

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Forbidden Foods Clog Up the Heart

“את תשקצו את נפשותיכם בכל השרץ השרץ ולא תטמאו בהם ונטמאתם בהם: כי אני ה' אלקיכם והתקדשתם והייתם קדשים” (א מג-מז)

The *passuk* “*venitmeisem bam*” is explained by Chazal (Yoma 39a): “Do not read it ונטמאתם but rather ונטמאתם” to teach you that “*aveirah* clogs up the heart of a person.” And the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (Ch. 11), that even though every *aveirah* clogs up the heart, eating forbidden foods does it much more “because they enter the person’s body literally, and become part of his flesh.”

Rav Chaim Palagi explains based on this why the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah established in *Shemoneh Esreh* that the *brachah* of *Atah Chonen* is right after *Atah Kadosh*. Because by avoiding forbidden foods a person fulfills the *passuk* והתקדשתם and he is saved from the *timtum halev*, and thus he merits wisdom, insight and knowledge.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky added an explanation for the words of the *tefillah* of Yom Kippur: “*Atah chofes kol chadrei beten ubochen klayos valev*,” and it means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu tests the purity of the kidneys and the heart that guide the way of a person, as Chazal say (*Brachos* 61a): “Kidneys advise, the heart understands,” by “*chofes kol chadrei beten*” – examining the chambers of the stomach, to ensure they were not sullied by forbidden foods.

Birchas Moadecha L'chaim Vol. II, Drush 21 for Shabbos Hagadol;
Machzor Siach Sifsoseinu
Yom Hakippurim p. 81

Pischu Shearim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Ninety-One Pesukim

In the Chumashim that we have, there is a note at the end of each *parashah* with the number of *pesukim* it contains. This was the work of the *baalei hamesorah*, who worked to precisely preserve the *nusach* of the Torah, and the other holy writings, and in counting their *pesukim* and letters.

This week’s *parashah* – *Shemini* – is unique in that it has 91 *pesukim*, which is numerically equivalent to amen. There are other *parshiyos* with almost the same number of *pesukim* – *Pekudei* has 92 and *Tazria* has 90 *pesukim*. But there is only one *parashah* in the Torah that has exactly 91 *pesukim* and that is *Shemini*.

I came across this number under remarkable circumstances. It was Erev Shabbos *Parashas Shemini* of 5774. On that day, I came to shul early before Shabbos, and I was *zocheh* to fulfill an aspiration I’d had for a long time – to finish *shnayim mikra v’echad Targum* by Erev Shabbos (as per the *Magen Avraham* 285 6).

After reading the final *passuk* in the *parashah*, I noticed the number of *pesukim*, and I was amazed to see that the number has the same value as amen, which is so close to my heart.

Later, a significant personal connection to this *parashah* and its number of *pesukim* emerged. In 5774, the year when this happened, Shabbos *Parashas*

Shemini came out on 26 Nissan, which is the *yahrtzeit* of my grandfather, Rav Yaakov Dov Marmurstein, *ztz”l*, whose name and legacy I am *zocheh* to carry. My grandfather’s adherence to answering amen was eternalized both by his age and the year he passed away – as he passed away at the age of 91 in the year תרצ”א. But now, it became clear to me that the day of his *yahrtzeit* is also connected to answering amen. *Parashas Shemini*, whose reading falls in regular years very close to his *yahrtzeit*, contains exactly 91 *pesukim*. The fact that I came across this after saying “*shnayim mikra*” adds more depth, because when reading “*shnayim mikra*” of *Parashas Shemini*, we read 182 *pesukim*, which is numerically equivalent to the name יעקב – which as we know has the value of twice amen.

I will just add that the name עבדיה – which is numerically equivalent to amen, and which the *baalei hamesorah* chose as the word to represent the number of *pesukim* in this *parashah*, teaches us that anyone who seeks to be an *eved Hashem*, truly and sincerely – has to be very strict to answer amen. And with that, I will dedicate this issue to the merit and *aliyas neshamah* of my grandfather, who was an *eved Hashem* all his life, Rav Yaakov Dov ben Reb Shmuel Mordechai Marmurstein *ztz”l*.

