

Halachos of Answering Amen

Amen Chatufah [Rushed Amen]

18. **Improperly vowelized.** One must be careful not to say "a rushed Amen." One explanation of this is that it refers to improper vowelization, e.g., with a shva or pasach under the aleph. The aleph must be pronounced with a komatz (מ"ב סק"ט) (ש"י"ע ק"ד ס"ח, מ"ב סק"ט) (ש"י"ע ק"ד ס"ח, מ"ב סק"ט).
19. **Saying it quickly.** Similarly, one should not rush and answer Amen before the mevareich finishes his brachah (ש"י"ע שם). Wait until the mevareich or chazan completely finishes the last word, and only then answer Amen (מ"ב סק"ל).

Amen Ketufah [Broken Amen]

20. **Proper enunciation.** One must make sure to pronounce the letters properly, such that each letter is distinguishable. For example, one should not slur the nun (ש"י"ע שם) in a way that it is not clearly heard, even if he said it. Similarly, one should not slur the aleph or mem (ביאה"ל ד"ה קריאת הנ"ן).
21. **Broken in two.** Another explanation is that one should not break the word in two by pausing between the two syllables ("A - mein") (ב"י בשם הערוך, רמ"א שם).

Amen Yesomah ["Orphaned" Amen]

22. **Doesn't know what he's answering to.** An amen yesomah is when the Amen is "orphaned" and disconnected from the brachah, i.e., one answers Amen without any knowledge of which brachah he is answering to. One should not say an amen yesomah. See below (par. 26) for details about this halachah.
23. **Paused after brachah.** Another explanation: an amen yesomah is when one pauses between the end of the brachah and answering Amen. In other words, once it is past toch k'dei dibur [about two to three seconds] after the end of a brachah, one should not say Amen, as that is an amen yesomah (מ"ב סק"ד) (רמ"א שם). It often happens that a baal korei says Amen before beginning to lein, well after the aleh finishes his brachah.
24. **In a tzibbur.** As long as the tzibbur is still answering Amen, one may answer with them even if it is past toch k'dei dibur. This is only if most of the tzibbur has not finished saying Amen (מ"ב שם), and he answers within toch k'dei dibur of their answering (מיד) (ביאה"ל ד"ה מיד).

Amen Ketzarah [Short Amen]

25. One should not say Amen in a short, rushed manner lest it appear like a burden. It should be somewhat extended – long enough to say (ש"י"ע שם ס"ח) 'אל מלך נאמן' (מ"ב סק"ז). However, one should not extend it too much because when doing so, the word is not heard properly (ש"י"ע שם).

Did Not Hear Entire Brachah

26. **Birchos hamitzvah.** One who wants to be yotzei a brachah by listening to someone else say it must hear the entire brachah from beginning to end (ש"י"ע ס"ד ר"ג ס"ג); then he must answer Amen (ש"י"ע) (ס"ד ר"ג ס"ב ומ"ב סק"ז) (ש"י"ע ס"ד ר"ג ס"ב ומ"ב סק"ז). [If one is using ערבות to be motzi someone else in a brachah he himself was already yotzei, some hold if the other person does not answer Amen, he is not yotzei (רע"א ס"ד ר"ג ס"ד).]
27. **Regular brachah.** When one is not being yotzei the brachah he is hearing, the Mechaber holds he may answer Amen if he hears others answering Amen, even if he does not know which brachah he is answering to (ש"י"ע שם ס"ח).
28. **Rama.** However, the Rama holds for all brachos that if one does not know which brachah he is answering to, he may not say Amen (רמ"א שם). If he knows which brachah he is answering, he may say Amen even if he did not hear the end of the brachah (מ"ב סק"ג).
29. **Chazaras Hashatz.** Nowadays that everyone says his own Shemoneh Esrei and no one is yotzei with the chazan, according to the abovementioned opinion of the Mechaber, one may say Amen even without knowing which brachah he is answering to (מ"ב סק"א) (בדעתו). According to the Rama, one should l'chatchilah make sure to know which brachah he is answering to and also listen to the end of the brachah. B'dieved, he may say Amen as long as he knows which brachah was said, even if he did not hear it (מ"ב סק"ג).

Over the Phone, on a Recording

30. **Phone.** Even though we hold one cannot be yotzei a brachah he hears from a distance over the phone, a loudspeaker, or a live broadcast, he may still say Amen, as he is answering in real time to a brachah someone said (ש"י"ע שבת הלוי) (ח"ה ס"ו פ"ד) (סוכה דף ג"א ע"ב). Nowadays, one usually hears the brachah within toch k'dei dibur (above, 23) even on an international call.
31. **Recording.** However, one should not say Amen to a recording of a brachah someone made at an earlier time.

