



פרשת וירא
מרחשון תשפ"ד

COMMUNITY LEARNING

In preparation for Chof Cheshvan, the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab, close to 60 members of Anash came together on Thursday night to learn Chassidus.

The learning was in the Zechus and memory of Lawrence Hoffman, a daily attendee of Chassidus Shiurim in the Kollel.

The Kollel hosts Chassidus learning evenings throughout the year before the Chassdishe Yomim Tovim. We will be hosting our next learning evening in Kislev in preparation for Tes-Yud Kislev and Yud Tes Kislev, both days that celebrate the strengthening of the learning and spreading of Chassidus.

THE SHABBOS SHIUR

The weekly Shabbos afternoon feature Shiur continues this week. All men and women are invited to join Rabbi Gordon for a Shiur after Mincha in the Yeshivah Shule.

YARCHEI KALLAH

The Yarchei Kallah plans are underway and we look forward to updating the community with all of the details as they are finalised, including our guest speaker and the topics of Shiurim.

DEDICATE A DAY OF LEARNING

Celebrate a Simcha or birthday or commemorate a Yartzheit by sponsoring a day of learning in the Kollel. Email kollel@yeshivahcentre.org



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Are we as guilty as CNN and BBC?

Two weeks ago, media headlines around the world announced that Israel had bombed a hospital in the Gaza strip, killing 500 innocent Palestinians.

The reports sparked condemnation from foreign governments and accusations that Israel had violated International laws by targeting a medical facility that in addition to treating the sick and injured, was used a shelter by hundreds of innocent civilians. With tensions rising across the Middle East, there was a real fear that the war would widen, drawing-in other hostile Arab regimes.

The reports instigated global protests to condemn Israel and unleashed a wave of ugly global antisemitism in the streets and halls of academia around the world. Until that point, most Western countries were supportive of Israel and her right to self-defence after the horrific Simchas Torah massacre. Protests in support of the Palestinians were limited and did not gain much media attention. But as a result of the hospital attack, things started to rapidly shift.

Before the smoke even cleared, politicians, governments and ordinary people were quick to adopt the narrative that Israel was to blame. Afterall, these reports were being aired by reputable, household-brand international media outlets.

No one stopped to question the authenticity and integrity of the reports. No one stopped to ask where the media got their information? And where was it sourced? From the health authorities in Gaza, which is none other than Hamas, the terror organisation that had deliberately targeted and massacred 1400 civilians and were desperate to swing the pendulum of international outcry back in their favour.

Slowly the truth began to emerge, painting a completely different picture to the initial headlines. It wasn't the hospital itself, but rather the carpark. The figure of 500 dead was grossly inflated. And most importantly, it was not Israel who bombed the hospital, but a misfired missile from one of the Gaza-based terror organisations.

Having to defend its integrity in the international arena, Israel was forced to spend precious time and resources in the midst of a war, to investigate the event and release irrefutable proof of its innocence.

To their credit, some media outlets apologised and retracted. Others, in a bid to save-face and salvage their pride and integrity, revised their reports to state that the facts remain unclear and are subject to dispute.

Either way, it was too late. The damage to Israel's reputation had been done. The protests and global anti-semitism had been unleashed and could not be quelled and those who were just looking for a pretext for their hatred of Israel and Jews, continued to argue that it was still Israel's fault.

Media is incredibly powerful and not just in shaping people's opinions. Their headlines can lead to violence, bloodshed and even war. In rushing to condemn Israel, the media was completely dangerous and recklessly irresponsible.

Before destroying the cities of Sodom and Amora. Hashem says ארדה נא ואראה הכצעקתה הבאה אלי עשו כלה "I will descend and see; if they have acted in accordance with the outcry that has come to Me - then destruction". These were the cries of oppression and evil that arose from Sodom.

The commentaries are perplexed. Hashem is all-knowing. Before Him, "everything is revealed and known". Why did He need to descend to see the truth of the outcry that came before Him?

The truth is that Hashem did not need to descend and see. He was teaching us a lesson.

Rashi explains that from this verse, our sages teach that a judge in a capital case may not rule on the case without first seeing. The intent is not that the judges have to literally witness the crime - that it the role of witnesses. It means that the judges cannot just rely on testimony or hearsay, without thoroughly investigating and questioning the witnesses to discover the truth, before issuing their ruling.

It is very easy to criticise the media outlets for failing to adhere to our sages' sound advice. But how often do we do the exact same thing?

We hear the cries of Lashon Hara, gossip and rumours about others that come before us and are quick to accept the reports as truth. In the importance of public awareness, we have to share the "headline reports"

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Answering Amen to our own Brachos

Q. I've noticed that generally we don't answer Amein to our own Brachos. I've even heard that it is not an appropriate thing to do. So why in Bentching do we conclude the blessing Boneh Yerushalayim by saying Amein?

A. The Gemara brings 2 seemingly contradictory statements. One says that it is improper to answer Amein to their own Bracha. The other says that it is praiseworthy to do so.

