

Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Pamphlet From "Bney Emunim"



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Peninei Emunim

Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

The Brachah of "Hagomel" for the Kohein Gadol

"ויאמר ה' אל משה דבר אל אהרן אחיך ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש מבית לפרכת אל פני הכפרת אשר על הארץ ולא ימות כי בענן אראה על הכפרת" (טז ב)

Chazal say regarding the entry of the Kohein Gadol to the Kodesh Hakodashim on Yom Kippur (*Zohar Chadash Bereishis* 24:2): "When the Kohein enters *lifnai velifnim*...if he merits – he goes inside in peace and emerges in peace, if he is not *zocheh* – then a flame emerges from between the two *keruvim* and he is burned up and dies inside."

The Rishon Letzion, **Rav Eleizer Nachum**, author of *Chazon Nachum* on *Mishnayos* and the *rebbe* of the Chida, asked if after the Kohein Gadol merited to emerge safely from the Kodesh Hakodashim he had to *bentch Hagomel*, in keeping with the *halachah* of someone who was in a dangerous place and was saved. He sent his question to **Rav Yitzchak Zerachyah Azulai**, the father of the Chida, who replied that the Kohein Gadol did not make *Hagomel* when emerging. He explained his answer as follows: Although the *brachah* of *Hagomel* was established for one who was in a place of danger and was saved, the Kodesh Hakodashim cannot be called a place of danger, because the emergence of the Kohein from there in peace depends solely on

Kol Emunim

A word from the founder and Nasi of Bney Emunim

Brachos That Are a Perfect Gift

Lag Ba'omer is almost here. This coming Erev Shabbos, you will hear in lots of shuls the song of Bar Yochai, and along with it, the light of the holy Tanna Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai will illuminate our hearts.

In the holy Zohar, which Rabi Shimon left us, there are lots of mentions of the virtue of answering amen. In this segment, I would like to focus on a remarkable revelation that the Zohar makes in Parashas Eikev (271a). He writes:

"When a brachah that is answered by amen rises On High, all the gates of Shamayim are opened before it, and an announcement is made in all the firmaments: This is the gift sent by so and so to the King; this is the gift that was sent with the *kiyum* and perfection as is worthy."

Wonder of wonders! Each morning, we begin the day by saying *Birchos Hashachar*, but we have the option to decide how our brachos will be treated in Shamayim. With a simple act – by saying them *bechavrusa*, we can merit that they should be accepted in Shamayim with love and willingness, and that each and every brachah will be called in your name and will be crowned as the perfect gift. If you don't make sure that someone hears the brachos and answers amen after them, you've lost the special treatment that they could merit when they reach the Higher realms. How can one just stand by and forgo such a thing?!

The passuk (*Tehillim* 19:15) "Yihyu leratzon imrei fi" – which we say at the end of the Amidah -- alludes to this, as "פי" with the kollel is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the same as amen. The best way for the words of our mouths to be accepted "leratzon" is by answering amen.

Let us begin our day by saying *Birchos Hashachar* in front of someone who will answer amen after them, and by doing so, the gates of Shamayim will be opened to them, and this will effect upon us so much goodness and brachah.

be accepted, *lerachamim uleratzon*.

Good Shabbos
Yaakov Dov Marmurstein

his deeds.

But the Chazon Nachum did not accept the answer. In his view, even if emerging from the Kodesh Hakodashim depended on his merits, the danger of actually going in there obligated him to recite *Hagomel* when he emerged safely.

