

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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פרשת בהעלותך תשע"ה

## Answering Amen

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### 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.

(נויר 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' ככד ס"ט וסי' רטו ס"ב, זהר ר"פ עקב, (בן איש חי מסעי י"ד)

### Answering with Enthusiasm

The **Zohar** relates: The son of **Rav Safra** was a young *talmid chochom* 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)

One day, the **Baal HaTanya** 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 all he said, yet with it he 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')

One should be very careful to join in the congregation's responses to *Kaddish*. 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 making the responses to *Kaddish*.

*Chazal* say that when a person answers *Amen*, he accepts upon himself the fear of *HaShem*, for the word *אמן* is made up of the initials of the words *א-ל מלך נאמן* – "HaShem, Who is a trustworthy King." The *Alter Rebbe* writes in his *Shulchan Aruch* that it should take as long to respond *Amen* as it takes to say those three words.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' נ"ו, סנהדרין ק"י ע"ב)

### The Pleasure of Praising

The *tzaddik* **Reb Nachum of Chernobyl** was once walking in his town, when he saw a gentile 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?!"

(הבעש"ט ותלמידיו ע' 212)

**Reb Pesach Molostovker**, a *chossid* of the **Baal HaTanya**, 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 *minyán* to *minyán*, to join in the responses of *Amen, Kedusha* and *Borchu* that he valued so highly.

(רשימו"ד ח"א ע' רנ"ד)

One of the Russian *chassidim* who was exiled for many years in a Siberian prison was **Reb Zalman Leib Astulin**. Being cut off from other *Yidden*, he was unable to *daven* with a *minyán*, hear *Kaddish* and *Kedusha*, or even answer *Amen* to a *bracha*. When he finally left the Soviet Union, he traveled to *Eretz Yisroel* where he met his brother-in-law, **Reb Yankele Galinsky**, in *Bnei Brak*. It was a rapturous reunion.

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. Time passed and although the *shul* was very close by, which meant that he could not possibly have lost his way, **Reb Zalman Leib** didn't return home. After a while, **Reb Yankele** went to *shul* and found his brother-in-law standing there, 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 *minyán* 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)

## Consider This

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

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

## Sparks of Greatness

### The Panim Me'iros - כ"ז סיון

**Reb Meir Eisenstadt**, also known as the **Maharam Ash**, was born in Poland in the year *Taf Lammed*. He was a nephew of the **Shach** and learned by the **Magen Avraham** and **Reb David Oppenheimer**. He was known to be one of the greatest *rabbanim* and *talmidai chachamim* of his day and served as *rov* in many cities, culminating with the city of Eisenstaedt. He was the **Rebbi of Reb Yonasan Eibshitz**, and is most well-known for his *sefer* "**Panim Meiros**," amongst the other *seforim* he compiled. He was *niftar* on *Chaf Zayin Sivan* ט"ז תמוז (1744).

In his *sefer* "**Kosnos or**" Reb Meir writes:

"The *possuk* says *"Am zu yatzarti li, thilasi yesapeiru"* – 'This nation I have created for myself; they will tell my praise.' The *Zohar* says that the word 'Am', this nation, (as opposed to 'Ami,' my nation) is a reference to simple folk. The *Zohar* also states that when the unlearned *Yidden* rise early to praise Hashem, He accepts

it to be as if they have learned the deepest parts of Torah.

This is what the *possuk* says *"Am zu yatzarti li"* – I have created ignorant who cannot learn, *"thilasi yesapeiru"* – they can serve me by singing my praise.

It happened once that Reb Meir disappeared from his town for a full year, without leaving any indication of his whereabouts. The community, sure that he had passed away, wanted to appoint one the *dayonim* of the city as the new *Rav*. On the day that they convened to write the new *"Ksav Rabbonus"*, a letter from Reb Meir arrived for his wife telling her that he knows that a *Dayan* will be appointed as the new *Rav* and she should not feel bad. He added that he had been notified from above by being shown the *possuk*, *"Higdil alai akev"*, of which the last letters spell out "*Leib*" – the name of the new *Rov*.

## Library Sparks

This week's Torah portion, *Beha'aloscha*, opens with the words "When you light the lamps."

