

# ונאמר אמן

## The Amen Response

This booklet is a detailed explanation of the important subject of answering "Amen"; and serving as an educational guide for parents, teachers and other leaders of the Jewish community.

A new collection of teachings and stories from the Talmud, Zohar and Midrash concerning this subject; utilizing these sources to indicate the responsibilities that lie with the Jewish leaders, parents and teachers in this important matter.



By

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Machon L'Horaah B'Schitho Uvdikoth.

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**Brooklyn, N.Y., 5741**

**We appeal to you not to disregard this booklet by putting it aside but to read it from time to time, as well as to disseminate it among relatives, neighbors, and friends. By doing so, you too will have a share in *zikuy harabbim*.**

Please be aware that the publication of this booklet is very expensive. We would greatly appreciate it if everyone would contribute according to his ability, to enable us to continue our holy work.

May the L-rd grant us the ability to do His will with a pure heart, so that no pitfalls result from our work, G-d forbid, and that we should merit that G-d's name be sanctified in the world through us, and that we should all live to see the *ge'ulah sh'lemah* in our days, in the very near future. Amen.

Editor:

**Rabbi S. Y. Gross**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No words can adequately express my tremendous debt of gratitude to the publisher of this *sefer*. The special efforts — consummate craftsmanship and genius — of my esteemed dear and devoted friend Reb Yitzchak Issac Gross shlita proprietor of

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are gratefully and deeply acknowledged. He envisioned the *harbotzahs haTorah* value of this *sefer* and undertook to single-handedly publish it with his renown high degree of professionalism, self-sacrificing devotion and loyalty. His talent and efforts in arts, graphics and production ensured a Book of outstanding beauty.

He has always warmly responded to my needs — with his time and talents — and has cooperated in every conceivable way to assure the stylistic and technical beauty of this completed work. The tangible fruits of his long and warm friendship are appreciated. This visually excellent work, both within and without, are in no small measure due to his extraordinary expertise, skill and dedication — which is clothed in kindness, patience, courtesy and *kavod chachomim*.

*In merit for his love of Torah and his dedication to kiyum hamitzvohs may the Rebono Shel Olom grant him all that his good heart desires, arichas yomim v'shonim with health, together with his entire family... May all the Torah's blessings be bestowed upon him. Amen.*



## CONTENTS

(a) Endorsements .....	5
(b) Letter to public (esteemed brother) .....	9
(c) Appeal to the public .....	11
(d) Acknowledgements .....	12
(e) a Song of Thanks .....	16
(f) Instruction for the Reader .....	16
(g) Notice .....	17
(h) Appeal letter to my book .....	18
(i) Introduction .....	21
Chapter 1	
The Amen Response .....	23
Chapter 2	
Obligation of Yeshivah Teachers and Principles .....	34
Chapter 3	
The Duty to Admonish and Protest — Quotations from Talmud, Zohar and Midrash .....	43
Chapter 4	
An Anthology from Talmud Zohar and Midrashim Concerning the importance of answering “Amen” properly .....	54
Chapter 5	
1) Inspiring Stories and Maxims Concerning the matter of Answering “AMEN” and “AMEN, YEHAY SHEMAY <b>RABBOH</b> ” .....	57
2) A True story about answering “AMEN” .....	64
3) A brief biographical Sketch of <b>R’ MORDECHAI JAFFE</b> , of blessed memory .....	68
Chapter 6	
1) An Outstanding Cry for help directed to Rabbonim, Rebbes, Teachers, Roshei Yeshivas, Principles and Presidents of Synagogues .....	80
2) How do the Rabbonim and influential individuals not tremble 92	92
Chapter 7	
1) Fiery Sermon by Harav Moshe Stern, Debritziner Rav Shlita .....	104
2) Synopsis of Harav Moshe Stern; Sermon .....	117
Chapter 8	
1) Attention Synagogues .....	121
2) Our Jewish Brethen .....	121
3) Resolution and Application for Prayers of Tzaddikim ..	122

## Endorsments

משה פיינשטיין  
 ר"מ תפארת ירושלים  
 בנוו יארק

בע"ה

הנה ראיתי כמה מהספרים שנתחברו ע"י ידידי הרב הגאון מוהר"ר שלום יודא גראס שליט"א הרב דק"ק האלמין מברוקלין, ביניהם הספרים אכילת מצות בישראל ז' חלקים, אפיית המצות השלם ג"ח, שו"ת זבחו ובחי צדק, אהלי ישראל, דבר משה, מוזות שלום, מגנת יהודה, קדושת ישראל, נפש ישעי' ועוד, וכולם נכתבו באופן וצורה שראויה לבני תורה לעיין בהם, שהגאון המחבר שליט"א אסף וביאר בחריפות ובקיאות נפלאה, ההלכות והשקפות ששייכים לכמה ענינים שהעולם, ר"ל, נכשלים בהם, ואף שלא שייך לי מחמת טרדת הזמן, אלא לעיין קצת בספרים, וממילא לא שייך לכתוב הסכמה לגבי החלטת הדינים, מ"מ כבר אתחזק גברא, שיש לסמוך על הגאון המחבר שליט"א, שחיבר ספריו לכבוד השם ותורתו, וממילא אני מקוה, שכל שומרי התורה יעזרו להגאון המחבר שליט"א, שבאמת מצוה גדולה לחזקו ולתומכו בכל האפשרות.

וע"ז באתי על החתום לכבוד התורה ולומדיה,

ביום י"ח לחדש סיון תש"מ

נאום משה פיינשטיין

I have seen many of the Seforim authored by Rabbi Sholom Yehudah Gross שליט"א, Rabbi of Holmin, from Brooklyn, with whom I am well acquainted. Among them are the works entitled: *Achilath Matzoth B'Yisroel*, 7 vol.; *Afiath HaMatzoth Hashalem*, 3 vol.; *Responsa Zivchu Zivchei Tzedek*; *Oholei Yisroel*; *D'var Mosheh*; *Mezuzath Sholom*; *Minchath Yehudah*; and many others. They are all written in a manner and form worthy of the attention of Torah scholars. The author, a Gaon, has organized and explained each topic with extensive erudition and profound understanding. These Seforim document the laws and ideas concerning many areas of Halacha in which observance has, unfortunately, become lax. Shortage of time has denied me the possibility to properly review his works. I, therefore, am not in a position to endorse his legal decisions. However, this Gaon, the author, may be relied upon since he has already displayed his ability in this field, and has authored his works without any ulterior motives, only for the honor of G-d and His Torah. I, therefore, hope that all observant Jews will assist the learned author of these books, for it is a great Mitzvah to encourage him and support him as much as possible.

I, therefore, affix my signature in honor of the Torah and those who study it, on the eighteenth day of Sivan, 5740.

Moshe Feinstein

*In the author's previous works, among them Responsa Zivchei Zedek, Afiath Matzot, Achilles Matza B'Yisroel, Nefesh Yeshaya and Minchath Yehudah, letters of appreciation and support were printed from Geonim and Tzadikim of our generation, the authorities upon whom the House of Israel depends.*

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B.H.

Esteemed brethren:

We come to you with a request:-

This booklet is dedicated to the explaining the importance of being conscientious in answering "Amen" and not conversing during *Chazaras Hashatz* and the reading of the Torah, something the public has sadly neglected.

Everyone must review his past deeds and resolve to repent of his shortcomings, as *Rambam* states in the Laws of *Teshuvah*, to make a strong resolution to mend our ways and from today on, to behave properly during Services as the *Shulchan Aruch* requires. This includes watching the children as closely as possible, so that they do not converse during the services, especially during *kaddish*, *chazaras hashatz*, and the reading of the Torah. For this very reason we have undertaken to publish this booklet, to serve as a guide and to make amends for previous shortcomings.

We hope that this booklet will succeed, with G-d's help, and be a great aid both for those who were negligent in the aforementioned matters and for those who were lax because of ignorance. As reward for this, the L-rd will bless us so that none of our brethren will suffer from any trials or tribulations, either spiritual or material, neither in this world nor in the next, and that we will be redeemed in the near future, Amen.

It is obvious that compiling such a booklet required much effort and toil, in addition to paying the skyrocketing costs of typesetting, printing, binding, and postage, which are beyond our ability to keep up with.

We, therefore, appeal to you to support our work to the best of your ability, so that we will be able, with G-d's help, to continue with our holy work, in which you will have a share. We beg you to make all efforts to support our undertaking even beyond your ability, so that we will be able to carry on with our work, which, in the past, has guided many Jewish homes on the right path, and has simultaneously, lent support to those who have striven to conduct their homes in the spirit of our ancient traditions.

Do not allow this opportunity to slip away from you. Take advantage of it by sending us your generous contribution to assist us in our holy undertaking, and you will have a share in the *mitzvah* of arousing many families who will receive our/your booklet.

As a reward for your assistance, may G-d bless you with outstanding children, long life manifold sustenance, Jewish *nachas*, blessing and prosperity, wealth and honor in all respects. May we merit in the near future, to be free of all troubles and from the yoke of our exile, and merit to greet the King Messiah speedily and in our days, Amen.

This is important for all those who were negligent in answering "Amen" and "Yehei Sh'mey Rabba". Our rabbis tell us that repentance helps merely to be saved from Gehinnom, but the absence of the *mitzvah* of answering, "Amen" is an irreparable loss.

#### AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC

As everyone knows, printing costs are constantly rising, and it is virtually impossible to keep up with the expenses of printing, publishing, photographing, binding, mailing, etc.

We, therefore, appeal to you to help us with a generous contribution cover the expenses involved in the publication of this volume. By doing so, you will merit to be among those who lead the public to righteousness, as is indicated in **Pele Yoetz**: "Since it is usually difficult for the rabbis to print their works... it is proper for the wealthy... **to open their hands generously** to them, and with this, they will **share alike** with the rabbi... This share is in direct proportion to the nature of the tome, how necessary it is for the public, and according to the benefit the public can derive from it in serving the A-lmighty. If you reflect upon the matter, you will conclude that **almost no monetary donation is equal in magnitude to this mitzvah**, for every expenditure for a *mitzvah* is only on a one time basis whereas one who donates toward printing a *sefer* — **his righteousness stands forever**, for all generations. **He leads the public to righteousness, and the merit of the public is ascribed to him... How meritorious and gracious is his lot!** He acquired a good name; he acquired words of Torah; **he acquired the life of the World to Come, and also this world...**"

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to mention my dear mother, the personification of "A G-d fearing woman — she is to be praised." Esther ח"י, the daughter of Rabbi Zev Wolf Mutzen ל"ד, the *shochet* of Arad, (who passed away on the eighth day of Tammuz, 5715). I beseech the Almighty to grant her long life in health and happiness, and may she have *nachas* from her children and grandchildren engaged in learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvos, until the coming of the Messiah speedily and in our days, Amen.

May my beloved wife, ח"י Taube, the daughter of Rabbi Chaim Eliyahu Bittman, שליט"א be blessed with the threefold priestly blessing, for exerting every effort to stand by my side and help me fulfill my aims; she enjoys immensely seeing me free to engage in the Torah, to write *novelae*, and to author *seforim*. May her reward from the L-rd, G-d of Israel, be complete, and may we both merit to raise our lovely children to learn Torah, to enter the *Chupah*, and to engage in good deeds. May our children: Yaakov Yeshayah Zev, Miriam Berochoh, Avrohom Chaim Elimelech, Chayah Soroh Feige, Pearl Malkah, Nissan Moishe, Dovid, Avigdor, Freide Bale, and Yoseph Yoel all merit long lives in happiness. I pray: Please, Almighty G-d, guard them from misfortunes and illnesses, and may we have much *nachas* from them. May they raise generations of upright Jews, blessed by G-d to be a glory to our holy forebearers.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express gratitude to the members of my congregation, Congregation Mogen Shaul of Halmin, and especially to the scholars of the kolel "Beis Yeshayah" of Brooklyn, who are dedicated to the study of the laws of *shechitah* and *bedikah*. They are all Torah observers and magnanimous people, who assisted me greatly in the publication of this book and other books. May G-d bless them, as well as all others who have assisted me in my holy task and grant them all the desires of their hearts for good.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I express my appreciation to my dear brother, Harav Jacob Shlomo Gross, proprietor of

*Excellent Varsityper and Printing Co. (212) 384-4249*  
whose utmost exertion produced a work that will be pleasing and appreciated by all who read it.

May he be blessed with all the Heavenly Blessings of goodness for all time. His reward is very great since it always will be with him.

He rightfully deserves significant admiration, praise and laudation beyond the scope of these few words for his forbearance in continuously abiding by our request in making changes and corrections so that this work become the product you now behold.

I pray that he, his wife and wonderful children be blessed manifold times for all his effort extended toward this project with *Hatzloche*, good health, long life, Yiddish nachas from their children and may his descendents reap the blessing promulgated by their father's foresight. Last, but foremost, may Heaven shime forth upon him the wisdom and merit to further his efforts in similar manner and fashion in all his endeavors — — — since they all are performed purely **L'SHAYM SHOMAIM and to increase K'VOD SHOMAYIM.** *The very few of those who give all of their time money and prayers that this work be accepted, honored, embraced, adopted and obeyed, should also be blessed with all good. This work was not produced as a hobby or past time, rather as the Gemorah states (Shabus 54) "Anyone capable of admonishing, reproaching or rebuking members of his household and does not do so is punished and considered culpable for the sins of the members of his household. Anyone capable of admonishing the people of his city, and does not do so is punished for the sins of the people of his city, anyone capable of admonishing the entire world and does not do so, is punished for the sins of the entire world."* (Gemorah Shabus 54a).

All who help toward this attainment with either money or talent will surely reap *eternal blessings* according to their effort dispensed. Can you work toward a greater aim than this?

## Acknowledgements

I cherish this opportune time to express my sincere indebtedness...more than words could convey or acknowledge...to a most wonderful newly acquired Friend Mr. Alexander Tepfer, Shlita of

### **Computerized Quality Separation, Inc. 145 Hudson Street, New York, New York 11013**

His wholesome good naturedness, total dedication and expertise combined with his helpful and high degree of talent in a highly specialized field enhanced the beauty of the illustrations in this book especially introducing the cover, and improved the quality of the text His sympathetic understanding of my educational aims and his ability to transfer them to the printed page are very much appreciated beyond the scope of understanding.

ALL those whom this book wil pick up and therefrom learn the holy words of the Al-Mighty (due to the attractiveness of the cover) will so do solely due to the credit of Mr. Shiyah Alexander Tepfer, and as recompense for such I implore Heaven to grant him reward in accordance to benefit derived therefrom. In the merit of such dedication administered here, may the Al-Mighty bless his beloved ones, too, along with him with ariches yomim (long life), with health and happiness, Amen.



Special thanks are given to Mr. Joseph Dershowitz who has given of his time unselfishly during the course of preperation of this monograph with understanding, despite an extremely busy schedule he has assisted our timely needs and never sought excuses, He forged ahead with his G-d given artistic abilities to create the pictures presented herein. We wish him and his family much Yiddishe naches with all Biblical blessings of health, wealth naches and all that their good hearts desire.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is proud to express his sincere debt to **Harav Hagaon Sinai Halberstam, shlita**, whose love of Torah and righteousness made him a beacon of inspiration, mentor and cherished friend. He has graciously made himself freely available despite that his time is meticulously budgeted in a tight and hectic schedule. Few authors have had the ability to call upon such an encyclopedic repository of genius — — **b'kius in shass** and **poskim** which are at his fingertips, hashkafa and erudition — — and a spring of original thought, scholarship and judgement, including a masterful editing capability.

He read the entire manuscript and clarified and elucidated many difficult statements and concepts of our **Chazal**. He has reviewed this work and allowed me the privilege to draw upon the phenomenally rare depth and exceptionally broad knowledge and clarity of thought which he possesses. His discriminating eye, incisive criticism and unselfish loyalty are in great measure responsible for this **sefer**, as well as many of the previous **seforim** that I have been blessed to have issued.

He, however, allowed me editorial discretion — — the freedom to decide what to include and what to omit — — and, therefore, he is absolved from any share of responsibility for the final redaction.

Words do not adequately express my appreciation, eternal gratification and thanks for his comments, criticisms, stylistic and conceptual observations, invaluable suggestions, and his guiding thoughts and interpretations. In merit of his self-sacrificing devotion to **harbotzahs ha'Torah** may **Hashem** reward him and his entire family with long-life, health, happiness, **bracha v'hatzlacha** and **kol mele d'maytav**. Amen.



We wish to commend Reb Chaim Shmuel Friedman without whose strenuous effort toward perfection in some of the art work here-in contained, this work would not have achieved the full appeal enjoyed by all. His Heavenly-granted artistic talent is vividly displayed in bringing out the fine points we strenuously derive to obtain. May his futur be bright together with his spouse and children to see true Yiddish nachas from them.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harav Sholom Yehudo Gross Shlita, is an internationally renowned author, a most distinguished and erudite Talmudical and halachic scholar and research specialist, having written on crucial issues impacting upon our obligatory daily mitzvoh observances concerning the **Torah's** Commandments dealing with, **SHABBOS, MEZUZOS** and **TEFILLIN, KASHRUS, GAN EDEN (Paradise) etc., etc.**

He has provided all the necessary information required to enable an individual to lead a true Jewish life.

His numerous and multi-faceted seforim, some 42 works relating to Jewish Law - encompass the diverse and wide-ranging areas of Jewish halacha.

Though a rav of the European school of thought - Rabbi Gross is extremely knowledgeable of the technological manifestations of the modern era. Living in a period of great discoveries which daily create new problems in many areas of Jewish Law, e.g., the field of Kashrus and other important areas.

Rabbi Gross is not satisfied with the thoroughness of his halachic findings; indeed he made inquiries by contacting various departments of the Federal and State governments, as well as physicians, veterinarians, etc., to discern and establish the **FACTS**.

First, he informs and advises what is best for us and then provides specific information based upon the dictums of our past sages and halachaic authorities. In addition, where policies he has elicited direct governmental response to arrive at his own determination.

Every one of Rabbi Gross' seforim has been acclaimed, in writing by the greatest Torah authorities, who concur with the results of his findings, and who make an impassioned plea to all rabbis and leaders to unite under one banner and support his quests and ideals.

It is the author's sincerest desire and prayer that the reader will achieve an awakened and heightened spirituality enabling him to attain the stature of being a beloved child to our Father in Heaven, Is this not everybody's wish?



## A SONG OF THANKS

From the depths of our heart, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the great rabbis who gave generously of their time, and took the trouble to review this book, remark about it, and correct it according to their profound understanding. Moreover, they offered me appropriate advice on how to publish this book in the best possible manner, both the legal and ethical sections, so that it would be acceptable to the public. May the Al-mighty fulfill all their wishes for good, and may they prosper wherever they turn, and be privileged to disseminate the words of the Torah and sanctify it, in the vineyard of Israel until the coming of the Messiah speedily and in our days, Amen.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO THE READER

This book is the result of much toil and hard work in collecting the scattered material, from various sources, one of the most difficult tasks in this field. The reader should know that any complaints he has, are on the books from which I quote these statements. I am clear of any blame, since all my work was to pour from one vessel into another. This statement is old, similar to that found in the introduction of **Mesilath Yesharim**.

I request you to study all the statements quoted in this book, **the benefit you will derive from it is unfathomable**, , with **Hashem's** help, it is full of statements which will server as a remedy to the maladies of the soul and body. **By casually skimming over the material, this benefit cannot be realized.**

**This holy tome is being published in the vernacular, in contrast with the practice of other generations, to print in the holy tongue, simply because it is human nature for one to be close to his mother tongue, the language he learned in his childhood. He will, therefore, find it easier to read in that language than in another language learned in later life, in which he is not so fluent.**



**Moreover, women and children will find it easy to read through. This is very essential for the desired result, that they take heed of the halachoth mentioned here, which apply to them. In addition to their own observance, they will assist their husbands and encourage them to follow suit, if it is not possible for the husbands to find time to pursue this volume and study it thoroughly by themselves. In such cases, the wives will do the work for them.**

**May the words of Sefer Chasidim** be fulfilled for us, that whoever repeats a statement made by those of earlier generations, they will pray for him and defend him in Heaven, (ch. 224).

May the merit of all the tzaddikim and saints quote here, with all the other tzaddikim stand us in good stead for us and for our posterity, so that we may cling to their ways and follow in their footsteps, to observe the holy practices transmitted to us by our forebears, and satisfy the Creator until the coming of our redeemer speedily and in our days, Amen.

#### Notice

We wish to note that we do not mean, G-d forbid, to find fault with any Jew. It is our mission to give assistance with practical examples from every day life to see that those Jews who truly wish to practice Judaism in the traditional manner, without compromise, but because of hurrying or lack of reflection do not notice the many pitfalls that come about daily, and therefore fail, are reminded that this is contrary to their desires and principles. We wish to show and explain to them that this is contrary to the statutes of the Torah, and that through small deviations we endanger the entire structure of Judaism.

Simultaneously, we indicate these laws from Rabbinical teachings that these regulations are not merely pious practices, preferable behavior, or things which should be done from the outset, but stringent laws and regulations.

We present here a part of the introduction of the *Sefer, Eis Laasos* by the famous tzaddik, Rabbi Hillel Lichtenstein of Kalamaye, Hungary, o.b.m., which we deem appropriate for our booklet.

“My dear sefer (book), that has cost me so much time from learning Torah and so many tears, I send you out into the world, and I exhort you to avoid neither large cities not small towns. Do not say or even think, that in the brazen, impudent world of today, “Who will look at me? Who will take heed of my message? Where will I be able to accomplish anything? On the contrary, I will cause people to commit more sins, since they will regard me with disdain and mock me.”

“I say to yu, dear sefer, that even according to your view, your mission will not be fruitless, for even if you are unsuccessful in your attempts to influence men, you may influence women, whose hearts are softer and who are more impressionable. Should you fail to influence the youth, you may influence elderly persons; if you fail to impress healthy people, you may impress those sick and wracked with pain, as well as those whose fortunes have taken a turn for the worse.”

