

The Weekly Farbrengens



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ANSWERING AMEN

THE POWER OF AMEN

Chazal say that responding *Amen* to a *bracha* is more praiseworthy than reciting the *bracha*. The person saying the *bracha* is likened to the simple foot soldier who begins the battle, thus making it possible for the mighty warriors, those answering *Amen*, to come afterwards and bring victory.

The *Maharsha* explains that there are negative *malochim* who attempt to block *brachos* from coming down; saying a *bracha* creates good *malochim* to battle them. When one answers *Amen*, the battle is won.

(נזיר ס"ו ע"ב, מהרש"א שם, וראה לקו"ש חל"ה ע' 219)

It is obligatory to answer *Amen* when hearing another recite a *bracha*, even when one's own obligation is not being discharged by that *bracha*. The word must be pronounced correctly, and must be said immediately after hearing the *bracha*.

The *Zohar* writes that it is a *zechus* to have others answer *Amen* to a *bracha* that one recites. However, if one knows that those present will be lax in answering properly, he should rather say the *bracha* quietly and not cause them to err.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' קכד וסי' רטו ס"ב, זהר ר"פ עקב, בן איש חי מסעי י"ח)

ANSWERING WITH ENTHUSIASM

The *Zohar* relates: The son of Rav Safra was a young Torah student when he arrived in *Eretz Yisroel*. One day, while standing on a roof, he heard *Kaddish* being recited, so he quickly jumped down and ran into the *shul* to hear *Kaddish* and join in its responses with the other *mispalelim*. A man who had witnessed this assumed that he was a great *talmid chochom* and took the stranger to be his son-in-law. And indeed, he later became a luminary who revealed many secrets of Torah.

(זהר ח"ב קס"ה ע"ב ואילך)

The Alter Rebbe writes in his *Shulchan Aruch* that one should be very careful to join in the congregation's responses to *Kaddish*, and adds that this is even more important than joining in the congregation's responses to *Kedusha*.

One should answer *Amen, yehei Shmei rabba* with concentration, for one who recites that response

with all his *kavana* can cause even a *gzar din* of seventy years' standing to be torn and become annulled. Moreover, by doing so he opens the gates of Gan Eden for himself. One should also answer loudly, for this sound silences all the prosecuting voices and threatening decrees in the Heavenly Court. Some people stand out of respect when when responding to the responses to *Kaddish*.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' נ"ו, סנהדרין ק"י ע"ב)

CONSIDER

Is an Amen said without "all one's kavana" also effective? Why?

To whom is Amen said: the one making the bracha, those listening, one's self or HaShem?

The Alter Rebbe also explains that when responding *Amen* one should think of its meaning, which varies according to the *bracha* that was just said. Thus, if the *bracha* expressed praise to *HaShem*, one's *Amen* echoes that praise, expressing a confirmation and agreement with what was said. Likewise, if the *bracha* was a request or was part of *Kaddish*, then the *Amen* asks that that request be fulfilled soon. And if the *bracha* included both praise and a request, one should keep in mind both meanings.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' קכ"ד ס"ט)

The Friediker Rebbe related: One day, many years before the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment in Petersburg in 1796 (תקנ"ט), he came out to the chassidim and said, "In Gan Eden, they appreciate the preciousness of *Olam HaZeh*. The *malochim* would forgo everything for one *Amen, yehei Shmei rabba* said by a Yid with all his might, with complete concentration and total involvement in those words."

That was the entire *maamar*, and with it the Alter Rebbe kindled such a burning enthusiasm in his listeners that throughout the entire following year, *Amen, yehei Shmei rabba* was said with fire.

(היום יום י"ז אדר א')

THE PLEASURE OF PRAISING

The Rebbe Rashab writes in a *maamar*, "The spiritual pleasure derived from *Elokus* can actually increase one's body fat. It is said that Reb Nachum Chernobler was heavy from answering *Amen, yehei Shmei rabba*."

