

# Parasha Meditation Va'etchanan

## Devarim 3:23 – 7:

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

### Introduction:

This week's *parasha* always touches me. It's so filled with emotions, so suitable for the celebration of TubAv. Moshe Rabbeinu describes his very deepest yearning for the Land of Israel. How privileged are we to be able to not only enter the Land, but live here and nurture our relationship with the Land of Israel through planting and growing!

### *Shema Yisrael* – The Centerpiece of Jewish Belief and Prayer

The end of the *parasha* includes the *Shema Yisrael* prayer, which is like a seed that contains the entire Torah – a direct shortcut to Hashem. This centerpiece of Jewish belief and prayer contains the power to draw us back to our Soul's purpose: Loving G-d, and sanctifying His Name as One. שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה'שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה'שֵׁם אֶחָד. – “*Shema Yisrael*, Hear O Yisrael, Hashem is One.”<sup>1</sup> It says “*shema*” – hear/listen, not just because we cannot see G-d, but because we are to bring the truth of Hashem's Oneness deep into our being. What we see remains external to ourselves. We cannot ‘see’ but we can ‘hear’ Hashem communicating to us especially in the words of His Holy Torah. We unite with Him through seeing and remembering, but even more so by hearing and listening.<sup>2</sup> The *Shema* is a verbal mikvah, pouring into every level of our souls. It aligns us to the truth of Hashem's Oneness, purifying doubt and the temptation to believe that there is anything in the world that is separate from Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

### Complete Active Listening

שְׁמַע – The first word of the *Shema* prayer means hear or listen. Its first letter *shin* represents *esh*- fire, the following letter *mem* – is associated with *mayim* (water). To truly listen is to unite our vital energy (fire) with the receptiveness of water. This kind of hearing is called active listening. The last letter in the word *Shema* is *ayin*, which means eye and has the shape of an eye. To truly listen is to visualize the message we hear in our mind's eye. The letter *ayin* has the numerical value of seventy, corresponding to the seventy facets of the Torah, and the seventy languages of the world. To listen is to integrate the message with all its possible numerous aspects.

<sup>1</sup> Devarim 6:4.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Shelomo Carlebach, *Parashas Eikev*, Issue #25, 19-20 menachem Av 5767.

<sup>3</sup> By alumna student Tziona Achishena for full article see <<http://www.berotbatayin.org/shema.htm>>.

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### Israel – Straight to G-d

יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Yisrael* – Israel. This word can be broken up into two: Straight ישר – *yashar* אֵל – to G-d. The first letter of the word *yashar* is *yud*. It is the smallest most humble of all the letters. When writing any Hebrew letter, we always begin from the top, forming a *yud*. *Yud*, the most hidden beginning of all the letters is the first letter of Israel – the beginning of Hashem's creation plan. He created the world for our sake, but our greatness is hidden throughout our exile and persecution. *Shin*, the second letter of Israel looks like flames of fire. It represents the fiery energy to keep us going, and keep our passion for Hashem strong. *Reish*, the third letter of Israel – has the shape of the back of the head. The letter *reish* also means head (*rosh*). With this letter we become the leader of the world, but only if we connect with the *alef-lamed* of G-d's revealed name. "El" also means power, and interestingly it may be the root of the English word electricity. This name of G-d consists of the *alef* the oneness of G-d together with the *lamed* – the tallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet – symbolizing going upwards reaching towards its higher spiritual purpose.

### The Eternal Name

הָשֵׁם – The four lettered name of G-d is translated most correctly as the Eternal. It includes within it the letters of *heh*, *yud*, and *vav* through which you can spell *haya* – was, *hove* – is, *yiheye* – will be. Hashem is beyond time and includes all past, present and future. The *heh* is the letter of breath, birth and creativity, the letter *vav* is the letter of connection. G-d created and breathed life into all existence and connected the world to himself. The first *yud* of His name denotes beginning, He is the first, nothing preceded Him, both Israel and G-d begin with this same letter signifying the connection between us.

