

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



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## Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

## Acquiring the Middah of Humility in Tefillah

“ולקח למטהר שתי צפרים חיות טהרות ועץ ארז ושני תולעת ואזב” (יד ד)

Rashi explains that the *tola'as hashani* and the moss that purify the *metzora* allude that the *tikkun* to his sin is that he should lower himself from his *ga'avah* like a worm and the moss.

**Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus** explained:

As is known, the *middah* of humility is a necessary condition in the *avodah* of *tefillah*, as ruled in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 98 3): “A person should pray with pleading like a poor man begging at the door.” The reason for this is that when a person davens with humility, his *tefillah* is closer to acceptance. When a person stands in *tefillah* in front of Hashem with pride in his heart, he conveys that he lacks for nothing, and he is asking only for extra luxuries, so why should there be compassion for him from On High? But when he lowers himself and bends himself, he proves that he recognizes that nothing that he has is his, and he needs the support every single step of the way. Such a person's requests are willingly accepted by Hashem, just like *l'havdil*, a flesh and blood person would have compassion on him if he saw him in his humble state.

In order to reach this level of humility, Chazal instituted places where we bow in *tefillah*. These bows were placed in a way that the higher a person's status is – the more he needs to lower himself, as Chazal say (*Brachos* 34b) that a regular person bows in *Shemoneh Esreh* in *Birchos Avos* and in *Modim*, at the beginning and the end, the Kohein Gadol bows at the end of each *brachah* and the king at the beginning and end of each *brachah* (see *Rambam Hilchos Tefillah* 5:10).

In light of this, each person needs to make his own reckoning: The higher he feels his status is, the more he has to lower himself when he comes to daven, so that his *tefillah* should be accepted.

It is therefore so important that we do not capitulate to habit on this important subject, and we should not fulfill the *takanah* of bowing by rote. We must bow with a feeling and a recognition of the reason we are bowing, and thus we will merit to submit ourselves properly, and then our *tefillos* will be willingly accepted, with compassion.

Tiferes Shimshon

## Kol Emunim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

### If you don't answer, how will you be answered?

In this *parashah*, the Torah details the laws of *tzara'as*, which is a punishment for one who sins with his tongue. The holy *Zohar* (*Metzora* 53a) reveals to us that this is not the only punishment of one who sins with his tongue. In addition, his forbidden words also sully his mouth and block his *tefillos* from being accepted.

However, “death and life are in the hand of the tongue.” Just like the tongue has the power to block the gates of *tefillah*, it also has the power to open them. The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 288b) teaches us about the tremendous power of answering amen according to *halachah*. He writes: “When Am Yisrael are careful to answer amen properly, the Voice announces in all the worlds: ‘*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*’ (*Yeshayah* 26:2) – do not read it *emunim*, rather *amenim*. Just like Am Yisrael open the gates of *brachos* by answering amen, likewise, the gates of *tefillah* will be opened to them and their *tefillah* will be accepted.”

What about you, dear reader, will you approach davening without first opening the gates of *tefillah*?! The key is in your hand - will you give it up?!

It is not for naught that we say each morning, before *Birchos Hashachar*, the *passuk* that reminds us of this concept (*Tehillim* 69:14): “*Aneini b'emes yishecha*,” meaning “*aneini b'emes*” – answer me in the merit of answering amen, which as is known, means *emes*.

Do not miss the opportunity to open the gates of *tefillah*! Come early each morning to shul and say *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*! It is an easy, simple thing to do yet it is unbelievably powerful and it guarantees that your *tefillah* will be accepted, *lerachamim uleratzon*.

Good Shabbos  
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

## Birchos Hashachar k'halachah

Aloud

With kavanah

Bechavrusa

Rav Hillel Dovid Litvack, *shlita*, a tremendous *talmid chacham* from Flatbush, New York, who has written wonderful *seforim* on a number of Torah subjects, has been working for years to strengthen the fulfilling of the mitzvah of answering amen according to *halachah*, wherever he goes.

He wrote this story at the beginning of his *sefer Chovas Aniyas Amen*. It is a story that combines wondrous *Hashgachah pratis*, and a tremendous *chizuk* regarding answering amen, with all its details.

The story began on Shabbos *Parashas Mishpatim* 5758. Rav Hillel davened that Shabbos in a certain shul in Boro Park, as he had a practice of going there once

“Answering amen before the *sha”tz* finishes the *brachah* is considered an *amen chatufah* which must not be answered,” Reb Hillel explained to the man. But the man struggled to admit to his mistake. “One second here or there has no significance...” he claimed. When Reb Hillel tried to argue with him, the man demanded that he show him a source.

