

***Sh'ma* – Decoding the Key to Jewish Spirituality**

An Exploration of the Multiple Meanings of the *Kriyat Sh'ma*

Based on Biblical and Rabbinic Text Study

With sources for guided study

By Noam Zion

BOOK THREE

Kriyat Sh'ma as Kavanat HaLev -

The Intentionality of the Heart

Shalom Hartman Institute, TICHON Project

12 Gedalyahu Alon Street POB 8029, Jerusalem 93113

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Unit VI. Intentionality of the Heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma*

Unit Goals

In the previous unit we dealt with aspects regarding the form of *Kriyat Sh'ma* and the public ceremony of *Prisat Sh'ma* customary in synagogues during the period of the Mishna. In practice, the growing trend in the halachic literature is to define the essence of *Kriyat Sh'ma* according to **the intentionality of an individual's heart**. It is a crucial question. Prayer as *Avodah She'Balev* and *Kriyat Sh'ma* have no meaning if reduced to distracted lip service. Only if we define the required ideational content of heartfelt intentionality, will we be able to understand the essence of the belief in God towards which the paragraphs of *Sh'ma* educate us.

The meaning of *Kriyat Sh'ma's* intentionality of the heart is clarified by its **halachic context that defines the extent of verses which require full intentionality**. In the following three units (VI, VII, VIII) we will deal with the halachic disputes in the Talmud regarding the portion of *Kriyat Sh'ma* that requires intentionality, and the opinions regarding its thematic content (**Unit VI**). The consensus today is that halacha requires intentionality only during the first verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*."

In **Units VII** and **VIII** we deal with two main themes within the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*":

Acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - the Kingdom of Heaven (Unit VII)

Declaring and Enhancing God's Unity (*Yichud Hashem*) (Unit VIII).

The Goals of Unit VI are:

To show that **an individual's intentionality of the heart**, and not the performance of a ritual reading (*Kriyah*), is the requirement of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. In prayer at large and specifically in *Kriyat Sh'ma*, the internal event, rather than the ritual reading, is what really matters.

To become familiarized with **the disputes** answering the question: "what is the main portion of *Kriyat Sh'ma*" and to theorize about possible rationales behind these disputes.

To differentiate the three paragraphs thematically and to see which verses are most significant.

Lesson A - Introduction

Posing the Question: What is the Difference Between a Ritual Reading (*Kriyah*) and Intentionality of the Heart? (Source #1)

Source #1 - "If One Had the Intentionality of the Heart, One Fulfilled the Requirement."

Mishna Brachot 2:1

"If one happened to be reading [the paragraphs of the Sh'ma] from the Torah and the time for reading [*Sh'ma*] arrived, then if one had intentionality, one fulfilled the requirement."

Rabbi Steinsaltz explains:

The first problem, discussed only implicitly in the Mishna, is the question of intentionality of the heart.

"If one was reading Torah" - reading those very paragraphs of *Kriyat Sh'ma*; "and the time for reading arrived" - in the morning or in the evening; "if one had intentionality of the heart - one fulfilled the requirement." - and one is not required to read *Kriyat Sh'ma* an additional time. Nor does the fact that the brachot of *Sh'ma* were not recited detract from the fulfillment of the mitzvah.

- 1) According to this cryptic Mishna, it seems that a person who was reading the paragraphs of *Sh'ma* at the time of *Kriyat Sh'ma* fulfilled the requirement of the mitzvah of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, as long as - besides reading from the Torah - the person also had intentionality of the heart.
- 2) Try to explain what the difference could be between reading the paragraphs of *Sh'ma* while reading or studying Torah in class and reading *Kriyat Sh'ma* separately from the siddur during services. Is there a difference?

The concept of intentionality of the heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma* appears for the first time (**source #1**) in a Mishna from Brachot: "If one was reading Torah [the paragraphs of *Sh'ma*] and the time for reading (of morning or evening *Kriyat Sh'ma*) arrived, **if one had intentionality of the heart**, one fulfilled the requirement." This Mishna mentions the differentiation between a ritual reading and a reading of an inner consciousness, with intentionality of the heart, without clarifying what the difference actually is. We can offer various explanations **for a reading devoid of intentionality of the heart:**

Reading without **understanding**, as one would read an unfamiliar foreign language.

Flipping through the text **without mental concentration**, like a person who daydreams in the middle of reading a book.

Reading and saying things while understanding and concentrating, yet **without serious intention** regarding what is being said. It is superficial, for example, if someone reads "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One*" but remains utterly indifferent to religious questions.

Reading with concentration and understanding, **without faith or agreement** with what is written. Reading from a siddur is supposed to be different from reading any other book, for a siddur is meant to express the beliefs and opinions of the people who pray from it, not only to learn information from the composers of the siddur. Reading from a siddur is not only reading for the purpose of studying, it is reading and recitation of things which compel the reader to act accordingly or at least believe in them. This is a mere mouthing of words close to hypocrisy.

At this point there is no need to determine which explanation is preferable, nor is any single explanation authorized by the Mishna. These differentiations highlight the difficulties found in required reading in general, and more specifically compulsory prayer from a siddur. Obviously, the halacha intended to demand something

internal, beyond mumbling the words of the paragraphs of *Sh'ma*, every morning and evening. (In this unit we propose to define “intentionality of the heart” as understanding and cognitive concentration, and in Unit VII we will focus on an alternative definition of intentionality of the heart as concentrating and believing, agreeing and consenting to what is being read).

In order to contrast the approach of intentionality of the heart with the approach of a ceremonial declaration (Unit V), we recommend rereading **the two disputes appearing in unit V** (in lesson A, from *Midrash HaGadol* on Deuteronomy 6, and TB Brachot 13), the disputes between Rabbi Eliezer Ben Azaria and Rabbi Meir; and between Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi and the Rabbis (Chachamim), regarding reading in an audible manner and reading in the Hebrew even for someone who does not understand Hebrew. There is no need to study the details of the dispute again, just to notice that there exists an anti-ritual ideal of *Kriyat Sh'ma* that regards **intentionality of the heart as** essential. This concept is based on the words from the paragraph of *Sh'ma*: "**Take to heart these instructions.**" According to the words of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and other scholars, the minimal requirement of reading with intentionality of the heart is reading **with understanding**. The word *Sh'ma* should be understood as "Understand! "*Hasket!*" "Hear O' Israel," - "in any language."