### Elokim – The Power of Nature

אֱלֹהֵינוּ – The root of this word is *Elokim* the word for G-d which is manifested within the physical world also denoting judgment. *Elokim* decreed that the natural rules of the world operate in according to set laws. The first two letters are shared with the word for Israel denoting our connection with *Elokim*. It is interesting that these letters are in the end of the word *Yisrael* whereas they appear in the beginning of the word for G-d. Our end goal and purpose to reach the Divine, is only the beginning of G-d's infinite being which is so uplifted beyond what we can even begin to imagine. The *heh* is the birth not only of our world, but of all the worlds beyond us, reaching towards the *yud* that most spiritual letter corresponding to the world Above – The World to Come. The suffix נוּ – is always used to denote "us" or "our". The nun stands for the fifty gates of understanding all which Hashem wants to grant us, and the *vav* is the letter of connection. Whatever is ours is what we connect with on the deepest level.

### The Gate of Brotherhood & Unity

אֶחָד – The first letters of the word for one (*echad*) is *alef* and *chet*, which spell the word אַח – *ach* – brother. In order to be united we need to feel the connectedness of brotherhood. The last letter of *echad* is *dalet* which has the numerical value of four, representing the four corners of the world that needs to be united in the One. The *chet* in the middle of the word represents the *chuppah* (marriage canopy), which connect together the oneness of G-d with the four directions of the world. It is the gate through which the Oneness, so to speak, has to pass in order to enter the physical world.



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**Meditation:****Shema Meditation based on Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan<sup>4</sup>**

Make yourself comfortable and close your eyes. Begin breathing slowly.

**Step 1.** Try to visualize the first two letters of the word the *Shema*: ש – *shin* and מ – *mem*. These two letters are two of the three “Mother Letters.”<sup>5</sup>

**Step 2.** Inhale while imagining *shin*, exhale while imagining *mem*. Repeat ten times.

**Step 3.** Visualize how the *shin* represents chaos and fire, while the *mem* connects to harmony and water. Allow the letters of the *Shema* to break through your everyday level of consciousness (*shin*), and raise you to tranquility and inner peace (*mem*).

**Step 4.** Feel how the sound of the *shin* is “shhh” is a sound that includes the presence of all sounds. Connect with the sound of *mem* which is its opposite – the pure harmonic sound, “mmm”.  
נ – *ayin* – the last letter of the *Shema* has no sound. It acts as a neutralizer and vessel for the fire of *shin* and the water of *mem* to merge.

**Step 5.** Inhale while visualizing the letter נ – *ayin*, exhale while making a “shhh” sound, and visualizing the letter ש – *shin*.

**Step 6.** Inhale while visualizing the letter נ – *ayin*, exhale while making a “mmm” sound and visualizing the letter מ – *mem*.

**Step 7. Repeat ten times**, inhaling silently, and exhaling “shhh.” Then inhaling again silently, and exhaling “mmm.” The repetitions will draw you deeper and deeper into the “mmm” sound.

**Notes:**

There is a spiritual pilot light, or *Pintele Yid*, in every Jew that never is extinguished, and the *Shema* is a spark that causes that hidden light to grow and strengthen. We suffer when we are not connected to this truth without understanding why. The perpetual presence of the *Shema* pilot light gets obscured by layers of worldly impurity that comes with exile, true exile: the distance from knowing Hashem. Every time we say the *Shema*, the light that is within us grows stronger, purifying us with the truth, connecting us to a wellspring of *emunah* (faith).

<sup>4</sup> See this beautiful video presentation <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9bwEFS7Btk>>

<sup>5</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:2. (The third Mother Letter is *alef*).



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# About Us



## **Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum**

*Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work. For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean*

*Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.*

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

*Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.*

*If you are interested in:*

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*or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>*

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