

Torah Weekly

בס"ד

PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN

7-13 Av 5784
11-17 August 2024

Torah: Duet. 3:23 – 7:11
Haftorah: Isaiah 40:1-26

Psalms Daily

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

Pikrei Avot (4:2)

Ben Azzai would say: Run to pursue a minor Mitzvah and flee from a transgression. For a Mitzvah brings another Mitzvah, and a transgression brings another transgression. For the reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah, and the reward of transgression is transgression.

You Can('t) Help Yourself!
If you look around, I am sure you could spot the life-coach who can't get his own life together; the marriage counselor whose marriage is either history or well on the way; and the parent who preaches to her children to "stop scratching and biting over blocks of Lego" while she is constantly brawling over pride and money. It is quite obvious that many of us can help anyone but ourselves. We have advice for our children on how to handle stress. We advise our co-workers on how to manage their time. We teach our students the value of study. And of course, we educate our parents how to be parents...

...Yet in our own lives, we are enrolled in an anger management club. Our time management is in serious need of a new CEO. An article longer than 300 words is avoided like the plague. And our own parenthood is a non-issue because we just celebrated our sixteenth birthday.

There are many junctures in our lives when we need objectivity and clarity in order to see our strengths and weaknesses for what they are. Dating, career seeking, child rearing and relationship struggles are just but a sample of stages in our lives when an unbiased view can serve as a potential lifesaver, and where we can be our own worst enemy.

That is why the sages of old have advised and instructed to "Appoint a mentor for yourself!" Find yourself someone who can be your guide, your objective compass—pushing, advising, and instructing you on how you can be the real you.

Therapists are nice (and expensive) and there are times when they are needed. But not every issue calls for therapy. There are the times when all we need is someone who knows us, who cares for us, a wise person with a little life experience who can save us from ourselves—by seeing the reality for what it is, rather than what we perceive it to be.

And dedicated. The mentor must be dedicated.

Let me share an insight. Shortly before his passing, Moses established "Cities of Refuge". What is a City of Refuge? If a person was guilty of manslaughter, and a family member of the victim was chasing after him to kill him to avenge his next-of-kin's death, these cities served as a safe zone where the killer could stay and – in the words of the Torah (Deuteronomy 4:42) – "live". From the fact that Torah says that he should "live" in them, and it's a given that one cannot live without Torah, our Sages ruled that the killer's Torah teacher must accompany his pupil to his city of refuge! A real mentor follows you to exile. A real mentor is there for you even when you don't think you need him. A real mentor will pull you by the bootstraps out of any rut you fall in. My dear friends, may we all find such mentors, and may we serve as such mentors to others.

Oh, what a world it will be....

By Levi Avtzon

Words in a Doorway

"Hear O Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is one" - Deuteronomy 6:4

The words of the Shema constitute the most basic statement of Judaism: that G-d is our G-d—a real presence in our lives; and that G-d is one—the singular, absolute, all-embracing truth of our existence.

What do we do with these words? Many things.

1) Mind: We study them and contemplate them. As the verse enjoins, "Hear O Israel"—the Hebrew word for "hear," "Shema", also means "comprehend."

2) Heart: Study and contemplation give birth to emotion. Hence, "Hear O Israel" brings us to "You shall love G-d with all your heart, all your soul and all your might" (Duet. 6:5).

3) Speech: When "these words are upon your heart," the next step is verbalization and communication—"You shall teach them diligently to your children; and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up" (Duet. 6:7). The last words in this verse are the source of the mitzvah to recite the Shema every evening ("when you lie down") and every morning ("when you rise up").

4) Body: "You shall bind them for a sign upon your arm, and they shall be as tefillin between your eyes" (Duet. 6:8). Like a marriage ring on a finger, the tefillin are a physically tangible bond on our bodies, embodying our bond with G-d and our commitment to make G-d's oneness real in our world.

5) Environment: "You shall inscribe them on the doorposts of your home, and on your gates" (Duet. 6:9). The last and ultimate phase is the mezuzah: a parchment scroll containing the verses of the Shema affixed to the doorpost of the Jewish home—defining both the sanctity of the environment within and its influence on the environment without.

By Yanki Tauber

Aleph Institute
Hyman & Martha Rogal Center

5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

www.AlephNE.org
info@AlephNE.org



ALEPH INSTITUTE
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

שמע ישראל – SHEMA YISRAEL

Shema Yisrael (שמע ישראל – "Hear O Israel") are the first words of a section of the Torah (largely from this week's Torah portion) this is the centerpiece of the morning and evening prayer services, encapsulating the monotheistic essence of Judaism:
"Hear, O Israel: the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One"
– "שמע ישראל, ה' אלקינו, ה' אחד"

In its entirety, Shema consists of three sections: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41.

Its recitation twice daily (morning and evening) is a biblical commandment; it is also recited before retiring to bed for the night. Traditionally, it is also a Jews last words before departing this world.

(Full text of the Shema on the next side)

שמע ישראל – SHEMA YISRAEL

Translation:

Hear, O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One.

(Recite the following verse in an undertone:

Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.)

You shall love the L-rd your G d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

I am the L-rd your G d who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G d; I, the L-rd, am your G-d. True.

Transliteration:

Shmah yee-srah-ayl ah-doh-noi eh-loh-hay-noo ah-doh-noi eh-khahd.

(Recite the following verse in an undertone:

Bah-rookh shem ki-vohd mahl-khoo-toh li-oh-lahm vah-ehd.)