Machazik Brachah [Chida] Orach Chaim 219 1-2

Precede the Tzarah with Korban and Tefillah

"וכי תזבח וזבח שלמים לה' לרצונכם תזבחהו" (ט"ה)

Rav Shlomo Kluger explained that often, when a person is in a state of trouble, he makes a promise that when he saved, he will sacrifice a *korban Todah*, as it says (*Tehillim* 66:14): "Asher patzu sefasai vediber pi batzar li." But this *korban* does not come from the person's desire to sacrifice a *korban*, because the person would prefer that he should not have had this trouble in the first place, and he would not have to bring a *korban* as a result. In fact, the right and more effective way is to precede by bringing the *korban* willingly, before the *tzarah* arises, and as Chazal say regarding *tefillah* (*Sanhedrin* 44b): "A person should always precede with *tefillah*, as the Torah says "Vechi sizbechu zevach shelamim l'Hashem – lirtzonchem tizbechu," don't wait for the trouble to come that will compel you to bring a *korban*. Rather, bring the *korban* willingly first, before the *tzarah* strikes, and thus you will prevent it from coming in the first place.

Imrei Shefer

Birchos Hashachar k'halachah

Aloud

With kavanah

Bechavrusa

Maasei Emunim

A Story About Amen and Tefillah

– An Apartment That W Expanded Bechavrusa –

This story, about a small apartment, a neighbor who objected to an extension and *Birchos Hashachar* said together that managed to open his heart, was shared by the person it happened to, Reb Shmuel.

Since his marriage, Reb Shmuel had lived in the same apartment. It was a small, three-room unit in one of the central neighborhoods of Bnei Brak.

Over the years the family grew, and was blessed with six children. With every new baby that came into the world – along with his plaintive cries and tremendous light – the crowding grew. The apartment was too small to give the children the space they needed to grow in a healthy and happy environment.

The place was too small to contain them and their belongings... There was no room for another bed, and the constant mess negatively affected their peace of mind.

There were tempting offers for new apartments, more spacious

The only practical solution was expanding their existing apartment. Many residents in the buildings nearby had already done so. The building where Reb Shmuel lived was one of the few who had not yet extended, and many of the neighbors discussed among themselves their intentions to expand in the near future. It was a natural step, as families grew.

Thus began a long and tiring bureaucratic process, which lasted three years. Ultimately, Reb Shmuel managed to get all the permits he needed. But now, he faced another hurdle, perhaps the most complex of them all – obtaining permission to build from the neighbors.

The neighbors all knew Reb Shmuel and his sweet children, and they were very happy to make it possible for him to extend his apartment. All of them except one: The elderly neighbor who lived one floor above him. The neighbor who had recently finished marrying off all his children

did not need to extend his house, and all he wanted was some quiet and peace of mind. The thought of the dust, dirt, and especially the noise of workers and machines – deterred him, as he was reluctant to have his tranquility disrupted so extensively. In addition, he murmured something about his apartment

becoming dimmer because the renovation would block some of the daylight.

All Reb Shmuel's efforts – along with those by the other neighbors who galvanized to help him – to soften the neighbor's heart were not successful. He stood firm in his refusal: "If you want a bigger apartment – move to one."

Reb Shmuel was peaceful by nature. He did not want to harm a Jew or to mar the atmosphere of unity in the building. As such, he chose a different channel – *tefillah*. Each

day, he pleaded to his Creator to open his neighbor's heart, so that he would let him extend his apartment.

And then corona broke out. The shuls closed down, but *tefillah* was not neglected even during those turbulent times. The courtyard of the building because a "Chatzros Beis Hashem," and the residents gathered three times a day to daven.

With time, the courtyard was adapted for this need. It was cleaned, the floor was smoothed out, chairs and *shtenders* were placed there, and the *kol tefillah* resonated among the buildings that surrounded it. Reb Shmuel, who had the practice of saying *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, looked for a new partner during this challenging time. Somewhat hesitantly, he asked his elderly neighbor to be his *chavrusa* for *brachos*, and the man willingly agreed.

Each morning, the two went down to the courtyard. Standing near the wild grass and the stone wall, they would make *brachos* together. A quiet breeze wafted between them and carried the *brachos* and the *amens* all the way to the Kisei Hakavod. Moreover, a wind of friendship also began to blow, bringing them closer together.

After a while, the elderly neighbor's doctor instructed him to remain at home, but he asked Reb Shmuel to please continue coming to the door of his home to preserve their *minhag* of reciting *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*.