The Talmud reconciles these contradictory statements by explaining that they refer to different blessings. When is it praiseworthy? At the end of the Bracha Boneh Yerushalayim in Bentching. When is it improper? For all other Brachos.

There is a Machlokes amongst the Rishonim whether answering Amein is only permissible after Boneh Yerushalayim or could apply to other blessings which are similar in nature.

Rashi, the Rif and the Rosh do not limit this ruling specifically to the Bracha of Boneh Yerushalayim. Boneh Yerushalayim is brought by the Talmud as an example of a category of blessings. It marks the end of a series of linked Brachos. Similarly, one would answer Amein to their own Bracha for any Bracha which comes at the end of a series of Brachos. For example, Yishtabach which is the end Bracha of Pesukei Dezimra or Shomer Es Amo Yisroel Laad which is the end of the blessings of the Shema one would recite Amein even to their own Bracha.

The problematic Amein would be to answer Amein after each individual Bracha in a series of Brachos (or after a solitary Bracha such as a blessing before eating). This is because saying Amein would imply that one has finished the blessings and has nothing further to add.

This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch and the practise of Sefardim.

The alternate view (held by Tosfos, Rabbeinu Chananel and others) is that Boneh Yerushalayim is a unique case, and that we would not answer Amein to any other Bracha even if it marks the end of a series of Brachos.

The reason Boneh Yerushalayim is unique is that it marks the end of the 3 Biblically required blessings of Bentching. The fourth and final blessing is only Rabbinic in nature. We are required to distinguish between them. This would be the only situation where this would apply since all other Brachos are only Rabbinic. The first 3 Brachos of Bentching being the only Biblical Brachos.

The Ram"o rules that this is the custom for Ashkenazim and that one should not deviate from it. This ruling is brought by the Alter Rebbe as the accepted minhag.

For any other Bracha we do not answer Amein to our own blessing. The Talmud's meaning that it would be reprehensible is that it is a display of haughtiness or arrogance. We are so particular concerning this that even if a person concludes his Bracha at the same time as the chazzan in Shule is concluding the same Bracha, he should not respond Amein to the chazzan as this would appear like he is answering Amein to his own Bracha.

Since in Bentching, we say **בונה ברחמינו ירושלים** **אמן** for the reason described above, it does not appear as arrogant.

One should actually pause between the words **ירושלים** and **אמן**, since the Bracha actually ends with the word Yerushalayim, Amein being only an affirmation and not part of the nusach of the Bracha. However one should not pause too long otherwise this would be an Amein Yesoma (literally an orphaned Amein), since it is separated from its Bracha (like an orphaned child **ר"ל** from their parents.)

Additionally, the Shulchan Aruch rules that the **אמן**

at the end of the Bracha Boneh Yerushalayim should be recited quietly. The reason is that since it highlights the fact that the 4th blessing is only Rabbinic, people may come to treat it lightly by thinking that "it is only Rabbinic and the real Bentching is finished". Nonetheless popular practise is to say the **אמן** out loud. The Poskim offer the following justification:

According to strict halacha, a labourer (**פועל**) who is paid for a day's work would not recite the 4th blessing. Since it would be coming at the expense of his employer, the Rabbis waived the requirement to recite it. (This alone is a fascinating degree of the Torah's concern for theft and business ethics since we are talking about a minute of lost labour time).

When this was the practise there was a concern that others (or even the labourers themselves) may take the 4th blessing lightly even when there would be no situation of loss to the employer. If Amein would be recited this would further suggest that one could be lenient. This concern would also apply to Sefardim and is their practise still today.

Nowadays however it is accepted and standard practice that employers are not concerned for such minimal loss of time and accept it upon themselves. This is especially true today with labour laws etc. which allow for allotted paid breaks. Since there is now no case where the final blessing is not recited, there is no concern of treating it lightly and as such Amein may be recited aloud.

Nonetheless, some Poskim advise that the Amein should still be recited silently. The Bach recommends that at least it should not be said louder than the rest of Bentching which would show special emphasis.

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with our families, friends and acquaintances in conversation and across social media.

On a subtler level, we interpret things that we see about others or form judgments from our interactions with them based on our own subjectivity-bias. Instead of being Dan Lekaf Zechus, we rush to presume the worst and are hasty to condemn.

Do we stop to first question the truth of the reports that we here and the authenticity of where they are coming from? Do we seek to be sure of our conclusions before sharing them with others or making our own judgments

based on them? Would we stand up to the same scrutiny that we subject the media and standard of integrity that we expect from them?

The message of the Parsha is as relevant to us as they are to CNN, BBC and ABC. We can't expect much better from the media who are known for sensationalism and are unlikely to change their ways. But we can certainly demand higher standards of honesty, ethics and integrity from ourselves in our personal interactions and in our communities.

If this is how Hashem responded to the cries about the people of Sodom whom the Torah describes as being exceedingly wicked and sinful, certainly we can do the same in our relationships and interactions with others, even if it is simply because it is how we would want others to treat us.