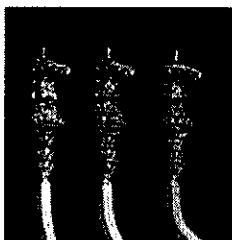


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Purposeful Prayer: Dialogue with the Divine

Shema: The Meaning and the Message – Part I:

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December 24th, 2012



THIS COURSE IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF:

אסתר חיה זיל בת צבי ופרומה עלקא פייגא בת מאיר ופשא לאה זיל נח בן אברהם ופייגא זיל
תהא נשמתם צרוורת בצרור החיים

MAY THEIR SOULS BE BOUND IN THE EVERLASTING BOND OF LIFE

(יחיד אומר: אל מלך נאמן).
שמע | ישראל, יי | אלהינו, יי | אחד.
ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

ואהבת את יי | אלהיך, בכל | לבבך, ובכל נפשך, ובכל מאדך. והיו הדברים האלה, אשר | אנכי מצוה
היום, על | לבבך. ושונתם לבגדי, ודברת כם, בשבתך בביתך, ובכלכתך בדרך, ובשכבך, ובקומך.
וקשרתם לאות | על ירך, והיו לטטפת בין | עיניך. וכתבתם | על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך.

והיה אם שמע תשמעו אל מצותי, אשר | אנכי מצוה | אתכם היום, לאהבה את יי | אלהיכם ולעבדו,
בכל | לבבכם ובכל נפשכם. ונתתי מטר | ארצכם בעתו, יורה ומלקוש, ואספת דגנה ותירשך ויצגנך.
ונתתי | עשב | בשדה לבהמתך, ואכלת ושבעת. השמר לך פן יפתה ללבבכם, וסרתם ועבדתם |
אלהים | אחרים והשתחיתם להם. וחרה | אף יי ככם, ועצר | את השמים ולא יהיה מטר, והאדמה לא
תתן את יבולה, ואכרתם | מהרה מעל הארץ הטבה | אשר | יי נתן לכם. ושמחתם | את דברי | אלה על |
לבבכם ועל נפשכם, וקשרתם | אתם לאות | על ירכם, והיו לטוטפת בין | עיניכם. ולמדתם | אתם | את
בניכם לדבר כם, בשבתך בביתך, ובכלכתך בדרך, ובשכבך, ובקומך. וכתבתם | על מזוזות ביתך
ובשעריך. למען | ירבו | ימיכם וימי בניכם | על האדמה | אשר נשבע | יי לאבותיכם לתת להם, כימי
השמים | על הארץ.

ויאמר יי | אל משה לאמר. דבר | אל בני | ישראל ואמרת אליהם, ועשו להם ציצת על כנפי בגדיהם
לדרתם, ונתנו | על ציצת הכנף פתיל תכלת. והיה לכם לציצת. וראיתם | אתו וזכרתם | את כל מצות
יי, ועשיתם | אתם, ולא תתורו | אחרי לבבכם ואחרי | עיניכם, אשר אתם זנים | אחריהם. למען תזכרו
ועשיתם | את כל מצותי, והייתם קדושים לאלהיכם. אני יי | אלהיכם, אשר הוצאתי | אתכם | מארץ
מצרים, לדורות לכם לאלהים, אני יי | אלהיכם.

ואהבת You shall love* HASHEM, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources. Let these matters that I command you today* be upon your heart.* Teach them thoroughly to your children and speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise.

Touch the arm-tefillin at Bind them* as a sign upon your arm and the head-tefillin let them be tefillin between your eyes. And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

While reciting the second paragraph (Deuteronomy 11:13-21), concentrate on accepting all the commandments and the concept of reward and punishment.