“I, however, am convinced that you will succeed in **all** your travels. Fear not! Don’t worry! Do not be frightened off! Remember Abraham, concerning whom the Torah writes, “**And he believed in G-d**”. His belief was as strong as the Rock of Gibraltar. That faith is deeply rooted in his descendants as an inheritance, so that their name is always “**Maaminim b’ney maaminim**” (believers, the children of believers). I, therefore, am convinced that you will be very successful. Many Jewish children will kiss you, and many will shed tears while reading you. Even if certain elements

cast you to the ground and trample upon you, there will come a time when they themselves will pick you up and love you, because the time is drawing closer and closer when people will come to their senses and recognize the pure, unadulterated truth. Today, we find many who deviate from the teachings of the Torah, some completely and some partially. The morning of the redemption is at hand, when the *ruach hatumah*, the spirit of impurity, will be removed from the world, i.e. the *yetzer hara* will be completely eradicated, and the earth will be full of knowledge of the Lord, i.e. the people will come to recognize the complete unadulterated truth. Then everyone will strive to follow all the teachings of both the written and oral Torah, the Bible and the Talmud with neither alterations nor abbreviations, but in the precise manner that they were observed from time immemorial, not as some groups claim, that their "rabbis" have the power to alter or disregard the *Shulchan Aruch*. Then, people will not allow themselves to be misled by various types of misleaders, or to be enslaved to such leaders who mean only their own monetary gain and their own glory. The time will come when the Almighty will fulfill His promise to "circumcise" our hearts, to remove the obstructions that clog our hearts spiritually. As the Bible teaches us, falsity lasts but a moment, whereas the true tongue will be established forever. I, therefore, assure you that you have no need to fear. You will surely succeed in disseminating and expanding the truth."

★ ★ ★

The printing and dissemination of this monograph have been made possible in order to benefit the public and to sanctify the *shem shamayim*, the Al-mighty, Blessed be He, through a very pious man, who participates in every holy endeavor, and who wishes to remain anonymous. He is a descendant of the author of the *Levushim*, and strives to raise the status of answering 'Amen' to its previous level, as his forebear, the author of the *Levushim*, as is related in the book, *Vovei Ha-amudim* and in *Sefer Hagan* (cited *ibid*).

### A Song of Thanksgiving

From the innermost recesses of my heart I extend Biblical blessings to the aforementioned, who volunteered to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious ancestor, the author of the *Levushim* of sainted memory, to restore the importance of answering, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", to its previous status; dedicate his soul, body, and wealth toward the accomplishment of this aim.

May the *z'chus* of his sainted forefather, the author of the *Levushim*, stand him in good stead to enable him to perform great accomplishments in this endeavor and to see the fruits of this labor, which is his sole aim. May he merit to benefit the public in matters concerning other *mitzvos* of paramount importance, as is his heartfelt desire, in good health, happiness, and contentment. May he merit to see children and grandchildren engaged in *Torah* and *mitzvos* and of meritorious deeds benefitting the public.



## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this booklet is to arouse those of our people who are slumbering, neglecting the *mitzvah* of responding Amen at the requisite time during prayer. This mitzvah is, unfortunately, so sadly neglected that it is not considered by the general populace as obligatory, but optional. Instead of the parents educating their children and the teachers their pupils, to stand quietly during *chazaras hashatz* and the recitation of *kaddish*, so that they will be able to respond in the proper place and in the proper manner—to merit all the favorable prophecies promised for them, and to be saved from the horrible punishments in store for those who do not observe this mitzvah—they themselves stand and engage in forbidden conversation, thereby forfeiting all this precious treasure.

The beginning of my work is, therefore, to show that even in this generation of weakened spirituality, it is possible to accomplish significant things and to restore the “Amen—response” to its previous status in the most convenient ways and with the easiest means. We merely lack the feeling for the gravity of the matter, and the will to benefit the public with an observance of paramount importance, which is, unfortunately, disregarded.

In order to arouse the public to the gravity of this precept, and to simplify the subject for those participating in this project, I have composed this booklet, which through G-d's help, contains both these advantages, as well as helpful advice. May it be G-d's will that His Name be hallowed through us, and that we easily achieve the complete redemption, and the repeal of all harsh decrees and the birth pangs of the Messiah, through the response of “Amen, and *yehey sh'mey rabba*” in the proper manner, as is described by Chazal (our wise sages).

We appeal to the public at large to study Mishnayos for the benefit of the soul of Rabbi Chaim ben Zev o.b.m. The deceased was very active in the performance of mitzvos and good deeds, Also, many hundreds derived benefit from his acts of kindness, unaware of the power behind all his doing. The merit he gained by these deeds is unfathomable. In our sacred literature, we read that 'one who saves his fellow Jew is rewarded for all future generations descended from him, as well as he is rewarded for saving the person himself.' All these merits stand him in good stead, and he is elevated from one temple to the next. It is, therefore, a great mitzvah to learn Mishnayos for the benefit of this holy soul. It is indeed an act of kindness, especially since he informed us during his lifetime that he yearned for people to learn Mishnayos for his soul as much as possible. Since the letters of the word "Mishnoh" contains the same letters as the word "Nishomoh", therefore does it create merit for his soul.

In the well-known ethical work, entitled *Chovoth Halevavoth*, Duties of the Heart, in the section dealing with love of G-d, ch. 6, we read: ...Similarly, one who improves himself only, merits very little, whereas one who improves himself and many others, gains merits according to the number of merits of all those he recruited for G-d. As our rabbis stated: Anyone who leads the public to righteousness - no sin will come through him. They stated further: Moses was righteous and led the public to righteousness; the merit of the public is ascribed to him, as it is said: "(Deut. 33:21) He executed the righteousness of the L-rd, and His ordinances with Israel." Scripture says further: "(Proverbs 24:25) And for those who reprove it shall be pleasant, and a good blessing shall come upon them." And further, "(Malachi 2:6) The Torah of truth was in his mouth...and he brought back many from sin." And still further: "(Daniel 12:3)...and those who lead the public to righteousness are like the stars forever and ever." The Creator, therefore, commanded to admonish those who neglect their duties, as it is said: "(Leviticus 19:17)...you shall reprove your neighbor."

# The Amen Response

## CHAPTER 1

One of the most sadly neglected observances in our generation, is the answering of *Amen* and *Yehey Sh'mey Rabba* the neglect of which is responsible for the lengthening of our exile and other calamities, G-d forbid. We have already attained the lowest level of observance of this Mitzvah.

Although many writers and anthologists have dwelt on the gravity of this transgression and its resulting punishments, it is, nonetheless, fitting to publish this booklet on the same subject. As King Solomon said, (Mishlai 15:23) "And a thing in its time - how good it is!" And, as explained by the exegetics of our Sages, "there is never a *bais midrash* without a novel approach on any subject, I decided that the time is now ripe for a new revival. I was inspired by the Talmudic maxim: "If one sees frequent calamities becoming more and more severe from all sides, both to the community as a whole and to individuals, one should search and seek after the transgressions of the generation." According to the words of *Chazal* (explained below,) it is obvious that all the calamities and troubles that befall our brethren in all corners of the globe are due to our neglect in answering *Amen*, and *Amen, yehey sh'mey rabba*. Virtually everyone has at some time in some way been stricken by some calamity, whether personally, through his property, family, or relative.

All this is in addition to the troubles of the Jews in general, perpetrated by those who despise everything sacred to our people and strive to destroy us, were it not for G-d's abundant mercies upon us, which come to our aid every moment.

Moreover, there are the geo-political upheavals in the arena, of nations ...wars, pestilence, hunger destruction...antagonizing one another. No one knows what the next moment may bring. May G-d have mercy upon us!

There is a very appropriate statement concerning the response of *Amen* in the *Sefer Devar Shmuel*, based on a statement of the *Sh'lo*, which conveys briefly that whenever one thinks he cannot perform a *mitzvah* because of inconvenience or other unavoidable situations or difficulties, and wishes to absolve himself from punishment by the Heavenly Tribunal, or at a minimum, to alleviate the severe punishment meted out for this neglect, one can do so only if he observes *mitzvos* that do not involve these difficulties. If, however, one is not conscientious in the observance of easy *mitzvos*, the excuse becomes null and void, and he is punished for all *mitzvos* neglected, even the difficult ones. Consequently, if one does not study *Torah* on weekdays, but does study on Sabbaths and Holidays when one is free from work, he may be saved from punishment with the excuse that he must earn his livelihood. However, if one does not utilize his free time to study on Sabbaths and Holidays, he is punished *also* for his neglect to study on weekdays.

By this same reasoning, if one is taken to task by the Heavenly Tribunal for not observing certain *mitzvos*, and he attempts to excuse himself by arguing that these *mitzvos* are difficult, and that he has encountered many hindrances, preventing him from keeping them, they will ask him whether he observed such easy *mitzvos* as the response of *Amen*, *yehey sh'mey rabba*, and observed the prohibition of not conversing in synagogue, which can be performed by refraining from talking, without any physical action. If he is not conscientious in these *effortless* observances, his excuse is worthless.

Moreover, when one is too tired to learn or to engage in *mitzvos*, yet is perfectly capable of conducting a conversation on politics in a loud voice, with no sign of fatigue, will he not be embarrassed to defend himself before the Heavenly Tribunal, with the excuse that he was fatigued and that his voice was too weak to answer *Amen* and *Yehey sh'may rabba*? This is one of the *mitzvos* that people tread with their heels, i.e. they are as



easy to perform as stepping with the heels. If you observe these— or alternatively, if you observe the *mitzvos* accomplished by treading with the heels, such as walking to the synagogue,— then Hashem, your G-d, will observe you...and He will love you and bless you, and He will bless the fruit of your womb...(Dvarim, 7:12, 13).

According to the Rabbinic maxims cited below, the response of *Amen*, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba* can save Jewry from all harsh decrees, save the individual from punishment in Gehinnom, and bring him to the life in the World to Come. Every sensible person should understand that the one who neglects to answer *Amen* and *Yehey sh'mey rabba* because of his trivial and unimportant conversation or other causes, is unspeakably cruel to himself, his family and to the Jews in general. For, were one to answer *Amen*, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba* and other responses of *Amen*, in the required manner, he would have saved them from all their calamities. This is evidenced by the *Gemara Shabbos* (119), which states that when Jews answer *Amen*, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba* aloud, all harsh decrees are nullified. The *Zohar*, (*Vayelech*, p. 285b), discussing answering *Amen* and its importance, states that all the gates of Heaven are opened for one who answers "*Amen*". And when there is trouble in the world, the Holy One, Blessed be He, regards those who answer, "*Amen*", and are conscientious in its observance, to save them from troubles and calamities, Heaven forbid.

The *Zohar* (*ibid.*) also teaches that the gates of blessings are opened for them in Heaven, and joy and goodness dominate all the worlds. Consequently, instead of grieving and searching the various ways to save oneself from troubles, calamities, and illness, one would do much better by observing the *mitzvah* of responding *Amen*, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba* properly. Then one would prosper in all his undertakings. The *Sefer Hagan*, which states that neglect of the *Amen* response is responsible for the delay of the final redemption.

How frightful are the words of *Chazal* (*Berachos* 47a,) that if one answers *Amen* with a *chataf* instead of a *komatz*, or without pronouncing the final *nun*, or if he does not know for which blessing he is answering, his punishment is that his children will be orphaned, Heaven forbid! Is there greater folly than to disregard the words of the Sages and to converse during the prayers, when one knows that because of this, he will leave his wife a widow and his children orphans, Heaven forbid?

Every day we hear of various misfortunes: automobile accidents, heart attacks, holdups, robberies, murders, conflagrations, bankruptcies, cancer, and innumerable others. We see young people being taken away from us in a most horrifying manner and in unprecedented frequency, Heaven forbid. Is the Holy One, blessed be He, suspected of punishing without cause? Now, since *Chazal* warned us in advance that all this would occur if we are not conscientious in answering *Amen*, is it necessary to search for other sins and to stand in astonishment wondering why G-d did this to us?

The truth of the matter is that when Jewish communities maintained their proper status, and every rabbi was responsible for his synagogue, his congregation and his city, then for each misfortune that occurred two or three times they would gather their congregants and expound before them concerning the cause of these punishments. Thereby, the congregants were aroused to repent and to serve G-d properly. Moreover, the rabbis were empowered to innovate various enactments in the synagogue according to the necessity of the times.

This is not so nowadays, for, we have no power to place the observance of the Torah on a firm basis. Everyone is jealous of his neighbor. Every rabbi fears that if he enacts innovations concerning the response of *Amen*, *Amen yehey sh'mey rabba* and similar matters, those who refuse to conform will boycott

his synagogue and go to pray elsewhere, where they are not so strict in these matters. Moreover, the rabbis do not feel the responsibility that lies upon them, since they know that the worshippers are not obligated to follow their views and their instructions, and they are not under their jurisdiction at all. They are like customers who go to one store to buy cosmetics and to another to buy meat. So, too, they go to another store for public prayer. Therefore, although the rabbis may remain silent in this important matter, it should not be taken as an indication that they condone this practice.

This aforementioned rationale is responsible for the rabbis' neglect to enforce the proper response of *Amen*, and *yehey sh'mey rabba*, as well as other important observances in this generation. Prayer is one of three things that need strengthening. Since the power of prayer has waned, so has the Almighty's response. And since the *proper response* has become very weak, the troubles have concomitantly increased. May the L-rd deliver us from them!

Although we can find justification for the rabbis' neglect to admonish their congregants concerning this subject, we cannot exonerate them completely, for the following reasons:

First, there is no person who does not have his hour. There is, therefore, an appropriate time for the rabbi to expound before his congregants, e.g. before the reading of the Torah, during *Sholosh S'udos*, or on festive occasions. Then, he should take advantage of the opportunity to arouse his congregation concerning the neglect of this mitzvah and to explain to them the gravity of the matter as is explained by *Chazal*. And, according to his ability, lead them to understand that this causes the misfortunes that befall everyone: illness, problems with children, property, wife, etc. He should explain to them that with such an easy task as answering *Amen*, and *yehey sh'mey rabbah* properly, one has the ability to abolish a heavenly ordained harsh decree lasting seventy years, as taught by our Sages. Suppose an angel came to you saying: "The end

of your troubles depend on answering *Amen*, and *yehey sh'mey rabba* with all your strength and concentration," You surely would not wait one moment to fulfill this task or even more difficult ones. If accordingly, since every religious Jew believes in G-d, His Torah, and does not doubt any word of *Chazal*, will surely believe the words of the Tanna R'Ishmael Kohen Gadol, which was related by our sages read as follows:

"When they showed R' Ishmael Kohen Gadol all the harsh decrees that would be levied upon the Jews until the advent of the Messiah, with each decree different from the next, and the troubles would burgeoning exceedingly, he asked: "Would the Jews have the strength to bear all this?" The holy angel, Matatron, replied that "By answering "*Amen*, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", all these decrees would become null and void, and holiness and joy would be lavished on the Jews".

How foolish are those who worry about their troubles, running from one doctor to another! From one advisor to the next, not knowing that the remedy is before them! Three times a day, without effort or expenditure of time, money, or bother, they can bring the remedy into their house, with assurance that they will be delivered from their distress. Instead, of dedicating their time for the response of *Amen* and *yehey sh'mey rabba* in its proper place and according to its halachah (law), they sit and converse, joke, and waste time with idle chatter, or, *lehavdil*, look into *sefarim*, at a time, when even the recitation of *Tehillim* is prohibited.

This is analagous to one whose close relative is critically ill, and instead of rushing a physician to his house to effect an immediate cure, he sits and engages in idle chatter, or even lofty conversation. Does not everybody recognize that in such an instance, even though it is indefinite whether the physician will be able to effect a cure his foolishness has gone beyond all limits.

How much more is this true regarding Amen and Yehey *sh'mey rabba*, of whose efficacy our Sages assured us, that it effectuates salvation from all troubles, frees one from all punishments, grants him long life, saves one from Gehinnom, and brings one to the future life! Is there anything more pleasant than this? Yet, one destroys all this with his own hands, without deriving concomitant any physical pleasure, ones evil inclination Yatzer Harah entices him to neglect this matter in order to envelop him with his troubles, take years from his life, and eventually throw him into Gehinnom, G-d forbid.

There is not a shadow of a doubt that the rabbis, preachers, teachers, counsellors, grand rabbis, and other influential people, would achieve *wonders* were they to explain these points logically to their congregants, followers and friends. Hence, there is no argument by which they can free themselves from this obligation.

Moreover, there is another solution to this problem, for which there is no excuse for neglecting. It is possible to appoint a man who will volunteer to walk through the synagogue during *chazaras hashatz* and *kaddish* to keep the congregation quiet and attentive. If it is impossible to find a volunteer, one should be compensated by the same token that a rabbi, and cantor, are compensated by the congregation. This position should become an established institution in every synagogue.

Another reason is that sorrowfully, even the prominent members of the congregation are not heedful, attentive or careful to answer, "Amen, and Yehey *sh'mey rabba*" at all times, and are, sometimes drawn into a conversation at that particular time. This is, indeed, a great *Chillul Hashem* (desecration of G-d's name) both because the worshippers see that the learned Jews are not conscientious in their observance, as well as because the lay members have no one to learn from. This is an awesome *Chillul Hashem*, in addition to

the fact that through their carelessness they cause the public to sin, and in this capacity have no share in the World to Come.

In many places our sages admonish regarding *Chillul Hashem*. They designate *Chillul Hashem* as the worst crime a Jew can commit. All halachaic scholars agree that any action performed by a Jew that serves to falsify, disparage and ridicule the Jewish religion in the eyes of the world constitutes a desecration of the Divine Name.

If they were smart, many synagogues would institute a permanent rule not to allow anyone to pray in their synagogue unless he *controls himself* from engaging in idle chatter during the services. They would see that they would not lose by this step. They would, in fact, gain, because numerous young men are looking for just this type of synagogue where prayers are recited with the proper decorum from beginning to end, without any conversation.

There is another important point worthy of our attention. It is well-known that every father and mother, no matter how neglectful they are of Torah and *mitzvos*, as long as they believe in G-d and His Torah, desire to see their children develop into G-d-fearing Jews. They should take into consideration that the main source of the child's upbringing is the father's deeds, for children are nearly always influenced by their parents' customs. Consequently, if one desires that his son pray reverently and answer, "*Amen, and yehey sh'mey rabba*" at the proper time, he will not see the results of his toil unless he *himself* is conscientious in this matter. Otherwise, if the son witnesses his father's insincerity, he will not heed his admonitions, and all the father's efforts will be in vain.

It is not unusual to hear children tell their fathers to correct their own faults before admonishing them concerning those same faults. Parents must set an example for their children, otherwise all their scolding is of no avail.

The rabbi of the synagogue should pay attention to the great merit he has that G-d has granted him the leadership of a place of Torah and prayer, where he has the opportunity to guide his flock and arouse them to fulfill the *mitzvos* pertaining to the synagogue, such as answering "Amen, and Yehey *sh'mey rabba*" at the proper time, and abolishing idle chatter during the services. This merit will stand him in good stead to all eternity, since the fathers will instruct their children, who will, in turn, instruct their children, all because of the rabbi's admonition. Consequently, he will be rewarded for all generations, as is explained in *Chovos Hal'uvavos* regarding one who brings merit upon the public.

Furthermore, since this *mitzva* is sadly neglected, those who undertake to uphold it are immensely rewarded equivalent to that which the rest of the world would accrue were they to observe it. This is explained by our sages and in the writings of R'Moshe Kordivero, a distinguished Kabbalist. For this reason, Noah and Abraham received the reward due the ten generations preceding them. Also, Joshua and Caleb received the share in Eretz Israel originally due the ten spies who slandered the Holy land. (See *Baba Basra* 118b). Also, the talmud (*Chagigah*) tells us that if one *merits*, he receives his own share of Paradise as well as his friend's. Accordingly, since the *mitzvah* of answering "Amen, and Yehey *sh'mey rabba*" is very much neglected, the reward of one who undertakes to answer, "Amen and Yehey *sh'mey rabba*" is overwhelmingly immense.

Our Sages teach us (see below) that this *mitzvah* saves us from all harsh decrees and brings near the ultimate redemption and prosperity upon the world; all these favors and good fortune will come about through the initiative of the one who admonishes the general populace concerning this *mitzvah*. Consequently, all their subsequent good deeds will accrue his credit. It is difficult to fathom the magnitude of the merit of one who aroused the populace to this *mitzvah*. When a worthy

poor man comes to one for charitable support, the *Zohar* considers this as a gift from the L-rd, since he now has been given the opportunity to fulfill a great *mitzvah* by assisting this poor man. How much more can we consider this great *mitzvah* of encouraging the proper *Amen* response as a gift from the Almighty.

The *Sefer Yisrael Kedoshim* explains that it is mentioned in many holy seforim that a wealthy man's riches are not really his own. They are merely deposited in his care by G-d to distribute among the poor. Thus, he too, incidentally, benefits from those funds remaining as a balance after the giving of the charity. The same is true concerning the great scholars of Israel, the *geonim* and *tzaddikim*, rabbis and grand rabbis, upon whom great honor is lavished by their flock and the general population. Why do they deserve this honor? It cannot be because of their Torah and *mitzvos*, since there is no reward for *mitzvos* in this world. Moreover, there are other great *geonim*, more learned and scholarly, who are not honored as much as the leaders. Why? It can only be that certain leaders deserve their honor in order that people heed their words of admonition. Were their rabbis not afforded such great honor, the people would disregard their words.

We find, therefore, that those who are honored by the congregation, such as being given seats in front of the synagogue and other customary honors including presidents, vice presidents and *gaboim*, receive their honor only to be able to exert influence on the congregants. If they do not fulfill their mission, they are, in a sense, misusing G-d's depository, entrusted to them, Scripture states emphatically concerning *Mitzvohs*, "today to do them "(Deut. 7:11)", implying, per the Talmud that tomorrow, (i.e. in the next world,) we receive the reward for performance, yet these individuals, with their receipt of honors are benefitting from their Torah and *mitzvos* in this world for no reason. Now if they mean to use the honor in G-d's



name, or if they mean to enjoy it *in addition* to utilizing it for the fulfillment of *mitzvos*, we could find a justification therefor. If, however, they use it purely for their own ends, they are indeed using the "scepter of the King of Glory", to which they have no right. Communal leaders will understand that they do not occupy positions of rulership but of servitude.