The *misparallel*’s request was not at all complicated for Reb Hillel. As one who has been busy with this for years, the *halachos* of answering amen were very clear to him, especially this simple *halachah*. He went over to the bookcase and sought the first volume of *Mishnah Berurah*, by the Chofetz Chaim. But

A week passed. On Erev Shabbos *Parashas Terumah*, an envelope arrived in the Litvack family’s mailbox. The envelope contained a folded letter with a bank check. The letter said that because of a problem with the check, the bank had to return it. A quick glance at the check was enough for Rav Litvack to see that there was a mistake, and it wasn’t even his check. He called the bank and asked about this, but they didn’t have an answer, and they told him to go to the local branch to try to figure it out.

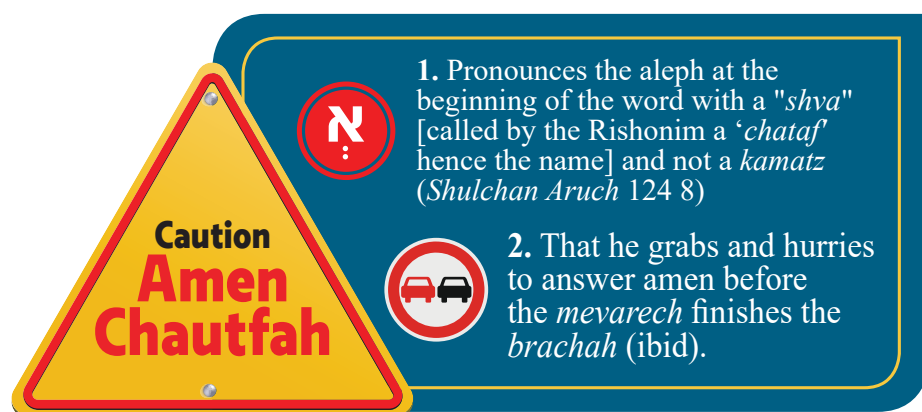
A few hours later, the mystery was solved, when the phone rang in the Litvack home, and the person on the other end introduced himself as a resident of Boro Park who had received a similar envelope that came to the Litvack home but inside was a check made out to a member of the Litvack family. Apparently, when stuffing the envelopes, the bank clerk had mixed up the checks, and sent the wrong check with the right letter to each family.

Rav Litvack thanked the speaker. He asked for his name and address and they made up that after Shabbos they would meet to switch the checks.

A few hours later, close to Shabbos, this story suddenly rose in Rav Litvack’s mind. He replayed the name of the family of the person who had mistakenly received his check...It was a familiar name, and it took him a few long moments to remember from where.

It turned out that this was none other than the person who, a week earlier, he had met in shul and had pointed out that he’d answered an *amen chatufah*. The family name was not particularly common, but the address was very close to the shul where he’d davened. So there was no doubt that it was the same person.

Rav Litvack saw this as remarkable *Hashgachah pratis*, as if it was a signal from



a year for a *tzedakah* appeal for an important organization that he helps manage.

Although Reb Hillel was a guest, and especially as the objective of his visit obligated him to try and find favor in the eyes of the *misparallelim*, he still did not desist from engaging in strengthening those around him in the subject close to his heart – answering amen according to *halachah*. So, when he noticed during *chazaras hasha”tz* that one of the *misparallelim* was answering amen time after time before the chazzan finished his *brachah*, he could not bear it. After davening, he went over to that person and pointed out that this is forbidden.

remarkably, he could not find the volume he was looking for.

So Reb Hillel went over to the person and said that he did not find the volume he was looking for, but if the man wanted, he could look in the *Mishnah Berurah* in *siman* 124 *se’if kattan* 30, and easily find the *halachah*. Just to be sure, he asked the man for his name, and told him he’d try to send him a copy of the page where the *halachah* appeared.

Because the person had been so reluctant to accept his rebuke, Rav Litvack began to feel doubts that perhaps he should not have pointed out the man’s error, because after all he was a guest in this shul.