Lesson B. - How much of *Kriyat Sh'ma* requires intentionality?

Our halachic question emerges from this case: **Let us assume that a person read all of *Kriyat Sh'ma* quickly and did not focus on all of what was being read, only on part of it. Did that person fulfill the requirement of the mitzvah of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?** Did this perfunctory reading have any worth or must that person go back and repeat the reading, this time with intentionality of the heart? **The answer** focuses mainly on the extent of the portion to which adequate thought was devoted. But in that technical issue we seek to explore the essence of *Sh'ma* and therefore the essence of Jewish faith.

We will organize the differing opinions in order from the maximal demand to the minimal one:

Intentionality of the Heart - Until What Point? All Three Paragraphs (source #2)

Source #2 - The Whole *Sh'ma*

Tosefta, Brachot 2:2

The reader of *Sh'ma* must have intentionality of the heart.

Rabbi Achi says in the name of Rabbi Yehuda: If one had intentionality of the heart in the first paragraph "*Sh'ma...VeAhavta*," even if one fails to have intentionality of the heart in the final paragraphs, one fulfilled the requirement [of *Kriyat Sh'ma*].

- 1) What is the dispute in this Mishnaic source?
- 2) What do you think is the reasoning underlying the first opinion? What do you think of this reasoning? Explain.

Tosefta Brachot says: "The reader of *Sh'ma* must have intentionality of the heart." The ruling is cryptic; it is unclear if someone who read it and after the fact discovered that s/he had no intentionality of the heart throughout the reading of *Kriyat Sh'ma* must repeat the reading. But it seems that in the first place the ideal is for a person to read *Kriyat Sh'ma* **in its entirety** with intentionality of the heart, and no attempt to differentiate among various levels of importance. One is supposed to mean *all* that one says in *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

Intentionality of the Heart - in the Paragraph "*Sh'ma*" and in the Paragraph "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" (sources #3-#4)

Source #3 - The First Paragraph Only or the Second Only

TB: Brachot 13a

"Take to heart."

Rabbi Zutra says: Through here [the paragraph of *Sh'ma*] the mitzvah requires intentionality. From here onward, only a ritual reading is required.

Rabbi Yoashia says: Through here the mitzvah is of ritual reading. From here onward [the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*"] - the mitzvah requires intentionality.

- 1) What is the difference between the mitzvah of intentionality and the mitzvah of ritual reading (*kriyah*)?
- 2) Read the paragraph of *Sh'ma and V'Ahavata* in parallel to the paragraph of *Vehaya Im Shamo* and define in one sentence the essence of each paragraph.
- 3) Try to provide reasoning for the opinion of Rabbi Yoashia in light of the definition of the essences of these paragraphs.

Source #4 - The First Paragraph Only

TY Brachot 2:5

Rabbi Achi says in the name of Rabbi Yehuda: If one had intentionality of the heart in the first paragraph [the paragraph of *Sh'ma*], even if one fails to have intentionality of the heart in the second paragraph [the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*"], one has fulfilled the requirement of *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

What is the difference between the first and second paragraphs?

Rabbi Chanina said: All that is written in one is written in the other.

So [if there is no conceptual difference] should a person only read one of them from now on?

Rabbi Ila said: The first teaches about the individual, the second about the community; the first is for study and the second is for action.

- 1) What are the differences between the two paragraphs according to Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Ila respectively?
- 2) Are Rabbi Ila's claims correct? Check the content of the paragraphs.

In TB Brachot 13 (source #3) a dispute is mentioned between **Rabbi Zutra and Rabbi Yoashia** that differentiates between ritual reading and intentionality of the heart. They claim that there exist two different mitzvot regarding *Kriyat Sh'ma*: one is a mitzvah of simple reading and one is a mitzvah of special intentionality of the heart and cognitive concentration. They disputed the question: **which paragraph requires special concentration?** Rabbi Zutra said the paragraph of *Sh'ma*, and Rabbi Yoashia said the paragraph of *Vehaya Im Shamo*.

Here we recommend reviewing and **summarizing** in a single word, or perhaps two, the essence of each of the three paragraphs of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, and then **rate them** according to their order of importance. After compiling the results, the students' opinions can be compared with those of the scholars (the commentary of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is located at the beginning of Unit IV, and the words of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha are at the beginning of Unit VII).

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai is consistent, seeing in the mitzvah of *Kriyat Sh'ma* a kind of Torah study. However **Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha** differentiates between one's attitude towards God and one's attitude towards mitzvot. In his opinion, acceptance of *Oi Malchut Shamayim* comes *before* acceptance of mitzvot. Furthermore, the Ten Commandments begin with "*I am Adonai your God*" and only afterwards the commandments of God, the Ruler, are specified.

In the following unit we will take a closer look at the explanation of the concept "acceptance of *Oi Malchut Shamayim*." The first explanation, **Rabbi Ilai**, clarifies the linguistic difference between the paragraphs (source #4). For instance, in the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" it speaks in the singular, saying, "*And you shall love...with all your heart and all your soul,*" while in the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" it speaks in the second person plural, saying, "*with all your hearts and all your souls.*" The question is, what is more important - the personal, direct connection with God, or the historical connection of the Jewish People who signed a **covenant** with God? The ideas of a covenant with consequences - reward or punishment - and the connection to the Land of Israel appear only in the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" in *Kriyat Sh'ma*. If we understand *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a review and reminder of the Ten Commandments (Unit III) or as a reconstruction of the Sinai Experience (Unit II), then the importance of the second paragraph does in fact outweigh the first.

Intentionality of the Heart - Until What Point? All of the Paragraph of "Sh'ma Only Part of It? (sources #5-#7)

Source #5 - First Three Verses Only

TY Brachot 2:1

Bar Kapara said: One does not need intentionality of the heart other than during the first three verses only, and so we learned "teach them" ("Veshinantam") - until here intentionality is required, and from here on only recitation ("shinun") is required.

Source #6 - First Three Verses Only

TB Brachot 13a,b

"The words of Rabbi Eliezer: 'Take to heart these instructions.'" Is it possible that the entire paragraph requires intentionality? Rather, "these" - until here it requires intentionality, but from here on it does not require intentionality.

Rabbi Akiva said to him: But it says, "take to heart...with which I charge you this day," from here we learn that the entire paragraph requires intentionality.

