

## 3-א-ל מלך נאמן

Some questions about the addition of ל מלך נאמן will remain unanswered here. For example, if the recitation of א-ל מלך נאמן is the completion of the ברכה of בעמו הבוחר בעמו וקאי אסיום דהבוחר בעמו ישראל) אבודרהם as is the position of the (באהבה והוא במקום אמן שיש לענות אחר ברוך הבוחר בעמו ישראל) רמ"א and the (באהבה) then how does adding those words cause קריאת שמע to consist of 248 words?

Another question: why do the following commentators not agree on the source for the requirement that one recite 248 words when reciting קריאת שמע?

כלבו סימן ט' ד"ה ומתחילין ק"ש. . . ורמ"ח תיבות כנגד רמ"ח אברים לקיים מה שנאמר (תהילים לה, י) כל עצמותי תאמרנה ה' מי כמוך. זוהר חדש כרך ב' מגילת רות דף ל' עמ' ב'—פתח רבי יהודה ואמר (משלי ג, ח) רפאות תהי לשרך ושקוי לעצמותיך—התורה היא רפואה לאדם לגוף ולעצמות בעולם הזה ובעולם הבא. . . ואמר ר' נהוראי בק"ש יש רמ"ח תיבות כמנין רמ"ח אברים של אדם והקורא ק"ש כתיקונה כל אבר ואבר נוטל תיבה אחת לעצמו ומתרפא בו. אבודרהם ספר ברכות קריאת שמע—יש נוהגין לומר א-ל מלך נאמן בתחלת ק"ש ואומר לתשלום רמ"ח תיבות שיש בק"ש דאמרי' באלה הדברים רבה (משלי ד, א) שמור מצותי וחייה; שמור רמ"ח תיבות שבק"ש והקב"ה ישמור רמ"ח איברים שלך.

Another mystery: It is evident from ספר מגן אבות, written by the מאירי (1249-1315 CE) in response to disputes that arose between the newly-arrived pupils of the deceased רמב"ן and the local rabbis from southern France regarding customs in which the Meiri defended the local customs<sup>1</sup>, that the Jewish community was split along geographic lines on whether to recite א-ל מלך נאמן. How did that split develop?

סימן א' ד"ה מנהג קדום—מנהג קדום בארצות הללו מימי קדם, בימי הרבנים הגדולים, וכן בארץ צרפת (France) ובאשכנז (Rhineland) שאומרים אחר ברכת אהבת עולם כשבאים להתחיל בקריאת שמע, א-ל מלך נאמן. ובאמת לא היה מנהג זה לא בארץ המערב בא"י ולא בארץ המזרח, וגם לא בארץ קטלוניא (Catalonia) אשר היתה מקדם בכלל ארץ ספרד (Spain). וכבר הגיע לידינו מחזורים מארץ קטלוניא כתובים מזמן קדם קדמתה שלא היה מנהג זה כי היה מנהגם כארץ ספרד ברוב הדברים או בכלם. ובימי ר' זרחיה הלוי שיצא בבחורתו מעיר גירונדא (Gerona) וזכה ללמוד במגדל לוניל ועמד שם זמן רב וחזר לו לשם. והנהיג בשם כל בני הקהל כמנהג הארץ הלזו, ונקבע במחזורתיהם כדרך שהוא קבוע במחזורים שלנו. ובהגיע תור הרב הגדול ר' משה בר' נחמן ז"ל (רמב"ן), ראה שמקודם לא היו נוהגים כך ושבכל ארץ ספרד לא היה אומרים אותו, ונתקשה בעיניו על שהיו אומרים