## The First Strengthening

The Bais Yosef begins his magnum opus, the *Shulchan Aruch*, with the words: “He should strengthen himself like a lion to rise in the morning to serve his Creator, and he should rise with the dawn.” This *halachah* is the basis for the fulfillment of *mitzvos* and *avodas Hashem* of a Jew, as the *Pele Yoetz* wrote that “all of Yahadus hinges on this” (*Chessed L’alafim* 1 1). Because when a person begins his day by overcoming and rising quickly, he will merit to continue to overcome his *yetzer* throughout the day. But if immediately at dawn, he capitulates to his *yetzer hara*, and continues to sleep, then how will he be able to withstand the temptations of the *yetzer* during the day? Don’t Chazal say (*Avos* 4:2): “*aveirah goreres aveirah*”?

Rav Mordechai Dovid Levin, author of *Darkei Dovid*, wrote:

“And experience shows us that someone who rises and davens properly, then his learning in Torah all day is worthy, because one strengthens the other, and his spirit is ready inside him to engage and to delve into Torah properly. And if *chas vechalilah*, his *tefillah* is lax at the beginning of the day and it is not proper, *chalilah*, then the day is dragged after the beginning, and he will not be pleased with himself. Therefore, a person needs to strengthen himself and make the effort on both together - in *tefillah* and in Torah.” (*Darkei Dovid Kesubos* 110b)

## Hashkamah Kills the Yetzer Hara

Rav Avraham Azulai, author of *Chessed L’Avraham*, wrote that rising in the morning is a wonderful *segulah* “to kill the *yetzer hara* and to submit it,” and he brings an allusion to this from the words of the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 58a): “*Haba lehorgecha – hashkem lehorgo*.” The way to overpower the *yetzer hara* that “comes to kill you”

is by *hashkamah*, rising early – “*hashkem lehorgo*.” (*Hagahos Mahar”a Azulai* on the *Levush* 1 1)

The Baal Hafla’ah writes that overcoming to and rising in the morning to serve Hashem is a “*shemirah* for the whole day to help him overcome and prevail over his *yetzer*.” (*Pischa Ze’ira* at the beginning of *sefer Hamakneh* 38)

## The Last Day Full of Mitzvos

In *sefer Yisgaber K’Ari* (*Sha’ar Aleph*, 3) the author shares a poignant understanding about the virtue of rising early in the morning, which he reached following a story that happened:

One of his acquaintances suddenly collapsed at eight o’clock in the morning and passed away within a few hours.

That day, this Jew had woken up with alacrity, as he usually did, recited *Krias Shema* with *kavanah*, put on his *tallis*, donned *tefillin*, answered amen after *Birchos Hashachar*, davened *betzibbur k’vasikin*, answered amen after *Kaddish* and *chazaras hashah”tz*, and even had an *aliyah*. Then he still managed to attend his regular *shiur* after davening, and elevated his soul with another *daf* of *Gemara*.

So, although he returned his soul to Hashem at the early hour of the morning, he still managed on his final day to do many *mitzvos* that accompanied him when he returned his soul to its Creator.

Imagine if that Yid would have gotten up late that day, how regretful he would have been at having missed these great *mitzvos* on the last day of his life?

A living person should take heart, and immediately in the morning, should worry that perhaps these are his final hours, and if he doesn’t hurry to wake up he will lose the *mitzvos* that he can fulfill as soon as it is morning. (*Yisgaber K’Ari*, *Sha’ar Aleph*, 3)

Shamayim that he had acted correctly when he’d pointed the person’s attention to the fact that he was answering amen *amen chatufah*, and that he should continue trying to strengthening this *inyan* of answering amen.

As soon as Shabbos was over, Rav Litvack called the person and asked if indeed he was the man who he’d spoken to the week before about the *amen chatufah*.

The man affirmed that it was him, and he was equally as surprised. They made up a time to meet and exchange the checks.

This time, Rav Litvack came to the man’s home with a volume of the *Mishnah Berurah*, and when he met the man, he read to him:

Regarding the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* (124 8) in the explanation of the *issur* of *amen*

*chatufah* – “that he should not grab and hurry to answer it before the *mevarech* finishes,” and the *Mishnah Berurah* writes (*se’if kattan* 30): “It means that he should wait until the *sha”tz* finishes the last word completely. And there are people who begin to answer amen while the *sha”tz* is still saying the final half of the last word, and this is *assur*.”





### Answering Amen Is Preferable to Participating in a Bris Milah

”וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו” (יב ג)

The *ga'avad* of Ramat Elchanan, Rav Yitzchak Silberstein, was asked by a person who regularly says *Birchos Hashachar* with his friends in shul, in a way that each *mispalles* says the *brachah* at his turn and the rest answer amen after him. One day, after reciting the *brachos* for his friends, he found out that there was a *bris milah* taking place upstairs in the shul, and wondered if it would be better to continue answering amen after the *mevarchim* or if he

should go to the *bris*, where, as is known, Eliyahu Hanavi comes to participate.