- 1) Compare the distinction made by Bar Kapara between intentionality and recitation with that made in source #3 from TB Brachot 13.
- 2) Why did Bar Kapara choose the phrase "recitation" ("shinun")?
- 3) With whom does Bar Kapara agree - Rabbi Eliezer or Rabbi Akiva?
- 4) What are the claims of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer?
- 5) Read the two parts of the paragraph of *Sh'ma* and define their essence.
- 6) Why do you think Rabbi Eliezer ignored their essence? Why do you think Rabbi Eliezer discarded the second part and determined that it did not require intentionality of the heart during its reading?

Source #7 - First Verse Only

TB Brachot 13b

The Rabbis taught: "Hear Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One" – up through here, intentionality of the heart is required, said Rabbi Meir.

Rava said: The halacha is according to Rabbi Meir.

- 1) What is the halacha in this dispute? Try to define the essence of the verse that requires intentionality of the heart.
- 2) What can we learn from the fact that so many scholars disputed over this central issue of the intentionality of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?
- 3) Compare the opinion of Rabbi Meir to the first opinion in Tosefta (source #2).
- 4) Why do you think the halacha was ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir?
- 5) Do you find it desirable to focus intentionality of the heart just on the first verse and then read the rest of the *Sh'ma* as a simple, regular reading?

Appendix - A Story about Saying *Kriyat Sh'ma* in a Foreign Language

TYerushalmi Sotah 7a, according to the commentary *Hakorban Edah*:

Rabbi says: I say *Kriyat Sh'ma* must not be said in any other language but the Holy Tongue. For what reason? "Take to heart *these* instructions" (Deuteronomy 6) [exactly as they were pronounced in the Torah].

Rabbi Levi Bar Chayta went to Caesaria (or Katzrin). There he heard the the people reading in Greek and he wanted to stop them, so that they would not read in any language other than the Holy Tongue.

Rabbi Yossi heard about this and was angry at him. He said [rhetorically]: Do you mean [to be so strict about the form of the *Sh'ma*] that one who does not know how to read Assyrian [Hebrew written in the Assyrian alphabet as we use today, since Hebrew is no longer written in the same alphabet as the First Temple Jews once wrote it] should not read it at all? Rather, one fulfills one's obligation [for *Sh'ma*] in any language one knows.

Each verse in the paragraph of *Sh'ma* adds an additional element: belief in God, love of God, study, etc. What is the main element? Scholars disputed over this point:

Bar Kapara and Rabbi Eliezer require a reading with intentionality of the heart **just until the words: "Take to heart"** in the paragraph of *Sh'ma*. Afterwards, from the word "teach" (*VeShinantam*) they require only "*shinun*," which is simple reading or recitation. Apparently, according to their opinion, the main mitzvah of *Kriyat Sh'ma* is its first section - "*and you shall love Adonai your God.*" (sources #5-#6).

In the opinion of **Rabbi Akiva, the entire paragraph** requires intentionality of the heart, for it says, "*Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day.*" Therefore, the other mitzvot that appear in the paragraph are also included in the things that must be taken to heart. Perhaps Rabbi Akiva is not willing to restrict the meaning of *Sh'ma* to its emotive mitzvah of love (*V'Ahavata*), unless it entails concrete behaviors as detailed afterwards - "*to recite them,*" "*teach them,*" "*bind them,*" "*inscribe them*" (source #6).

Rabbi Meir requires intentionality of the heart **only in the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael.*"** It seems that in his opinion, the mitzvah of love and its expressions in tefillin and mezuzot are not the main thing. The opinion of Rabbi Meir was identified later as the obligatory halacha, and so it is particularly important to try and provide reasoning for his stand.

Summing Up This Unit in the Following Points:

The Rabbis had a pressing need to differentiate between the essential and the secondary parts of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. They feared that most of *Kriyat Sh'ma* would become a plain reading and therefore required that people take notice and focus at least on one verse.

The dispute regarding the essence of intentionality of the heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma* creates sensitivity to the various ideational elements of *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

The Transition to Unit VII:

First, in Unit VI we have explored the halachic question regarding **the extent** of verses requiring intentionality of the heart, and we offered our own theories to explain the differences. Now in the following Unit VII we will examine traditional commentaries regarding the content of intentionality of the heart.

Second, in the last lesson we learned the opinion of Rabbi Meir on the exclusive importance of the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*," in contrast to the opinions of Rabbi Eliezer and Bar Kapara that the mitzvah of "and you shall love" should also be included within the essential intentionality of the heart of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. In the following units we will explore in depth two explanations of the words of Rabbi Meir and one of the words of Rabbi Eliezer.

Regarding Rabbi Meir and the first verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*," the two main explanations of intentionality of the heart are **acceptance of *Oi Malchut Shamayim* (Unit VII) and Declaring and Enhancing God's Unity (*Yichud Hashem*) (Unit VIII)**. For Rabbi Eliezer, the main idea of *Kriyat Sh'ma* is **Love of God (Unit IX)**.

Unit VII. What is Intentionality of the Heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma*? Acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - The Kingdom of Heaven

Introduction - Accepting the Yoke out of Free Will

Educational Guide to the Sources

Lesson A - Accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and Freedom of Choice

Source #1 - Why is the First Paragraph First? - TB Brachot 13a

**Source #2 - "And they accepted God's sovereignty joyfully,"
The Bracha *Go'el Yisrael* - Arvit, Ashkenaz**

Source #3 - The Slave and the Voluntary Acceptance the Yoke - TY Brachot 3:3

Source #4 - *Matan Torah*, Exodus 19:8

Source #5 - The Covenant of Yehoshua -Joshua 24:14-26

**Source #6 - "But Israel chose God for themselves"
- Midrash Dvarim Rabba, "Va'Etchanan"**

Lesson B - *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - The Kingdom of Heaven

Source #7 - "To the *Molech*" - TB Sanhedrin 64a

Source #8 - "With all your Soul" - Mishna Brachot 9:1

Lesson C - The Yoke of Sanctifying God's Name *Ol Kiddush Hashem*

**Source #9 - Surrendering one's Soul in *Kriyat Sh'ma*
- Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Hachayim *Kriyat Sh'ma* 61**

Source #10 - The Death of Rabbi Akiva - TB Brachot 81b

**Source #11 - The Eve of Shavuot in the Ghetto: Those who Did Not Surrender" by
Moshe Praeger**

Source #12 - Yossele Rakover in Dialogue with his Creator by Zvi Kolitz

Source #13 - *Aleinu*

Lesson D - "When You are My Witnesses, I am God"