Good Shabbos

Yaakov Dov
Marmurstein

Birchos Hashachar k’halachah

Aloud

With kavanah

Bechavrusa

Ahead of the *yahrtzeit* of Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg *zy"ta*, which will take place next Tuesday, 1 Iyar, we present this awe-inspiring story that describes a wondrous event that occurred with Reb Shmelke as a result of his scrupulousness not to recite a *brachah* without someone being present to answer amen. This story was written by Rav Tzvi Yechezkel Michelson, the Rav of Plonsk and author of *Shu"t Bais Yechezkel*, in his letter to Rav Moshe Menachem Walden, who, like his father Rav Aharon, published compilations of the Torah of *gedolei Toraha* and *chassidus*. The letter was printed by Rav Moshe Menachem in his *sefer Ohel Yitzchak* (in the note to letter 176) and this story is based on it:

It was after Pesach of 5538, at the holy home of Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg *zy"ta*. The Rebbe was laying weakly on his bed, his eyes closed and his face burning. He was

During this lofty time, the Rebbe turned to the *talmidim* and said:

"I want to tell you a story that happened to me many years ago. Since then, there were a few opportunities for me to tell it to you. But I was afraid that you might cast doubt about its occurrence, and so, I would end up being *machshil* you instead of bringing benefit. Now, feeling that my end is near, I would like to tell you the story, so that you can learn *mussar* from it, and learn that when a person is *moser nefesh* and wants to do a mitzvah with all his being, he is guaranteed that from Above he will be assisted to fulfill his will."

Rav Shmelke then continued:

"You surely know the practice that I have been very careful about for a very long time, to this day, not to make a *brachah* without someone standing next to me to answer amen. I have already stressed to you many times that every *brachah* creates an

angel, but its form is not complete unless amen is answered to the *brachah*. Therefore, I am strict that my *brachos* should be answered with amen, so that the angel that is created from them is complete.

"One day, I was asked by a wealthy

balabos from a town near Nikolsburg to serve as the *sandak* for his son's *bris*. On the appointed day, the baby's father sent a carriage hitched up to strong horses to bring me to the *bris*. The carriage was driven by a wagon driver who – although Jewish – was clearly a coarse and uncouth person who was very far from the path of Torah.

"In the middle of the way, when we stopped for a short rest, it became necessary for me to recite *Asher*

Yatzar. Baruch Hashem, there was a spring of water there so I could wash my hands before the *brachah*. But when I wanted to make the *brachah* in front of the Jewish wagon driver, so that he could answer amen to me, I quickly realized that the man was so empty and lowly that I could not include him in anything holy.

"I didn't know what to do. All my life, until that time, I had been able to maintain my practice. I was afraid of the thought that I'd have to give it up now. Almost of its own accord, a *tefillah* emerged from my heart that I should merit to fulfill my practice now as well, and that a blemished *malach* should not be created from my *brachah*. *Bechasdei Hashem*, my *tefillah* was heard.

"Suddenly I heard a rustle in the bushes around me. I turned my head to the direction of the noise, and was surprised to see two men with a very regal but strange appearance step out. They approached me, without saying anything, and just stood next to me. As such, I immediately made the *brachah* with great awe, and those two men answered amen with tremendous sweetness and enthusiasm. I wanted to thank them, but before I could do so, they disappeared.

"For a long while, I stood there, frightened and trembling. I realized that Raphael and Gavriel – the *malachei Elokim* – had been sent to me from Above to answer amen to my *brachah*, after it was desired by Shamayim that I should maintain my holy practice that I had become so used to. Needless to say, the wagon driver did not see their arrival or departure, and right after that, I boarded the carriage and we continued on our way.

"At the time, I thought of an explanation to the words in the *passuk* (Iyov 23:13): "*Vehu b'echad umi yeshivenu uvenafsho ivsah vaya'as*," which we say on Rosh Hashanah – and then add the words "*Nora V'Kadosh*." And I explained it as follows:

As is known, answering amen completes the words of the *mevarech*, and everyone wants to complete their *brachos* with amen. What should a person do if he has



A Jewish alley in Nikolsburg. Photo circa 5660/1900

surrounded by his family and prime disciples, gazing at him in mounting worry.

The end seemed near, and those standing around the Rebbe's bed were on alert, listening to every sound the Rebbe uttered. His mouth was constantly murmuring *divrei Torah*, and in between, he conveyed lessons in *mussar* and for life, and revealed a little bit about deeper goings on. They did not want to miss even one syllable that he uttered.

Reward in This World and the Next

In the *breisa* of *Eilu Devarim* that we say each morning after *Birchas HaTorah*, Chazal list a number of individual *mitzvos* of which they said that “a person eats their fruits in this world, and the principle remains for him in Olam Haba.” The *mitzvah* of “*Hashkamas beis hamedrash Shacharis v’Arvis*” is listed among these *mitzvos*.

The meaning of this is that for rising to go to shul, a person merits reward already in this world, but that reward is only “*peiros*”, fruits, but the main reward, “the *keren*” the principle, is preserved for Olam Haba, where he receives complete and eternal reward.