1. Bar-Ilan Judaic Library CD-ROM under the section entitled biographies.



## TRANSLATION OF SOURCES

**ספר מגן אבות סימן א' ד"ה מנהג קדום** - It was a longstanding custom in this area, in the days when great Rabbis lived and in France and in Germany that one would recite Kail Melech Ne'Man after the Bracha of Ahavat Olam as one was about to begin to recite Kriyat Shema. In truth that was not the custom in Israel, or in the Eastern countries or in Catalonia which was in the south of Spain. Machzorim from the land of Catalonia written from a long time ago have come into our possession in which the custom was not to recite Kail Melech Ne'Man. They conducted themselves like those who lived in Spain in most customs if not in all customs. Rav Zarachiya who in his youth moved from Gerona and was fortunate to study at Migdal Louneel and remained there for a long time as the Rav conducted himself in the same way that we conduct ourselves (to recite Kail Melech Ne'Man) and in the Machzorim of his era you find the same language as you find in our Machzorim. When the Ramban was chosen to act as Rav, he noted that in an earlier era the people in his area did not recite Kail Melech Ne'Man and that it was not being recited in Spain. It seemed to him that reciting Kail Melech Ne'Man was a problem. The Ramban often found himself in disagreement with Rav Zecharia and wrote comments on Rav Zechariya's books. In time, the Ramban wrote his own very nice book "Sefer Milchamot." In the book the Ramban attested to the fact that he had asked the great Rabbi, Rabbenu Mayir from Tolitolia about this custom. Rabbenu Mayir answered the Ramban that it is a mistake to recite Kail Melech Ne'Man; that it is not said in the Spanish countries and not in Israel. The custom to recite Kail Melech Ne'Man was then terminated and the words erased from the Machzorim. The Ramban thought that it was the right decision and gave praise and thanks to G-d that this mistake had been corrected. The Ramban felt that he bolstered his position based on the fact that the Bracha of Ahavat Olam was the Bracha that is recited before performing the mitzvah of Kriyat Shema. It was therefore inappropriate to pause before performing the Mitzvah. He brought proof for his position from a source in the Jerusalem Talmud in which it is taught that whoever is Porais the Shema should not answer Amen after his Bracha and if he did so he was considered a boor. He further argued that reciting Kail Melech Ne'Man was the equivalent to reciting Amen just as the Gemara described: What is Amen? Kail Melech Ne'Man. Even when they would recite Kail Melech Ne'Man not as the extrapolation of the word Amen, it was inappropriate and a pause because it had more words than the word Amen. So whether or not the words Kail Melech Ne'Man were being said as an amplification of the word Amen or the words were recited for their own sake, it still was deemed that as the person acted inappropriately. It is an improper pause. The person must go back and repeat the Bracha of Ahavat Olam. In our time, students of the Ramban moved into our area and were surprised that we conduct ourselves by reciting Kail Melech Ne'Eman after the Bracha of Ahavat Olam. We have told them day after day that it has been our custom in this area from the time that several Gaonim lived here and other well respected Rabbis who

were here for many years; Rabbis who taught hundreds and thousands. All of this seemed insignificant in their eyes. The end result was that we felt the pressure of their insistence and they seemed to grow stronger and louder in their opposition.

'ספר מגן אבות סימן א'-They said that the students from France already asked their teachers how this custom began. The teachers responded: in former generations, the general population did not recite Brachot on their own because there were unlearned. As a result the prayer leader would recite the Brachot and those present would respond with Amen and then they would recite the Shema which is the main Mitzvah. By reciting Amen, those present would complete the requirement to recite 248 words. Amen was recited in place of Kail Melech Ne'Eman or they would occasionally recite Kail Melech Ne'Eman in the place of Amen.

רבינו יהודה ב"ר יקר-The Bracha of Ha'Bochair B'Amo Yisroel B'Ahavah was based on the verse (Devarim 7,7) Lo MiRoobchem MiKol Ha'Amim Chashak Hashem BaChem Va'Yivchar Bachem Ki Atem Ha'M'At MiKol Ha'Amim; Ki Ma'Ahavat Hashem Etchem. Because the Bracha ends with the word: B'Chira, one recites Kail Melech Ne'Eman because of the verse Li'Maan Hashem Asher Ne'Eman K'dosh Yosroel Va'Yivarchecha (Yishayahu 49, 7). And because of this too we recite Kail Melech Ne'Eman: Hashem gave us the land because we cause G-d's name to be one just as Avrohom was the only one who believed in Hashem and Avrohom was rewarded by receiving the land of Israel. Yaakov said to his sons: do not question Hashem who said to you and your children: I will give you the land of Israel and Hashem has not yet given the land to you; know that Hashem is Kail Melech Ne'Eman and will keep his promise. The sons of Yaakov answered Yaakov: Shema Yisroel Hahsem Elokainu Hashem Echad.