Reb Shmuel was careful to recite the *brachos* with him, to ask how he was doing and to offer any help. His children helped with shopping and various errands. A close bond was forged between the elderly neighbor and the large family, and the children began to view him as a friendly grandfather figure.

One day, about half a year later, there was a knock at Reb Shmuel's door. It was their neighbor, holding a thick envelope.

"We've been saying *Birchos Hashachar* for quite some time now," the neighbor began warmly. "Our *chavrusashaf* has helped me get to know you much better. I see how special you and your family are. I really admire you, the way you are raising your children to



ones, that he heard all the time. But they all demanded a big sacrifice: Leaving their familiar surroundings, the *kollel* and schools where the children learned, and moving out of the neighborhood that they loved.

Reb Shmuel struggled to imagine life in a different place. His *kollel* was a second home to him, his children were thriving in their schools, and the neighborhood itself was a Gan Eden of Torah, as they lived alongside many *talmidei chachamim* who had also made it their home.

The Virtue of Amen One Who Answers Amen Is Called *Kadosh*

"והתקדשתם והייתם קדשים כי אני ה' אלקיכם" (כז)

The *sefer tzava'ah* that Rav Naftali Katz, author of *Semichas Chachaimim*, wrote was printed in dozens of editions. In the part where he turns to his sons and instructs them on life practices, Rav Naftali lists in the name of the Arizal twenty-one things that sanctify a person, and when a person is careful about them he fulfills the mitzvah of "*Vehiskadashtem veheyisem kedoshim*." Among those things, Rav Naftali lists answering amen with *kavanah*. He writes (21 ibid):

"The *kavanah* of amen means that he should answer amen with all his strength, literally, because the voice arouses the *kavanah*, as we see in the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, that one is allowed to daven in a loud voice to arouse *kavanah*... And he should have in mind when answering: '*K-l Melech ne'eman*' (see *Shabbos* 119b)... '*K-l*' is *chessed*, as it says (*Tehillim* 52:3): '*Chessed K-l kol hayom*.' '*Melech*' is *din*, as it says (*Mishlei* 16:10): '*Melech bemishpat ya'amid eretz*'... '*Ne'eman*' is *rachamim*... as it says '*Ani Hashem ne'eman leshalem sachar tov*,' and '*Ani Hashem ne'eman lifroa*' (see *Rashi Shemos* 6:2). He should also have in mind the Names of Hava-yah and Adnus, which, when combined are numerically equivalent to amen.

"And when he does all this, he will be called a *kadosh*, as it says '*Vehiskadashtem veheyisem kedoshim ki Ani Hashem*

Elokeichem,' and they explain (*Brachos* 53b): "*Vehiskadashtem... Ani Hashem Elokeichem is a brachah [Birchas Hamazon], and if the mevarech is called Kadosh then how much more so the oneh amen is called kadosh because 'gadol ha'oneh amen yoser mei'hamevarech*.'" (*Brachos* ibid)

The *Shelah Hakadosh* (*Maseches Yoma Derech Chaim Tochachos Mussar* 198) brings in the name of the *talmidim* of the Arizal that answering amen with *kavanah* sanctifies the person.

The *Pele Yoetz* brings an allusion to this that "one who is accustomed to answering amen acquires for himself *kedushah*" from the fact that the Torah placed the *passuk* (*Bamidbar* 5:10): "*V'ish es kodashav lo yihiyu*" next to the *parashah* of *Sotah*, where it says (ibid 22): "*V'amrah ha'ishah amen amen*." (*Semuchim La'ad Parashas Naso*)

Sefer Manchil Emunim (24, and see there 10) explains based on this the reason why Yeshayah Hanavi was punished (see *Yevamos* 49b) for saying (6:5) "*Ubesoch am temei sefasayim anochi yoshev*," as follows:

Chazal explain (*Aggadas Bereishis* Ch. 79) that when Yeshayah Hanavi saw that even the *amei ha'aretz* who do not know the *mitzvos* of the Torah receive great reward when they are strict to answer amen with *kavanah*, he offered praise: "*Hashem Elohai Atah aromimcha odeh Shimcha ki asisa pele eitzos mei'rachok emunah omen*." In other words, I thank You for the wonder that You did advising that the reward of the people distant from Torah should receive by giving

them the mitzvah of answering amen, whose reward is very great. From the words of the Midrash it is evident that in the generation of Yeshayah, Am Yisrael were strict to say amen with *kavanah*. For this reason, he was punished for calling them an "*am temei sefasayim*," because even if impure words left their mouths, still, they should not be called this at a time when they are strict to answer amen which, as noted, sanctifies the person.