In subsequent chapters we will cite from the *Gemara*, *Zohar* and *Midrashim* emphasizing the incumbent obligation upon individuals to admonish and protest against improper practices. From these sayings one can fathom the severity of the punishment due one who neglects and shirks his obligations to awaken the public to this great *mitzvah*, either out of laziness or fear that one will lose his respect before the congregation if he scolds them or for fear of losing money, which in any case, one cannot take along to their final resting place. On the other hand, we see the great merit of those who bring the public to fulfill *mitzvos* and the great reward for answering "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" as is prescribed by the halachah, and the penalty meted against those who do not answer properly.

The aforementioned applies to anyone who has influence over others, e.g. rabbis over their congregations - grand rabbis over their *chassidim*, *Roshei Yeshivos* over their disciples, teachers over their pupils...and even the laity who are responsible for the behavior of their own children.

To this point we have discussed the requirements of answering Amen in general. Unfortunately, we must add many important halachos (laws) pertaining to Amen, that are so sadly neglected, either because people are unfamiliar with them or because very often the one who goes before the *omud* (altar) to lead the service, is in a hurry to conclude the services and consequently, even those who wish to answer Amen properly after his *berachos* find it impossible to do so. This will be explained in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 2

### OBLIGATIONS OF YESHIVA TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

Before concluding this thesis concerning the obligation of the communal leaders to inspire and awaken the people concerning the terrible neglect of answering, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", in its proper time, it is necessary to address the teachers and principals of elementary yeshivos.

The *Gemara Baba Basra* (8a), expounds the Biblical passage (Daniel 12:3): "*and those that turn many to righteousness will be as the stars forever and ever,*" as a reference to teachers of young children. *Rashi* comments that teachers turn many to righteousness by teaching and training them to follow the right path. Hence, it is apparent that the great reward that teachers of young children receive is granted because they train the children and guide them to follow the right path. Now, in *Rashi's* time, *Yiddishkeit* was at its peak, and the parents, undoubtedly spent substantial time teaching and training their children. Yet, the teachers were still rewarded for guiding the children in the performance of *mitzvos*. How much more so should this be true in our time and even, when fathers are too busy earning a livelihood, and it is unusual for a father to devote any appreciable amount of time to assist his child with his studies and training as it should be! The parents send their children away in the morning and expect the *melamdim* to effectuate the entire job and send the children home as *completed* products. Due to this situation where teachers are in *loco parentis* the responsibility of the *melamdim* (teachers) is indeed immense. A *melamed* must consider himself as teaching a group of children at the *cross-roads of their lives*. It depends *solely upon him* whether his wards will lead lives of Torah and fear of Heaven, or, G-d forbid...

Likewise, the pupil's lot regarding prayer in general, and answering, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" in particular, are dependent upon the intensity of the teacher's guidance and the

Dear children! Do you know how great you are and how much you can accomplish? Picture to yourselves that for the one mitzvah of *gemilus chasodim* (kind deeds) that a Jew practices, he receives infinite reward both in this world and in the next.

Now! imagine how great a reward children receive if they *davven* with sincerity, and answer "Amen, and Amen yehaey sh'mey rabba" aloud thereby performing an act of kindness to the whole world. The rabbis teach us that the world exists in their merit, that this redeems the Jews from their troubles, and will accelerate the coming of the Messiah. You must understand that children can be punished more severely for neglecting to answer "Amen" since they do not have the worries their parents have.

Do you wish that your parents and your whole family should live long and enjoy good health.

Do you wish to live to see children and grandchildren?

Do you want to be worthy of entering Gan Eden and not, G-d forbid, Gehinnom?

Then you have but one way to accomplish all this! Namely, to answer, "Amen, and Amen yehey sh'mey rabba" aloud, in the proper way it should be recited.





Dear children! Do you know how great you are and how much you can accomplish? Picture to yourselves that for the one mitzvah of *gemilus chasodim* (kind deeds) that a Jew practices, he receives infinite reward both in this world and in the next.

Now! imagine how great a reward children receive if they *davven* with sincerity, and answer "Amen, and Amen yehaey sh'mey rabba" aloud thereby performing an act of kindness to the whole world. The rabbis teach us that the world exists in their merit, that this redeems the Jews from their troubles, and will accelerate the coming of the Messiah. You must understand that children can be punished more severely for neglecting to answer "Amen" since they do not have the worries their parents have.



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awakening experienced from him. If the teacher is conscientious in informing the children the paramount importance of answering "Amen, and *Yehey sh'may rabba*" and if he continually admonishes them, sometimes with mild words and sometimes with harsh words, and reminds them at the proper time to respond, the habit of responding *Amen* will become a second nature; the teacher will perceive the products of his toil, for which his reward will be everlasting.

But, if, G-d forbid, the teacher shirks his obligation, and surely, if he fails to mention it at all, whence can his help come? As the Talmud states: "If there are no kids, there will be no goats." I.e. if the young are not trained, how will they develop into educated adults? Moreover, the *melamed* must remember that his words *will* bear fruit, and that this fruit too will bear fruit. Not only is the *zechus* of his words loftier than that of many other *mitzvos*, but in addition, the principle will last for future generations, since these children will grow up and guide their children, just as they were taught and guided. Furthermore, those children who will later follow the calling of teaching Torah will also teach their pupils in the same way their teachers have taught them.

Think a little about the efficacy of the recitation of "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" by young children who have not tasted any sin. *Chazal* teach us (*Shabbos* 119b): "The world exists only in the merit of the breath emanating from the mouths of school children." Since the rabbis did not explain to what breath they were referring, we can assume that they meant the speech of the children in their learning and in their utterance of prayer, and the like.

Concerning the *Yehey Sh'mey Rabba* response the rabbis also stated: On what is the world standing? On *Yehey Sh'mey Rabba* recited after the study of the *aggadah* (*Sotah*, 49a). Now try to fathom the efficacy of children who have not tasted sin, who assure the existence of the world with their breath when they recite, "Amen and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*."


## A TRUE STORY WHICH OCCURED IN CANADA

A teacher who was always meticulous in teaching his pupils the importance of answering **Amen** and of not talking during the davening (prayer) services especially during the recital of the loud **Shmonrh Esray**, has this true story to relate that took place with one of his students.

**Once, a father began speaking to his child in the midst of recital Shmoneh Esray**, He spoke to him once, he spoke to him twice during this prohibited period yet, the child maintained his complete silence. For this he was rewarded with a resounding smack across his little face as the father released his anger, declaring: "You impudent child! Why didn't you answer me after I spoke to you several times?" The child, being compelled to responded in his defense lest another smack would be forthcoming, sheeplessly responded: "**My Rebbe** (teacher) taught me, '**We must never talk during the loud Shmoneh Esray**'."

**The fathers face turned beet red from shame and humiliation as many of the Congregants in his proximity witnessed this episode.**





Once, a father began speaking to his child in the midst of recital Shmoneh Esray. He spoke to him once, he spoke to him twice during this prohibited period yet, the child maintained his complete silence. For this he was rewarded with a resounding smack across his little face as the father released his anger, declaring: "You impudent child! Why didn't you answer me after I spoke to you several times?" The child, being compelled to respond in his defense lest another smack would be forthcoming, sheepishly responded: "My Rebbe (teacher) taught me, 'We must never talk during the loud Shmoneh Esray.'"

A TRUE STORY WHICH OCCURED IN CANADA

A teacher who was always meticulous in teaching his pupils the importance of answering Amen and of not talking during the davening (prayer) services especially during the recital of the loud Shmoneh Esray, has this true story to relate that took place with one of his students.

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From this maxim we can easily fathom a fraction of the spiritual status attained by the teacher who invests considerable time and effort in training his pupils to fulfill this *mitzvah* properly.

However, unfortunately, there are very few teachers concerned with this matter. And, even those few who are dedicated, do not devote regular scheduled periods for this subject. Moreover, it must be pointed out that even children responding when their teacher is present because they fear him, do not continue to do so when they leave the *cheder* and are no longer under his domination and the fear of his ruler. How much more effective would it be were the teachers to explain, pleasantly, the lofty and beautiful reward in store in both worlds to those who are careful to recite these responses at the proper time in the proper manner! Then, these practices would take root in the hearts of the children and blossom into beautiful blossoms, eventually becoming second nature, from which the children will never deviate as long as they live.

I will cite several Rabbinic dicta reflecting how important school children are considered in Heaven:

1) Every day an angel goes forth from before the Holy One, Blessed be He, to destroy the world, Yet, as soon as the Holy One, Blessed be He, looks at the school children, His anger turns to mercy (*Kallah Rabathi* 2).

2) When the children come out of school, a *bas kol*, a heavenly echo, resounds and says to them: "Go, eat your bread joyfully. (*Koheles Rabbah* 9:1).

3) *Chumash* teachers and *Mishnayos* teachers who teach the children faithfully, are destined to stand at the right of the Holy One, Blessed be He (*Vayikra Rabbah* 30:2).

4) Come and see how precious the children are to the Holy One, Blessed be He, for when the *Sanhedrin* was exiled, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, did not go in exile with them, but when the children were exiled, the *Schechinah* went with them (*Eichah Rabbah* 1:33).



- 5) Any city that has no schoolchildren, will be destroyed. (*Shabbos 119b*).
- 6) The world exists *only* because of the schoolchildren (*ibid.*).
- 7) School children may not be made to neglect their studies even for building the Holy Temple (*ibid.*).

### CHAPTER 3

#### The Duty to Admonish and Protest - Quotations from Talmud, Zohar, and Midrash

- 1) Anyone capable of admonishing reproaching or rebuking members of his household and does not do so: is punished and considered culpable for the sins of the members of his household; against the people of his city, is punished for the sins of the people of his city, against the entire world, is punished for the sins of the of the entire world (*Shabbos 54b*)
- 2) Since Phinechas should have protested against *Hophni*, Scripture considers it as though he had sinned (*Shabbos 55b*)
- 3) One who has the ability to admonish and protest and does not, the sin is ascribed to him (*Yerushalmi Shabbos ch. 5*).
- 4) Because of four things, the property of householders is usurped by the government, (one of which is) because they have the ability to protest and do not do so (*Sukkah 29b*)
- 5) Silence is a symbol of acquiescence: Since the Rabbis were present and did not protest, this indicates that they agreed. (*Gittin 56a*)
- 6) *Abner* was punished (by being killed) because he should have protested against *Saul*, and did not do so. (*Sanhedrin 20a*)
- 7) *Joshua* the high priest wore soiled garments because his sons married women unfit for the priesthood, and he did not protest against them (*Sanhedrin 93a*)

8) Concerning *Zedekiah* it is written (II Kings 24:19): *And he did what was evil in the eyes of the L-rd.* The evil is attributed to him because he was able to protest and did not (*Sanhedrin 103a*)

9) If a person learned, taught, observed, (negative commandments), and performed (positive commandments), but did not protest, he is deemed cursed. On the other hand, if a person did not learn, did not perform (positive commandments), did not observe (negative commandments), did not teach others, and did not have the ability to protest, yet he protested, he is deemed blessed. (*Vayikra Rabbah 25*)

10) The Holy One, Blessed be He, said (to the Divine Attribute of Justice): "These are completely righteous men, and these are completely wicked ones." He replied: "It is fully revealed to me that they had the ability to protest, but did not do so." He responded: "It is fully known to Me that if they had protested, they would not have heeded them." He retorted: "If it is fully known to You, is it fully known to them?" They, therefore, should have protested and allowed themselves to be humiliated for the sanctity of Your Name, and to suffer beatings from the Jews. (*Tanhuma Tazria 9*)

11) "Take all the leaders of the people and hang them. (*Num. 25:4*)" The sins were attributed to the leaders of the people because they did not protest against the people. (*Tanhuma Balak 19*)

12) Who was responsible for the deaths of all those killed in the civil war against Benjamin because of the killing of the concubine in Gibeah of Benjamin?) *Phinechas!*, Because he had the power to protest and did not protest. We learn from this that anyone who has the power to protest and does neither protest, or attempt to bring the Jews to improve their ways, all blood that is shed among the Jews, is shed because of him. (*Yalkut Judges 68*)

13) The great *Sanhedrin* should have tied iron ropes around their waists and lifted their cloths above their knees and gone throughout all the cities of Israel, one day to Lachish, one day to Eglon, one day to Hebron, one day to Jerusalem, to teach them proper manners. (ibid)

14) Jerusalem was destroyed only because they did not admonish one another. (*Shabbos 119*)

15) If a Rabbinical scholar is loved by the people of his city, it is not because he is superior, but because he does not admonish them concerning matters of Heaven. (*Kethuboth 105b*)

16) When the footsteps of the *Messiah* will be heard, there will be no admonition. (*Sotah 49a*)

17) Because of what did *Jeroboam* merit the kingdom? Because he castigated Solomon. (*Sanhedrin 101b*)

18) One should love admonition, for as long as there is admonition in the world, goodness and blessing come to the world, and evil departs from the world. (*Tamid 28a*)

19) Everyone who admonishes his friend for the sake of Heaven, merits the portion of the Holy One, Blessed be He; moreover, a mantle of grace is drawn over him. (*Tamid 28*)

20) Anyone who knows how to admonish and admonishes the public, brings content to his Creator. (*Tana d've Eliyahu Rabba 3*)

21) One who knows that his fellow man is wicked, yet he flatters him, or if he knows that his colleague is full of sins, yet he says to him, "You are righteous," deserves that all the curses in the Torah come upon him. However, one who admonishes his colleague that he repent, takes the blessings of the one who is admonished. If he accepts the admonition and repents then, he too, receives blessings. (*Yalkut Devarim 793*)

22) Is there any man who hates his son? However, if he does not admonish him concerning Torah, wisdom, and proper

manners, he will eventually hate him. If he admonishes him, however, he will eventually love him. (*Yalkut Proverbs 950*)

23) The Divine Attribute of Justice rose and said before G-d: Even on the righteous among them, You shall write on their foreheads a *Tav* of blood, *Tav* standing for *Tamuth*, you shall die. The Holy One, Blessed be He, replied and said: "Why?" She answered, "Because they did not reproach your children with words of admonition, and they did not instruct them not to sin." The Holy One, replied, "It is revealed before me that if they had admonished them, they would not have listened". The Attribute of Justice replied, "Even though they would not have accepted, nevertheless, the righteous should have rebuked them". The Holy One acceded and proceeded to treat the righteous of that generation in Jerusalem as wrongdoers. Six angels of destruction were dispensed to Jerusalem and they devastated it (*The Letters of R' Akiva*).

24) Whoever is able to admonish and does not do so is stricken with *tzaraas*. (*Zohar Part III part 45b*)

25) The righteous man is conscientious to go to the wrongdoers to help them turn away from their sins. He informs them of the heavenly judgment and the punishment of *Gehinom*. He does not allow himself to rest day or night until he has rebuked them and brought them to full repentance. (*Zohar Pg. 20b*)

26) All Jews are responsible for each other. (*Shevuos 39a*)

27) Even the perfectly righteous are held responsible for the sins of their generation ... for not rebuking the wicked. (*Midrash Tanchuma Mishpatim*)

28) Some sins are so great that those who commit them are not afforded Divine assistance to repent. Included among them is one who was able to rebuke others, be it a group or individuals, and did not do so but left them in their backsliding. (*Rambam Hilchos Tshuva 4:1*)

29) It is a Jew's duty to protest against sinners. Anyone who has the ability to protest, and does not do so, is held responsible for that sin. (*Remah Yore Deah 334:48*)

30) Evil decrees fall only upon those who could have protested and did not. (*Yalkut Ruth on the verse, "And Elimelech died..."*)

31) Anyone who says that Solomon actually sinned is in error. The sages ask: But it is written, "and Solomon sinned .."? They answer: Because he should have reprimanded his wives and did not, scripture considers it as if he actually sinned. *Rabbi Yehuda* says in the name of *Shmuel* that Solomon would have preferred to be a lackey to a foreign ruler rather than have it be written in Scriptures that he sinned. *Rashi* explains the Gemorah to mean that he would rather have suffered indenture to chop wood and draw water for idol worship. This teaches us how severe the rebuke is for one that could have protested and did not. (*Shabbos 56b*)

32) The reason that the people in the civil war against *Gibeah* died was: *Hashem* said to them, "For My honor you did not protest, but for the honor of mortals you do protest!". (*Sanhedrin 103b*)

33) The verse "and I shall destroy from amongst you the righteous and the wicked," refers to the righteous who are imperfect. Since they were able to protest and did not, they are considered imperfect. (*Avoda Zara 4a*)

34) *Aaron* did not protest when *Moses* hit the rock at *Meriva* for he considered himself as *Moses'* disciple. However, one need not give honor to a teacher when there is a profanation of the Divine Name. Because he did not protest, he was punished in the same way as *Moses*. (*Midrash Tanchuma, Chukas*)

35) From the incident of *Pinchas* one should learn to be zealous for *Hashem* when there is a profanation of the Divine Name of the Torah. The importance of this is shown by the

gratitude and good favor through which Hashem gave the priestly covenant of peace to Pinchas. (*Shelah Hakodesh, Ten Praises*)

36) It is written (*Midrash Tanchuma, Re'ei*) that many upright people lived in Noah's generation but, nevertheless, perished with the others. The reason they perished is that they did not protest the wrongdoings of the others, unlike Noah who did protest. (*The Chida, Chomas Anach, Parshas Noah*)

37) One who does not oppose those who persist in their evil ways is punished for all their sins. Furthermore, he transgresses the negative command, "You shall not bear his sin ..." It is obligatory upon every G-d fearing and G-d loving person and those of pure heart to arouse zeal ... (*Sha'arei T'shuvah, Sha'ar 3:59*)

38) *The Remah states that in our times we do not protest against wrongdoers because of the danger involved (Yoreh Deah 334, Choshen Mishpat 12) quoting the Responsa of the MaHariv 157 The Bechor Shor (quoted in the Piskei T'shuva) says that many, basing their actions upon this decision, justify themselves in flattering influential people even though there is no certain danger. This rationalization, which has weakened the Torah, is a blatant mistake, in that the MaHariv's opinion was stated only in an instance when there is certain danger. Were this not so, then the precept, "Thou shalt not fear a man," would become null and void. Certainly the intent of this precept was directed to a situation in which there is a reason for fear. And, yet we are instructed you shall not fear!*

A judge who is appointed to punish wrongdoers and fulfills this precept, will merit the reward of Pinchas, the zealous, and no evil will befall him.

39) Do not envy wrongdoers, for anyone who sees their actions and does not arouse zeal transgresses three negative commands. For this reason a man should sever relations with them and have a separate way from them (*Zohar I pg. 239b*).

“Gentlemen! I have warned, reprimanded and admonished you time and again. I cited statements from the Talmud and Midrash how important it is to answer, ‘Amen.’ For neglecting to do so, one is cast into the deepest place in Gehinnom forever. After 120 years, you will not be able to blame me as your Rabbi, because I did not warn you enough. I spend much time and energy every service, **three times a day**, to arouse you strictly to observe these laws.

Therefore, if you do not repent, and promise to abruptly STOP from this evil practice of talking during “Kaddish” and the repetition of the “Shmoneh Esray”, you yourselves will suffer from this bitter punishment, and I will not be blamed.



40) *The Angel of Death does not have the same power over a man who is zealous for Hashem as he has over other men. (Zohar 29b)*

41) Anyone who is able to protest and does so, thereby avenging Hashem from the wicked of this world, Hashem seals a covenant with him and his seed, just as He did with Pinchas. (*Reishis Chochma, Sha'ar HaYirah, ch. 12*)

42) If even a minor sin receives public and juridical acceptance, this is the product of corruptness and an unpardonable sin; and furthermore, the entire people are held guilty. Forgiveness is possible only after a punishment has been executed upon the entire nation. This was the sin of Sodom. (*HaAkeida 20*)

43) Because they did not protest against evildoers, the future generations learned from their bad ways. (*Rashi Sotah 41b*)

44) It is clearly derived from both the Oral and Written law that one who can protest and does not do so, is held responsible for that sin and for neglecting a positive commandment. Furthermore, he is considered in the category of the wicked. (*Chinuch Mitzvah 239*)

45) The judges of Israel are responsible for the sins of their people. (*Yalkut Yechezkel 341*)

46) *It is written "Ben Adam: A sentinel have I appointed you for the Family of Israel and you have heard the word of My mouth .. but you did not speak up to warn the wicked one concerning his evil way to save his life. He, the wicked one, shall die for his sin, and I shall demand his blood from you. Yechezkel 3:17,"*

47) It is possible that Moses, assured of the righteousness of his brother Aaron, knew that Aaron's intention in making the



golden calf was not evil. However, he accused him for the evil-doing of the people. Since their downfall came through him, he was deserving of rebuke. (*Rambam, Ki Sisa*)

48) Why do many Torah scholars die young? The answer is: they allow themselves to be disgraced, for they do not avenge like a snake the words of Torah and the fear of Heaven. (*Avos of R'Nasson, ch. 29*)

49) There were great men of Israel who saw evil and looked the other way. The Holy One remarked to them, "There will come a time when I will do likewise." (*Midrash Rabbah, Lamentations*).

50) In summary, I would like to cite that which *R' Chaim Sofer* writes in his illustrious work, *Sha'arei Chaim (6a)*:

"Woe to us from the day of Judgment; Woe to us from the Day of Rebuke, when the time comes for *Hashem* to search through the action of every living being and it will be found written: This righteous man desecrated the *Sabbath*; this pious man transgressed the prohibition of *Niddah*; this G-d fearing man transgressed the prohibition against eating non-Kosher food and wearing *shatnes*; this holy man is guilty of having relations with a married woman. All believers will be astonished and wonder at the sins attributed to these pious men, for these men were part of a generation of righteous. But *Hashem* will reply in wrath, "Behold, it was in your power to rebuke such and such a wicked man. Why did you not remember him and remind him of his sin?"