Aaron the *kohen* (priest) was commanded to kindle the *menora* in the Sanctuary every day. The *menora* was required to burn at all times, as the Torah states, "To cause a light to burn perpetually."

Just as Aaron lit the *menora* in the *Mishkan*, so is every Jew required to illuminate his home and surroundings with the Torah's holy light.

Aaron was a *kohen*, but so too is every member of the Jewish people, as it is written, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests." The giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai transformed every Jew into a "*kohen*."

The *menora* stood in the *Mishkan* (and later in the *Bais Hamikdash* in Jerusalem). Similarly, every Jewish home is a *Mishkan*, a "Sanctuary" to G-d. The verse "I shall dwell in their midst" means that G-d dwells within each and every Jew; hence, every Jewish home is an abode for the Divine Presence.

The light that Aaron kindled was "perpetual"; so too must the light in every Jewish home be always shining. The Torah's light of holiness must burn night and day, and pervade all corners of a Jewish residence.

All Jews, and especially Jewish children, have the power to imbue their homes with holiness.

How is this accomplished? By expressing an awareness of G-d every moment of the day.

As soon as a Jew opens his eyes in the morning he says "*Modeh Ani*" ("I give thanks to You"); whenever he eats he recites the proper blessings both before and after. Throughout the day he conducts himself according to the Torah's laws, and at night he says the "*Shema*" ("Hear O Israel") before going to sleep.

The Torah and its *mitzvos* are likened to light: "A *mitzva* is a candle, and the Torah is light." Indeed, the Torah and its commandments are the medium through which the Jew is able to illuminate the "Sanctuary" in his home.

Lighting the *menora* is also associated with the Final Redemption with *Moshiach*:

The *menora* that stood in the *Mishkan* and the Holy Temple was composed of seven lights, as it states, "The seven lamps shall give light."

When *Moshiach* comes, the Jews who are dispersed around the world will return to Israel in seven paths, as is written in the Book of Isaiah, "And [G-d] shall wave His hand upon the river... and smite it into seven streams."

Thus, disseminating the light of Torah and *mitzvos* in our own homes serves to hasten *Moshiach's* coming with the Final Redemption, may it happen at once.

## Halacha Sparks

### Studying on Shabbos for a Test

*Rabbi Chaim Chazan*

**May I study on Shabbos for a test or is it prohibited because of *hachono* - preparing on Shabbos for after Shabbos?**

There are several forms of preparation which are prohibited on Shabbos:

"*Mimtzo cheftzecha*" – one may not do something permissible on Shabbos in preparation for a weekday activity which is prohibited on Shabbos.

"*Vedabair davar*" – forbids even verbally expressing one's plans to do those activities.

"*Hachana*" – forbids preparation for after Shabbos even when the activity itself and what it is facilitating are not related to anything prohibited on Shabbos<sup>1</sup>. An example would be to bring a bottle of wine from the cellar for *havdalah*<sup>2</sup>. There are several conditions that are required to be present in order for an activity to be classified as *hachana*, a discussion of which would be beyond the scope of this article.

A preparation that addresses a present Shabbos need, even if the act also serves as a post Shabbos preparation, is permitted<sup>3</sup>. As example would be clearing off a table from *seuda shlishis* if the table is needed or the messy appearance of the room is disturbing.

It follows that it is permitted to study for a test on *limudie kodesh* because the *mitzvah* to study Torah applies on Shabbos, therefore when studying Torah one is fulfilling a "need" for Shabbos, despite it also serves as a post Shabbos preparation<sup>4</sup>. However, verbally expressing one's post Shabbos motive is possibly forbidden on Shabbos<sup>5</sup>.

Some forbid studying for a test on secular studies, but others doubt whether this is prohibited<sup>6</sup>.

1. שו"ע הרב סי' שז ס"א, וסי' תק"ג ס"ג.

2. משנ"ב תרס"ז ס"ק ה'.

3. שו"ע הרב סי' שב ס"ו.

4. שש"כ פכ"ח ספ"ד ובהערות.

5. בשש"כ שם הע' קסט מסתפק ע"פ משנ"ב סי' רצ סק"ד, וכ"כ בשו"ע הרב סי' רצ ס"ו.

6. שם הע' רו הסתפק הגרש"ז אוירבאך, אכן ראיתי במלקטים שיש מחמירים.

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