The same *tzaddik* was once walking in his town, when he saw a goy in a cheerful mood. He turned in wonderment to the chassidim accompanying him and asked, "What is he so happy about? Did he answer *Amen, yehei Shmei rabba* today?!"

(היום יום ט"ו תמוז, הבעש"ט ותלמידיו ע' 212)

Reb Pesach Molostovker, a chossid of the Alter Rebbe, the Mittler Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek, would daven every day for hours on end. In his old age he was no longer able to continue with his extensive meditative *avoda*, so instead he traveled in a wagon from *minyan* to *minyan*, to join in the responses of *Amen, Kedusha* and *Borchu* that he valued so highly.

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' רנ"ד)

The chossid Reb Zalman Leib Astulin was exiled for many years in a Siberian prison, far from any other yidden. When he finally left Russia, he traveled to *Eretz Yisroel* where he met his brother-in-law, Reb Yankele Galinsky, in Bnei Brak.

The next morning, Reb Yankele took Reb Zalman Leib to a nearby *shul* to daven. After *Shacharis* Reb Yankele went home and Reb Zalman Leib stayed on. After some time passed and Reb Zalman Leib didn't return home, Reb Yankele went looking for him. He found Reb Zalman Leib standing in *shul*, supported by his crutches, his face radiating with joy.

"Why are you still here?" Reb Yankele asked. "You probably finished davening long ago, so come home and eat something."

"I just can't leave!" answered Reb Zalman Leib. "After my *minyan* finished, another one began, and then another, and each one offers me a chance to say *Amen, yehei Shmei rabba* and *Kedusha* again and again. *HaShem* finally gave me this precious opportunity – and I should give it up for breakfast?!"

(אמן ע' 76)



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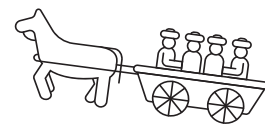
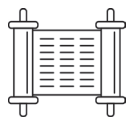
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BLACK TEFILLIN STRAPS

The *retzuos* of my tefillin has white spots near the knot. Is that a problem?

One of the eight requirements for *tefillin*, transmitted to Moshe on Har Sinai, is for the *retzuos* (straps) to be black. Without this, the *tefillin* are invalid.¹ *L'hatchila*, they should be dark black ('like a raven'), while *b'dieved*, they are kosher as long as their color is called black.²

What if the *retzuah* fades over time?

While some are *melamed zechus* that it's only necessary for them to be black when they're first made but not later,³ the implication from the *poskim* is that the blackness must be constantly maintained (similar to the squareness of the *batim*).⁴ When renewing the blackness, one should do so *lishma* and say "L'sheim kedushas tefillin."⁵

If the *retzuah* is only partially faded, some employ the rule of *rubo k'kulo* (majority) to declare the entire *retzuah* as black.⁶ However, others require the entire *shiur* to be black. R. Shlomo Zalman Aurbach points out that if the *retzuah* would be called "black" if asked and not "black and white," even if white spots or cracks are visible, it is considered black and kosher based on its overall appearance without having to employ *rubo k'kulo*. Though it should be kept entirely black for *hidur mitzva*.⁷

The outer surface is what must be black, while the inner surface can be any color besides red.⁸ While the Rambam writes that it is a beauty of *tefillin* for both sides to be black,⁹ the *minhag* was not so.¹⁰ In recent years, some *retzuos* are saturated with black ink simply to ensure that the *retzuos* don't fade, as they are black through and through.

It is imperative that the black side face outward. If the non-black side flips over in the strap encircling the head or first coil around the bicep, the Alter Rebbe rules that one is not *yotzei*.¹¹