It is quite evident that those who have the capability to rebuke and admonish their fellow man are required to do so. Hesitation or neglect of this requirement is calamitous; perserverence and meticulous fulfillment of this responsibility accrues abundance of blessings.

## CHAPTER 4

### AN ANTHOLOGY FROM TALMUD, ZOHAR AND MIDRASHIM CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF ANSWERING "AMEN" PROPERLY

1) We may not answer "Amen" vocalizing the *aleph* with a *chataf* rather than a *komatz*. Neither may we answer "Amen" without pronouncing the final *nun*. Nor may we answer an "orphan" Amen, (I.e. without knowing the blessing to which the response is addressed.) One who answers an orphan Amen, his children will become orphans. One who answers Amen with a *chataf* - his life will be snatched away (Heb.  $\text{גזל}$ ). One who answers Amen without pronouncing the final *nun* - his days will be cut off. He who extends the word Amen - his days and years will be lengthened. (*Berachos* 47a).

2) The one who answers Amen is greater than the one who recites the blessing (*Berachos* 53b)

3) Anyone who answers Amen with all his might - the Gates of Paradise (gan eden), are opened for him. (*Shabbos* 119b).

4) To the Holy One, Blesses be He, there is nothing greater than the "Amen" that the Jews answer (*Devarim Rabbah* 7).

5) When does a child (who died) merit to come to the World to Come? From the time he says, "Amen". (*Sanhedrin* 110b).

6) Everyone who answers, "Amen", in this world, merits to answer, "Amen" in the future world (*Devarim Rabbah* 7).

7) Because of one "Amen" that the wicked answer from within *Gehinnom*, they are rescued from it. (*Yalkut*, Isaiah 429).

8) Ignorant people, who know neither to read the Bible, learn the *Mishnah* nor expound on the Torah, yet if they enter the synagogues and the *batei midrashim* and answer, "Amen" even if they have nothing but the reward of "Amen" it is sufficient. (*Agadas Bereishis* 79).

9) Those who belittle the response of "Amen", go down to Gehinnom, to a place known as *avadon* - (perdition) - from which they never come up (Zohar Vol. III p. 285b).

10) Those who answer "Amen and *yehey sh'mey rabba*" with all their might, will stand in the second place in Paradise (Zohar I 38b).

11) One who sanctifies the Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, by concentrating on "Amen" properly, will be elevated from one level to the next in the future world (Ibid, III. 3, 286).

12) He who does not concentrate on "Amen" despises, as it were, the Holy One, Blessed be He (ibid. 285).

13) One who answers, "Amen" with all his might - even a decree issued against him for a punishment of seventy years, is rescinded (Tikunei Zohar 19a, 40a, III 20a; Shabbos 119b, Tos. ad loc. and in "*Raya Meheimna*", where the reading is, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey raba m'vorach*", not "Amen" alone.

14) When answering, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", one must arouse all his limbs with all his might, and thereby, break the powers of evil. (Zohar III 220).

15) When Israel is in distress, and they pray to the Holy One, Blessed be He, a voice announces in all the worlds, "Open the gates." Just as the Jews open the gates of the blessing by answering "Amen", so will the gates be opened for them now, to accept their prayer (ibid, III 285b)

16) When the Jews answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" aloud, the Holy One, Blessed be He, becomes filled with mercy, and has pity on everyone, even on the wicked in Gehinnom, so that they are given respite three times a day, for one and a half hours. (Zohar 62b).

17) When the Jews observe the response of "Amen", and concentrate properly, many gates of blessing are opened for them in Heaven, and much goodness is found in all the worlds; much joy is in all the worlds (ibid, III. 285b).

18) Rav Safra's son jumped off the roof to hear *Kaddish*, and people became aware that he would become a great man (*Zohar* II 166 a).

19) *Kaddish* is a praise by which the Holy One, Blessed be He, becomes elevated more than by any other praise. Why is this so? Because it is instrumental in humbling the everpresent "satanic forces" and in elevating the glory of the Holy One, Blessed be He, over everything (*Ibid* II 129b, III 129b).

20) Even one engaged in the study of the *Ma'asei Merkavah* (holy chariot), should interrupt his studies to answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" (*Berachos* 21b)

21) One who answers, "Amen and *Yehe sh'mey rabba m'vorach*", in a dream, is assured that he will enter the World to come (*ibid.* 57a).

22) On what does the world stand? On the merit of reciting the *kedusha* in *Uva L'Tzion*, and on the merit of answering, "*Yehey sh'may rabba*" after learning *aggadah* (*Sotah* 49a).

23) When the elder sits and expounds, and his disciples answer after him, "Amen, May His great Name be blessed", even if one has against him a record of decrees for one hundred years, the Holy One, Blessed be He, forgives him (*Koheles Rabba* 9:20). In *Midrash Shocher Tov*, (*Mishlei* 10,) the reading is: *Even if their verdict was sealed, I forgive them and atone for their sins.*

24) The angel *Sandelphon* ties crowns to the L-rd of Glory from the recital of *Kedusha*, *Borchu*, and from "Amen, and *Yehey sh'may rabba*", that the children of Israel answer. From here the Sages deduce that anyone who neglects to answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", is instrumental in diminishing the crown, and is liable to excommunication (*Midrash Konen*).

25) When my son recited the *haftarah* in public, they released me from judgment, and when he recited *Kaddish*, they rescinded my verdict completely (*Zohar Chadash Lev.* 49a).

26) Everyone who answers “Amen” in this world, merits to answer “Amen” in the World to Come (*Devarim Rabba* 7:1; *Tanchuma Tzav* 8).

27) If one answers, “Amen, and Yehay sh’mey rabba”, with all his might, even if he has a blemish of idolatry, he is forgiven (*Zohar Chadash, Lev. Raya M’heimna* p. 20).

28) The response of “Amen, and Yehay sh’may rabba”, is one of the things for which all of one’s sins are forgiven (*Chareidim, Commandment of Repentance, ch. 7*).

## CHAPTER 5

### INSPIRING STORIES AND MAXIMS CONCERNING THE MATTER OF ANSWERING “AMEN” AND “YEHAY SH’MAY RABBA”

1) The rabbis teach us (*Shabbos* 119b): “Anyone who answers, “Amen” with all his might, - there is opened for him all the gates of Paradise.” *Maharsha* explains this as follows: Paradise has many gates, one partition within the next one, as is stated that every *tzaddik* is “burned” from his friend’s canopy, and as stated (*Shabbos* 152a), that every *tzaddik* has a dwelling place granted him according to the honor he deserves. The Talmud tells us that one who answers, “Amen” with all his might, has *all* these gates opened for him. (See *Shomer Emunim*, beginning of part 2, where it is explained why the one who answers, “Amen”, is entitled to go farther into Paradise than the greatest *tzaddikim*.)

2) The ARI O.B.N. (Introduction to “*Emek Halachah*”, Intro. 3, ch. 2) told his disciples that during his sleep, the angel *Mattatron* would come to him and lead his soul to any *yeshivah* in Heaven that he would desire, and to any palace he would desire to enter and learn there, so will it be in the future for those who are conscientious in answering, “Amen”, all the palaces will be opened before them, to allow them to learn *Torah* in the Heavenly academy, all gates will be opened for them, and no one will stop them. (*Shomer Emunim* II 247b).

3)The sainted Rabbi Aharon Roth z.t.l. (author of *Shomer Emunim*, *Shulchan Hatahor* etc., writes in his will: It is astounding that everyone reads such frightful warnings and severe punishments (*Zohar Vayelech* 285, *Berachos* 47a), yet do not take them seriously. Is there any greater folly than this? These punishments are hardly mentioned even in reference to the gravest sins. Yet, rather than experience the slight inconvenience of controlling one's mouth during services, people put themselves and their very souls into such danger, G-d forbid. For if one converses when the *chazzan* repeats the *sh'moeny-esreh*, during the recitation of during the *Torah* reading, or the recitation of the *berachos*, it is virtually impossible to avoid answering an "orphan amen" (explained *ibid.*), "Amen" with a *chataf* instead of a *komatz*, one without the final *nun*, or the like, since he does not know for which *berachah* he is responding. If one claims that he can concentrate, he is exhibiting pure arrogance.

In the *Sefer Hagan*, we are taught that this is the reason for the delay of our final redemption. This was revealed from Heaven to the author. The sainted Rabbi *Yeyva* of *Ostraha*, too, revealed that this sin is the cause of the delay of the redemption until now. Therefore, dear brethren, *have pity on your souls* and be extremely conscientious in this matter. Thereby, you will receive a reward equal to the whole world. At present this *mitzvah* is considered like a *meis mitzvah*, a dead body that has no one to occupy himself with its burial. Anyone who does not observe this rule is not counted among my disciples, because I always took great pains to curb this evil in my own synagogue where I had the power to do so, and also in the neighboring synagogues where I could persuade the worshippers to observe this law conscientiously. In the distant synagogues, however, I had no power to protest, because there the worshippers emulate the so-called *sheine yidden*, the learned Jews, who are supposed to be observant in all aspects of Jewish law. One who wishes to guard his soul from falling

into the nethermost region of Gehinnom, as is depicted in the holy *Zohar*, should spare his soul and refrain from all speech during *Chazaras Hashatz* (the *Chazzan's* repetition of the prayer, during the *kaddish*, and during the *Torah* reading, and the recitation of the *berachos*, etc.

If they are tempted to believe that they will lose money because of this, let them sacrifice their ignoble money, for, indeed, no one suffers a loss for being zealous for the honor of Heaven, G-d forbid, as is stated in scripture "those who seek the L-rd will not lack..."

4) The *sefer*, *Sh'nei Luchos Hab'ris*, (the *Sh'loh* (*Masseches Tomid*, topics of prayer), states: Both the ethereal beings as well as the earthlings, are all dependent on the word, "Amen", which is the root and the foundation of all the worlds, one who concentrates on every blessing emanating from the mouth of the one reciting it, and answers, "Amen" with devotion and according to the *din* (law), causes extensive sanctity above and a great abundance of goodness to all the worlds...The voice goes forth in the heavens above and announces; 'all this goodness was caused by such and such a person, the servant of the Holy King.' When the Jews are found in distress and they pray, the announcement goes forth in all the worlds: "Open the gates...!" Just as they open the gates of blessings and plenty, so will their prayer be accepted." (*Zohar*). The rabbis of the Talmud, too, made a similar statement. This is the reward in this world. What is the reward in the World to Come? "... he ascends from one level to the next, to enjoy Paradise in the World to Come." Concerning him it is said, "For I will honor those who honor Me." There is a common expression in the codes and the works of the Kabbalists: "He who answers "Amen" is greater than he who recites the blessing." This is, indeed, true, that *Amen* is intrinsically great, and its greatness is fathomless.

5) Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz o.b.m., told a story about a *tzaddik* whom he had seen in Paradise. One of his opponents queried:

“(How could you see that *tzaddik* in Paradise? Aren’t you here in this world?” He replied: “Didn’t the rabbis say that if one answers “Amen” with all his might, that the gates of Paradise are opened for him? Now, why should they be opened if he cannot see within?” There is no doubt that one who merits to answer, “Amen” with all his might, merits to see the open gates of Paradise, and he can gaze within, for the rabbis did not speak with exaggerations. We, however, do not merit this. (*Shomer Emunim*, II p. 247b).

6) One who converses either during *chazaras hashatz*, (the reader’s repetition of the *sh’moneh esreh*), during *kaddish* or the recitation of *birchas hashachar* before the *omud*, can by no means avoid answering an “orphan amen”, because he cannot concentrate on which *b’rachah* he is responding. We explained above that if one does not know to which *b’rachah* he is responding, it is considered an “orphan Amen”. He, certainly, cannot concentrate on the meaning of “Amen”, even on the simple meaning. Moreover, he is apt to answer “Amen” without the final *nun*, known as *amen ketufah*, a broken off *amen*, or a hurried *amen*, (i.e. before the proper time to respond, or after the reader has commenced the following blessing). Experience teaches us this, and no one can deny it, unless he is a fool, a wicked man, and arrogant not to admit the truth. (*Ibid*, p. 262).

7) A disciple once came to the author of the *Sefer* entitled *Imrei Eish*. This disciple was wont to converse during *chazaras hashatz*. All day The Rabbi referred to him as *gadol*, the great one, yet no one knew the reason for this. When his other disciples asked him about this, he replied “Since he conversed during *chazaras hashatz* he is a sinner, whose sin is too great to forgive, (as in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 124:7. 1.) Therefore, called him “great”. (*Ibid*. b)

8) In general, if one is approached by a prominent person, who wishes to engage him in a conversation, he is ashamed to say “Go away; now is *chazaras hashatz*” or “It is the middle of



*kaddish*, I cannot talk to you". He is afraid people will consider him a *batlan* (an impractical person), or an overreligious fool. As regards this, Scripture warns: "Be strong, and let your heart be courageous", It is unfit for the truth to be ashamed and cowardly. On the contrary, be strong and courageous, not fearing any person. Be not abashed by him, but fulfill the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* to rebuke him, regardless of who he is, especially if he is one of those who talk in public. If one stops them, however, and causes the public to answer "Amen" through his admonition, the merit of the public will be ascribed to him. Even if you see a *tzaddik*, a holy man, talking during *chazaras hashatz*, G-d forbid that you should follow his example. Even if *Eliyohu The Prophet* would come, we would not heed him to abrogate even one iota from the *Gemara* or the *Shulchan Aruch*, and surely not concerning the Amen response with its attendant frightening warnings. If you take heed, you will receive as reward that which the whole world should have received had they followed this prohibition. Additionally, you will be rewarded because others will emulate your behavior. Unfortunately, many great men are lax in their observance of this prohibition. (Ibid).

9) I am accustomed to stop people who recite supplications (*tehillim*) and prayers while the reader is repeating the *shmoneh esreh*, for, surely, G-d will not grant them what they pray for. On the contrary, He will take away what they already have, All *halachic* authorities agree unanimously, that when the reader repeats the *Sh'moneh esreh*, the congregation must remain silent, answer "Amen", and concentrate on the blessings that the *chazzan* is reciting. One who does not observe this, whatever he has attained will be taken away, and what he requests in his private supplications will not be granted, for this sin destroys the efficacy of his prayers (*Vovei Ha-amudim*, ch. 10, alluded to by *Magen Avraham* 124).

10) My dear brethren, if you wish to save yourselves from the plague and your small children from dying from such

horrible deaths as smallpox or measles, Heaven forbid, refrain from conversing in the synagogue about any unnecessary matter.

The *Sh'loh* admonishes very stringently that one must flee with his small children if he comes to a place where there is a smallpox epidemic. Those who refuse to flee will be blamed for their children's death, since they were instrumental therein. Unfortunately, in our case, the fathers are very much to blame, *because they converse in the synagogue*. Today, it is considered a perfectly permissible pastime, of which even the great men of the generation are guilty.

I have come here to arouse your pure hearts, and all the rabbis of the land and those who give out *halachic* decisions in all congregations and villages, to order the sexton to admonish the people not to talk during the services, by announcing, "*Silence is proper during prayer.*" Then they will live to a ripe old age, because the Hebrew initials of *בשעת התפלה יפה שתיקה יפה* form the word old age, alluding to the fact that one who refrains from talking during prayers is granted old age.

Everyone must be zealous in performing this easy repentance. Even if one already spoke, he will achieve forgiveness if, from this day on, he rebukes his friend. One is, indeed, required to rebuke his friend, as is stated in the *Shulchan Aruch* (ch. 124).

Thus, we can understand the verse: (Jer. 2:30): "*In vain have I struck your children. They received no correction.*" I.e. they received no correction and were talking in the synagogue, as mentioned above. Therefore, their sin was great, like that of Cain, who slew his brother and whose sin was too grave to be forgiven. His sin, too, is grave, yet the power of repentance is great, through which he gains grace for himself and for others as well. Your intentional sins which you committed *before* repenting will be counted as merits, and angels of mercy will be created through them, and you will achieve a good and pleasant

life for yourselves and for your children after you, (*Sefer Hagan V'Derech Mosheh*, eighth day).

11) Every time the Accuser accuses the Jews of a sin, the Holy One, Blessed be He, silences him. For example, when the Accuser says that the Jews are thieves, the Holy One, Blessed be He, replies: "Who says that if the other nations had received the Torah, that they would not be greater thieves and robbers than the Jews?" But if the Jews are accused of talking in the synagogue, the Holy One, Blessed be He, has no answer, for we see now that the other nations of the world stand in their houses of worship with awe and reverence. Immediately, the Holy One, Blessed be He, gives the destroyer permission to destroy the world, i.e. the plague, G-d forbid, *dever* in Hebrew. Do not read this as *dever*, plague but as *dibur*, i.e. because he was speaking in the synagogue during prayers, he created destructive angels, who will kill him in times of plague, G-d forbid (*ibid.* eighth day)?

12) Once a pious man was fasting in penance for the length of the *Galut* (exile). From Heaven it was revealed to him in a dream, that the redemption cannot come as long as people do not take pains to respond "Amen" to blessings of the redemption, viz. *המחזיר שכינתו לציון*, Who returns His divine presence to Zion, and *ועל ירושלים*, and upon Jerusalem, recited Friday evenings before *ושמרו* (*ibid.*, eleventh day).

13) The sainted Reb Yayve o.b.m. always preached with loud voice, cries, and supplications, that talking during prayer is the main cause of the length of the exile. He revealed that because of this sin, all the decrees of the year 5408 the Polish Cossack massacres took place during the Chmielnicki uprising) (*Shomer Emunim* p. 256).

14) The behavior of most people during *chazaras hashatz* is improper; the common people, instead of answering "Amen", recite prayers and *maamados*. The scholars, too, discuss the Torah, ...If, G-d forbid, even one of those who hear the blessing does not answer, "Amen", his sin is unforgivable. Moreover, he

leads the common people to sin, since the common people emulate the scholars, who discuss Torah during the *Sh'mone Esray* and they themselves engage in mundane conversations. He, thereby, brings harm upon himself and others, and is like Jeroboam the son of *Nebat*, who sinned and led Israel to sin. The *Shulchan Aruch* requires everyone to rebuke those who converse in the synagogue, for they are sinners, like murderers, and their sin is too grave to forgive (*Hagan V'derech Mosheh*, fifteenth day).

### 15) A TRUE STORY ABOUT ANSWERING AMEN

*HaGaon R'Mordechai Jaffe* was originally the head of the *beth-din*, (a rabbinical court), and a *yeshivah*, in a small town. As the years went by, during which he wrote many learned works, e.g. the ten volumes of *Levush*, evidencing his erudition in *Halachah*, *Aggadah*, and *Kabbalah*) his fame spread throughout Europe. When the rabbinate of the well-known city of Posen became vacant, the community sent a delegation to *R' Mordechai* with a contract, to invite him to fill the post vacated by their previous rabbi. The *gaon* readily accepted the position, but insisted on one condition before being installed as *rav* of Posen.

He explained to the delegates that he was well versed in all *Halachic* subjects except the one pertaining to the fixation of the Jewish calendar, which involves a significant number of astronomical calculations. Since there was no one in Germany, Poland, or any neighboring countries who was knowledgeable in this field, he would have to go to Venice, Italy, to study among the Sephardim, who mastered this subject. After the delegates agreed, he journeyed forthright to Venice, where he spent the next three months studying under the tutelage of *Chacham Aboab*, until he completely mastered the laws governing the planning of the months and the years.

One day, at the end of this period, *R'Mordechai* was sitting in the *beth midrash* engrossed in his learning. Unnoticed, the *chacham's* five year old son entered the study hall with an apple

in his hand. He recited the appropriate *brachah* aloud, after which all assembled responded with "Amen". R' Mordechai, however, being totally immersed in his studies, neglected to answer, "Amen" to the child's *Berachah*. Noticing this, R'Aboab became infuriated and proclaimed a *nidui* (a ban) on R'Mordechai. In accordance with the *dinim of nidui*, R'Mordechai waited a month and then returned to the *chacham* to beg him to revoke the *nidui*. The *chacham* refused to do so. Thereupon, R' Mordechai asked him, "Why is my sin so great that you refuse to revoke the *nidui*?"

The *chacham* replied: "Believe me, I love you more than I love my own children. You should realize, however, that when you failed to answer "Amen" after the child's *berachah*, you were liable to death by the Hand of Heaven. I can only revoke the *nidui* on the condition that in every community you enter, you preach to the public concerning the gravity of neglecting to answer "Amen" after any *berachah*. Also, you must command your children and your grandchildren throughout all generations, to relate the following narrative wherever they go:"

"In Spain, before the Crusades, there were many large Jewish communities in that country. One of these large cities was governed by an anti-Semitic king who could not rest until he expelled the Jews from his kingdom. Were it not for the fact that the rabbi of the city, a truly pious man, had pleased him, he would have surely expelled them. As it was, every time he attempted to expel the Jews, the rabbi would thwart his plans.

"On one occasion, when the king was displeased with the Jews, he decreed expulsion upon them. In an attempt to beg him to repeal his decree, the members of the community approached the rabbi to go before the king to intercede for them. The rabbi readily consented to do so, but since it was time to recite the *mincha* prayers, he told them that he would first pray before leaving for his audience with the king. The people, however, insisted that now was an opportune time to speak to the king and that he could pray afterwards. Reluctantly, the rabbi agreed and accompanied them to the

royal court. As soon as the king saw him, he was immediately impressed and ran towards him, embracing and kissing him. The pious rabbi thought that now the decree would surely be repealed. He, therefore, conversed with the king about other matters, hoping to return to the topic of expulsion.

“While they were talking, a bishop from a distant diocese, entered the throne room and fell to the king’s feet. The rabbi decided that this would be an opportune time to *Daven Minchah*. He retreated to the corner and proceeded to *daven*. Meanwhile, the bishop proceeded to bless him with a lengthy Latin blessing when he concluded his blessing and rose to his feet, he called out to the entire assembly to answer “Amen”. Since, only then would the blessing be fulfilled. The rabbi, not having understood the announcement, and not wanting to interrupt his prayer, did not respond. The bishop asked the assembled whether everyone had answered, and they all replied in the affirmative. Then he asked, “Did the Jew respond to my blessing?” Upon this, they all replied emphatically, “No!” When the bishop heard this, he was infuriated. He tore his hair and cried bitterly, “Woe is to us, for since this Jew did not respond to my blessing, it will not be fulfilled!”