Indeed, the *Chishukei Chemed* testified that in Yerushalayim, a certain Yid was called "*kadosh*" only because even when he was old and weak, he made the effort to go to shul to answer amen to *brachos*. (*Notrei Amen*, Vol. I, p. 157)

Answering Amen After Every Brachah

"יצויתי את ברכתי לכם בשנה הששית ועשת את התבואה לשלש השנים" (כח כא)

Rav Yaakov Chaim, the only son and successor of the Ben Ish Chai, wrote:

The word "לכם" with the *kollel* is numerically equivalent to amen. So we can explain the *passuk* as follows: "*Vetzivisi es birchasi – lachem*" – HaKadosh Baruch Hu is commanding you that whenever you hear a *brachah* you should answer amen after it, as the Rambam rules (*Brachos* 1 13): "Anyone who hears someone in Am Yisrael making any one of the many *brachos*, even though he did not hear the entire *brachah* from beginning to end, and even though he is not obligated in that *brachah*, must answer amen." (*Tzitzim Uprachim*)

ahavas Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, with patience, and with the personal attention you give each child. The more I got to know you the more impressed I have been.

"Recently, when I answer amen to the *brachah* of *She'asah Li Kol Tzorki* that you say, I feel uncomfortable. I know how difficult it is for you in your small, crowded apartment. After a lot of deliberation, I decided to remove my objection to the construction, and I even want to contribute towards the expense of it to make it easier for you..."

Reb Shmuel took the envelope, stunned and a bit uneasy. He opened it to find a very generous sum of a few thousand shekels. Before he could even thank his neighbor, the other man had gone up the stairs and disappeared back into his own house...

Reb Shmuel realized the unbelievable *Hashgachah pratis*: From a vehement objector the neighbor became a supporter and even direct partner in the construction. His *tefillah* had come true – he could start building, and

while doing so, he also merited another good neighbor in addition to the ones he'd had before!

After several long months of construction, with everything that involves, when he and his family were finally enjoying a spacious, newly renovated apartment that met their needs, all they could do was thank Hashem, and publicize the abundance that they had been blessed with in the merit of answering *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*.

“תורתו מִגֵּן לָנוּ הִיא מֵאִירַת עֵינֵינוּ, הוּא יִמְלִיץ טוֹב בְּעֵדְנוּ, אֲדוֹנֵנוּ בֶּר יוֹחֵאִי”

Ahead of Lag Ba’omer we bring a taste of what *Sefer Hazohar Hakadosh* says about the great virtue of answering amen and the magnitude of the obligation to be strict to answer it according to *halachah*. His holy words were arranged on the *pesukim* according to which the Chachmei Hazohar explained their lofty secrets on the answering of amen.

Gedolei Yisrael especially emphasized the words of the *Zohar* on *Parashas Vayeilech* (285a and onwards), where he discusses at length the reward of the *oneh amen*, and on the other hand, on the severity of the punishment of one who is lax about its importance, *chalilah*. One who peruses his words there will be gripped by fear and trembling, as the *Pele Yoetz* wrote (*Aniyas Amen*): “We know how much the holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285b) expounded on the great and powerful reward of one who is a *shomer emunim*, who actively looks out and waits for an opportunity to hear a *brachah* so he can answer amen. In contrast is the intensity and severity of the punishment for one who is not concerned about answering amen. In truth, the hairs of a man should stand up on end upon seeing the severity. And hearts should feel pain about the many *amei ha’aretz* who are not careful at all. Hashem HaTov should atone for them, because the nation has sinned unintentionally.”