Source #14 - "You are My Witnesses!" Midrash HaGadol, Deuteronomy 14:1

Unit VII. What is Intentionality of the Heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

Acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - The Kingdom of Heaven

Introduction - Accepting the Yoke out of Free Will:

Personal Autonomy and The Kingdom of Heaven

Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha explains *Kriyat Sh'ma* as an internal event of personal acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*. In his opinion, Jews who read the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" must concentrate on their personal attitude towards the sovereignty of God more than on the verbal content of the text. Are they prepared to accept the yoke and observe the mitzvot? If this is indeed the intentionality of the heart of a person who believes in God and reads *Kriyat Sh'ma*, then Judaism promotes a unique attitude towards God. **Each day Jews must consider - do they personally want to renew God's sovereignty over them or not? The sovereignty of God is based on the autonomy of individuals, who decide whether or not to accept it.**

The religious revolution that is to be found in this approach is reflected in the unusual combination of the words "acceptance" and "kingdom." Could it be that the awesome Ruler, Creator of the world, rules *only* under the condition that each individual decides to accept God? **In traditional religious approaches** the authority of God is based on a more solid foundation than the will of the individual. The essence of God is God's incredible power in comparison to the people God created. God is eternal, people were born mortals. God is above nature, people are subject to their own desires, instincts, and natural needs. The enormous gap between Creator and creatures, between the Master of Power and the servants of their own needs, creates a religion based on the dependence of human beings on God psychologically, physically, and metaphysically. Therefore people are required to obey their Ruler. **This dependence is emphasized in many prayers when depicting the relationship between human and Divine.** In their prayers, Jews address God as merciful, able to help people that are incapable of fulfilling their own needs. It is common knowledge that in times of crisis, people become aware of their dependence on God and it makes them more "religious."

Nonetheless, **in the modern era**, two experiences have contributed to undermining that religious approach of dependence on the powerful Ruler:

The political awareness of **the power of people**, their valuation of self-rule and their utter rejection of external rule as tyrannical. People have become aware of their autonomy, which has been achieved by their ability to fulfill their own needs. In the democratic world, the metaphor of God as ruler does not conjure up identification or recognition of authority.

Modern consciousness, especially among Jews of the twentieth century, has been altered by the **Holocaust** and the atrocities of the World Wars. Here, the "omnipotent human being" was revealed in all its destructive power, and the lack of intervention on the part of God is seen as a moral outrage and a reflection of Divine weakness.

How are we to recognize the authority of a Ruler who does not exercise power in times of crisis? How are people to be seen as weak and dependent creatures when they act within international political frameworks utilizing unlimited power, both constructively and destructively? These two experiences do not enhance the human consciousness of dependence on God as a strong and powerful Ruler to whom we turn in prayer.

Identifying as a Jew in a democratic society is no longer the result of external coercion, it has become an autonomous choice. In modernity, it is out of free will that many Jews immigrated to Israel (*Aliyah*), and many Jews in the Diaspora formed voluntary Jewish communities. Neither the Zionist movement nor the Jewish communities had the power to force their authority upon individuals; all they could do was ask the members of their nation, as individuals, to accept their authority and accept the physical sacrifices and financial responsibilities to enable the continuation of the existence of the nation. In the post WWII world, Jews who wish to accept *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and the mitzvot do not act out of coercion; one chooses a rabbi and a community out of free will and preference. The power and "sovereignty" of Judaism are the result of an individual's decisions.

If this is a realistic description of the internal reality of Jews today, then the model of Ruler and subjects, the weak dependent upon the powerful, may not be appropriate to describe the relationship between the modern Jew and God, just as it does not describe the relationship of the citizen to the President.

However, within traditional sources it is possible to find at least two political-religious models more suitable to a modern democratic society: one from **the Biblical period**, the other from **the Rabbinic era**.

In the Exodus 19-24, the relationship between God and the Jewish people is based on the nation's free acceptance of the covenant and recognition of God as their national God ("*Adonai is our God, Adonai is the only One*"). In Biblical history God is revealed as a powerful heroic figure, who saves a nation of weak slaves from the clutch of Pharaoh. But in the **Sinai covenant** God asks the nation if they wish to sign the contract willingly. In light of the redemption from Egypt, it is hardly surprising that the nation votes for the God who saved them, and take upon themselves to be citizens of God's kingdom, the kingdom of priests ("*Mamlechet Cohanim*"). (See J.B. Soloveitchik's explication of Sinai in *A Lonely Man of Faith* and in *Kol Dodi Dofek*.) The bilateral covenant, the legal model for the relationship between the nation and God, is more appropriate for us than the royal model of the powerful reign of a benevolent king over his weak subjects. God's authority is derived from the will of the nation, not from the fact that God is their Creator.

During the Rabbinic period, the concept of covenant is significantly altered and upgraded. Each and every individual is invited to renew the covenant with God every day by means of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. Each Jew confirms the authority of the Sovereign of sovereigns, not necessarily as a member of the nation as a whole and not necessarily because of God's power of redemption. The historical experience of the rabbinic period, with its numerous instances of destruction and exile is much closer, though of course not identical, to the experience of Jews in the Holocaust than to the participants of the Exodus from Egypt. At Sinai, Israel as a whole accepted the God who took them out of Egypt; for the Rabbis, an individual Jew crowns as the universal Sovereign the God who, based on everyday experience, seems to have abandoned them to the vicissitudes of Roman power politics. Nonetheless, Jews recite *Kriyat Sh'ma* and decide to accept *Ol Malchut Shamayim*. The yoke includes not only the mitzvot, but also the historical yoke of people called upon to be the witnesses of God in this world, those faithful to the Torah in a world of persecution, even when the majority of fellow citizens of the Roman empire do not recognize the reign of God. **During mutiny or crisis, if God does not protect the Divine reputation, then God's proteges, the Jews, must sanctify God's name and accept the yoke even unto death.**

In summary, the model of acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* through *Kriyat Sh'ma*, which was designed by the Rabbis during their complex and trying historical period, serves as a useful model for the understanding of the relationship between Jews and God in contemporary times as well. According to **Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha**, *Kriyat Sh'ma* enables each individual to consider autonomously what is his or her relationship to God. A positive decision should be the result of a person's will to be a Jew for the sake of being a Jew, not as a result of hopes for salvation and immediate material help from God. **One must believe in one's power to contribute to the creation of Divine sovereignty , and not rely on God to provide automatic redemption.**