והיה And it will come to pass* that if you continually hearken to My commandments that I command you today, to love HASHEM, your God, and to serve Him, with all your heart and with all your soul — then I will provide rain for your land in its proper time, the early and late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. I will provide grass in your field for your cattle and you will eat and be satisfied. Beware* lest your heart be seduced and you turn astray and serve gods of others and bow to them.* Then the wrath of HASHEM will blaze against you. He will restrain the heaven so there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce. And you will swiftly be banished* from the goodly land which HASHEM gives you. Place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul; bind them for a sign upon your arm and let them be tefillin between your eyes. Teach them to your children, to discuss them, while you sit* in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise. And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. In order to prolong your days* and the days of your children upon the ground that HASHEM has sworn to your ancestors to give them, like the days of the heaven on the earth.*

ויאמר And HASHEM said* to Moses saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them that they are to make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations. And they are to place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of techeiles.* And it shall constitute tzitzis for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of HASHEM and perform them; and not explore* after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My commandments; and be holy to your God. I am HASHEM, your God, Who has removed you from the land of Egypt to be a God to you. I am HASHEM your God — it is true —

Concentrate on fulfilling the commandment of remembering the Exodus from Egypt.

1. תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף יג עמוד א

משנה: אמר רבי יהושע בן קרחה: למה קדמה פרשת שמע לזוהיה אם שמוע – כדי שיקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים תהלה, ואחר כך מקבל עליו עול מצות; והיה אם שמוע לויאמר – שזוהיה אם שמוע נוהג בין ביום ובין בלילה, ויאמר אינו נוהג אלא ביום בלבד.

Approach #1:

2. תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף צא עמוד ב

ואמר לו אנטונינוס לרבי: מאימתי יצר הרע שולט באדם, משעת יצירה או משעת יציאה? – אמר לו: משעת יצירה. – אמר לו: אם כן ברעט במעי אמו ויוצא אלא: משעת יציאה. אמר רבי: דבר זה למדני אנטונינוס, ומקרא מסייעו שנאמר +בראשית ד'+ לפתח חטאת רבץ.

3. Prayerfully Yours: Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky (pages 138-139)

R' Grodzinski asks, inasmuch as we assume that the nature of the *yetzer hara* is to seek pleasure via gratification of physical desires, what could be the motivation for driving the fetus out of its mother's womb? The fetus is in an idyllic state, with all its needs being provided by its mother. What pleasurable gratification could there be in leaving the womb?

R' Grodzinski answers that we err in thinking that the primary drive of the *yetzer hara* is gratification of desires. *The primary drive of the yetzer hara is to be free and unfettered.* Indeed, it wishes to be free to indulge in pleasurable activities, but that is just one of the ways in which it wishes to be unrestricted. However, even in absence of actual pleasure, the *yetzer hara* seeks to be its own master.

The idyllic intrauterine existence of the fetus is offset by its confinement within the womb. If the *yetzer hara* were present in the fetus, it would incite it to kick its way out of the womb, even to perish rather than be confined.

R' Grodzinski has provided us with an important psychological insight. People may be driven to self-destructive acts by the impulse to be free and unfettered. Rebellion against authority is innate and not a product of the intellect. Parenthetically, this may explain why the most frequent psychiatric diagnosis of adolescence is "Oppositional Defiant Disorder." The modern-day release of social restraints has allowed the *yetzer hara* to achieve its primary drive.

The essence of Judaism, expressed in the *Shema*, is *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim*, "accepting the yoke of heaven." This goes beyond servitude. It means total and unquestioning submission to God, accepting the restraints imposed by His will just as the ox is restrained by the yoke. "Oppositional Defiant Disorder" should be as impossible a phenomenon as an ox casting off the yoke.

4. The Hirsch Siddur: Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (page 114)

13:2). They teach, too, that the essence of the declaration of שמע lies in קבלת עול מלכות שמים, the subordination of all of our personality and of our entire world to the one and unique dominion of God.

5. רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה מרק א הלכה ג

ואם יעלה על הדעת שאין כל הנמצאים מלכדו מצויים הוא לכדו יהיה מצוי, ולא יבטל הוא לבטולם. שכל הנמצאים צריכין לו והוא ברוך הוא אינו צריך להם ולא לאחד מהם, לפיכך אין אמתתו כאמתת אחד מהם.