Answering at the Same Volume as the Mevareich

32. **Louder than mevareich.** One should not say Amen in a louder voice than the mevareich's (ש"י"ע ס"ד ס"ב) based on the posuk, "גדלו לה' אתי ונרוממה שמו יחדיו," which implies their voices should be equal (מ"ב סק"ז). One may say Amen in a voice louder than the mevareich's if he has a valid reason, e.g., to spur other people to answer too (מ"ב שם); to arouse his kavanah in fulfillment of Chazal's statement (see above, 3) that the gates of Gan Eden are opened for one who answers Amen with all his strength (מ"ד בש"ת שבת הקהתי) (ח"ו ס"ו צ"ג); or the chazan has a soft voice (שם).
33. **Quietly.** Based on the above posuk ["ונרוממה שמו יחדיו"], one should also not answer in a softer voice than the mevareich's; they should be the same volume (שם).

Answering Amen to One's Personal Shemoneh Esrei

34. **Quiet Shemoneh Esrei.** When saying Shemoneh Esrei, one must hear what he is saying, but he should not make his voice heard out loud (ש"י"ע ס"ד ק"א ס"ב). L'chatchilah one should daven so quietly that even someone standing nearby cannot hear (מ"ב סק"ז), but if one cannot hear kavanah that way, he may daven in a somewhat audible voice as long as he is not bothering others in his vicinity (שם).
35. **Saying Amen.** If one is davening Shemoneh Esrei somewhat audibly and the person next to him hears the end of a brachah, he should not say Amen. The one davening is doing something improper – as others can hear his brachah – and the directive to answer Amen was not said in this case (א) (הג"ה ש"ת) (הליכות שלמה, הג"ה ש"ת) (הליכות שלמה, פ"ח ה"ב, ש"ת שבת הלוי ח"ג ס"ו ט"ו).

Increasing the Answering of Amen

Saying Brachos Out Loud

36. It is very important to have others say Amen to one's brachos. Therefore, one should strive to say brachos in a way that others will answer to them (זוה"ק ריש פ' עקב הובא בכ"ה חיים ס"ד ק"ד סק"א, פ') (ויצא דף ק"ס, מחצית השקל ס"ו ו' סק"ט).
37. Thus, one should say all brachos out loud so that others will hear and say Amen. One should accustom himself to saying brachos in a way that others can answer Amen, as through this, his brachos become complete (הג"ה וואלוין הובא בס' נוטרי אמן ח"ב פ"א אות ט"ז) (בה"ט ס"ד תרמ"ג) (סק"א שם השליה). According to this reason, one should say a brachah out loud even if there is no one there listening.

Ninety Amenim

38. Every Jewish man should strive to answer Amen ninety times a day (מ"ב ס"ו ו' סק"ג, ש"ת תשובה סק"ה, ש"ת הרב שם אות ט) to brachos, not including Amen to Kaddish (ש"ת הרמ"ע מפאנו ס"ד ק"ט). Chazal find a hint to this in the posuk (ישעיהו כ"ו, ב) – the word צדי"ק stands for ninety amenim, four Kedushos, ten Kaddishim, and one hundred brachos (כ"ה) (החיים ס"ד ק"ד סק"ג בשם מהר"ו) (ספר הגן) (צדי"ק by fulfilling this acronym every day).

Birchos HaShachar

39. **Tzibbur.** Many have the minhag that the chazan in shul says the brachos out loud and everyone says Amen. Since nowadays the chazan is not motzi others, everyone in the tzibbur also says the brachos out loud so that everyone can answer Amen to them (ש"י"ע) (א"ח ס"ו ו' ס"ד). This is to increase the answering of Amen for everyone and to help get to ninety Amenim a day (above, 28).
40. **Individual.** Even if they are not saying the brachos out loud for the whole shul [because that is for older people and not everyone can do it (פמ"ג א"א שם סק"ה)], many people at least try to find another person to say Birchos HaShachar in front of so that he can answer Amen.
41. Similarly, many tzaddikim make sure to hear multiple people say Birchos HaShachar every day to help get to ninety Amenim (הארי"ל, הבעל שם, יסוד ושורש העבודה, זקנינו הג"ר מנעט, בית אהרן מקרלין, זקנינו מהר"ם (א"ש, דברי חיים, האדר"ת, ועוד הובאו בס' בני אמונים פרק אוצרות אמונים).
42. **At home.** Even at home, a husband and wife can say the brachos to each other (מנהג הג"ר קנייבסקי ועוד). It is also proper for one to train each of his sons and daughters to say all the Birchos HaShachar out loud and answer Amen to each other's brachos. They should also be trained to say all birchos hanehenin, Asher Yatzar, and Birkas HaMazon out loud and all answer Amen (רבי) (יעקב מאיר שכטר בס' המברך יתברך עמ' ס"ו, עמ' צ"ו).

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