

A Dvar Torah to encourage matters of Yiras Shomayim prepared to be shared and discussed with your family at the Shabbos table



פרשת עקב

59

## ANSWERING אמן

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

### THE POWER OF אמן

The Gemara says that answering אמן to a bracha is greater than reciting the bracha. This is compared to a simple foot soldiers who begin the battle (saying the bracha), making it possible for the mighty warriors to come afterwards and bring victory (answering אמן). The Maharsha explains that there are bad malochim who attempt to block the brachos from coming down and the bracha creates good malochim to battle them. By answering אמן, the battle is won.

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

It is obligatory to answer אמן when hearing another recite a bracha, even when not taking part in the bracha. אמן must be pronounced correctly and said immediately after hearing the bracha.

The Zohar writes that it is a zechus to have others answer אמן to one's bracha. However, if one knows that those present will be lax in answering properly, he should rather say it quietly and not cause them to act wrongly.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' קפ"ט ס"ו וקב"ד ס"ח, זהר ר"פ עקב, בן איש חי מסעי י"ד)

The gaon Reb Mordechai Yaffa, known as the author of the Levush, was a Rov in a small town when he was invited by the residents of Pozna to become their Rov. Before moving to Pozna, he traveled to Venice for three months to learn astronomy from the Chacham Avuhav HaSfardi.

Once while he was there, the young son of Chacham Avuhav recited a loud bracha on a fruit and all present answered אמן. Reb Mordechai Yaffa did not pay respond, and the Chacham, very upset, placed a Nidui (a type of 'Cherem') on him. When thirty days passed, Reb Mordechai came to his Rebbe to ask forgiveness. The Chacham agreed on the condition that he publicly speak about the importance of answering אמן to any community he passes through, and that he tell his children, grandchildren, and all future generations to relate the following story:

Before the Spanish Expulsion, there were was a city in Spain where the king attempted many times to expel the Yidden, but the Rov of the city, a pious and very wealthy man who found favor in the king's eyes, continually found ways to discourage his evil plans. Once when the King became very angry and commanded that they be driven out, the Yidden ran to their Rov and pleaded that he go to the king and try annulling the decree. It was late in the day and the Rov wanted to first daven Mincha, but the people begged that he go immediately, for such a great mitzva takes precedence. The Rov conceded and went to the palace.

Upon arrival, after the king's honorable greeting, the Rov began conversing on a variety of topics, intending to bring up a discussion about the recent decree. Meanwhile, a priest from a distant city arrived, and entered the chamber, falling to the king's feet, and blessing him in Latin. The Rov, not understanding what the priest was saying and seeing that he was taking a while, used the opportunity to go to a corner and daven Mincha, hoping to finish before the priest did. Shortly after, the priest got up, instructing those around to answer Amen to his blessing, which they all did, except for the Rov who did not understand the priest's instructions and was still davening. The priest inquired whether the Yid had answered Amen, and when he was told that he had not, he flared up, screaming that because of this Jew, the blessing will not be fulfilled. This greatly angered the king and he decreed that the Rov be killed by being cut into pieces and that all the Jews be expelled.

A certain pious man, who had known this Rov and recognized his righteousness, was greatly disturbed with the brutal punishment he had received, so he fasted, davened, and requested to be notified from above why this had happened. Once when the man was alone, he was frightened to see the Rov appear to him. The Rov calmed him and said that he had come to explain why he had received such a harsh punishment. "I never did any aveirah. However, once when my young son said a bracha on bread, I did not answer אמן, and Hashem waited with the punishment until the time I stood before a physical king and did not answer אמן to his blessing, inciting him with anger. The בית דין של מעלה then judged me for not answering אמן to Hashem's bracha."

Finishing the story, Chacham Avuhav concluded, "Now you understand why I became so upset and put you in a Nidui, for this was to be an atonement for you."

(ספר הגן ע' 40)

On Shavuot, תר"ד, the Tzemach Tzedek related: The Baal Shem Tov would travel through the towns and villages, from town to town and from village to village where he would gather the simple Yidden and draw them closer to Yiddishkiet. Once the Baal Shem Tov came to a town, gathered all the men, women, and children and told them, "It says in Tehillim 'אשרי תבוך ותקרב', 'Praised is the one who You (Hashem) choose and bring close.' אשרי forms the first letters of the words of the possuk, 'אמן יהא שמא רבא חצריך, ביתך, קדוש', 'Although there are various levels, as seen in the continuation of the possuk, 'היכלך' (your courtyard, home, (and in) the holiness of your hall), yet with regard to איש"ר, all are equal." With these words, the Baal Shem Tov aroused in the people a love towards answering איש"ר.

