

# Kinder Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Vayeshev

Amen

“Chaim, are you leaving the Beis HaK’nesses 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 (parashas Vayelech) 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 Torah (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.”

“Yishaya HaNovi 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 compared to a witness making a legal statement 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.”

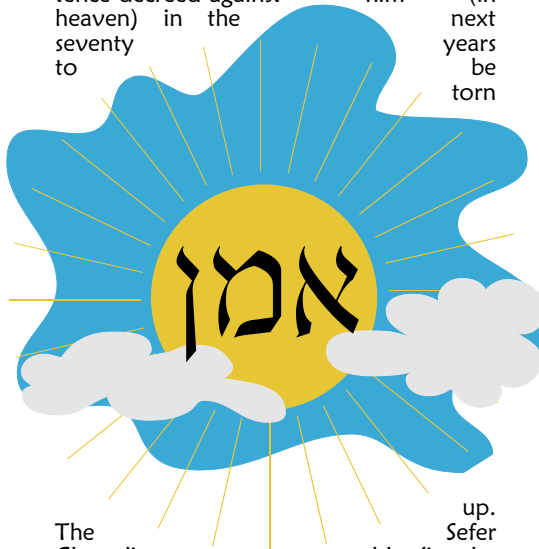
“I never realized that.”

“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 Yishaya HaNovi 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 119b) declares that one who says this with all of his strength causes any harsh sentence decreed against him (in heaven) in the next years to be torn



up. 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!”

## Miracle Oil

Why do we celebrate eight days of Chanukah? The Greeks entered the Beis HaMikdash and defiled all of the oil that was used to light the menorah. All except one flask. That oil, which would have naturally burned one day, instead burned for eight days. Only the last seven days of burning were miraculous. Why, then do we celebrate eight days? This famous question is asked by the Beis Yosef. To begin to answer it, let us first understand why the Greeks wanted to defile all of the oil. The oil lit the menorah, which represented the light of Torah. As the verse states, “Because the lamp is a mitzvah, and the Torah is light” (Mishlei 6:23). The goal of Greeks was to destroy the Jews spiritually, not physically. By defiling all of the oil, they wanted to extinguish the light of Torah in the world. Amazingly, they overlooked one flask.

Rav Shlomo Brevda, Shlita, in his sefer “L’hodos U’l’hallel” shares a deep insight. The flask that survived was itself a miracle. How could they overlook it? Therefore, it is no surprise that other miracles came from this miraculous flask. This flask is a parable to our generation. After all of the trials and tribulations of 2000 years of exile, pogroms, holocaust, and assimilation, the Jewish people have survived. Anyone who has remained faithful to Hashem and His Torah in our days is a living miracle, like the miraculous flask. Therefore, we can expect miraculous things to come from him.

*Kinderlach* . . .

You are a living miracle. What does that mean? You can accomplish miracles. Do not ever think that any spiritual accomplishment is out of your reach. “I cannot learn that Mishna. It is too hard for me.” “I cannot make peace with my friend.” “I cannot listen to my Imma; I don’t have *koach* (strength).” You do have *koach*. Just try a little harder. Chanukah is coming, the time of miracles. You will succeed. You are the stuff of which miracles are made.