This uniqueness of eating fruits in this world is only practiced in the few *mitzvos* that Chazal listed in this *breisa*, and does not exist with the other *mitzvos*, where a person only has the *keren* for Olam Haba. As the Baalei Hatosafos wrote (*Bava Basra* 10a): “Most of the things do not stand for a person in this world, until after his death. And in *olam hazeh*, only great *mitzvos* stand for a person, as it says (*Kiddushin* 39b): ‘*Eilu devarim she’adam ocheil peiroseiheim b’olam hazeh vehakeren kayemes lo l’Olam Haba.*’”

One Who Rises Early to Shul Lives Long

In *Maseches Avos*, Chazal say (10:3) “Sleeping in the morning...removes a person from the world.” On the other hand, we find that one who rises early to *tefillah* lives a long life, as the Gemara says (*Brachos* 8a) that when Rabi Yochanan was told that there were elders in Bavel, he wondered about this, because didn’t the Torah promise (*Devarim* 11:21): “*Lema’an yirbu yemeichem*” only applied “*al ha’adamah asher nishba Hashem l’avoseichem*” – in Eretz Yisrael? But when he was told that these elders are strict to go to shul morning and evening, he calmed down, as they had merited *arichus yamim* because of this practice.

When a young man came to the Kehillos Yaakov and told him that because he had reached the age when his father had passed away, he was afraid for his life [as the Midrash says (*Bereishes Rabbah Toldos* 65:12): ‘When a person reaches the years of his father...he should worry about death’], the Steipler advised him based on the Gemara that he should make sure to go to shul early in the morning and in the evening. (*Kuntress Mispeid Gadol*, p. 54)

Proof That Rising Early to Shul Gives Life

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Eikev Remez* 871) brings a wondrous story about this:

“There was a woman who aged a lot, and she came to Rabi Yosi ben Chalafta and said to him: Rebbi, I have aged too much and now my life is just one of atrophy and withering, I do not taste food or drink, and I ask depart from this world. He said to her: Which *mitzvah* do you do every day? She said to him: I am accustomed that even if I have something I like, I set it aside and rise early to go to shul each day. He said to her: Do not go to shul for three days in a row. She did as he said and on the third day she fell ill and died.”

Rav Eliyahu Hakohein Ha’Itamari pointed out that even though *l’halachah* Rabi Yosi ben Chalafta was not allowed to give the woman advice that would hasten her death, he did it anyway so that those in his generation would clearly see how rising to go to shul gives a person *arichus yamim*, and through that they should strengthen their observance of this *mitzvah*. Because as Chazal teach (*Brachos* 54a), when necessary, it is permitted to do something forbidden for the sake of *kavod Shamayim*, as it says (*Tehillim* 119:126): “*Eis la’asos l’Hashem heferu Torasecha*” (*Midrash Talpiyos, Beis Haknesses*).

One Who Rises Early to Shul Lives a Long Life

It is brought in *Maseches Brachos* (8s) that Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said to his children that they should come to shul early and stay there until a late hour and that this practice would be beneficial for them to live a long life. Based on this, the Shela Hakadosh explained the request of Dovid Hamelech (*Tehillim* 23:6): “*Ach tov v’chessed yirdefuni kol yemei chayai veshavti beveis Hashem l’orech yamim.*” Dovid said: Being that I am strict to go to the “*beis Hashem*” morning and evening, I am sure that I will merit as a result “*l’orech yamim.*” Now, all that is left is for me to ask that “*ach tov v’chessed yirdefuni kol yemei chayai*” – that these days that I merit should be good days filled with *chesed* and that I should not suffer difficulty and distress. (*Shelah Maseches Tamid* 26)

no choice but to make a *brachah* when he is alone, at home or on his way, and there is no one to complete his *brachah* with amen? To this the *passuk* says: “*Vehu b’echad*” – when a person has to make a *brachah* alone, “*umi yeshivenu*” – and there is no one to answer amen after him, then if “*venafsho ivsah*” – if he desires that his *brachah* should be completed with amen, then “*vaya’as – nora vekadosh*” – he is able to effect awesome things by having

angels sent to him from Above, who will answer amen to complete his *brachah*.

“As we traveled, I dozed off in my seat, and from Above it was revealed to me in a dream that I my explanation was well received, and that indeed those were *malachei Elokim* who had been sent to me from Above to answer amen to my *brachos*.”

The fact that two angels were sent to answer amen to the *brachah* of Rav Shmelke indicates that it was not enough to send just one angel. This can be explained based on the words of the Rema MiPano, in his *sefer Asarah Ma’amaros* (*Maamar Chikur Din* 2:15, cited in *Machatzis Hashekel Orach Chaim* 6 9), who writes: “How good it is that each person should have two friends, who listen and answer amen after his *brachos*.”