(תהלים סד, ה, סה"ש תש"ד ע' 190)

## ANSWERING WITH ENTHUSIASM

The Alter Rebbe writes in Shulchan Aruch that one should be very careful to answer kaddish, which is even greater than answering kedusha. One should answer איש"ר with much concentration, for one who answers איש"ר with all כוונה can cause even a גזר דין (evil decree) of seventy years to be torn and become annulled, and he opens for him the gates of Gan Eden for himself. One should also answer loudly, for this sound breaks all adversaries (מקטרגים) and bad decrees. There are those that stand out of respect when answering kaddish.

The Gemara says that when answering אמן, he accepts upon himself the fear of Hashem, for the word אמן it is a ר"ת of the words אל-מלך אמן, Hashem who is a trustworthy king. The Alter Rebbe writes in Shulchan Aruch, that the answering of אמן should take as much time as it takes to say those words.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' נ"ו, סנהדרין ק"ע"ב)

The Alter Rebbe explains in Shulchan Aruch that when answering אמן one must contemplate its meaning, which is dependent on the bracha said. If the bracha is praise to Hashem, then אמן is stating a confirmation and agreement with what was said. If it is a bracha of request or a kaddish, then אמן is a request that it be fulfilled soon. And the bracha includes both, praise and request, then one should ponder on both meanings.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' קכ"ד ס"ט)

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 off the roof and ran into the shul to hear kaddish and answer with the mispalelim. Assuming he was a great talmid chochom, a man who had witnessed this, took the stranger to be his son-in-law. Indeed, he later became a great light and revealed many secrets of torah.

(זהר ח"ב קס"ה ע"ב ואילך)

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: Many years prior to the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment in Petersburg, he came out to the Chassidim and said, "In Gan Eden, they appreciate the preciousness of עולם הזה. The malochim would forgo everything for one איש"ר said by a Yid with all his might, with complete concentration and total involvement in these words." This was the entire mamor, and with it the Alter Rebbe created a burning התלהבות (enthusiasm) in the listeners that for the entire following year איש"ר was said with a fire (ברען).

(היום יום י"ז אדר א')

## THE PLEASURE OF PRAISING

When the Rebbe visited Camp Gan Yisroel, he spoke to the campers about learning from the ways of the holy Baal Shem Tov, after whom the camp was named. The Rebbe related that before the Baal Shem Tov began teaching torah to adults, he would learn torah with yiddische children, take them to cheder, and teach them to say ברוך הוא וברוך שמו, אמן, and שמע ישראל, מודה אני, and to answer אמן. Regarding this time period, the Baal Shem Tov later told his talmidim that these were his most enjoyable years. The Rebbe concluded, "This was told to us to let us know that we have the

of kedusha from Hashem with us when answering איש"ר, and this helps us go to cheder, return (in good health), and have success in our learning there."

(תו"מ חכ"ה ע' 237)

The Rebbe Rashab writes in one of his mamorim, "The ruchniusdike pleasure derived from אלקות can increase body fat. It is told about Reb Nachum Chernobler that he was heavy from answering אמן יהא רבא שמא רבא."

Once, the tzaddik Reb Nachum Chernobler was walking in his town, when he saw a goy in a cheerful mood. Seeing this he turned to those accompanying him and asked, "What is he so happy about? Did he answer אמן יהא שמאי רבא today?"

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

Reb Pesach Molostovker, a chossid of the Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek, would daven every day for many hours. In his old age, Reb Pesach was no longer able to continue with his avoda, so instead he traveled in a wagon from minyan to minyan, answering אמן, Kedusha and Borchu. He said that this is also a something great.

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' רנ"ד)

The chossid Reb Zalman Leib Astulin was imprisoned for many years in Siberia. Being cut off from other Yidden, he was unable daven with a minyan, hear kaddish and kedusha, or even answer אמן to a bracha. When Reb Zalman Leib 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 joyful and rapturous reunion.

In the morning, Reb Yankele took Reb Zalman Leib to a nearby shul to daven. Time passed and although the shul was very close by, negating the possibility of getting lost, Reb Zalman Leib did not 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 minyan finished, another one began and then another, and each one offers me a chance to say איש"ר, אמן 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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