“When the king heard the bishop’s cry, he turned against the rabbi with extreme cruelty. He ordered him to be executed immediately and then eviserated. The king’s servants complied with his wishes and killed the rabbi after torturing him cruelly. Then, they quartered his body and sent his limbs home, wrapped in a cloth. Then the Jews were expelled from the land.

“This rabbi had a friend, also a very pious man, who could not fathom why his friend had been put to death with such cruel tortures. He was sure that *Hashem Yisborach* would not have decreed upon him such a horrible death unless he had committed a grave sin in secret; yet he was just as sure that his pious and, G-d fearing friend had not sinned. He fasted and secluded himself, praying to the Almighty to reveal to him the

reason for his friend's death. One day, while he was sitting in his chamber, his friend appeared to him a vision startling him. "Fear not, my friend," said the deceased rabbi.

"But," queried the living *tzaddik*, "I know that you were a very pious Jew. I beg of you to reveal to me why *Hashem Yisborach* was so angry with you so as to cause you to be put to death in such a horrible manner."

"Be patient, my friend, and I shall explain it to you," replied the deceased rabbi. "The truth of the matter is that I never committed a sin during my entire lifetime. Yet, as our rabbis tell us, *Hashem Yisborach* is meticulous with the righteous and punishes them for any infraction of the law even as fine as a hair. He, therefore, punished me for neglecting a precept which the great majority of the people neglect. Once my small son recited *Hamotzi* and I did not answer "Amen". G-d was patient and did not vent His anger upon me until the incident that occurred in the King's throne room, when I did not respond to the blessing bestowed upon the king, and the king vented his full wrath upon me. Then, the Heavenly tribunal judged me and condemned me for my failure to respond with "Amen" to my son's *berachah*. I, therefore, admonish you to relate this narrative to your children and your grandchildren and to all future generations so that they will be scrupulous in answering "Amen", after every *berachah* they hear." With this, the dead rabbi faded away from his friend's sight.

After relating this narrative to *R' Mordechai Jaffe*, the Sephardic *Chacham*, *R' Aboab*, concluded: "Please do not bear any resentment against me for placing a *cherem* (a ban) upon you. I did it only so that your transgression should be atoned for, that you should have a *kapparah*. Therefore, I am removing it now only on the condition that you repeat this story and to all congregations and communities in which you will have an opportunity to preach."

16) A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF R' MORDECHAI  
 JAFFE, OF BLESSED MEMORY

R'Mordechai Jaffe was born to his father R'Avrohom in Prague in the year 5290. he learned Torah under the tutelage of three teachers: his father, R'Shlomo Luria (known as Maharshal), and R'Moshe Isserles (known as the Ramo). He learned Kabbalah (the secrets of the Torah) from R'Mattisyahu Dulakrat, and the astronomical calculations necessary for preparation of the *luach*, the calendar, from R'Aboab.

His reputation as a *gaon* and a *tzaddik* spread far very quickly. In his youth he was appointed *rosh yeshivah* in the renowned *yeshivah* of Prague. Later he served as *rav* in Grodno and subsequently as *rosh yeshivah* in Lublin. Several years later, he became the chief authority of the Council of the Four Lands (a union of all rabbis of Poland, Austria, Bohemia, and Lithuania). This organization was responsible for many important laws enacted during this era. He was also *rav* in Kremnitz, which he left in the year 5352 to return to Prague, to assume the position of *rav* vacated by the Maharal. Seven years later, in 5359, he was appointed to the rabbinate of Posen and the surrounding regions, again a post vacated by the Maharal.

He was the author of ten important *sefarim*, known as *Levushim*, garments (Levush Hatecheles, Levush Hachur, Levush Ateres Zahav, Levush Habutz V'argomin, Levush Ir Shushan. and five others), based on a *posuk* in Megillas Esther that tells of Mordechai wearing such garments. Since his name was Mordechai, he adopted these titles for his works.

He passed away at the ripe old age of eighty-two, survived by children and sons-in-law *geonim* and *tzaddikim*. The date of his passing was Adar Sheni 3, 5372. May his *zechus* stand us in good stead.

17) Therefore, the holy *Tanna R'Meir* taught that a child begins earning a share in the World to Come, from the time he answers, "Amen." When an infant comes into this world, in a spiritual sense he is like shapeless matter. Hence he cannot



achieve the light of the World-to-Come, for this requires a spiritual garment, (as is mentioned in *Zohar (B'reshis 7b Terumah 101a)* that without a garment it is impossible to enter the Garden of Eden). If, however, the child merits to answer, "Amen", he is endowed with a form and a garment. This *mitzvah* is so great that even without knowledge, the child receives a holy and awesome garment (*Shomer Emunim*, vol. 2, p. 257)

18) *Messiah*, too, receives a great elevation with the response of "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*." Therefore, the *Messiah* stands over them. Undoubtedly, they will be recompensed in the future, to be in the palace of the King *Messiah*, and to learn *Torah* from his mouth, a privilege only certain people achieve. (*Ibid*, 257)

19) By answering "Amen and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" aloud, one can save the wicked from *Gehinnom*. Consequently, we deduce that the more one answers, "Amen, and *Yehay sh'may rabba*", with strength and concentration, the more people he saves; surely the souls of his parents, relatives, and even his own (if he will have to go down to *Gehinnom*), for there is hardly any good deed in the world through which one can be saved from *Gehinnom*, like this (*ibid.*).

20) During *chazaras hashatz*, (the reader's repetition of the *shmoneh esreh*), it is very important to listen attentively and to answer *Amen* after every *berachah*. If there are not ten people listening to the *Chazaras Hashatz*, it is likely that his *berachos* are in vain (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 124:4*)

21) Those who converse during *chazaras hashatz* commit an unforgivable sin, for which they should be castigated. (*ibid.* 7)

22) The *Sefer Mirkeves Shlomo* written by R 'Ishmael Kohen Gadol p. 3a: relates the following awe-inspiring narrative: Said R'Ishmael The heavenly prince of the interior said to me: 'My friend, come....and I will tell you what will happen to the Jews'..... He was crying, with tears running from

his eyes and falling on me. I said to him, "Your exalted Majesty, why are you crying?" He replied: "My friend, come and I will bring you in and show you what is in store for Israel, the holy people". He took me by the hand and brought me into the inner chambers, into the archives and the treasure houses, and he took the clay tablets. He showed me letters written about troubles, each one different from the next. I asked him: "For whom are these?" He replied: "For Israel." I asked him: "Can Israel endure them?" He replied: "Come tomorrow and I will show you troubles different from these". On the morrow he took me into the archives and into the inner chambers and showed me troubles different from the first and worse. Those destined to die, shall die; those destined to be slain by the sword, shall be slain by the sword; those destined to die of hunger, shall die of hunger; and those destined to captivity, shall be captured. I said to him, "Your exalted Majesty, Have the Jews sinned so much?" He replied, "Every day new decrees, more severe than these, are issued. However, when the Jews go into the synagogues and into the *botei midrashos* and answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba,*" we do not allow them to leave the inner chambers and they are forgiven."

23) Beloved brother, you should know that if you stand before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and answer "Amen, and *Yehay sh'mey rabba*" with a strong loud voice and with concentration, that voice rises, splits *mighty boulders*, smashes iron locks, and splits walls up above, according to the power of your spirit and soul. Then, with this power, the *Shechinah* adorns Itself, and gives strength to merciful angels of Israel, and they seize many souls from (the Satan), souls upon whom it has already been decreed captivity, killing, plunder, and all sorts of horrible troubles, G-d forbid, and they were delivered into the hand of the Accuser for captivity and plunder, the Al-mighty, with His mercy, rescues them with miracles and wonders.

Therefore, since you are instrumental in abolishing the evil decrees, and are instrumental in saving a person from death, or

even many people from death, their blood and the blood of their future children depend on you, for you saved them and were instrumental in keeping them alive. Hence, you have a share in all the *mitzvos* performed by these people (*Shomer Emunim* pp. 259-260).

24) Now I will present the well-known story alluded to by the *poskim* who discuss the advantage of reciting the *kaddish* after the death of one's father or mother (See *Darchei Moshe* and glosses of *Ramo, Yoreh Deah* 376). This story is quoted at length in *Or Zarua*, laws of *Shabbos*, ch. 5

It once happened that R' Akiva saw a naked man, black as charcoal, carrying on his head a load of usch weight usually carried by ten porters, and he was running as fast as a horse. R' Akiva called to him to stop, and he did so. He asked him: "Why are you doing such hard work? If you are a slave, working for a master who demands this, I will redeem you from slavery; if you are poor, I will make you wealthy." He replied: "Please, do not detain me lest my supervisors become angry with me." He asked him: "What is this, and what is your occupation?" The man replied, "I am a deceased person. Every day they send me to chop wood, and they burn me with it." He asked him: "My son, what was your work in the world whence you came?" He replied: "I was a tax collector, of the prominent citizens. I would show favoritism to the rich and ill will towards the poor." He asked him, "Haven't you heard from your supervisors whether you have a remedy?" He answered, "Please, do not detain me lest the chastisers be angry with me. I heard them say that there is no remedy. However, I heard from them a thing: if this poor man had a son who would stand up in the congregation and say, ברוך את ה' המברך "*Bless the L-rd who is blessed*", and they would respond after him, ברוך ה' המברך לע-  
ועד ולם ועד *Blessed be the L-rd Who is blessed for ever and ever*, or if he would say "*Yisgadal*" and they would answer "*Yehay sh'mey rabba m'vorach*", they would immediately release him from his punishment. This person, however was not survived by a son. He left his wife pregnant, but did not know whether

she bore a son. And if she bore a son, who will teach him? For I have not a friend in the world.”

At that moment, R' Akiva resolved to go and investigate whether the man's wife had begotten a son, in order to teach him *Torah* and stand him up before the congregation. He said to him: “What is your name?” He replied, “*Akiva*.” What is your wife's name?” “*Shushvina*.” “What is the name of your city?” “*Ludkia*.” Immediately, R' Akiva felt great anguish and went and inquired about him. As soon as he came to that *Ludkia*, he inquired after this man as was told: “May that wicked man's bones be crushed!” He inquired after his wife. They replied: “May her memory be obliterated from the world!” He inquired about the son. They replied: “He is uncircumcised. We did not occupy ourselves even to perform the rite of circumcision upon him.” Thereupon, R' Akiva took the child, circumcised him, and sat the boy before him, yet he would not absorb the *Torah*. R' Akiva fasted forty fasts for his benefit. Finally, a heavenly voice came forth and said, “R' Akiva, go and teach him.” He went and taught him *Torah*, the recitation of *Sh'ma*, *Shmoneh esreh*, and *Birchas Hamazon*. He then took him before the congregation, the child said, “*Borchu ess Hashem ham'vorach*”, to which the congregation responded: “*Borchu Hashem ham'vorach l'olam vo'ed* and “*Yisgadal v'yiskadash sh'may rabba*”.

At that moment, the dead man was immediately released from his torments. He immediately came to R' Akiva in a dream. And said to him: “May it be G-d's will that you achieve contentment in Paradise, for you saved me from the torments of *Gehinnom*.”

Thereupon, R' Akiva opened his mouth and said, “O L-rd, Your Name is forever; O L-rd your remembrance is for all generations.”



A picture of an old age home. An old man is explaining to older men: "With what kind of feelings are you leaving this world, knowing full well that you did not train your children properly, how to behave in respect to berachos and kaddish? Because of this, not only will your soul not be elevated on the day of your Yohrzeit when your children lead the prayers, but, on the contrary, you will be punished for the serious sin of not educating your children concerning the recitation of kaddish and 'Amen' according to halachah." **Boruch Hashem, thank G-d, I taught my children the laws regarding 'Amen' — just like my father taught me... I'm not worried.**

**In Sefer Mora Mikdash, 20;** People who habitually conversed during prayers and during **kaddish**, in addition to receiving their deserved punishment, when their children recite the kaddish for them, not only will they not be helped, but their punishment will be increased, because then, the behavior or their fathers in this matter will be reviewed, and they will be judged again (Kedushath Amen, ch. 7).



A picture of an old age home. An old man is explaining to older men:  
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Reminiscing of a life lived.

In *Zohar* (Chadash, Acharei) we find the following narrative. A man went to the mountains of Ararat, in the accompaniment of two scholars accompanying him. They saw fissures in the ground with fire and smoke emanating therefore. They heard a person crying, "Woe! Woe!" They said, "Surely, here is one of the places of Gehinnom."

One of the travelers fell asleep and dreamt of a man carrying a bundle of thorns on his shoulders while two supervisors of *Gehinnom* were igniting the bundle of thorns, making them to burn and causing him to scream. They said to him: "Two holy angels were sent by the Most High Judge, to Whom they belong. You abandoned the L-rd, and His angels, who guarded you in this world and in the world to come, and you conformed with wicked. Therefore, the thorns will burn you."

The traveler said to the wicked man being tormented in Gehinnom: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am a wicked Jew, and the supervisors of *Gehinnom* do not remind me of my name. They judge me three times a day and twice at night." He said to him: "Do you know the name of your place?" He replied: "Upper Galilee." "Did you leave in the living world?" He said, "I left a son. I was a butcher, and because of the evil deeds that I committed in my early years, they are judging me on my mouth, and hands. The angel who judges me, says to me when passing judgement: "Woe to the one who swore to keep the *Torah* and swore falsely! Woe to the head upon which *tefillin* were never placed, Woe to the hands that used the follies of the world. Woe is to the feet that went to the follies of the world." At the time they were whipping me with disciplinary lashes, I related to them what I had done, and my soul and the angel appointed over my soul, gave a writ for each sin that I had committed. My soul testified together with the angel, and said: '*Through the testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses, the one destined to die will be put to death.*' And concerning this, the Scripture states: '*From the one who lies in your bosom, guard the openings of your mouth.*' This is the soul who testifies against a person at the time of his death."

That traveler awoke from his sleep and went to Upper Galilee. When he came there he asked. "Have you seen a child, the son of a butcher who died at such and such a time?" He was told "The child you inquire about is in the slaughterhouse, and he is as wicked as his father. May all evil occurrences befall him and his nurse who nursed him."

He went to the slaughterhouse where he found the lad playing with the children in the slaughterhouse. He said to him: "Come with me." He went with him. He outfitted him, and engaged a teacher to teach him *Torah* until the lad grew up and learned *T'nach*. He arranged that he should recite the *Haftarah* in the synagogue, that he should pray, until the lad learned *T'nach* and *Mishnah* and he gained more knowledge until they called him "Rabbi."

The dead man, the lad's father who was being judged, came to this scholar in a dream, and said to him: "My master, as much as you have comforted me, may the L-rd comfort you. At the time my son recited the *Haftarah*, they released me from judgment. At the time he led the prayer and recited the *Kaddish*, they completely tore up my sentence. At the time he gained knowledge in *Torah*, they gave me a portion in Paradise. And that is the portion about which they say "A Portion for the World to Come." A portion that each *tzaddik* has by himself. They brought me in with the *tzaddikim* in their *yeshivah*, and when he gained more knowledge, and they called him "Rabbi", they crowned me with the crown with which the *tzaddikim* are crowned. Then they gave me food and drink, which is the pleasure derived from the luster of the *Shechinah*, and any person who derives pleasure from the luster of the *Shechinah*, it is as though he ate and drank. And because of you, my master, I merited all this honor. Fortunate is your lot, for because of this you have an additional portion in this world and in the World to Come." (See *Kav Hayashar* ch. 80, where these two narratives are cited.)

25) When a person becomes angry, an adhesion is formed on his lungs, at which time he is in danger that the lung may



become perforated, G-d forbid. The remedy is to answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", on that day with force. Then the adhesion dissolves from the lung. Because of this, Chazal innovated that we answer, "Amen, and *yehey sh'mey rabba*" many times during the day, so that if one has an adhesion, it will easily dissolve (*Bas Melech*, appended to *Zera Kodesh*).

26) When I was young, I knew a common man, who was accustomed to answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*", aloud and with all his might, and it was apparent to all that the sanctity of the *Shechinah* was hovering over him, for the efficacy of responding with "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*" with strength, is exceedingly high and exalted (Shomer Emunim, II 72b)

27) In *Ohr Tzaddikim* by Maharam Papirash ztl, a disciple of the sainted ARI (*Tikkun Hatefillah* par. 52) we read: "A person requires extreme penitence for neglecting to answer, "Amen" even once upon having heard someone reciting a blessing over a fruit or for any *mitzvah*; surely neglect of the Amen response after the prayer of the leader in the synagogogue, obviously requires extreme penitence; and how much more does one need to repent if he neglected to answer, "Amen, and *Yehey sh'mey rabba*"!

28) In Zohar, we find: Even if one answers, "Amen" if he does not concentrate, it would be better had he not been created. One who hears a blessing from his friend and does not concentrate on "Amen" concerning him Scripture states: (I Sam. 2:30) "*And those who despise me will be humiliated.*" What is his punishment? When he departs this world, a proclamation goes forth and states: "Close all the gates for this person. Let him not enter Paradise, and do not accept him."

Therefore, let everyone place the following proclamation into his *siddur* or on the wall and at the time of prayer, and, he should say this when he is ready to commence his prayers:

“L-rd of the Universe! It is well-known before You that I am but flesh and blood, and I have not the power to concentrate on “Amen” properly. May it be Your Will that my concentration on “Amen” join the concentration of those survivors of the earlier generations, who knew how to concentrate on “Amen” properly.

Then he should say the confession commencing with *Ashamnu* every day, and weep sincerely for all the “Amen”s he neglected to answer (*Ohr Tzaddikim, Tikkun Hatefillah*, 52).

29) We must search in the Gemara, for mild remedies for spiritual maladies, for those individuals who are not strong enough to tolerate the harsh remedies. Now we find that the Rabbis said, “Anyone who answers, ‘Amen, and *Yehey sh’mey rabba*’ with all his might, even if he has a blemish of apostasy, his sins are forgiven.” The *Zohar* deals very stringently with this, stating that one must cause all his limbs to tremble and to answer with a loud voice. Anyone who accustoms himself to do this, is promised that his sins will be forgiven, provided he does not revert to his past folly. Conclusion of *Sefer Chareidim, Mitzvas Hatshuvah*, (Merit of Repentance) ch. 7:

30) It is cited in *Midrash Tanchuma (Sh’mini 18)*: The L-rd will, in the future, give out a proclamation saying: “Anyone who engaged in any *mitzvah* shall come and receive its reward.” Every *mitzvah* has its own gate, and one who was conscientious in answering, “Amen” with all the requirements mentioned above (in this essay), the Holy One, Blessed Be He, will proclaim and say “Open all the gates. And allow to enter therein a righteous people, *shomer emunim*, who answer “Amen”. Fortunate is his lot if he merits to be counted among those who observed answering “Amen”, that all the gates of all the palaces of Paradise will be opened before them, it is as though they had fulfilled the entire Torah and Fortunate is their lot, and the lot of the Holy Jews to whom it is destined and prepared because of the Amen response, a reward that is unachievable by the *seraphim* (angels) of Heaven (*Shomer Emunim*, II, p. 273).

## CHAPTER 6

### AN OUTSTANDING CRY FOR HELP DIRECTED TO RABBONIM, REBBES, ROSH YESHIVAS, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

We appeal also to anyone within whose power has been vested the might of influence over the Jewish community.

They are the ones who are responsible for warning and alarming the people of the great danger. The entire Jewish nation's existence and survival is dependent upon this.

#### I

A holy obligation lies upon our Rabbonim and influential individuals to arouse the people through their lectures to go all out in their effort to teach their children to be quiet during services, especially during the reader's repetition of the *Sh'moneh esreh*, the reading of the Torah, the recitation of the Kaddish, etc., for this is the foundation of Israel's existence in the Diaspora, and their hope for a speedy redemption. Anyone who truly has a fear of G-d must protest bitterly to save his peers from talking at all during the recitation of *Amen*, *yehay sh'mey rabba*, or *Baruch Hashem hamevorach l'olam va'ed*. We find this illustrated in the words of our wise men, of blessed memory, in *Medrosh Yalkut* (Shoftim 12).

"Anyone who finds it within his power to protest but doesn't, is responsible for all the blood spilled in the Jewish nation as is written in the Scriptures: "And you, O son of man, I have made you a prophet for the house of Israel. And you, because you admonished the evil man you have saved your soul (Ez. 3:17-19) -- From here we derive that every Jew is responsible for his fellow Jew. For example, if you ask, "Why were those seventy-two thousand killed in Givas Binyomin?" The members of the Sanhedrin which Moshe and Yehoshua

and Pinchus left, should have girded their loins with ropes of iron, and lifted their clothes above their knees, and gone around to all the cities of Yisroel -- one day to Lochish, one day to Eglon, one day to Hebron, one day to Bethel, and one day to Yerushalaim. They should have taught them "the way of the land" for one year, two, three, four, and five, until the Jewish people became settled in their land, and the name of the Holy one, blessed be He, became sanctified throughout the entire world that He created. However, they did not do this. Rather, once they entered the land, everyone ran to his own vineyard and olive grove and said, "Everything will be allright with me!" so as not to have to work hard. The wise men taught in the Mishnah: "Do less business and involve yourself with Torah. If you have been idle from Torah, there are many idlers opposite you. When they did disgraceful and improper things in Givas Binyomin, the Holy One, Blessed be He, went forth to destroy the entire world, and seventy-two thousand fell. Who killed them? The Sanhedrin that Moshe and Yehoshua and Pinchus left."

## II

**How do the rabbonim and influential individuals not tremble** -- and how can their hair not stand on end when they read this Yalkut? Because the Sanhedrin did not protest, seventy-two thousand were killed in Givas Binyomin. How much more so do we have to protest and alarm the people, however and whenever possible, to save them from all pitfalls.