Vah-hahv-tah ayt ah-doh-noi eh-loh-heh-khah bi-khohl li-vahv-khah, oov-khohl nahf-shkhah, oov-khohl moh-deh-khah. Vi-hah-yoo hahd-vah-reem hah-ay-leh, ah-shehr ah-noh-khee mitzah-oo-khah hah-yohm ahl li-vah-veh-khah. Vi-shee-nahn-tahm li-vah-neh-khah vi-dee-bahr-tah bahm bi-sheev-tkhah bi-vay-teh-khah, oov-lekht-khah vah-deh-rekh, oov-shah-khbkhah oov-koo-meh-khah. Ook-shahr-tahm loht ahl yah-deh-khah, vi-hah-yoo li-toh-tah-foht bayn ay-neh-khah. Ookh-tahv-tahm ahl mi-zoo-zoht bay-teh-khah oo-vee-shah-reh-khah. Ah-nee ah-doh-noi eh-loh-hay-khehm ah-shehr hoh-tzay-tee eht-khehm may-eh-rehtz meetz-rah-yeem leeh-yoht lah-khehm lay-loh-heem. Ah-nee ah-doh-noi eh-loh-hay-khehm. Emet.

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה
אחד:

(Recite the following verse in an undertone:

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד:
ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך בכל-
לבבך ובכל-נפשך ובכל-מאדך:
והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי
מצוה היום על-לבבך: ושמנתם
לבנה ודברתם בם בשבת בביתך
ובלכתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך:
וקשרתם לאות על-ידך והיו
לטטפת בין עיניך: וכתבתם על-
מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך:

אני יהוה אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי
אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם
לאלהים אני יהוה אלהיכם:
אמת:

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Monday, August 12, 2024-8 Av, 5784

Spies Return (1312 BCE)

The Spies dispatched 40 days earlier by Moses to tour the Land of Israel return to Israel's encampment in the desert, bearing a huge cluster of grapes and other lush fruits. But even as they praise the land's fertility, they terrify the people with tales of mighty giant warriors dwelling there and assert that the land is unconquerable.

Civil War in Jerusalem (67 CE)

Fighting breaks out inside the besieged city of Jerusalem between Jewish factions divided on the question of whether or not to fight the Roman armies encircling the city from without. One group sets fire to the city's considerable food stores, consigning its population to starvation until the fall of Jerusalem three years later.

Tuesday, August 13, 2024-9 Av, 5784

Exodus Generation Condemned to Die in Desert (1312 BCE)

On the Ninth of Av of the year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE), the generation of Jews who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership 16 months earlier were condemned to die in the desert and the entry into the Land of Israel was delayed for 40 years.

As related in Numbers, when the Spies that Moses sent to the Land of Canaan returned with their disheartening report, the people wept all night - the night of Av 9th - proclaiming that they'd rather return to Egypt than attempt to conquer and settle it; G-d decreed that the entire generation would wander in the desert for 40 years until the last of them died out, and that their children, under the leadership of Joshua, will enter the land He promised as Israel's heritage.

Holy Temples Destroyed (423 BCE and 69 CE)

Both the first and second Holy Temples, which stood in Jerusalem, were destroyed on the 9th of Av: the First Temple by the Babylonians in the year 3338 from creation (423 BCE), and the second by the Romans in 3829 (69 CE).

Fall of Betar (133 CE)

Betar, the last stronghold in the heroic Bar Kochba rebellion, fell to the Romans on the 9th of Av of the year 3893 (133 CE) after a three-year siege. 580,000 Jews died by starvation or the sword, including Bar Kochba, the leader of the rebellion.

Expulsion From England (1290)

On this date in 1290, King Edward I of England issued an Edict of Expulsion, ordering the expulsion of all Jews from his territory.

Spanish Expulsion (1492)

The Jews of Spain were expelled by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella on the 9th of Av of 1492, terminating many centuries of flourishing Jewish life in that country.

Wednesday, August 14, 2024-10 Av, 5784

Holy Temple Burns (69)

The Romans set the Temple aflame on the afternoon of Av 9. For this reason, some of the mourning practices of the "Nine Days" are observed through the morning hours of Av 10.

AMIA Bombing (1994)

Arab terrorists connected to Hezbollah exploded a bomb in the Jewish Community Center (AMIA) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 86 and wounding more than 300, in the most lethal attack against any diaspora Jewish Community by Arab terrorists.

Expulsion from Gaza (2005)

More than 8,500 Jewish residents were forcefully expelled from their homes in 25 towns and settlements

in the Gaza Strip (including 16 settlements in the flourishing "Gush Katif" belt) and Northern Shomron in the summer of 2005, as part of the Israeli government's "Disengagement Plan."

Birth of Isaachar (1565/1564 BCE)

Issachar, the son of Jacob and Leah, ninth of the Twelve Tribes, was born on 10 Menachem Av in Haran. He lived to the age of 122. The tribe of Issachar was well-known for their Torah scholarship, producing many members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court.

Thursday, August 15, 2024-11 Av, 5784

Salvation of Baghdad Jewry (1733)

In 1733, the Persian conqueror Nader Shah Afshar laid siege to Ottoman-held Baghdad. Knowing that Persian rule would not bode well for them, the Jewish community prayed for an Ottoman victory. On 11 Menachem Av, an Ottoman force led by Topal Osman Pasha drove away the Persian forces and the siege was lifted. The Jewish community commemorated this day each year, refraining from reciting the penitential prayers of tachanun.

Friday, August 16, 2024-12 Av, 5784

Nachmanides' Disputation (1263)

By order of King James I of Aragon (Spain), Nachmanides (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, 1194-1270) was compelled to participate in a public debate, held in the king's presence, against a Jewish convert to Christianity, Pablo Christiani. His brilliant defense of Judaism and refutations of Christianity's claims served as the basis of many such future disputations through the generations.