Special Shemirah for Onei Amen

“אהבו את ה' כל חסידיו אמונים נצר ה' ומשלם
על יתר עשה גאווה” (תהלים לא כד)

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 286a) explains this *passuk* as follows: “*Emunim notzer Hashem*” – HaKadosh Baruch Hu keeps and guards the *oneh amen*, and in contrast “*umeshalem al yeser osei ga'avah*,” He pays and punishes one whose pride makes him be lax about answering amen, as he deserves (Based on *Mikdash Melech* *ibid*)

"Mechabdai" – By Answering Amen – "Achabed"

“כי מכבדי אכבד ובני יקל” (שמואל א' פרק ב')

The holy *Zohar* (*ibid*) explains that it says of the *oneh amen k'halachah*: “*ki mechabdai achabed*” – and he receives his reward both in this world and in the World to Come. In contrast, of one who is lax about amen, *chalilah*, it is said “*ubozai yekalu*” and he is punished both in this world and the Next.

Sefer Pri Eitz Chaim (*Sha'ar Kavanas Amen* Ch. 3) brings an allusion to the fact that the *passuk* “*ubozai yekalu*” is said about someone who does not answer amen because of the fact that the acronym of the final letters of the words of the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 83:17): “מלא פניהם קלון” is אמן and also מלא, meaning that one who acts like a mute

when he hears a *brachah* and does not answer amen, of him it is said “*ubozai yekalu*.”

Answering Amen Opens the Gates of Tefillah

“פתחו שערים ויבא גוי צדיק שמר אמנים”
(ישעיה כו ב')

The holy *Zohar* (*Vayeilech* 285b) writes that when Am Yisrael are careful answer amen properly, then when they pray to Hashem about their *tzaros*, the Voice announces in all the worlds: “*Pischu she'arim veyavo goy tzaddik shomer emunim*” (*Yeshayah* 26:2) – do not read it *emunim* but rather *amenim*. *Pischu she'arim* – just like Am Yisrael opens the gates of *brachos*, likewise, the gates of *tefillah* will be opened to them, and their *tefillas* will be accepted.

The Rema”z further explains on these words (*ibid*): “Because their mouths were sanctified by answering amen with *kavanah*, therefore, their breath rises up and breaches all the barriers.”

The Decree Is Torn Up in the Merit of Answering Amen

“אז תקרא זה' יענה תשוע ויאמר הנני” (ישעיה
נח ט)

In *Tikkunei Zohar* (40a) this *passuk* is explained to apply to one who answers amen with all his strength, that with the strength of answering amen, he merits “*Az tikra v'Hashem ya'aneh*.” The *Zohar* explains it

from the fact that the word “אז” is numerically equivalent to eight, the number that symbolizes amen, because אמן is numerically equivalent to the eight letters in the Names of Hava-yah and Adnus. From here, the *Chachmei Hazohar* extrapolated: “Anyone who answers amen with all his strength has his decree of seventy years torn up.”

The *Shomer Emunim* writes (*Ma'amar Pischu Shearim* Ch. 1): “And the words of the *tikkunim* are very deep in *sod*, and we do not engage in hidden things. In any case, in their simple meaning, as the commentaries say, it is explained that the *passuk* “*Az tikra v'Hashem ya'aneh*,” alludes to answering amen, whose number is like the two Names – which is 91. And likewise א is the number eight, like the number of letters of the two names. And one who answers amen with all his strength gives strength to be *meyached* these two names, and then the great lights from Above are also *nisyached*...And then through this, his decree of seventy years is torn up.”

He further adds that while in *Maseches Shabbos* (119b) it says “Anyone who answers amen *yehei Shemei Rabba mevarach* with all his strength – has his decree torn up,” here, in the *Tikkunei Zohar* it is explained that the tearing of the decree is promised to any *oneh amen*, not necessarily only who answers “*amen yehei Shemei Rabba mevarach*.”