Unit VII. What is Intentionality of the Heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

Accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - The Kingdom of Heaven

Unit Goals

Halacha ruled that one does not fulfill the mitzvah of *Kriyat Sh'ma* if one does not have intentionality of the heart during the recitation of the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*." On what is one required to concentrate when reciting "*Sh'ma Yisrael*"? Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha represents a very popular opinion in rabbinical literature, that sees in the experience of *Kriyat Sh'ma* an act of accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* **(the yoke of the sovereignty of God) on the part of the individual.**

When the Rabbis defined the intentionality of the heart required while reciting the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" as an act of personal **acceptance** of God's kingdom, they shifted the emphasis from the objective aspect of *Kriyat Sh'ma* to its **subjective** aspect. The question of intentionality of the heart is not "What do the words *Sh'ma Yisrael* mean literally?" The question, rather, pertains to the reader's inner thoughts and feelings while reading. **In the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha, *Kriyat Sh'ma* is not primarily a studious reading of Torah portions (*Talmud Torah*), rather it is an internal decision regarding the reader's attitude towards God.** The reading of these paragraphs is just a means to the end of strengthening the personal commitment of the individual to God. This personal event is a recapitulation of the national event at **Sinai**.

The Sinai Experience can be understood as the formative moment and definition as the basic relationship of the nation towards God: "You shall be my nation, and I shall be your God." Only after the acceptance of God's authority upon us (in the First Commandment: "*I am Adonai your God*") come the rest of the commandments and *Matan Torah* as a whole. Without defining the basic attitude of God and chosen people, Ruler and subjects, there is no authority to legislate laws and there is no obligation to observe them. **Therefore Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha singles out acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* in the first paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" and takes precedence over the acceptance of the yoke of mitzvot in the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*."**

The imagery of accepting God's kingdom is woven in three times throughout the liturgy of *Kriyat Sh'ma* and its blessings and then reappears in the Kedusha of Shabbat Musaf. Moshe Halbertal points out that the emotional valence of the acceptance of God's sovereignty changes each time it is mentioned.. First, in *Yotzer Hameorot*, the angels accept the cosmic yoke in fear and trembling (*yirah*), then the blessing of *Ahava Rabbah* describes Israel accepting the yoke of Torah at Sinai in love (*ahava*), which leads to reciting *Sh'ma* as a form of *kabalat ol malchut*, and finally at the Red Sea the Jewish people accept God's historical

redemption in joy (*bísimcha*). In Musaf Kedusha (according to the Hassidim and Sepharadim in the version called *Keter*) both the angels above and the people below accept God's kingdom - first cosmically with *Kadosh Kadosh*, then at Sinai by reciting *Sh'ma*, and finally eschatologically in the future redemption by repeating the phrase from the Song of the Red Sea - *yimloch líolam vaed*.

(A). *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - The Kingdom of Heaven

The concept of accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* is based on the metaphor of **kingdom**. This metaphor has two meanings. **The first is that** a ruler has the power and authority to demand that people obey, and to punish and coerce those who refuse, while rewarding those who comply. It looks as if an individual who is subject to a ruler's authority has no freedom of choice regarding whether or not to accept the ruler's kingdom. The kingdom is a reality based on power and intrinsic authority, and an individual can do nothing but comply. There is no purpose, according to this understanding, for an individual to renew one's acceptance of the yoke of this kingdom each morning and evening.

However, **the second meaning** of the kingdom metaphor implies that "ruler" is a term encompassing a bilateral relationship with the subjects. There can be no ruler without subjects, just as there cannot be a husband without a wife and vice versa. The authority of a ruler is rooted not only in military power but also in the agreement of the nation to recognize the ruler's rights as legitimate. Usually, individuals do not each decide to crown or overthrow a ruler, rather it is the group decision of a nation. (Deuteronomy 17:16 "*Place a ruler upon you*".) The weaker the ruler is, the fewer means of deterrence the ruler possesses, and the more dependent that ruler becomes on the loyalty of the subjects. (This is especially evident in tense situations such as rebellion, like Avshalom's rebellion against King David.)

In our attempt to understand the concept of accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* in the words of the Rabbis, we will have recourse to both of these conflicting aspects of the kingdom metaphor. **On one hand**, God established the kingdom over the nation through a show of force - the power of redemption in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. There, the nation accepted God as its Ruler as a fact to be taken for granted ("*God shall rule forever*"). But **on the other hand**, even during periods of *Hester Panim*, when God hid the Divine power from people, and the kingdom of gentiles enslaved the Jewish people, the obligation to accept *Ol Malchut Shamayim* everyday remains intact. Persecuted *Tzaddikim*, such as Rabbi Akiva, rebelled against the enslavement and became victims of the kingdom of evil, yet they still cried out "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" as their souls departed from their bodies. Accepting the Kingdom of Heaven means not only giving thanks for the redemption of the nation and not only recognizing the greatness of God's power, it also means a free choice in God as our Ruler, even in a situation of *Hester Panim*.

(B). Ol - A Yoke

The concept of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* includes an emphasis on "**Ol**," or **yoke**. The word entails an element of coercion and much toil. It is taken from the world of agriculture: one plows a field with an ox harnessed to a yoke. A stubborn ox is known in Hebrew as "*K'shei Oref*," difficult to teach for it is of a stubborn nature (literally, the hard back of the neck), therefore it is difficult to teach it to be accountable and remain in the furrow. "*Am k'shei oref*," a stiff-necked people (Exodus 32), is a phrase used to describe the Jewish people. It is as if the Jewish people are God's slaves, and God places a yoke upon them with weighty demands like king Pharaoh.

This concept could create difficulties for moderns who would otherwise try to identify with the message of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. This concept does not reflect the feelings of many Jews when they recite *Kriyat Sh'ma*. Therefore, here we attempt to introduce rabbinical sources that explain the "yoke" differently. We explain the concept of "*Ol Malchut*" to mean the **cost** of accepting God as Ruler. Jews who decide to accept God as the only Ruler must recognize the ramifications of this decision. If God is your Ruler, it is impossible to worship any other Ruler. Devotion to God requires much sacrifice ("with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might"). Therefore, ***Ol Malchut* is not the result of kingdom being coerced upon individuals as slaves, it is the result of the seriousness of the consent of individuals to accept God upon them personally as the only Ruler.**

In this unit we shall define the consequences of accepting God as the personal Ruler of whomever says "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" with full intentionality of the heart.