We learn in *Massecheth Shabbos* 44a: Anyone who has the ability to protest against the members of his household, but does not do so, is seized for the sins of the members of his household; against the people of his city, is seized for the sins of the people of his city; against the whole world, is seized for the sins of the whole world...

See also *Sefer Chareidim*, p. 49: The same applies to one who is silent when a *mitzvah* is neglected. He is alluded to by

the verse: (Deut. 23:15) *And He shall not see any disgraceful thing in you, and return from after you.* This applies even to individuals, and certainly to the rabbis, whose responsibility it is to admonish their congregants. Similarly, the Rabbis stated: The leaders of the people who know (of their sins) and do not protest against them, are punished first. (See *Sefer Va-Yoel Moshe*, by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, o.b.m., Grand Rabbi of Satmar, Introduction p. 12, the clarification of the *mitzvah* to admonish. We may not take into consideration what people will say if the matter pertains to the honor of G-d.)

### III

The theme of this Yalkut can be elucidated in accordance with a quotation from the Chofetz Chaim of blessed memory *Dovor Be'ito*:

One should know that there is a great difference between a person who serves G-d and keeps His *mitzvos* because he truly desires His service and *mitzvos*, and a person who does everything only for the sake of receiving a reward in this world and the next. This is illustrated in the verse: *"Praised is the G-d-fearing man; he desires His Mitzvos extremely."* We derive from this: *"It is the mitzvos that he seeks, not their reward."* Similarly, the verse: *"And you shall return and see the difference between a righteous man and a wicked man; between one who served G-d and one who did not serve Him,"* refers even to the one who fulfills G-d's *Mitzvos* but does so only for his own sake. The distinction between them will be discernable in the world to come.

"How can one tell if his service is genuine! Or if his intent is just for personal gain to receive reward and escape punishment? The sign is: one who is truly G-d's servant desires that everyone should serve G-d and do His will, in order that His Glory may be magnified. Also, if he sees people transgressing His will, he will feel extremely vexed and distressed. Not so is one whose intent is only for his own personal gain. He doesn't care at all if other people transgress

## A PICTURE HOW A TEACHER TALKS TO HIS STUDENTS 83

My dear beloved children, pay strict attention to my words that are spoken to you from the depths of my heart. Remember, dear children, what I speak to you now. No one lives forever. This world is merely a passage-way to the world to come. The many undiscrivable joys are given only to those who have earned it in this world.

Now, my beloved children, I hereby give you the prescription with which you can save yourselves from all kinds of punishment in purgatory and from the claws of the evil angels and through which you can attain the highest elevation in **Gan Eden in a very easy manner.**

The method is as follows: Adopt a firm resolution not to talk during the **davening** (in prayer). Answer beautifully and with deep feeling every "**Amen**" and "**Amen, Yehay Shmay Rabbah**" with the proper devotion. This should be followed at all times at home as well as in the Yeshivah; in fact wherever and whenever you hear a broche (blessing).

I appeal to you my beloved children: do not allow yourselves to be deceived by the **Yetzer Hora** (evil inclination) who tries always to induce you to talk during **davening**, to regard slightly the proper **Amen** response to the broches, craftily arguing that you have time when you will become older to become frum (religious) and answer the brochos.

Many are those who were led astray in this false belief and never achieved the capability to properly respond to the Broches as the law requires us. As a direct result, they lived their lives in foolishness and did not merit the share in the Olam Habori. They are now ending up in the Olam Habori and will not return again. Heaven shivers.

The teacher talks and the two hands are open and begs with tears running on his eyes.

Those who began to respond with meticulous care the "Amen" and "Amen, Yehay Shmay Rabbah" in the proper manner while very young in life as set forth above were fortunate to be able to maintain this practice and decorum into their old age, and afterwards to reap its benefits and enjoy Gan Eden amongst tzadikkim.

Therefore, I appeal to you my dear children, listen to my words so that you, too, may enjoy the everlasting world as well as this one.

G-d's *mitzvos*. He thinks that since he himself is careful not to break the laws of the Torah, and he won't be punished in *Gehinnom*, and that is enough; He isn't at all concerned that others are desecrating His name.

"You should know, my brothers, that this, too, is self-evident. Anyone who says: "Why should I worry about others?" has shown a great indication that his entire service of G-d is only for his own sake; it is in order to bring benefit upon himself in this world or the next, not for G-d's glory. For, were he concerned with His honor, surely he would try his utmost to make sure that *not even a single person would commit any sort of sin*".

#### IV

This matter is also stated in the Torah in the portion of the Sh'ma:

"*And you shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart with all your soul with all your possessions,*" Our sages explain this to mean: "*And you shall love Him*"—you shall make Him be beloved by the people. This is like a king's faithful friend, who tries to make him the beloved of all his subjects, that they should all be faithful to his service with a true heart. The concluding part of the verse: "*with all your heart,*" expresses the same thought: one must try with all his heart and all his soul. "*With all your soul*" means to make Him beloved by the People so that they should not obey their evil desires. "*With all your possessions*" means that one should not try to save money when Heavenly honor is in question, at a time when His service can thus be strengthened in the world.

This idea expressed in the Sifrie: "*And you shall love Hashem your G-d— You shall make him beloved by the people like Abraham your forefather, about whom it is written: 'The souls that he made in Choron.'*"

It is well known that Abraham our forefather was exemplary in the trait of kindness, and thus he brought the people under the fold of the divine presence (*Shechina*). As it is written: "*He*



(Abraham) *planted an orchard in Beersheba, and there he called in the name of Hashem, the G-d of the world*". As translated in the Medrosh: "by means of the orchard, Hashem gained esteem among all the people.

It is also well known that when each person accepted upon himself the fulfillment of the *Torah*, at the time of receiving the *Torah*, not only did he accept it upon himself, but rather, he obligated himself for whenever it is within his power to strengthen the *Torah* observance of others, as well. *At that time, all Jews were made responsible for each other.*

## V

This thought is the very meaning of the conclusion of the *Torah* in the section of (Netzovim): "*All concealed matters are for Hashem our G-d, but the revealed ones are for us and our children, forever, to do all the matters of this Torah,*" and as Rashi explains: "This means that they were made responsible for one another!"

It is for this very reason that the law dictates that every Jew can serve to fulfill someone else's *Mitzvoh* even though he himself has already performed that *Mitzvoh* (e.g. Kiddush).

If someone else is missing the *Mitzvoh* it is as if he himself is missing it also. This law also applies in the case of preventing someone from violating a negative command. Therefore also, in (*Yoreh Deah* 303,) the law states that if one sees that someone else is wearing *Shatnes*, even according to the opinion of the Sages who hold that one doesn't have to remove it from him in the street, because of respect, nevertheless, when that person comes home, the one who saw him must stop him from breaking the law of *Shatnes*. (See also *Yoreh Deah* 373: *Ramah* and *Shach* *ibid*.)

This is also true in regard to a *Torah* scholar; although he doesn't have to testify in a Jewish court of law when it is beneath his dignity, if, by doing so, he can stop someone from transgressing a law, he must testify. The Talmud states

(Shavuot 30b): "If one does not stop someone from transgressing a prohibition when he could have done so, will also be punished." Similarly we find in the *Midrash (Vayikra)*: "Yisroel is like scattered sheep." Just as the habit of sheep is that when one is struck in one of its limbs they all feel it (i.e. that the sheep flock together), and when one is stricken in a foot and must stop, they all stop. So also is *Yisroel*, when one sins they all are punished.

Rabbi *Shimon bar Yochai* taught: "This is analogous to a group of people who were sitting in a boat. One of them took a drill and began to bore in his place. His friends said to him. "Why are you doing this?" He replied: "Why does it bother you? Am I not boring in my place?" They answered him: "Because you are sinking the ship!"

Similarly in regard to our subject. If we will not take efforts or concern to admonish our brothers, by which we can save them from transgressing the prohibition relating to the neglect of answering, "Amen" at the proper times, surely we will be severely punished. When the day of Reckoning comes, we will be punished as severely as if we ourselves had neglected to perform these *mitzvos*. According to this, the most pious person, who stands attentively during the entire service and utters the proper responses at the proper time with the proper concentration, will be judged as having conversed during the entire service and not responding at the proper times. When he will question the heavenly tribunal in amazement: "How am I charged with these sins, when I cannot tolerate them? Did not I pray every day with the proper decorum?" They will reply: "Did you not know that all Jews are responsible for one another? Do you remember that people in your synagogue who stood and conversed during the entire services and never answered, "Amen" while you just stood from afar and didn't see fit to help them in the time of their need, that they should not transgress these prohibitions? Therefore, come and accept your judgment as is befits you."

Dear friends:

Many of you turned to me, complaining about various troubles that occurred to you.

One man told about his wife who fell and so seriously injured her leg that the physicians despaired of her ever walking on it again. In his misery, her husband was stricken by a heart attack, rendering him incapable of taking care of the children. Unfortunately, it was necessary to place the children in various foster institutions. It is, indeed, pitiful to witness the plaintive cries of the children who were deprived of their home at such an early age.

A second man complained of his two children who suffer from polio. Their condition is destroying his health and his savings.

A third individual complained of his aunt's poor health; she suffers from diabetes, as well as heart and kidney disease. Unfortunately, there is hardly a house where there is no suffering.

Now, my friends! Do you know why all this transpires.

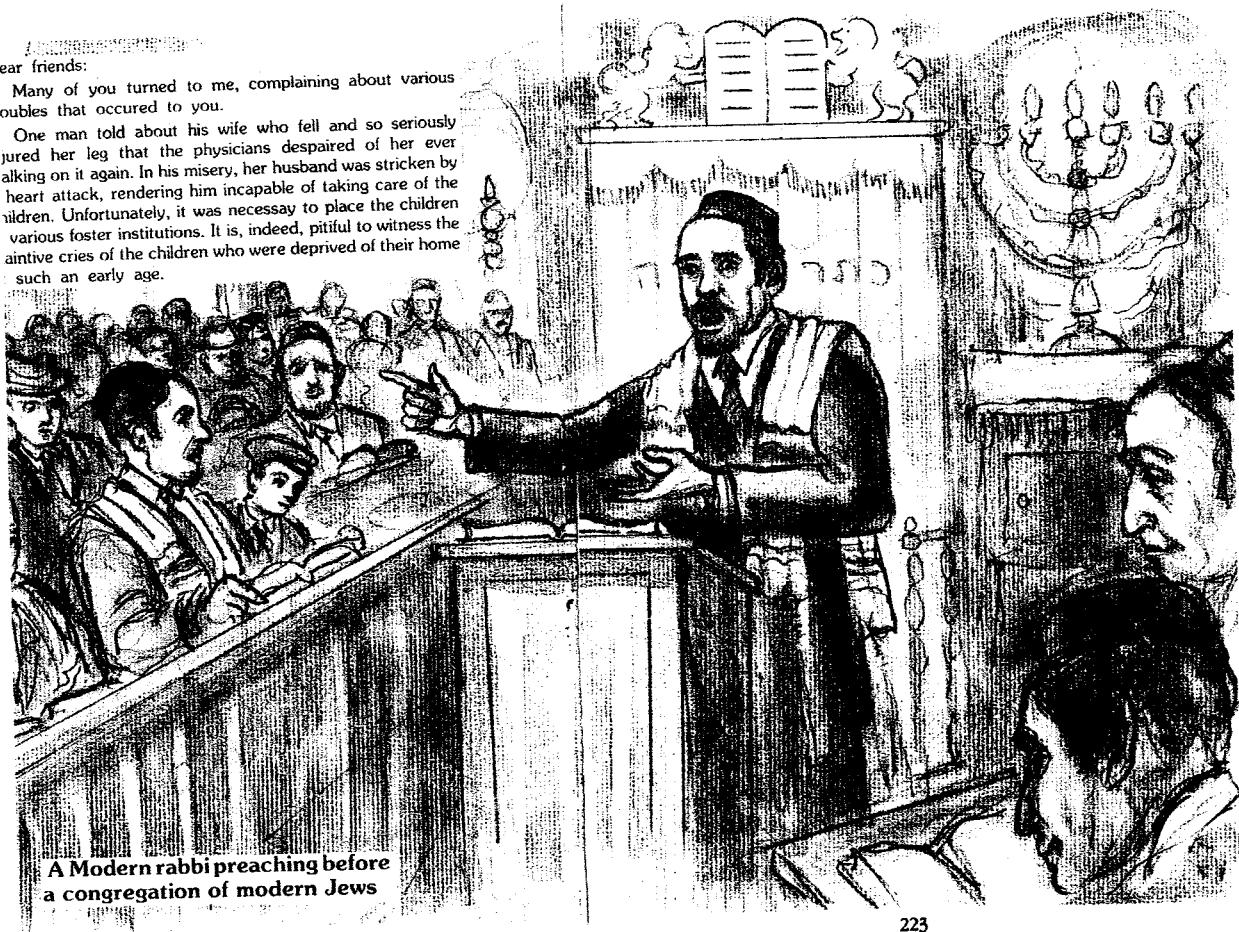
Because we do not answer, *"Amen, and Amen yehe sh'mey rabba"* aloud as we should, with the proper concentration! Only the proper Amen recited causes all harsh decrees to be repealed and as the Sages say, it eliminates all troubles that befall the Jewish people. Therefore, in order to free ourselves from all Jewish troubles and to avoid new ones, everyone must resolve to *davven* (pray) with sincerity and to answer, *"Amen and Amen yehey sh'may rabba"* properly!

Remember! No one knows what tomorrow will bring. Only in the merit of *"Amen, and Amen yehay sh'mey rabba"* can we be safe in exile and be redeemed therefrom.

ear friends:

Many of you turned to me, complaining about various troubles that occurred to you.

One man told about his wife who fell and so seriously injured her leg that the physicians despaired of her ever walking on it again. In his misery, her husband was stricken by heart attack, rendering him incapable of taking care of the children. Unfortunately, it was necessary to place the children in various foster institutions. It is, indeed, pitiful to witness the plaintive cries of the children who were deprived of their home at such an early age.



**A Modern rabbi preaching before a congregation of modern Jews**

## VI

How greatly will he regret this! A mere admonition on his part could have saved him from all these judgments! Let him not fool himself into thinking: "Surely, the judgment will not fall upon me alone, for I'm not the only one in my town." He should know that, analogically, when one co-signs a promissory note for tens of thousands of dollars, even though there are many other co-signers, nevertheless, when the time comes to pay, his portion, while admittedly only a part of the whole, will still be quite a significant sum, and will indeed be a very pressing burden for him to bear. Our case here is similar."

## VII

We have observed in many synagogues, that a large percentage of the worshippers stand around with their cronies during the service and converse, not paying any heed to the necessary responses, (e.g. *Amen, Amen, yehey sh'mey rabba, Baruch Hashem hamevorach leolam vaed.*) Those who have the power to alert their townspeople to observe these *mitzvot* to sanctify G-d's name, but are too lazy to do so, will surely bear the main brunt of the blame. This is illustrated in the *Tonoh Devay Eliyohu*: Anyone who finds it within his power to protest but didn't, to restore people to virtuousness but doesn't, all the blood which is spilled is his own fault, as it is written: *'And you, son of man, I have placed you as a scout for the House of Israel; and you shall hear from my mouth a word, and you shall caution them concerning it, in my saying to the wicked: Surely you shall die. And you did not warn them, etc. He is wicked, he will die bearing his sin, and his blood I shall seek from your hands.'*

In my opinion, this same idea is expressed in the supplication, *Ovinu Malkenu*, in the two requests: "Our Father, our King, blot out and wipe away our transgressions and our sins from before your eyes." And afterwards, "Our father, our

king, with your great mercy, erase all records (lit. 'titles') of our indebtedness."

These verses, one would think are apparently redundant. However, according to our previous explanation, it is to be understood as two *separate* ideas: First, we beg for forgiveness for sins and transgressions that a person commits *on his own*, and then afterwards, we plead for the "records of our indebtedness", which are not our personal sins, but rather, our *collective responsibility* toward others, which is also considered within the records of our indebtedness.

The Chofetz Chaim continues: 'And now, let us explain the reasoning of those who are lax in this aspect, and give a conclusive refutation to their argument.'

There are those who claim that "the number of those in our town who have gone astray has become many; we don't have the power to save them all, so what's the use of our saving a few of them, if we don't have the ability to save them all?" This argument is merely the cunning deception of the Evil Impulse, and is really analogous to a group of people who were going on their way on a bridge, until it collapsed, and all of them fell into the river, and cried: "Help! Help!" They were drowning. There were two men who knew how to swim. One of them ran to the river to save whomever he could from the water. The second one said to him: "Why should you trouble yourself? Did not about twenty people fall in there? Do you think you can save all of them?" He replied to him, "I don't understand your question! Just because I can't save all of them, shall I then hide my eyes from the blood of my brothers who are drowning, and be lax in saving whomever I can save? Even if I save a small number of them, all my toil and trouble will have been worth it. Whoever preserves one Jewish soul, is as if he preserved the entire world!" So also, in relation to our subject: Just because we don't have the ability to save all of them from transgression of negative commands (*Lo Sahseh*) and *Kerisos*, shall we then be completely lax? Rather, whatever is within our ability to do, and to whatever extent we can save them from transgressing

the *mitzvos* of the holy *Torah*, we are obligated to save them, even if we will save only the smallest minority. This is clearly demonstrated by King Solomon: "Whatever your hand will find within your power to do, do!" (*Chofetz Chaim*)

### VIII

Behold, from all the afore-mentioned words of the *Chofetz Chaim*, we learn the obligation and the great *mitzvoh* of admonishing one's fellow man. For the person who truly loves G-d, it is impossible not to cry out bitterly when he sees people rebelling against G-d.

Instead of hallowing *Hashems* Name to praise Him and exalt Him by responding with '*Amen* and *Yehe sh'mey rabba*' with concentration and devotion, and to bring about salvations from all the calamities and disasters that befall our brethren in all countries, and to bring near the end of the Diaspora and the redemption of our people, they engage in idle conversation about the latest news, the financial report, and other unimportant conversations. Sooner or later, one sin brings about another, and they engage in slander, tale-bearing, ridicule of others, and other idle gossip.

How our hearts pain us when we see what many of our people, even those who pray three times a day, keep the *mitzvos* and are particular to daven with a minyan only, still cannot control their urge to *talk*, during these few fateful moments in which he is being judged in Heaven (as is explained in rabbinic literature)! May Heaven save us! Woe to our eyes that behold such! How our hearts will ache! Even the influential people do not arouse the hearts of our brothers throughout the course of their sermons and their words, to admonish our brothers not to bring, Heaven forbid, disaster upon themselves and upon all of the Jews.

### IX

Now we can well understand the *Medrosh Yalkut* with which we began, that because the *Sanhedrin* did not protest, the blame for the seventy-two thousand Jews who were killed in

On the left, a fire is burning. On the right are two hands pushing a Jew and crying, "Into Gehinnom with him!" The Jew, in turn, is pulling his Rabbi, The Jew is crying, "It's not my fault, It's not my fault, the Rabbi is to be blamed, only he is to be blamed. He was very complacent; he showed lack of concern; he never reprimanded me. He never warned me in all these years... THROW HIM INTO GEHINOM... THROW HIM INTO GEHINOM!!!"

The Rabbi, in turn, cries; "Woe is me... Woe is me!!! Why didn't I Warn them not to talk during prayers? How could I have allowed myself to be influenced by the evil. How could I have allowed myself to be influenced by the evil inclination in being complacent in explaining to them the gravity of answering "AMEN?"





The Rabbi, in turn, cries; "Woe is me... Woe is me!! Why didn't I Warn them not to talk during prayers? How could I have allowed myself to be influenced by the evil. How could I have allowed myself to be influenced by the evil inclination in being complacent in explaining to them the gravity of answering "AMEN?"

If he doesn't protest... why shouldn't we talk?

On the left, a fire is burning. On the right, two hands are pushing a Jew and pulling him into Gehinnom with him!" The Jew, in turn, is pulling his Rabbi, The Jew is saying, "it's not my fault, It's not my fault, the Rabbi is to be blamed, only he is to be blamed. He was very complacent; he showed lack of concern; he never warned me. He never warned me in these years... **THROW HIM INTO GHEINOM... THROW HIM INTO GHEINOM!!!**"

Where words fail... pictures succeed.



throw him in the gehinom ... throw him.. him... oy vey eez mihr

*Givas Binyomin* is considered theirs. Every one is responsible for another, and once they didn't protest, the debt was collected from the "co-signer" who assumed responsibility for them. The co-signers in this case were the *Sanhedrin*, who should have gone from city to city and from town to town, crying out and alarming the people of their sins.

The *Sefer Chareidim*, *Tashbetz*, and *Rambam* explain that love for the Almighty includes preaching to others words of inspiration until one instills the love of G-d into the hearts of His creatures, just as a faithful follower of the king, who sincerely loves him, strives to instill love for the king into the hearts of his subjects. How much more should one strive to instill the love for the Supreme King of Kings into the heart of His creatures! Even an insignificant person should consider himself important, and do whatever he is capable of doing, to influence people to love Hashem. One should not refrain from doing this because of humility. If one neglects his task, he will be punished for depriving Hashem our King of His due.

In the ethical work, *Chovoth Halevavoth*, (Duties of the Heart, ch. 6,) we read: ...Similarly, one who only improves himself, merits very little, whereas one who improves himself and many others, gains merits according to the number of merits of all those he recruited for G-d. As our rabbis stated: 'Anyone who leads the public to righteousness; no sin will come through him'. They stated further: 'Moses was righteous and led the public to righteousness; the merit of the public is ascribed to him, as it is said: "*He executed the righteousness of the L-rd, and His ordinances with Israel (Deut. 33:21).*" Scripture says further: "*And for those who reprove it shall be pleasant, and a good blessing shall come upon them (Proverbs 24:25).*" And further, "*The Torah of truth was in his mouth...and he brought back many from sin (Malachi 2:6).*" And still further: "*...and those who lead the public to righteousness are like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3).*" The Creator, therefore, commanded to admonish those who neglect their duties, as it is said: "...you shall reprove your

neighbor(*Leviticus 19:17*).” Our rabbis asked: “How far is the obligation of reproof? Rav said, “Until one is cursed.” Shmuel said, “Until one is beaten (*Arachin 16b*). And it is said: “he who reproves a person after My commandments, will find more favor....(*Prov. 28:23*)” And from them will be his joy and happiness because he rejoices with them not for arrogance or self-aggrandizement.

