

A Personal Visit

"Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Israel" (Devarim 31:1). Where did Moshe go? This is a famous question asked by many of the meforshim. The Keli Yakar answers that Moshe Rabbeinu was going to encourage everyone to do *tshuva* (correct their sins). Everyone has some character traits that need work. It is so difficult to see ones own faults. Most people will not go to a Rav to ask him which sins they should correct. Even if a Rav speaks to the group, they will usually not take it to heart. Therefore, Moshe went to each tent individually. He spoke heart to heart to each family about doing *tshuva*.

Kinderlach . . . Moshe Rabbeinu visited people personally to encourage them to do tshuva. Sometimes we must make a personal visit for a different reason. We are all involved in doing tshuva before Yom Kippur. The last Mishna in Yuma states that Yom Kippur forgives only sins between man and Hashem (such as eating unkosher food). For sins between people (stealing, speaking loshon hora) we must go to the person and ask him for mechila (forgiveness). On the other hand, we must forgive everyone even if they do not ask. Tefillas Zaako is the prayer that we say before Yom Kippur begins. This prayer includes a declaration of forgiveness to all those who have wronged us. Let us all forgive everyone so they will not have to come and ask forgiveness. That is a true chessed (act of kindness). May Hashem be kind to us and grant us all a gemar chatima tova.

Amen

"Chaim, are you leaving the Beit HaK'neset now? If so, we can walk together. There is something that I would like to speak about with you."
"I'll be leaving in another five minutes, Avi."
"Really? The *minyan* (congregation) just finished *shacharis* (morning prayers). Why are you staying another five minutes?"
"The next *minyan* is beginning now. People will be saying *bircas ha'shachar* (the morning blessings). I always take the opportunity to stay and answer *amen* to those blessings."
"That takes up valuable time, Chaim. Is answering *amen* that important?"
"It is very important, Avi. The Zohar on this week's parasha expounds on this subject. It begins with the verse, 'I (Hashem) honor those who honor Me, and those who scorn Me will be cursed' (Shmuel I 2:30). Who are those who scorn Hashem? Those who do not concentrate when they answer *amen*."
"That is a bit scary, Chaim. Does Rebbe Shimon (Bar Yochai – the author of the

Zohar) explain why?"
"Yes. Answering *amen* to a blessing is greater than making the blessing itself. Rabbeinu Bechaye, in his commentary on the Chumash – Shemos 14:31 – writes about the subject of *emunah*, calling it the foundation of the entire Torah. Therefore, to strengthen this foundation, our sages ruled that we answer *amen* after blessings and prayers. Why? The word *amen* comes from the same root word as *emunah*. Therefore, answering *amen* strengthens our *emunah* more than the blessing itself."
"Fascinating."

"The Novi Yishaya declares, 'Open the gates so the righteous nation, keeper of the faith (*shomer emunim*) may enter!' The Gemora (Sanhedrin 110b) explains, do not read the verse *shomer emunim*, rather *she'omer amen* – those who say, 'Amen'. They are the righteous ones. The Gemora continues, 'What is the meaning



of *amen*? *Kel Melech Ne'eman* – Hashem is the Faithful King."
"That is so inspiring."
The Gemora (Nozir 66b) adds a different reason why the one who answers *amen* is greater than the one who makes the blessing. Making a blessing is like a witness making a legal statement to the fact that Hashem is the source of all blessing. However, a statement from a single Jewish witness carries relatively little weight in Beis Din. When the second Jew answers *amen*, he becomes the second witness, as it were, converting the statement into true testimony."
"I never realized that."
"There is more, Avi. The *gematria* (numeric equivalent) of the word *amen* is 91. That is the exact same *gematria* as the two names of Hashem – *Adnus* and *Haviah*. Therefore answering *amen* is like saying both of those names. The Medrash Rabba (on parashas Ki Savo) relates that The Almighty values nothing as greatly as the response of *amen*. The Zohar adds that when we answer *amen* with the proper *kavannah* (intention) good spreads throughout all the upper and lower worlds. For this, we receive reward

in both worlds. When we arrive in the next world, all of the gates are open before us, as the Novi Yishaya said."

"That is mind boggling. You have mentioned some of the reward for answering *amen*, Chaim. Is there more?"
"Yes, Avi. There is a special *amen* in the Kaddish – '*Amen y'hey sh'mey rabba m'vorach liolam uliolmei omayah!*' (Amen! May His Great Name be blessed forever and ever!) The Gemora (Shabbos 199b) declares that one who says this with all of his strength causes any harsh sentence decreed against him (in heaven) in the next seventy years to be torn up. The Sefer Charedim adds (in the name of the Zohar) that a person's limbs must quiver at the moment he says this. He must answer with all of his emotion and strength. Whoever accustoms himself to doing so is assured that all of his sins will be forgiven."

"Wow! Are there any other times that we can answer *amen*?"

"Yes. The Mishna Breurah on chapter 215 points out a widespread custom in Klal Yisrael to answer *amen* after any blessing that a Jew gives to another Jew, even if he does not mention Hashem's name. Therefore, if someone wishes you long life, or good health, or wealth, etc., you should answer *amen*."

"Chaim, you have opened up a whole new world to me. Thank you so much for taking the time to explain *amen* to me. May you be able to help many more people understand the importance of *amen*."

"Amen!"

Kinderlach . . . Do not underestimate the power of one little word . . . amen. It strengthens your emunah. It brings blessing to all of the upper and lower worlds. It brings you great reward in this world and the next. It is testimony to Hashem's Kingship. It tears up evil decrees and forgives sins. All of this is on the condition, of course, that you say it with the proper intention and concentration – that Hashem is the Faithful King, that He is the Source of all blessing, and that His Great Name will be blessed forever and ever. When you think of these things, it is easy to see why your faith is strengthened when you say amen. May you always merit all of the blessings that come from saying amen. "Amen!"

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