The goals of this unit are:

To determine that the intentionality of the heart required in *Kriyat Sh'ma* is personal acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* out of free will.

To clarify the terms "acceptance," "yoke," and "kingdom."

To differentiate between accepting the kingdom out of redemption and accepting the kingdom even in periods of exile and *Hester Panim* (during periods of exile the price of accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* is greater, and could even reach a point of dying in sanctification of God's name).

Remarks to the Educator

Since this entire unit deals with **the kingdom metaphor** as a parable of the relationship between an individual and God, it is essential to take into consideration the opinions of the students regarding this metaphor. There are several difficulties:

First, we assume that students who grew up in a democratic society stressing freedom of choice do not understand the traditional king or queen who rule without consent of the governed by virtue of dynastic inheritance.

Second, they might be able to use the royal metaphor with regard to God as an omnipotent entity, since they may accept absolute power as binding over them. Yet after the Holocaust, Divine omnipotence is itself taken into question.

We will have to refine the understanding of the metaphor of royalty to include, as much as possible, elements that **emphasize a person's freedom of choice** and the dependency of the ruler upon the people, both in being crowned and receiving authority. Rabbinic notions of kingship require consent of the governed. Only then will the students be able to take the importance of individual acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* more seriously.

An additional assumption is that **many students confuse acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* with belief in God**. Yet one may believe that there is a God but reject the yoke of mitzvot and values associated with God. The price a person pays when declaring loyalty to God should be much greater than the lip service of intellectual belief. We will try to explain the consequences resulting from the acceptance of God as a personal Ruler. These consequences are in fact the yoke a person accepts upon oneself when reciting the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" with intentionality of the heart.

Overview of Lessons

In **Lesson A** we introduce a commentary that sees in *Kriyat Sh'ma* and its brachot acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*. Then we will study the meanings of the **kingdom metaphor** and compare it to the relationship of an individual and God. We pose the question: why is the individual required to accept the kingdom of God? What is the value of this personal acceptance? We will try to emphasize the element of **free choice** in accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim*.

In the **Lesson B** shall try to clarify the term "**yoke**" through the concept of commitment entailed in the acceptance of God as a personal Ruler:

The prohibition to worship other gods.

The obligation to be prepared to sacrifice oneself and remain loyal through good times and bad.

Lesson C deals with the willingness to die **in sanctification of God's name**, in order to crown God in a world apparently devoid of Divine power, where God's kingdom **is** battling the kingdom of evil.

In **Lesson D** we shall present a midrashic concept - though very radical it is prevalent in the rabbinical literature world: **the dependency of God's kingdom upon the willingness of the Jewish people to crown God in the world**. This concept can be understood as the Rabbis attempt to deal with God's *Hester Panim* in their political and historical world. This concept gives great meaning to the everyday personal act of the individual accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim*.

Lesson A - Accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and Freedom of Choice

(Sources #1-#6)

We begin this lesson with the words of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha, who defines the ideational-halachic content of the paragraph of *Sh'ma* as **accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim*** (source #1). We clarify the meaning of the ruler-subject **metaphor** for the students. In the discussion we recommend addressing the issue of the ruler as possessor of absolute authority, the power to punish or reward, the ruler of subjects like slaves. On the other hand, we must not forget the historic dependence of the ruler upon the nation's acceptance, as in the days of Saul and David. After these clarifications, the degree of similarity or lack of such between the ruler-subject and God-individual relationships can be discussed. It is important to pose the question - **why does halacha require personal acceptance of God's kingdom every day?** God's kingdom is strong and is based on God's awesome power and the covenant with our ancestors, so why bother with a personal decision to accept or decline *Ol Malchut Shamayim*?

Source #1 - Why is the First Paragraph "First"?

TB Brachot 13a

Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha said:

Why does the paragraph "*Sh'ma*" come before the paragraph "*Vehaya Im Shamo*?"

So that one accepts the Kingdom of Heaven upon oneself first, and then one accepts the yoke of mitzvot.

And why does "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" come before "*VaYomer*?"

Because reading "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" is obligatory both during the day and at night [Ma'ariv], and "*Vayomer*" is only obligatory during the day [Shacharit, since Tzizit - the main portion of *VaYomer* - are worn only during the day when they can best be seen [without artificial light].

- 1) In the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha, what should be taking place in people's hearts every time they recite each of the two paragraphs: "*Sh'ma*" and "*Vehaya Im Shamo*?"
- 2) What do you think the connection is between this daily, internal event of "accepting a yoke" and Matan Torah at Sinai, the unique event occurring to the Jewish people who had just left Egypt?
- 3) The word "yoke" and "kingdom (*malchut*)" implicitly compare the relationship between God and people to the relationship between a ruler and subjects. Try to describe the relationship between a ruler and the subjects of the kingdom.
- 4) Does that fit the image of the relationship in this text? To what extent do you find this metaphor as used in this source appropriate to a democratic society? For example, do subjects "accept" the ruler's authority upon themselves, or does the ruler coerce them to accept it?

5) Would you describe your own attitude towards God as comparable in some way to a person towards a ruler?

Source #2 - "And They Accepted God's Sovereignty Joyfully"

The Bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*" - Arvit, Siddur Ashkenaz

- 1) In the bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*," which follows *Kriyat Sh'ma*, the Rabbis describe poetically the "acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*" by the entire nation in a famous historical experience. Which experience was it? What is the meaning of "*Malchut*" (kingdom) in the context of that experience?
- 2) Based on the bracha, what are the feelings of the nation when accepting the sovereignty of God? Does it fit the metaphor for acceptance of a "yoke?" Explain. Can you offer a better term?
- 3) What is the familial term used to describe the nation who sees the splitting of the Red Sea and accepts the sovereignty of God? What does this term teach us?

We now turn to **the bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*" (after *Kriyat Sh'ma* of Arvit) (source #2)**. This bracha reveals an interesting perception of accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* that is supposed to change, to some extent, preconceived notions about God's kingdom that may have been expressed during the discussion. **First**, according to the bracha, accepting God's kingdom is a natural reaction not only to God's great power as a judge and giver of punishment, but also to God's redeeming power. The Egyptian plagues and the parting of the Red Sea express the relationship of a ruler to subjects not in requiring obedience, but in providing a protecting patron. **The nation accepts God's kingdom, not out of coercion, but "voluntarily," not as slaves or even as subjects, but rather as "beloved children."** The nation is not ungrateful; it confirms its loyalty to God the Ruler, who has already provided royal sponsorship for the people.