1. מנחות ל"ה ע"א. רמב"ם תפילין פ"ג ה"א.
2. ברוך שאמר תיקון תפילין ע' מ"א.
3. ביה"ל סי' ל"ג ד"ה הרצועות השחורות.
4. ראה ביאור הגר"א סי' ל"ג ס"ג.
5. ראה משנ"ב סי' ל"ג סק"ט. וראה גם ב"ח סי' ל"ב סוף סכ"ה.
6. ראה שו"ע שם ס"ד.
7. שלמת חיים סי' מ'.
8. ראה הליכות שלמה פ"ד אות כ"ח.
9. תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' כ"ב. סת"ם כהלכתו פכ"ד ע' רט"ז.
10. שו"ע סי' ל"ג ס"ד.
11. רמב"ם הל' תפילין פ"ג הי"ד.
12. ב"י ודרכ"מ סי' ל"ג, משנ"ב שם סק"א.
13. ראה שו"ע סי' כ"ז ס"ט.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

HELP US CONTINUE

Dedicate an issue of *The Weekly Farbrengen* in honor of a *simcha* or *yahrtzeit*

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R. MICHOEL DVORKIN

R. Michael Dvorkin (5626-5709) was born in a town near Nevel to a family of Kopuster Chabad Chassidim. After the passing of the Magen Avos of Kopust, R. Michael traveled to Lubavitch and became a staunch *mekushar* to the Rebbe Rashab, and later had a deep personal relationship with the Frierdiker Rebbe. He lived in Eretz Yisrael and then New York in his later years, and was known for his heartfelt davening, nigunim, and Chassidishe stories.

Walking out after a *farbrengen* in the Frierdiker Rebbe's sukkah, R. Michael, red faced and dancing, began singing in Russian "*Nyet, nyet nikavoh*," there is nothing besides Hashem. [R. Michael had worked in the lumber business and borrowed various Russian expressions he had heard there.]

The Rebbe Rashab, who was visiting his son's home, stood by the door for some time to make out the words, and then said, "These are *birurim* of the forest... a *tohu'diker ein od*." He then added, "Even something simple, when done earnestly, is good. But without feeling, even a profound insight is dead."

When R. Michael found out that the Rebbe Rashab heard his singing, he beat his head from emotion.

Years later, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was exiled to Kostroma, R. Michael went ahead to prepare a home, mikvah and even a cheder. When R. Michael heard about the Rebbe's release, he was overcome with emotion. He danced around the house holding a bottle of *mashkeh* and singing his niggun, "*Nyet, nyet nikavoh*."

(סה"ש תרצ"ט ע' 302, תו"מ חמ"ד ע' 70)

Reb Michael was a talented *baal menagen*, and he would sing niggunim with precision and emotion. When Reb Michael came to America, he was recorded singing two *nigunim*, which the Rebbe later instructed Nichoach to include in an album.

When R. Michael served as *baal tefilah* he would often break down crying. Once, while learning a Purim *maamar* beginning *Balayla Hahu*, he came to the words "*Hamelech*" and began breathing heavily and crying as if it were Rosh Hashana...

(חסידים הראשונים ח"ב ע' 260)

The Frierdiker Rebbe once noted that two Chassidim came from Kopust to Lubavitch, but they're not the same. R. Mendel Leib [Abramson] is a "Lubavitcher" - calm and collected - who happened to have gone to Kopust, while R. Michael is really a "Kopuster" - emotional and excitable - who ended up in Lubavitch...

(בדרכי החסידים ח"א ע' 357)

A Moment with The Rebbe

לזכר נשמת מרת חוה לאה בת ר' שמשון הכהן ע"ה



HE DOESN'T NEED IT

Reb Itche Goldin, a loyal Chossid of the Frierdiker Rebbe, dedicated his life to Tomchei Temimim, for which he sat in jail. After arriving in New York, Reb Itche became involved in the Rebbe's work, devoting himself to administrate the young Beis Rivka Girls' School.

On Shmini Atzeres 5729, standing in the doorway of 770, Reb Itche suffered a heart attack, and passed away a short while later.

When his *matzeiva* was installed, it

included an inscription with the English words, "at rest".

When the Rebbe came to the Ohel, the Rebbe noticed the inscription, and sent a message to Reb Zalman Butman, a close friend of Reb Itche and a member of the Chevra Kadisha. "Reb Itche was a Chassidishe yid, and he doesn't need the 'At Rest'..."

The inscription was removed.

(A Chassidishe Derher, Issue 84)