers the Brachah Is Punished

Rav Menachem Di Lonzano, author of *Shtei Yados* (*Derech Chaim* p. 30b) wrote: Just like someone who hears a *brachah* and refrains from answering amen is severely punished for it (see *Zohar Vayeilech* 285 2), likewise, one who recites the *brachah* in a whisper and causes that amen should not be properly answered, will also be punished with this.

To the editorial department of *Vechol Ma'aminim*,

Under the direction of Rabbi Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *shlita*

In the past year, you quoted a number of times the words of the *Tanna Devei Elyahu* (*Rabba 11*) on the *passuk* in *Shiras Devorah* (*Shoftim* 5:2): “*Bifroa pera'os b'Yisrael behisnadev am barchu Hashem*.” He writes: “What did Devorah prophesize for Am Yisrael? She said to them: In whose merit does HaKadosh Baruch Hu exact punishment for Am Yisrael from the nations of the world? In the merit of those who go to the *beis knesses* and *beis medrash* morning and evening and answer amen...”

There is no need to expound on how much we have hoped and yearned this past year to see the revenge of Hashem on Am Yisrael’s enemies. I personally strengthened myself and others with the recital of *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, especially with answering amen in general, and your distinguished publication was a source of *chizuk* and encouragement.

Wonder of wonders, towards the end of the year, we have been privileged to witness “*bifroa per'aos besonei Yisrael*” in various and remarkable ways. And on *Shabbos Parashas Nitzavim-Vayeilech*, we were informed of the elimination of the fiend from Lebanon, *ym”s*. May Hashem continue to grant us more miracles.

When I saw this, I recalled the words of the *Tanna Devei Elyahu*, and there was no doubt in my mind that strengthening in matters of amen, which you are so instrumental in doing, is what has advocated for us to see how Hashem exacts revenge on our enemies.

Anyone who read the *haftorah* of *Parashas Nitzavim-Vayeilech* saw the *passuk* (*Yeshayah* 63:4): “*Ki yom nakam belibi ushenas ge'ulai ba'ah*,” and felt an urge to thank Hashem for the “day of revenge” that we have merited. Hashem also illuminated my eyes, and I saw in this *passuk* an allusion to why we merited this day of revenge, as the numerical value of the acronym of the words *בְּיָוֶם נִקְמָה בְּלִבִּי וְשָׁנַת גְּאוּלַי* is ninety one – the same as amen. Meaning that we merited this “day of revenge,” and *b'ezras Hashem* we will merit the “year of redemption” for being strict about amen. And we can add that the last word *בְּאוֹהַב* – also alludes to answering amen as it is an acronym for *בְּרִכּוֹת הַשְּׁחָרָה וּבְנֵי אֲמוּנִים*.

May the new year and its *brachos* begin, and may we merit to see the fulfillment of all the promises Chazal have made for those who are strict to answer amen.

With best wishes,
S.B.B., *Yerushalayim*



The ohel over the matzeivah of the Pele Yoetz in Silištra, Bulgaria

The Pele Yoetz 20 Tishrei 5588

Rabbi Eliezer Papo was born to his father, Rav Yitzchak in the city of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, in 5546. Already in his youth, he was known for his tremendous diligence, and his conduct of *prishus* and holiness. He learned from the sages of his city, Rav Moshe Danon and Rav Meir Binyamin Menachem Danon.

Around the year 5570, at the age of 24, he began to write his first compilation, *Chodesh Ha'aviv*, on *Maseches Brachos*. In 5580, he was invited to serve as Rav of Silištra, Bulgaria, a role that he held for eight years until his passing.

Rav Eliezer was known mostly for his wonderful *mussar sefer*, *Pele Yoetz*, but aside for that, he authored additional works such as *Dan Yadin* and *Elef Hamagen* on Torah, *Chessed L'Alafim* – *halachos* on parts of *Orach Chaim* and *Yoreh Deah* from the *Shulchan Aruch*, and others.

On 20 Tishrei 5588, Chol Hamoed Succos, he passed away at the young age of 42. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Silištra. Before his passing, he said that it had been revealed to him from Above that there was a dangerous plague endangering his city and he chose to sacrifice himself to atone for the residents. (*Oros Pele*, p. 28)

Be Careful About Answering Amen

In *Pele Yoetz*, Rav Eliezer Papo highlights two values of the obligation to be strict to answer amen according to halachah, and the great reward for one who is strict to do this. The first is in the letter 'aleph', in the entry Amen and the second is in the letter 'ayin' in the entry *Aniyas Ameinim*. And he begins the entry of Amen as follows:

“It is known how much the holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285 2) expounded on the greatness and tremendous reward for one who is 'shomer emunim,' who sits and waits for the opportunity to hear a *brachah* so he can answer amen. In contrast, the punishment for one who is not attentive about answering amen is very severe. Really, the hairs of a person should stand up when seeing the severity. And hearts should be pained by the many *amei ha'aretz* who are not careful at all. Hashem should atone for them, because the whole nation is doing it inadvertently.”

Regarding the reward of one who is strict to answer amen, the Pele Yoetz wrote:

“And if those who prevent amens from being answered would know the great reward of answering amens...they would run after them to go and hear and answer, 'like the *korei* [a type of bird] pursues in the hills' (*Shmuel I* 26:20), and they would rejoice with one answering as if they had discovered a treasure. But unfortunately, they did not know what this mitzvah is, and the severity of it, and the greatness of the reward.”

Things at the Height of the World

The second entry, *Aniyas Amen*, begins as follows:

“Answering amens...is something that is at the height of the world and people are lax about it. Some are like a deaf person and do not hear, and like a mute and do not open their mouths to answer, and there are those who answer an *amen ketufah*, *chatufah* or *yesomah*. And we

know how severe this is, as the *Zohar Hakadosh* (ibid) was strict about someone who does not answer amen. Wonder of wonders...It is not enough to answer amen, but rather one needs to have *kavanah* based on what it is, and one who does not have this *kavanah*, it is said of him (*Shmuel I* 2:30): “*Ubozai yekalu*” (*Zohar Terumah* 178 2). And for this, all the mourners should mourn, because who is clean? In any case, if a person forces himself to overcome and fulfill the mitzvah properly to bring pleasure to his Creator, yet another time, and is careful about an amen *chatufah*, *ketufah* and *yesomah* whose punishment is stated in Shas (*Brachos* 46a), and *poskim* (*Orach Chaim* 124 8), study them and watch your soul very much if you are a *baal nefesh*.”

Then You Will Understand Yiras Hashem

In his *sefer Chessed L'Alafim* (56 1) as well, the Pele Yoetz speaks about the great obligation upon a person to answer amen. He writes: “It is worthy for every person to try to run and wait to answer amen, and may it be that they would run to answer amen like they do for a profit of a few pennies. Of things like this it is said (*Mishlei* 2:3-4): ‘If you seek it like silver and hunt for it like treasures, then you will understand *yiras Hashem*.’”

The Greatness of the Reward Indicates the Greatness of the Mitzvah

He further wrote in *Chessed L'Alafim* (ibid): The tremendous reward promised to one who is strict to answer amen with all his strength – “the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him” – teaches us about the lofty level of answering amen and the great *nachas ruach* it causes to HaKadosh Baruch Hu when amen is answered properly. Surely a person should be happy from the fact that he merits to bring pleasure to his Creator, and it is even fitting for every Jew to be *moser nefesh* for this.