Second, the kingdom of God is revealed not in God's power to enslave, coerce, and enforce obedience, but rather in freeing God's nation into *Herut Olam* - "**eternal liberty**." Acceptance of Divine sovereignty is not the negation of freedom but a celebration of God's gift of freedom. **Acceptance of God's kingdom is identical with being set free from the slavery of any flesh-and-blood tyrant such as Pharaoh.**

Source #3 - The Slave and the Voluntary Acceptance of the Yoke

TY Brachot 3:3

Mishna:

Slaves... are exempt from *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

Gemara:

How do we learn this? As it is written: "Hear, Israel, Adonai [My Lord] is our God, Adonai is One." [Who is obligated?] Those who have no other lord or master but God. Therefore, excluded from (this law) is the slave, who has a different lord.

- 1) Do you think that it is relevant to compare a Jew who has accepted *Ol Malchut* to a slave? Explain.
- 2) Read the Gemara. Why is a slave not required to recite *Kriyat Sh'ma*? (Note the word "One" and the word "Lord" in the quoted verse).
- 3) Prior to the reception of the Torah and prior to the acceptance of God's sovereignty at the sea (described in the Bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*"), God redeemed the Jewish People from Egypt. In light of this source about slaves being exempt for *Sh'ma*, why did the Exodus from Egypt precede the acceptance of *Ol Malchut* and the yoke of mitzvot?

In source #3 from the Yerushalmi Talmud the connection between freedom and accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* is emphasized. A slave is exempt from *Kriyat Sh'ma* because a slave has a master other than God, hence there is no meaning to a slave's acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*. **The prerequisite accepting the yoke of mitzvot is autonomy, the freedom to choose a ruler and the ability to give that ruler exclusive loyalty.** The halacha translates **the national freedom** that was a prerequisite to accepting God's kingdom at the Red Sea and the Sinai Experience **into a personal freedom**. In light of this halacha, it is clear that the relationship between an individual and God is not similar to the relationship of slave and master. An individual must accept God's kingdom out of free will and choice. Therefore it is important to begin the day with *Birkot Hashachar*, including the bracha "who has not made me a slave" before one may recite *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

In the Biblical stories about **signing a covenant with God**, the nation seems to be free to accept or reject God's offer. In **Exodus 19:1-8 (source #4)** God invited them to be the chosen people and for him to be their God. Moshe mediates between God and the nation. Without threats, by means of lyric persuasion, God courts the nation. Only after the nation takes upon itself the authority of God as its Ruler does God begin to command them.

Source #4 - Matan Torah

Exodus 19:1-8

- 1. In the third month, when the people of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.**
- 2. For they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the desert of Sinai, and had camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.**

3. **And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel;**
4. **You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.**
5. **Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure among all peoples; for all the earth is mine;**
6. **And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the people of Israel.**
7. **And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.**
8. **And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord.**

- 1) Sometimes a person accepts the authority and orders of another out of coercion, not of free will. Give an example of such an instance.
- 2) Read Exodus 19: 1-8. Is the description of signing a covenant with God at Mt. Sinai more similar to accepting a yoke out of free will or out of coercion? Explain.

Source #5 - The Covenant of Yehoshua

Joshua 24:14-26

14. **Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river, and in Egypt; and serve you the Lord.**
15. **(K) And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**
16. **And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;**
17. **For the Lord our God, he is who brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way where we went, and among all the people through whom we passed;**
18. **And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, the Amorites who live in the land; therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.**
19. **And Joshua said to the people, You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.**
20. **If you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and hurt you, and consume you, after he has done you good.**
21. **And the people said to Joshua, No; but we will serve the Lord.**

22. **And Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.**
23. **Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.**
24. **And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.**
25. **So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.**
26. **And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Torah of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under a terebinth, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.**

- 1) Is the signing of the covenant described in Joshua voluntary or coerced? Compare it to the Sinai covenant.
- 2) If the nation has already made its commitment at Sinai, why should they make an additional commitment in the days of Joshua? Do you think that today we also have free will regarding whether or not to accept *Ol Malchut Shamayim*? Explain.
- 3) In light of these descriptions of signing covenants, how can we understand what should take place in the hearts of people when they read *Kriyat Sh'ma* every day?

The generation that entered Israel renewed the covenant with God out of total freedom of choice. In **Joshua 24:14-26 (source #5)** Yehoshua makes clear to the nation the fact that **they have a choice** to make between God or the god of Terach or Canaan. **The emphasis is not on Israel being the chosen people, it is on their choice of a God.** After they make their choice, they sign a binding covenant to which all of Israel is witness. The freedom of choice in the Sinai Experience is a freedom that is passed on continuously from one generation to the next. **The Biblical experience of the renewal of the covenant in every generation carries over in rabbinical literature from the realm of the nation to the realm of the individual.** In *Kriyat Sh'ma*, whose content includes the Ten Commandments and reminds us of the Sinai Experience (as we saw in Units II-III), individuals receive the opportunity to renew their choice of God out of a feeling of freedom and choice, devoid of any coercion.

The midrash on **Dvarim Rabba (source #6)** completes the ideational connection between accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and the freedom one has in accepting the yoke. This midrash portrays the nation choosing God, not God imposing authority on the nation. Divine authority is derived from the people's free choice, not from God's power as Creator of the Universe or Redeemer of the nation from slavery. (The entire experience is made possible only after the Exodus from Egypt, not before it.) ***Kriyat Sh'ma* is**

explained as a repetition of the Sinai Experience each day, in which each individual reconfirms having chosen God, as the nation did at Sinai.

Rabbi Pinchas Bar Chama develops the idea of the similarity between the Sinai Experience and *Kriyat Sh'ma* as two ceremonies whose content is the accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* (Dvarim Rabba 2:31):

"How did Israel earn the privilege of reciting the *Sh'ma*?