And the Rav answered: One should prefer to remain with the *onei amen* after *Birchos Hashachar* over going to the *bris*, because one who answers amen fulfills a mitzvah actively, while participating in a *bris* is not a mitzvah. The arrival of Eliyahu Malach Habris is not a reason to leave the *onei amen* to go to the *bris*, because when answering amen, a person creates new angels, as the well-known *remez* illustrates: מלאך is equivalent to *amei* (Vavei Ha'amudim Vechishukeihem

Kovetz 46 p. 96)

### Tamei Tamei – Corresponding to the Nullification of Meah Brachos

”וראשו יהיה פרוץ ועל שפם יעטה וטמא יקרא” (יג מה)

One of the sages of Yemen explained: Why was the *metzora* punished that he had to read in front of everyone “*tamei tamei*”? Because he failed to answer *meah brachos* a day, it was decreed that he should recite instead aloud טמא טמא – which is numerically equivalent to one hundred. (*Sho'el Umeishiv Yalkut Midrashim*)

## Shaarei Gan Eden

Amen and Brachos in the Teachings of a Baal Hayahrtzeit

### The Heichal Habrachah

10 Iyar 5634

The Rebbe, Rav Yitzchak Eizik Yehudah Yechiel Safran was born in 5566 to his father, the Rebbe Rav Alexander Sender of Komarna. As a child, he learned Torah from his eminent father.



The ohel at the resting place of the Heichal Habrachah in Komarna

After he was orphaned of his father at around the age of 12, he grew up with his uncle, his father's brother, the Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichoiv, and after he married the daughter of the *tzaddik* Rav Avraham Mordechai of Pintchov, he moved to live in that town, where his father-in-law served as Rav.

He often traveled to the *tzaddikim* of his generation, to learn from their practices and from their *chassidus*, but he learned primarily from his father-in-law and his uncle, the Zidichoiver Rebbe. After the passing of his uncle in 5591, when Rav Yitzchak Eizik was only 25 years old, he returned to Komarna, where *chassidim* began to flock to him and he became renowned as a *tzaddik* and *po'el yeshuos*.

He authored numerous *seforim* in which he combined the Torah of the Arizal and the Torah of the Baal Shem Tov, among them *Heichal Habrachah* – a *peirush* on the *Chamishah Chumshei Torah*; *Otzar Chaim* on the 613 mitzvos; *Zohar Chai* – a commentary on the *Zohar*; *Maasei Oreg*, *Atzei Eden* and *Pnei Zaken* on *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah*.

He passed away on 10 Iyar 5634, and was laid to rest in the cemetery in Komarna.

### Awe and Trembling

The Komarna Rebbe wrote in his *sefer Shulchan Tahor* (215 4) that the holy *Zohar*, and even the Arizal, expounded on the punishment of one who is *mevatei* the mitzvah of answering amen, and in contrast, described at length the reward of one who is careful about answering it. One who delves into their words “will be gripped by fear and trembling. Therefore, a person should be very careful to answer amen with great *kavanah* and *yishuv hada'as*...and he should be careful to answer ninety amens after *brachos* and *Kaddish*...”

### The Gematria of Amen With the Milui

The Komarna Rebbe further wrote (ibid in *Zer Zahav*, *se'if kattan* 2) that the numerical value of his name יצחק יהודה יחיאל is 297, which is the same as the *gematria* of the word amen in the full spelling [אֱמֵן], and in light of this, the Rebbe concludes with a request: “That I should merit to be *mekabel* Pnei HaShechinah with the light of 370 *nehorin*,” which one merits in the *zechus* of answering amen.

### The Minhag of the Baal Shem Tov

Regarding teaching children to answer amen, the Rebbe Rav Yitzchak Eizik of Komarna wrote in his *sefer Shulchan Hatahor* (98 3):

“It is a kosher *minhag*...that a *melamed* of children brings the *tinnokos shel bais rabban* to the shul to answer amen and *Yehei Shemei Rabbah* and *Kedushah* in a pleasant voice. This is what Rav Yisrael Baal Shem Tov did in his childhood, as he gathered all the *tinnokos shel bais rabban* to the shul to answer “*Amen yehei Shemei Rabbah*.”