Answering Amen Is Like Sacrificing Korbanos

”ואל בני ישראל תדבר לאמר קחו שעיר עזים לחטאת ועגל וכבש בני שנה תמימים לעלה: ושור ואיל לשלמים לזבח לפני ה' ומנחה בלולה בשמן כי היום ה' נראה אליכם” (ט ג-ד)

כי היום is numerically equivalent to amen. The *passuk* “*Ki hayom Hashem nira aleichem*” alludes that even today, when there is no *avodas korbanos*, we can merit the essence of “*Hashem nira aleichem*” that Bnei Yisrael merited in the time of the Bais

Hamikdash, by answering amen *k'halachah*. (*Meshivas Nefesh*)

They Didn't Answer Amen in the Mikdash

”ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל מועד ויצאו ויברכו את העם וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם” (ט כג)

In *Maseches Taanis* (16b) it is brought that in the Mikdash they did not answer amen, but rather “*Baruch Shem kevod Malchuso l'olam va'ed*.” Rav Chaim of Friedburg, a brother of the Maharal of Prague, explained the reason:

When the Mikdash was standing,

when the *Kavod Hashem* was revealed to all through the miracles done there, the *oneh* would join the *mevarech* who declared in his *brachah* the *Malchus Hashem*, by saying “*Baruch Shem kevod Malchuso l'olam va'ed*,” because everyone clearly saw the “*Kevod Malchuso*.” But in *galus*, when the *kavod* of Hashem is hidden, the *mevarech* coronates his Creator, and the *oneh amen* agrees with him, with the *emunah* that very soon, the *kavod* of Hashem's *Malchus* will be revealed.

Iggeres Hatiyul, Chelek Hadrash 2

Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit



The shul in the city of Kobrin, Belarus, as it looks today

Rav Moshe of Kobrin 29 Nissan 5618

Rav Moshe Pallier of Kobrin was born in 5444 in the town of Piaski near Kobrin and Brisk, to his father, Rav Yisrael Eliezer. In his youth he learned from Rav Moshe of Shereshov, and later, he became close to the Rebbe Rav Mordechai of Lechovitz. After the passing of his

Rebbe, he became close to his son, Rav Noach of Lechovitz.

After the passing of Rav Noach of Lechovitz, the *chassidim* appointed Rav Moshe as their Rebbe and leader, and his *beis medrash* was established in Kobrin. He worked extensively for the settlement of Eretz Yisrael, and even served as the Nasi of the Eretz Yisrael funds on behalf of Kolel Reisin. A group of his *chassidim* traveled to Teveriah to settle, as per his encouragement, and even established a shul there.

He continued the ways of his Rebbes in *avodas hatefillah*. He said that when a person makes a *brachah*, he has to say the first word, “*Baruch*”, with such fervor that he no longer has strength to say the next word, “*Atah*.” (*Imros Moshe, Tefillah*)

He was known for his humility, and his *matzeivah* states, as per his will: “Anyone who will dare to speak about me with honorifics, I will rise up and I will take revenge on him in this world and in the next, but any person is allowed to say of me that I was an *ohev Yisrael*.”

He passed away on 29 Nissan 5618, and was laid to rest in Kobrin. A few moments before his passing, he was heard whispering the *brachah* of *Elokai Neshamah*. His *divrei Torah* were compiled into *sefer Imros Moshe*.

One Worthy Amen

On the day that the Rebbe Rav Moshe of Kobrin turned seventy, his *talmidim* held a *seudah* in honor of the event. Towards the end, the Rebbe of Kobrin entered and said: “If only I would know that in all my life I answered one amen the way it is supposed to be, then it was all worth it.” At another opportunity he said: “If I would know that in all my life I answered one worthy amen, I would not worry at all.” (*Imros Moshe* [Bnei Brak 5776] Vol. I, p. 192-193)

Answering Amen with Emunah Brings Yeshuah

One of the *chassidim* of Rav Moshe of Kobrin asked to go into the Rebbe to share what was on his heart and to receive a *brachah*. In response, the Rebbe told him that he should enter when he was eating. When the *chassid* arrived, he heard the Rebbe making the *brachos* “*Borei Minei Mezonos*” and “*Shehakol Nihiyeh Bidvaro*” and he answered amen. Then the Rebbe said to him: “You have heard my *brachos* and you answered amen after them, which means *emunah* in the Leadership of Hashem in His world, do you have anything else to add?!” Indeed, the *emunah* that was rooted in the heart of that *chassid* from hearing his Rebbe's *brachos* and answering amen after them obviated the need for him to say anything, and he didn't ask for anything, except that he should continue to have this *emunah* in his heart. (*Ibid* Vol. I p. 104)