The following are quotations from rabbinic literature concerning the severity of the punishment of one who refrains from leading the public to righteousness.

Elimelech was a judge among the judges. He was a strong man with many men subordinate to him. He foresaw the distress and the famine, yet he did not admonish the sinners to repent of their evil ways. Then he went from Bethlehem to sojourn in the fields of Moab, to keep himself, his wife and his sons alive during the famine. He did not know that it is the *Torah* that keeps alive those who study it, and not the vanities of this world. Elimelech was an esteemed man, as it is stated; “*And a man (Ish) went from Bethlehem, Judah (Ruth 1:1)*.” Now, only an esteemed person is referred to as (*ish*) “a man”. Now, Elimelech was a revered person, held in high esteem in his city, and he went to save his life and the lives of the members of his household, and did not trouble himself with communal matters, whereas he was an esteemed person whom the people would believe when he would speak to them to bring them back from their evil ways and to exhort them to repent. Therefore, what is mentioned later befell him: (*Ibid. 3*), viz. “*And Elimelech, Medrash Tanchuma, parashath Sh’mini 9 Naomi’s husband, died, and Machlon and Chilyon died too.*”

(See also *Sanhedrin 20a*).

In the *Talmud* we find the following story: “Once *R’ Eleazer ben Azaryah’s* cow went out on the Sabbath with a strap between its horns, and his teeth became black from his numerous fasts.” Said *R’ Idi of Chutriah*, “It was really his wife who went out with an adornment prohibited on the Sabbath... In Bablyonia they related that it was his neighbor. Now, is one

punished for his neighbor?" Said R'Kiris of Yadma, "Yes! To teach you that anyone who is capable of protesting and does not protest, is blamed for that sin." (Yerushalmi, Shabbos 52b, Betzah 23a).

With reference to the great reward of one who leads the public to righteousness we find the following:

*Now there was one man from Ramathaim-Zophim... whose name was Elkanah... And that man would go up from his city from time to time to prostrate himself and to sacrifice to the L-rd...." (I Sam. 1:1)*

*Elkanah would make a pilgrimage to Shiloh four times a year, three as required by the Torah, and one that he had taken upon himself voluntarily. Elkanah would go up, together with his wife, children, household members, brothers, sisters, and all his kin. He said to them, "Learn the way of divine worship from the Canaanites and from the pagans, who made a way of worship for their idols even though they are worthless and empty. How much more must you make a way of worship and go up before the ark of the covenant of the L-rd, Who is a living and existing G-d, Whose Name is blessed forever and ever! He instructed all of them to go up with him. When they would go up with him on their pilgrimage, they would lodge in the city's street, where they would gather, men separately and women separately, so that one man would speak with another man and one woman with another woman, and an adult with a child, and the city would become aroused. The towns people would ask them: "Where are you going?" And they would reply: "To the house of G-d in Shiloh, from which Torah and good deeds emanate. Now, why won't you come with us and we will go together?" Immediately tears would trickle from the towns peoples eyes, and they would answer, "We will go up with you."*

*And so he would say to them another time, until the following year five households went up with him, and the next year ten households went up with him. In the year after that, they were all aroused to make the pilgrimage, and approximately sixty households went up with him. The route he took one year he*

would not take the next year, until all Israel would be making the pilgrimage, and *Elkanah* would use their good deeds to outweigh their bad deeds. He trained them to perform *mitzvot*, and many were led to righteousness through him. The L-rd who searches the heart said to *Elkanah*, "You caused the good deeds of all Israel to outweigh their bad deeds, you trained them to perform *mitzvot*, and many were led to righteousness through you. I will grant that from you shall come forth a son who will cause Israel's good deeds to outweigh their bad deeds, and who will train them to perform *mizvot*. From here we learn that as a reward for *Elkanah's* deed, he was granted the son Samuel. (*Tana De'vei Eliyahu Rabba*, ch. 8)

In the holy *Zohar*, (Gen. p. 79,) it is stated: "And the souls they had made in Charan (Gen. 12:5)." Said R'Abba, "How many people went with him? If you say that they all went with him." Rabbi Abba said, since it says: 'V'eth hanefesh' (and with the souls), this is to include the merit of all the souls that went with him, for anyone who leads another to righteousness, that merit is attributed to him and does not leave him. How do we know this? For it says: "v'eth hanefesh..." the merit of those souls went along with Abraham (See *Tana D'vei Eliyahu Rabba* ch. 25).

Also the *Zohar*, (*Vayakhel* p. 343), citing the same verse, stated as follows: 'Come and see, one who pities a poor person and refreshes his spirit - the Al-Mighty considers for him as though he created his soul. For this reason, Abraham, who took pity on the entire world, is regarded by the Al-mighty as though he created them, as it is written: "and the souls they made in Choron"'.

The *Zohar Terumah* p. 129 explains at length — that the reward of one who leads others to righteousness and brings them near to G-d's worship is limitless, for an announcement goes forth with a loud clamor and declares, "Heavenly beings and earthlings, bear witness! Who is it who creates souls and leads the sinners to righteousness? It is he, upon whose head the royal crown lies. He is now fit to ascend before the King, for

the King and the Queen are asking about him. Then two witnesses come forth and testify and state: "We testify concerning this certain person. Fortunate is his lot, for his father will be remembered for good for his sake, for he created and rejuvenated the souls of the sinners who were led astray." Through this, the L-rd is honored with a complete joy. At that time, The L-rd motions to one officer who is the treasurer of the images of the righteous..., and he brings the image of that person who corrected the souls of the sinners, to stand before the King and the Queen. At that time there is no *tzaddik* whose image is not engraved in the heavenly spheres under the trust of that officer. They deliver into his hand the seventy keys of all the treasures of his Master. Then the King blesses his image with all the blessings that He blessed Abraham when he corrected the souls of the sinners, and was gaining converts and bringing them under the wings of the *Shechinah*.. The Al-Mighty hints to the four heavenly camps, upon which they proceed to take that image into the seventy hidden worlds not merited by any other person, except for those who correct the souls of sinners. Were people to know how much good, and merit and purity were in store for them if they were worthy, they would go after them and pursue them as one pursues life. While the poor bring merit to the people who help them accruing for them heavenly treasures, he still does not compare to one who leads the sinners to righteousness. What is the difference between the two? It is but that one who is engaged in helping the poor, grants life to his soul and enables him to live, granting him because of this many good things in this world. Whereas, one who is engaged with correcting the way of sinners receives more. He is instrumental that evil be subjugated and no longer capable of exerting any power and he removes it from its dominion. He is instrumental in that the Al-Mighty ascends upon His Glorious Throne. He creates another soul for the sinner. How fortunate is his lot! (*Ohr Tzaddikim* ch. 5)

Therefore, we call out to the Jewish leaders and influential lay persons: *Have mercy and pity on your brothers, who are*

being massacred spiritually by neglecting to properly respond with AMEN and YEHEY SH'MEY RABBA, and instead, engage in idle conversation. If, Heaven forbid, an enemy attacker came to kill the residents of your city, would you just sit tranquilly and securely, and not strive with valor to save your brothers? Behold, this attacking enemy, the evil impulse, has come and is killing souls and is causing, Heaven forbid, calamity to your brothers, by causing them to neglect to answer "Amen"! Why are we silent? Why don't we cry out bitterly, to save brothers from spiritual massacre?

Have pity and spare your brothers, and save their souls! Restore the crown of holiness of the Jewish people to its original shine!

### X

Let us please remember that prior to World War II in which, due to our many sins, the vast majority of the holy communities in the world succumbed to martyrdom, all the holy communities in every land were imbued with the desire for sanctity of the synagogues and *botei midrashim*. Everywhere the *rabbonim* would see to it that every one of their community would follow the *Shulchan Aruch* during the entire service and during the Torah reading, and they would keep close watch on this matter. Let the Jews who emigrated from Central Europe open their diaries and try to remind themselves how they behaved there, how they behaved in the *yeshivoth* when they learned under the tutelage of their great *roshei yeshivoth*. How is it possible that they retrogressed to such an extent in so short a period of forty years? However, now that through our many sins, after the destruction of the major structure of Orthodox Jewry, only a few scattered *mitzvo* observers remain from the many, the obligation is all the greater to save the few remaining survivors from the Destroyer; to banish him from rising up again, Heaven forbid, and engulfing the few that are left.

Therefore, I propose and request: Return, please, the crown of the holiness of Yisrael (i.e Jewry) to its prior glory!

*Instruct, your brothers to guard their souls and those of their children, that they should be protected from any pitfalls concerning any idle conversation during prayer. For this, we will merit that His great name will be magnified and sanctified, in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of the entire house of Yisroel, when the righteous redeemer will come to Zion quickly in our days. Amen.*

## CHAPTER 7

**The following sermon was delivered by Rabbi Moshe Stern, Debrecyner Rav Shlita on the second day of Sukkoth 5741 concerning the sin of idle chatter during prayers. The following is a condensation of that sermon, which will, G-d willing, be published in its entirety sometime in the near future.**

1) There is much evidence in both Talmuds as well as in the codes of Jewish Law, that the obligation to admonish lies not only on rabbis and leaders of congregations but on every individual. Indeed, anyone who sees his neighbor committing a sin is required to rebuke him for it.

We find in the (*Baba Bathra* 10b) that Rav Yosef the son of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, ascended to heaven, where he saw an inverted world, those who belonged on top were on the bottom and those who belonged on the bottom were on top. Tosfos relates that R'Yehoshua ben Levi saw Rav Yehuda Sh'muel obtaining a higher honor than his father. This occurred because Rav Yehudah rebuked Shumuel, his master sitting before Rav Yehuda, his master, (*Shabbos* 55a) when a woman came and complained before him, and he did not pay any heed to her. Rav Yehudah said to him, "Does the master not believe in the verse: 'He who stuffs up his ear from listening to the poor...?'" How frightening it is to learn that one can gain a higher place in Paradise for rebuking his rabbi, who will lose his place for necessitating such a rebuke.



2) The Talmud expounds the verse: "And I will be to them as a minor sanctuary", as referring to synagogues and *bottei midrashim* in Babylonia (Megillah 29a). R'Eleazer Hakappar says: The synagogues and *bottei midrashim* of Babylonia are destined to be transplanted in Eretz Yisrael.

Maharsha comments that with this statement we are able to understand Psalm 122, which reads: *A Song of Ascents, of David. I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the L-rd. Our feet were standing in your gates, O Jerusalem."* This Psalm was composed in reference to the Diaspora. The Psalmist states, "*I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go the House of the L-rd,'* i.e. let us go to the synagogue, where it will be regarded as though our feet are standing in the Temple in Jerusalem. I, therefore, rejoiced in going to the synagogue as though I were going to the Temple in Jerusalem."

*The built up Jerusalem is like a city joined together.* (Psalms) This can be explained according to the Midrash that states that in the Messianic era the Temple will be as large as Jerusalem, and Jerusalem will be as large as the entire Eretz Yisrael. Concerning this, the Psalmist states that the Temple will be so large because the rebuilt Jerusalem of the future, will have joined to it all the places of the synagogues that were in this world. Accordingly, now that I am in exile, when I stand in a synagogue, I am actually standing in the Temple of the future. In this vein, the Rabbis said (*Berachoth 7a*) How do we know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, prays? For it is written: *And I shall cause them to rejoice in My House of prayer.* It does not say: In their house of prayer, but in Mine, in the house where G-d prays. As the Talmud mentions (*ibid*) R'Yishmael the high priest heard the Holy One, Blessed Be He, praying, "May it be My will that My mercies will overcome My wrath..." The verse concludes: "*And I shall cause them to rejoice in My House of Prayer,*" i.e. in the Temple that is destined to be in Eretz Yisrael, which is now in exile. *For My house will be called a*

*House of Prayer for all nations.* These are the synagogues in the lands of the nations, which are destined to be transplanted in Eretz Yisroel and to be augmented to the Temple.

3) We learn from the holy words of *Maharsha* that one who prays in a synagogue in the Diaspora with the proper reverence, as Scripture demands, *And you shall fear My Sanctuary*, is actually praying in the Holy Temple on the holy soil of Jerusalem, and his prayers ascend and penetrate the heavens.

We find a similar dissertation in *Sefer Yereim* (Mitzvah 324): *And you shall fear your G-d.* Scripture commands us that when a person enters the Temple, synagogue or *beis midrash*, that he behave with awe and respect, as is written in the *parsha B'har Sinai* (Lev. 26): "*My Sabbaths you shall observe and My sanctuary you shall fear*". We learn in *Yevamoth* (6b) *And My sanctuary you shall fear*" You must not fear the sanctuary but the One Who warned concerning the sanctuary, ie. the Holy One, Blessed be He. We find that the synagogue and the *beis midrash* are called minor sanctuaries, as we learned in *Torath Kohanim: (Bechukothai)* "*And I will lay waste your sanctuaries this includes synagogues and bottei midrashim.*"

We learned too (*Megillah 29a*) "*And I will be to them as a minor sanctuary*" - Said R'Yochanan: These are the synagogues and *bottei midrashim* in Babylonia. Thus we deduce that *when the Torah commanded to fear the sanctuaries, synagogues and bottei midrashim* are included. This is the ruling of other *rishonim*, as explained in *Semag* (Negative commandment 164) and *Semak* (Commandment 6). Likewise, as regards demolishing a synagogue, the one who removes a stone from a synagogue violates the negative commandment, "*You shall not do so to the L-rd your G-d*" (*Beth Yosef ch. 151 quoting Mordechai*). See also *Responsa Chatham Sofer Orach Chaim 32, Likutim 6, Orach Chaim 33, Yoreh Deah 260.* Who is it who fears G-d's word and truly

believes in the words of the Sages of blessed memory, and whose heart will not melt and whose knees will not knock against each other with fear and awe upon entering the synagogue to pray before the Creator of the Universe and to pour out his heart in prayer with humility, awe, and fear? How will he not be filled with wrath at those who engage in idle conversation during *chazaras hashatz* and during the Torah reading, who desigrate the sanctity of the synagogue and transgress the commandment of fearing the sanctuary in its full sense? These people have no pity on their souls, nor do they have pity on their wives' and children's souls, as evidenced by the fact that they bring harm upon them by desecrating the Temple itself, for one who stands in prayer in the synagogue is virtually standing in prayer in the Temple in Jerusalem, when it was standing in the Holy City. Similarly, one who exhibits levity in a synagogue and transgresses an explicit law of the *Shulchan Aruch*, sins and causes others to sin in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, in the Temple of G-d. (See Rambam, *Beth Hachemirah* 7:7.) Not only does he himself commit a serious transgression, but he is responsible for the sins committed by others. The Torah states "(Lev. 19:14):...and before a blind person you shall not place a stumbling block..." Our rabbis o.b.m. interpret this to mean that we may not cause anyone to stumble into sin. Many *poskim* rule that even if one causes his fellow to stumble into a rabbinical transgression, he is guilty of transgressing a Biblical precept. Moreover, many *poskim* rule that one who engages in idle conversation during prayer or during the Torah reading in G-d's sanctuary which is situated opposite the heavenly Temple or in the synagogue which is situated opposite the synagogue in heaven (as is stated in the Holy Zohar (*Raya Meheimna, Beshallah*), transgressed the Biblical precept of fearing the Sanctuary. Thus, one who converses with his friend during prayer in the synagogue is guilty of a Biblical transgression according to *all* halachic authorities. The unbiased who do not seek ways and means of

justifying their deeds will surely admit that this is true. See (Rambam, *Tefillah* 11:6, 11 based on *Megillah* 28 and will convince you of the validity of my statement.

4) We learn in *Midrash Rabba (Kee Savo 6)*: Said R'Yehoshua ben Levi: Everyone who enters the synagogues and *bottei midrashim* in this world will merit to enter the synagogues and *bottei midrashim* in the World to Come. Whence is this deduced? From the verse: *Fortunate are those who sit in Your House; they will continue to praise You forever* (Psalms 84:5)

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It is self-evident that one who behaved disrespectfully in the synagogue or the *beis midrash* through his idle chatter during *chazaras hashatz* or Torah reading will not be given the privilege to enter the synagogues and *bottei midrashim* in the World to Come in order to repeat his folly. Imagine one's shame and disgrace when he will be forced to stand outside the heavenly synagogues and to bear the stigma of a sinner and an accomplice to others' sins. They will say to him, "You don't belong here; here everyone must concentrate solely on prayer and the reading of the Torah." He will seek another synagogue hoping to gain admittance. Undoubtedly, he will find no such synagogue in the World to Come. Since no place will accept him, he will be compelled to remain outside with his cronies with whom he chatted and mocked and jeered at those who controlled themselves and sat in the synagogue with reverence and awe, listening attentively to the prayer of the (shatz) prayer leader and to the Torah reading. They will be objects of eternal disgrace. They will cry out in pain and heartache, yet no one will rescue them from their predicament.

Remember, it is not too late; repentance will still help. The Almighty, with His infinite mercy and kindness, will accept you and open the gates of mercy and kindness for you. You still have a chance to stand in the front row of the synagogue of the Future. Break your bad habit of doing what is displeasing to the Almighty. Do not raise up your hand against the sanctity of the synagogue and the *beis midrash*. Where the penitent will merit to stand, i.e. in the first row of the synagogue of the Future, even the completely righteous will not merit to stand, for the reward is given according to the pain involved. Since you have to work hard to subdue your strong temptation, you will be privileged to benefit of the great reward of standing near the holy Schechinah.

5) The aforementioned quotation from *Maharsha* coincides with his explanation of the Talmud in *Berachoth* 8a: Said Reish Lakish (*Ein Yaakov*: Rabbi Levi): Anyone who has a synagogue in his city and does not enter it is called a bad neighbor, as it is said: (Jeremiah 12) *So says the L-rd: Concerning all My bad neighbors who touch the inheritance that I have given My people Israel as an inheritance...* Moreover, he brings about exile for himself and his children, as it is said: (*ibid.*) *...behold I will exile them from their land, and the House of Judah will I exile from among them.*

People said to Rabbi Yochanan, 'There are old people in Babylonia.' He wondered and said, 'Scripture states (Deut. 11): *'In order that your days and the days of your children be lengthened.'* This implies that outside the Holy Land one cannot reach an advanced age." When they told him that they go to the synagogue early and stay there until late, he said, "That is what helped them." As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to his son, "Go early and stay late in the synagogue, so that you will attain longevity." Said Rabbi Acha, the son of Rabbi Chanina: What is the Scriptural verse that supports this? (Prov. 8:34) *Fortunate is the man who heeds Me, to hurry to My doors every day, to guard the doorposts of My doorways.* Immediately following this, it is written: *For he who finds Me has found life.*

Upon this passage, *Maharsha* comments:

This can be explained in conjunction with the passage in *Megillah* 29a: The synagogues and *bottei midrashim* in Babylonia are destined to be transplanted in the Holy Land. Concerning this the Talmud states here that "My bad neighbors who touch the inheritance...." those who do not attend the synagogue are involved with the inheritance the L-rd has granted to His people Israel, since those synagogues will eventually be transplanted in the Holy Land, the inheritance that G-d has granted His people. The Talmud proceeds to relate that it was reported to R' Yochanan that there are old people in Babylonia, and the Talmud concludes that their longevity was due to their diligent attendance in the synagogues. Since the synagogues will eventually be transplanted in Eretz Yisrael, they are already considered as part of Eretz Yisrael, and the promise of longevity in Eretz Yisrael applies to them as well. The Talmud further quotes the verse, "...to hurry to My doors every day, to guard the doorposts of my doorways." This apparently redundant verse is taken to mean that one should hurry to the synagogue early in the morning and remain there until late like a watchman who guards the doorposts of the synagogue. The following verse: "*For he who finds Me has found life,*" alludes to the maxim that the Most Holy, Blessed be He, is found in the synagogue. Hence, we deduce that one who attends the synagogue regularly and stays there until late studying Torah is regarded as though he were in the Holy Land even though he is in Babylonia, and he is blessed with longevity.

We find, thus, the *Maharshas* dictum that anyone who stands in a synagogue in prayer in the Diaspora regarded as though he were standing on the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael, and thereby merits long life for himself and his children as stated in Scripture.

It is painful to be aware that one who engages in idle conversation in the synagogue actually destroys this promise with his own hands; not only for himself but for his children as well. Through this idle conversation, he degrades the sanctity of the holy place, and as far as he is concerned, the sanctity no longer exists, thus converting a holy place into an unholy one, converting the soil of the Holy Land into soil of the Diaspora (as cited in the *Semak* and *Chatham Sofer*), and he loses the great blessing of long life for himself and all succeeding generations to posterity. Is there any greater folly than this?

The rabbis (*Chagigah* 4a) delineate an imbecile as one who destroys what is given to him. Here we have a person who is granted the elixir of long life, and he destroys it with his own hands! Can there be a more cruel person or a worse murderer than one who shortens the lives of his own sons and daughters?

If one forfeits his own years through the sin of light-headed behavior in the synagogue and by neglecting to respond to the blessings and *kaddish* recited by the reader, and brings retribution upon himself for the momentary and fleeting pleasure of listening to idle chatter from his friend in the synagogue, who can stop him from shedding his own blood? Even this is prohibited by the *Torah*. How much more so is it forbidden for one to bring harm upon his children by forfeiting the divine blessing of long life for them? This represents unfathomable cruelty, to such an extent that the worshippers of the synagogue are obliged to stand up against him lest he brings misfortune upon them. They are literally obligated to expel him from the synagogue if he disregards their warnings two or three times. He is tantamount to one who pursues another with intent to kill him. According to *halachah*, his life is forfeit. There is no alternative to rescue the worshippers of the synagogue from this evil, unscrupulous man, except to evict him bodily and to expel him from the house of worship in disgrace and shame.