6. Prayerfully Yours: Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky (pages 138-139)

Acceptance of the yoke of heaven can be taught only by modeling. Perhaps the reason that adolescents are so often rebellious is because they have never seen *kabbalas ol* in action. Even if they were raised in an ostensibly Torah observant home, there may have been a lack of *kabbalas ol*.

Approach #2:

7. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: Deuteronomy Chapter 6 Verse 4 (page 89)

Our knowledge of God does not rest on שמיעה but on ראייה; it was obtained by the evidence of the actual senses of the whole of our nation. Moses could say to his people: אהא הראה לדעה כי ה' הוא האלקים (Thou hast been brought to know by seeing that God (ה') alone is God, there is none else beside Him, (Ch. IV,35). But this revelation of Himself, making Himself perceptible on earth, God only did once, when laying the foundation for the creation of His People, so that it could be a means of conviction from generation to generation, from community to community, and remain by direct tradition the indisputable basis on which, for all eternity, every son of Israel has to build up all his thinking and doing. Henceforth it does not say שמע ישראל but ראה ישראל. Not out of the phenomena of nature and history is it that each one of us has to come to a conclusion in his mind as to the existence or non-existence of God. Far beyond the convictions which are arrived at from such speculative inferences and deductions, God demonstrated His Existence, yea His existence down here in the midst of all earthly conditions, to every one of our fathers by experiences which settled any possible doubt, for them to testify to their children who came after these events. They saw God with their own eyes breaking their chains in Egypt leading and feeding them through the wilderness and bringing them to the Promised Land. They heard Him with their own ears when He imparted the words of His Law to them at Sinai. Our knowledge of God rests on the evidence of this, testified by the whole assembly of the whole of our nation. Not from nature and history have we to deduce a belief in God, but, with the knowledge of God which we have been given in our hands, we are to look into nature and history and try to get an understanding of the phenomena of nature and the events of history.

And then, with our eyes awakened by God to see Him in nature, with our ears opened to hear Him in history, everything, the greatest and smallest in nature, the greatest and smallest event in history proclaims itself as His work, His governing. Then in the world of nature and history of our own times we shall still see the ruling of the God of our fathers, and, like them, we will wander through this world with God, and of Jewish minds and hearts it will eternally say: "They did once see Thy ways O God, even the ways of my God, my King in holiness". (Ps. LXXVIII, 25).
Therefore: "שמע ישראל".

A

B

C

D

E

Approach #3:

8. תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף נו עמוד א

דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: +בראשית מט+ ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו ואגידה לכם. ביקש יעקב לגלות לבניו קץ.... ונסתלקה ממנו שכילה. אמר: שמא חס ושלום יש במטתי פסול, כאברהם שיצא ממנו ישמעאל, ואבי יצחק שיצא ממנו עשו. אמרו לו בניו: שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד. אמרו: כשם שאין בלבך אלא אחד – כך אין בלכנו אלא אחד. באותה שעה פתח יעקב אבינו ואמר: ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

9. Worship Of The Heart: The Essence Of Shema: Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (page 112)

The theme of *Shema* has not only been communicated to us through an apocalyptic revelation as a truth that is metaphysical and transcendental. It was also discovered and ascertained by the human mind itself, employing its natural categorical instruments of apprehension and comprehension. Revelation only confirmed what the logos had already attained. Jacob is the representative of a natural ethical system of the charismatic community who went forth to find God and discover His ways,

relying on his own wits and talents. Moses, who was found by God and taken prisoner by Him in the great encounter of revelation, proclaimed the same truth—*Shema Yisrael*. The logos is capable of arriving at an apocalyptic truth. Hence, the experience connected with *Shema* is not something mysterious and paradoxical, which man can only accept but not comprehend. It is an august truth rooted in the logos and reaching out to the deepest strata of the human personality. It begins with the awakening of the logical awareness of man, with the ripening of his thoughts and insights, with the dawning upon him of the greatest of all questions—the question of origin and root. That occurs with the advent of the Patriarchs. Hence, the experience is consummated at the level of naturalness and rationality, when man begins to examine himself and his surroundings.