I once approached a chronic offender and rebuked him privately for his constant prattle. Realizing, that I was

unsuccessful in all my attempts to influence him, I finally told him that according to the *halachah*, he would be performing a great *mitzvah* if he would stay home and pray privately rather than attend the synagogue, where his prayer is regarded an abomination and not counted for prayer at all. I proceeded to tell him that if, after his death, he would be taken to task by the Heavenly Tribunal (Bais Din shel Ma'Loth) for not attending synagogue, I would shoulder the blame for this. All he need say is that I instructed him to stay home. He became very ashamed, literally turned red (as his sins), and became furious. Despite the rough treatment he had received and his reaction to it, he persisted in attending the synagogue for the next two or three weeks. Finally, he stopped attending my synagogue. Thank G-d I accomplished my goal. I recited the blessing, "Blessed be He Who freed me from the punishment of this one." I was indeed very happy, since his deeds actually caused me much anguish.

Just today we were shocked to hear that a young man of twenty two years of age, who had recently become engaged to be married, fell suddenly into a coma. The doctors have despaired of saving him. (Ed. note - while going to press, the young man is no longer among the living.) Also, very recently a thirteen year old girl became ill during class. Her teacher sent her home at three p.m. At six p.m., she was no longer alive. Woe is to us that such tragic incidents occur in our times! What is the reason for such tragedies?

We hear of many such misfortunes every day. One's hair can actually stand on end. Who knows what causes all this? The Almighty is not, G-d forbid, suspected of bringing trouble upon anyone without due cause. Who knows whether, G-d forbid, the sin of degrading the sanctuaries has brought this about, and whether intentionally destroying G-d's blessing of long life has not caused it? The Almighty in His manifold mercy and kindness, has given us a blessing of longevity, and we cruelly nullify it for the foolish pleasure of chattering in the synagogue. Perhaps, G-d forbid, this is the cause of all the



sickness. Since we have allowed *fools* to trample on the sanctity of the synagogues and reduce them to unholy places of the Diaspora instead of the holy places they are intended to be, the blessing of longevity no longer applies to them. Therefore, our prayers for long life are no longer acceptable.

(Note that I am not who calls them fools, but our great rabbi, the author of *Turei Zahav (Orach Chaim 55:4)* who calls them fools and declares that they may not be counted to a minyan.) We have not raised our voices in protest against them, neither have we tried to stop them as is required by the *Torah*, to disgrace them in public according to the decision of the *gaon*, the author of "*Vovei Haamudim*" (*Amud Ho'avodah* 10): "Through our many sins, this has become an insurmountable obstacle, that we cannot admonish the people, and they feel that everything is permissible. Woe is to their souls! How can their prayers ascend when they are soiled with all sorts of transgressions? An accuser cannot become a defender. It is, therefore, proper for every community where G-d's word is heeded, to appoint people to supervise with threats, those who talk during prayers, and to embarrass them in public. Thereby, the glory of the L-rd will appear on the earth, and the people will listen and fear and no longer commit any evil. They will control their tongues and no longer engage in mundane conversations in the synagogue.

With fear and fright we confront the following Talmudic passage (*Shabbos 32a*): *Rabbi Ishmael the son of Eleazer says: 'Because of two sins ignorant people die: because they call the Holy Ark a closet, and because they call the synagogue a communal house'.*

*Maharsha* comments that the Hebrew for synagogue is *beis knesses*, lit. a house of gathering. This could mean a house of gathering for the people only, or a house of gathering for the people in conjunction with G-d. *Beis am*, however, means just what it says, a communal, house of the people, excluding G-d entirely.

Now, let us reflect upon his commentary. If calling the synagogue *beis am* brings in its wake such a terrible punishment that it caused death to the ignorant folk, how much more punishment will befall the people who behave in the synagogue like in a communal house in which G-d has no part.

The Psalmist states: (55:1) *In the House of G-d we will go with feeling*, i.e. with feeling for the sanctity of the site, reverence for His glory which fills the earth, and which has been concentrated into the four walls of the synagogue. One must feel that he is entering the house of the Divine King of the world; a person is obliged to enter therein with awe. Indeed, everything depends on a person's feeling upon entering the synagogue. If he enters with a feeling of holiness, realizing that this is a house of assembly in the name of Heaven, where the Shechinah dwells, all his movements and thoughts while in the synagogue will be only to fulfill the will of the Almighty; to beware of doing anything displeasing to Him. If, however, when one enters the synagogue and steps over the threshold, it seems to him that he is entering a community center, to meet his friend and converse with him, and "also" to pray there, then all his behavior will be in this vein from the time he enters. Even the reader who stands before the *omud* to commence the services or to recite *pesukei d'zimra*, will not commence to pray immediately, but will seize the opportunity to talk to his friend, for he has come to a community center to meet his friends. Compare this action to one who enters the synagogue with *feeling*, immediately washing his hands, enwrapping himself in his *tallis*, putting on his *tefilln*, taking a *siddur*, and commencing to pray; conducting himself during the entire service, with a sincere feeling of sanctity.

9) The *Semak* - (*Sefer Mitzvoth Katan* - (Mitzvah 11): states:

If so we are to those who engage in idle talk or who behave with laughter and levity in the synagogue during services, and deprive their children of a share in the World to Come. We should deduce by a fortiori from the pagans who do not believe

in G-d and stand like mutes in their temples of idolatry; surely we who stand before the Supreme King of Kings, the Most Holy, Blessed be He must act with similar reverence. We find in the Midrash the Talmud, our forefathers told us, and we have seen with our own eyes that many synagogues have been converted to churches because people behaved there with levity. Similarly, the prophet says: (Jer. 7:11): "*Has this house become a den of the licentious?*" Therefore, let everyone strive to instill the fear of G-d in his heart, and not to talk at least when the reader recites the *sh'moneh esray*. See also *Magen Avraham* 151:1.

The *Semak* apparently saw with his own eyes how synagogues and *bottei midrashim* were converted into churches because of the sin of idle conversation. Understandably these synagogues that have been converted into churches will surely not be transplanted in Eretz Yisrael and will not be augmented to the great Temple whose size will be equal that of present day Jerusalem. Who can take upon himself the responsibility of preventing a synagogue from being transplanted in Eretz Yisrael, and G-d forbid, of causing it to be converted into a church?

10) The following is a quotation from *Chatham Sofer* (sermons p. 309):

...the reason for all this is that the Al-Mighty in His mercy and kindness, left us a minor sanctuary, the synagogue and the *beis midrash*. If we behave with reverence for their sanctity, they are destined to be transplanted in Eretz Yisrael (*Megillah* 29a), and therefore, even now they possess the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael; The prayers, ascending from them through the gate of heaven. If, however, G-d forbid, we debase them and engage in idle talk within their walls, the breath we exhale when talking wasteful words is unclean, and the Heavenly prince of

the lands outside of Eretz Yisrael; becomes enwrapped in it, dominates over the synagogue, receives all the prayers, and delivers them to the forces of contamination. May the All merciful save us. Thus he renders those who have offered up these prayers as idolators.

11) In conclusion, I will relate a frightful story which I myself witnessed and frightens me whenever reminded thereof.

Once, my father o.b.m. who sanctified G-d's name when killed by the cursed Nazis on the twenty-sixth of Sivan 5704, delivered a fiery sermon one Sabbath concerning answering "Amen" and "Amen Yehey shmei rabba". In this sermon, he quoted a statement from Rabbi Moshe **Kordivero** o.b.m., that the initials of the expression silence is proper during the prayer services from the Hebrew word  *, old age*, implying that one who is conscientious in this matter and answers "Amen" and "Amen yehei shmei rabba" will reach old age. He stated further that the converse is likewise true, (ie. one who is not quiet during prayer and does not make the proper responses will not attain old age); However he refrained from expressing this thought explicitly.

The following morning, there was a tumult in the synagogue. One of those who had heard the sermon had dreamed that he was standing before the Heavenly Tribunal, and had received an unfavorable verdict. He supplicated the Tribunal to grant him a reprieve since he was still young. Moreover, he questioned the severity of the punishment that was to be inflicted upon him. The Tribunal replied that he had conversed during prayers and had failed to answer "Amen" and "Amen yehei shmei rabba". He replied that he was unaware of the stringency of the prohibition. Thereupon, one of the judges became angry with him and retorted, "But this very Shabbos your rabbi delivered a sermon on this topic and said that one who is quiet in the synagogue and answers "Amen" and "Amen, yehei shmei rabba" merits old age, and that the opposite is also true, at which time you yourself were personally present. Now,

how do you say that you were unaware of the stringency of the matter? He then promised the Heavenly Tribunal that he would go and tell all the members of his congregation all that had happened to him, and that he would observe conscientiously everything the rabbi had said. He was then exonerated by the Heavenly Tribunal. The entire congregation after hearing this report, was moved by this frightening incident.

12) I am confident that, although many of our Orthodox brethren have at one time or other not behaved with the proper reverence in the synagogue, this infraction was due to ignorance of the law, and G-d will surely forgive them. After this sermon, I am confident that they will control themselves from talking during prayers so that the Name of Heaven will be sanctified in public when everyone prays with devotion and with a feeling of holiness. Our prayers will consequently be accepted by the L-rd of the Universe, and we will merit long life in good health. The sick will quickly be healed, and G-d will no longer visit sickness upon His people Israel. He will hasten the redemption and will make an end to our exile. The synagogues will be transformed into the Holy Land, like a city that has been joined together and augmented to the Holy Temple. We will sing praises for our redemption, for the redemption of our soul, which we will experience with joy when we go forth to welcome the Messiah soon and in our lifetime, Amen.

#### Summary of Rabbi Moshe Stern's Sermon

- 1) The mitzvah of redemption lies on each individual (1).
- 2) The reward for admonition is very great (1).
- 3) The synagogues and *bottei midrashim* of the Diaspora are destined to be transplanted in **Eretz Yisrael** (1).
- 4) All synagogues and *bottei midrashim* will be augmented to the Temple. Therefore, the Temple of the future will be as large as presentday Jerusalem (2).
- 5) When we stand in a synagogue or a *beis midrash* in the

Diaspora with awe, it is just as though we're standing in the Temple in the Holy City (3).

6) The *Torah* requires of us that we behave with reverence in synagogue similar to our behavior in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem (3).

7) Removing any part of a synagogue is prohibited by the *Torah* (3).

8) One who engages in idle conversation during prayers, sins and causes others to sin. Accordingly, he transgresses the Biblical precept not to place a stumbling block before a blind man" (3).

9) Anyone who enters a synagogue to pray with reverence, will be granted the privilege of entering the synagogues of the future (4).

10) One who talks during the service in the synagogue will not be permitted to enter the synagogues of the future and will be compelled to stand outside with his bad friends (4).

11) One who has conversed must repent; then he will be granted the privilege of sitting in the first row of the synagogues of the future (4).

12) One who prays in the synagogue in the proper manner will merit long life for himself and his posterity (5).

13) One who engages in idle conversation, cruelly deprives himself and his children of G-d's blessing of longevity (5).

14) One who engages in idle conversation, is as though he is pursuing all the worshippers in the synagogue (5).

15) It is better for one to pray at home rather than to talk in the synagogue (6).

16) One who talks in the synagogues is a "fool" and may not be counted to a minyan according to *Turei Zahav* (7).

17) It is a *mitzvah* to embarrass one who engages in idle conversation if after three warnings he does not keep quiet (7).

18) G-d forbid that we should behave in the synagogue as in a community center (8).

- 19) It is a *mitzvah* to enter the synagogue with a feeling of sanctity (8).
- 20) Many synagogues have been converted into churches because of the sin of idle conversation during prayers (9).
- 21) Through idle conversation in the synagogue, the synagogue is turned over during the services to forces of contamination (10).
- 22) Idle conversation lengthens the time of our exile and delays the redemption (10).
- 23) The synagogues on earth correspond to the synagouge in Heaven (10).
- 24) A frightening story of one who neglected to answer "Amen" and "Amen yehei shmei rabba" (11).
- 25) Let us repent and merit the advent of the Messiah (12).



The Almighty, in His great mercy and kindness, left us the minor sanctuaries, the synagogues and the *botei midrashim*. If we behave in them with the proper demeanor and sanctity, they are destined to be established in the Holy Land. (*Megillah 29a*). Even now, they are endowed with the sanctity of the Holy Land, and our prayers are channeled through them to the Gate of Heaven. If, however, we, G-d forbid, degrade their sanctity by engaging in idle chatter within their confines, the heavenly appointed (evil) prince of the lands outside Eretz Yisrael adorns himself therewith, (since the breath of idle chatter is unclean) becomes the occupant of the synagogues, and in turn collects their prayers and delivers them to the destructive spiritual forces; making the worshippers tantamount to idolators. (*Derashos Chasam Sofer*, vol. II p. 309b)



Resolution and Application for Prayers at Gravesites of Tzaddikim

I, the undersigned, promise without a vow, to refrain from talking during prayers, especially during those prayers that require the response of "Amen", such as *chazarath hashatz* (the reader's repetition of the *shmonah esreh*), *kaddish*, the Torah reading, and the like.

Similarly, I will not recite other prayers, say Tehillim, learn, or look into *sefarim* during *chazarath hashatz* or *kaddish*, but will listen attentively and answer, "Amen", "Yehey sh'mey rabba", "Baruch Hashem Hamevorach l'olam va'ed", at the proper times. I will also train my children to do likewise.

Signature .....

Address .....

Telephone .....

In recognition of the above, we hereby undertake to: send our committee composed of scholars and G-d fearing persons, in Eretz Yisrael, to the holy places and there pray for your well-being and welfare. The following is a condition of acceptance on our side:

We, the undersigned, promise to mention (Your name)

..... every month on the day before *rosh chodesh*, at the holy places in Eretz Yisrael, at least at the gravesites of ten *tzaddikim*, according to the following form of prayer: (They should first recite Tehillim slowly and deliberately, and then say the following prayer).

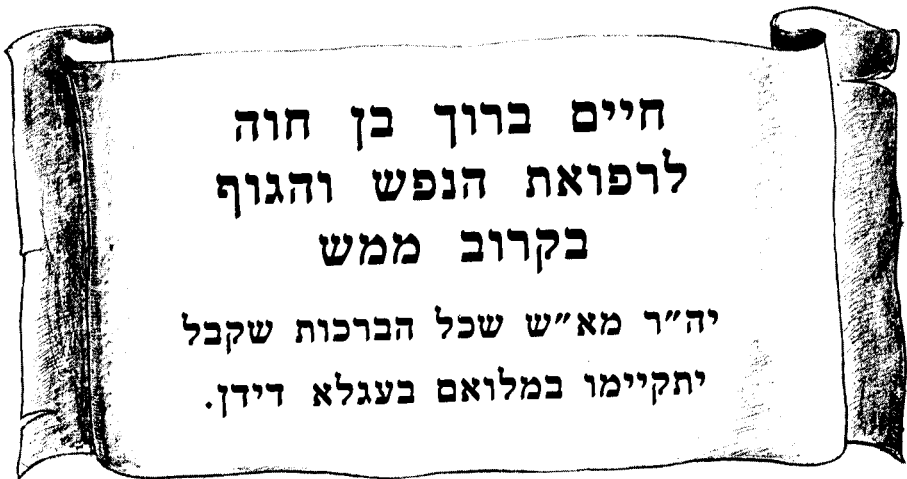
May it be your will, our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that in the merit of the *tzaddik* who is lying here, (Tzaddik's name is mentioned), (for example Mayshe ben Esther) who has faithfully taken upon himself to refrain from talking during prayers,



especially during those prayers that require the response of "Amen" such as *chazarath hashatz* (the reader's repetition of the *sh'moneh esreh*), Kaddish, the Torah reading, and the like, be found worthy, his wife, his children and all the members of his household among all Israel be to granted good health, perfection, a long and fruitful life in which Torah and wealth will be united on one table. May he be granted children and grandchildren, Torah scholars and G-d fearing persons, who do the will of their Creator by fulfilling the Torah and its commandments and be performing deeds of kindness sincerely and wholeheartedly. May they be granted daughters imbued with the trait of modesty befitting pious daughters of Israel, and may they marry them off to young men, well-versed in Torah, imbued with fear of G-d and servants of the Almighty.

May he be granted the ability to rectify all he is required to rectify in this reincarnation and all previous reincarnations, and to see the pleasantness of the L-rd and to visit His Temple.

Above all, may they merit all the good prophecies in store for those to answer, "Amen", and "Yehey sh'mey rabba", as delineated in the midrashim and in all holy books, and may they be spared all the calamities mentioned there, either in this world or in the next.





City of Crakow

In this little innocent town the greatest catastrophe took place.



City of Crakow

In this little innocent town the greatest catastrophe took place.

## Book Review

### *Kashruth Laws for Mothers*

The Holminer Rav, Rabbi Sholom Yehuda Gross Shlita, is not a new face in the Torah world. He is the author of 42 works relating to Jewish law.

Rabbi Gross has recently issued the sefer "Encyclopedia of Kashruth—Cholov Akkum and Infant Formulas" (vol 2).

This work consists of an anthology from Talmudic and Midrashic sources, as well as from *rishonim*, medieval rabbis, and the books of *mussar*, religious ethics and admonition. The central theme of these selections is the emphasis on the caution required by our holy Torah in the field of forbidden foods.

The foundation of Israel's sanctity and purity is their painstaking observance of the laws of kashruth. We find this stated explicitly in the Torah (Lev. 11:44):

"For I am the L-rd your G-d, and you shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy; and you shall not defile your souls with any creeping thing that creeps on earth."

In effect, by abstaining from forbidden foods we sanctify ourselves, and by laxity in this field, we, G-d forbid, defile our souls.

The Talmud in tractate Shabbos (105) describes the "strategy" of the *Yetzer-Horah*, the evil inclination of man. He, the *Yetzer* works slowly, discretely, telling man to commit small, insignificant

sins, until such a point that the man no longer has the moral strength to withstand the temptation. The *yetzer* then moves in with severe transgressions, such as eating *treifos*, desecration of the Sabbath, etc., until the man is spiritually bankrupt. At this point the *yeizer* has the ability to lead the man completely away from *Torah* observance. Since the *mitzvah* of *kashruth* is directly entwined with the physical as well as spiritual make-up of the Jew's body, non-observance of this *mitzvah* will surely lead its transgressor to the denial of the existence of *Hashem* and even to conversion.

This last observation was testified to by the holy Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Zanz z'l, who wrote (in his work *Divrei Chaim*) that entire communities were lost to Judaism as a result of eating forbidden foods.

Our sages wrote and preached extensively in opposition to the use of *cholov akum* (milk milked by a non-Jew without Jewish supervision). Many mothers, however, are not aware that most of the major baby formulas currently on the market are made from *cholov akum*.

Some of the questions and answers one finds in the anthology are:

**Q:** *Why is it that young children are required to observe kashruth as scrupulously as adults?*

**A.** Due to the fact that during the early, formative years of a child, the spiritual

and physical foundation for the child's entire life is established, it is of utmost importance that this foundation *not* be built upon forbidden food or drink.

**Q.** *Where is this documented in Jewish law?*

**A.** The *Shulchan Oruch* (*Orach Chayim*: 343) states that when a father sees his child eating *treifos*, he is halachically required to stop the child from this. If the father does not do this, the *Beth-Din* is required to reprimand him. This is true if the child took the food himself. If, however, the father gives the child *treifos* to eat, he is in direct transgression of a Biblical commandment.

The custom of washing the hands of children every morning gives the person

the ability to raise spiritually clean children who will grow up in a holy atmosphere (*Ben Ish Chai, Kaf HaChayim Chap. 4:22; Responsa Keren LeDovid I*)

The author's main quest in this volume is concluded with this plea:

I propose and request: *return, please, the crown of holiness of Israel (i.e. Jewry) to its prior glory! Please instruct your brothers to guard their souls and those of their children, that they should be protected from any pitfalls concerning the matters of forbidden foods, Heaven forbid! By means of this, the verse: "And you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy,"*

This all-encompassing sefer has the *haskama*/approbation of the leading Torah authorities including *Harav Hagaon Reb Moshe Feinstein shlita*, who writes: "The author, a gaon, has organized and explained each topic with extensive erudition and profound understanding.... This gaon, the author, may be relied upon since he has already displayed his ability in this field...."

The last part contains excerpts in *English* from the correspondence the author received from many of the largest companies in the Drug and Pharmaceutical industry. These letters indicate that it is questionable whether most medicines are kosher for *Pesach*, and also sheds light on their standard of *Kashrus* during the whole year.

According to the new information contained in these letters from the various companies, it is evident that one should *not* rely on the various published lists concerning the *Kashrus* of various medicines for *Pesach* as issued by the various Rabbinical organizations or individual rabbis. These lists were compiled without the knowledge of the new information written by the companies to the author!

The author has been working for years at great expense and effort in order to compile and publicize this information concerning the *kashrus* of medicines. These letters are but a small part of hundreds of letters the author has received from various companies.

This information concerning medicines is of great importance for anyone contemplating the use of medicine on *Pesach*.

The sefer also contains a discussion of the detailed research and diligent investigation concerning the accuracy of the *kashrus* of medicinal products (including capsules, drugs, powders, fluids, etc.) for use during the entire year, as well as on *Pesach*.

Besides considering the questionableness of the medicinal ingredients contained in animal products or derivatives, *Passover* use brings with it a series of doubtful ingredients (from the *kashrus* standpoint), such as legumes (*kitniyos*), e.g. corn starch, etc.

These two volumes will enrich your knowledge about baking and eating matzoh in order to celebrate the holiday of *Pesach* according to the *halacha*.

Rabbi Sholem Yehuda Gross is the author of the following seforim:

*Nefesh Yeshua*—*kashruth*—foods that are not permitted (in Hebrew and English). *Zivchu Zivchei Tzedek*—problems of glatt kosher meat in America. *Simchas Sholom*—the laws pertaining to chupa and marriage. *Minchas Yehudah*—about *Similac* and *Cholov Akum*. *Oholei Yisroel*—a guide for the bungalows in the summer and *mezuzos*. *Dvar Moshe*—various customs and laws. *Menuchas Sholom*— and many other works.

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