From Matan Torah they earned this privilege to read the *Sh'ma*. How? You find in the precise verses that God opened with: "*Hear, Israel, I am Adonai your God.*"

They all answered and said "*Adonai is our God, Adonai is One,*" and Moshe said: "*Baruch Shem Kvod Malchuto Leolam Vaed.*"

An **application** to the human realm could serve as a good summary to this abstract lesson that dealt with the relationship between people and God. If the ideal of *Kriyat Sh'ma* is that we choose God and the mitzvot voluntarily each day, then we could suggest a similar ceremony for any framework of which we are a part. For example, how would you compose a ceremony of accepting the “yoke of the family” or the “yoke of school” every day? Would you choose these frameworks if it were truly a voluntary decision? How can the feeling of choice change our attitude towards our commitments to the frameworks in our lives? How will the worship of God and Judaism in general look if they are purely the result of individual, personal choice?

Source #6 - "But Israel chose God for themselves"

Midrash Dvarim Rabba, "*Va'Etchanan*"

"*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.*" That [the emphasis that God belongs to us, written as “our Adonai”] is like what is written:

"*Adonai is my allotment, I say with full heart*" (Lamentations 3:24) and it is like [the following:]

"*When the Most High gave nations their homes and set the divisions of people, God fixed the boundaries of peoples in relation to Israel's numbers. For the Lord's allotment is God's people, Jacob God's own allotment*" (Deuteronomy 32:8-9).

and (Deuteronomy 29:25) "*They turned to the service of other gods and worshipped them, gods whom they did not know and whom God had not allotted.*"

What is "*Adonai is my allotment*?"

At the time that God divided the world into the different nations, as it was written "*When the Most High gave nations their homes,*" **each and every nation chose itself a god** - one chose the angel Michael, another chose Gabriel, another yet chose the sun and the moon.

But the people of Israel chose God, as is written "*For the Lord's portion is God's people*" and it is also written "*For Jacob was chosen for God, Israel as God's treasured possession*" (Psalms 135:4) [which can also be translated: "For Jacob chose God ."]

God said: You have chosen me; I too shall choose you, as is written, "*For the Lord's portion is God's people, Jacob God's own allotment*" (Deuteronomy 32:9). And on the day of Matan Torah God tore open the sky and showed the people of Israel what exists up there...God told them: See, there exists no other alongside me, as is written, "*It has been clearly demonstrated to you that Adonai alone is God, there is none besides God*" (Deuteronomy 4:35). "*Know therefore this day and place in your heart that Adonai is God in heaven and earth, there is no other*" (Deuteronomy 4:39).

(God asked them): Do you accept the kingdom upon yourselves? Do you wish to choose a god as did all the other nations who chose one of the angels who serve me? You can choose thousands of them if you so wish.

(The people of Israel) answered: "*You, out of tens of thousands, are holy to us*" (Deuteronomy 33:2). You are our God, You are our allotment, and You are holy, so I declare and enhance Your unity, Your Divinity and Kingdom upon me twice daily. Every day we say, "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is the only One.*"

- 1) Read the verses in the first paragraph. What is the meaning of "*Adonai our God*" in light of these verses?
- 2) According to the second paragraph, what is the meaning of "*Adonai is my allotment or portion*"?
- 3) According to the third and fourth paragraphs, what choice did God give the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai?
 - 4) According to the fifth paragraph, what do Jews mean when they recite "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One*" twice a day? Could this become your feeling during *Kriyat Sh'ma*? Explain.

Lesson B - Ol Malchut Shamayim - The Kingdom of Heaven (sources #7-#8)

After having emphasized the element of free choice in accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim*, people could get the wrong impression and think that worshipping God lacks an element of duty, as if freedom and duty are opposites. In this lesson we explain the concept of "yoke" as a commitment that includes a willingness to pay a price.

To Accept *Ol Malchut* Means to “Crown” Certain Values Upon Ourselves.

Most people are not liberated in the perfect sense: they make sovereign over themselves not only idols but also idolatrous values such as money, popularity, and power. **Rabbi Chanina (source #7)** emphasizes that one can become enslaved to anything. People who crown God upon themselves as their sole sovereign must reject not only enslavement to an idol or a flesh-and-blood master, but also enslavement to all kinds of objects, concepts, and values that people crown upon themselves.

Source #7 - "To the Molech"

Leviticus 18:21 - "Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech."

TB Sanhedrin 64a –

Rabbi Chanina son of Antigonus says: To what does the Torah refer when it uses the term "Molech"?

Anything they crowned upon themselves, even a bundle of objects or a small stick.

- 1) What is the question about the verse posed by the commentator Rabbi Chanina son of Antigonus?
- 2) According to Rabbi Chanina, a person decides what to crown upon oneself be it God, loyalty to a certain country, or the pursuit of money (see for example, the story of the Golden Calf). How can the desire to crown something upon oneself be understood?
- 3) Describe the behavior of a person who decided to crown upon oneself the love of food.
- 4) When Jews accept upon themselves the sovereignty of God reciting "*Adonai is our only One*," how is this supposed to affect their behavior?

Source #8 - "With all your Soul"

Mishna Brachot 9:1

One must make a blessing over the bad as one would over the good, as it is written:

"You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

"With all your heart" - with both your instincts - the instinct to do good and the instinct to do bad.

"With all your soul" - even if your soul is taken from you by God.

"And with all your might" - with all your wealth.

Or an alternative explanation: "And with all your might (M'oDecHa) - with whatever occurrences God measures (MiDaH / MoDeid) [tests or judges] you, you must acknowledge (MoDeH) God.

- 1) To crown something upon you means to accept the "yoke," or to be willing to pay the price of your choice. Give an example of accepting something upon yourself willingly and then having to pay a price for it.
- 2) In light of this source, what is the "price" a person must pay when committing to love God "with all your soul and all your might?"
- 3) Try to define three values for which you would be willing to pay the price of "with all your might" = with all your wealth. Rate the three according to their order of "crowning" upon you, that is, which takes precedence for you in directing your life?

"With all your soul" and "with all your might" (source #8) emphasize the price a person who accepts *Ol Malchut Shamayim* is willing to pay for this loyalty. Choosing certain values requires renunciation of other values. Loyalty to God is not contingent upon the reception of favors. It is binding whether good times or bad follow. *Kriyat Sh'ma* requires the **clarification of a person's basic values, and a declaration of willingness to give up one's fortune and even surrender one's life in order to serve one's highest values.**

A **value clarification exercise** can be developed in order to clarify what values one is willing to pursue **"with all your soul" and "with all your might."** Students can explore the price they are willing to pay for their loyalty to values such as "truth" (telling a friend one's negative opinion of that person's boy or girl friend); "life" (endangering one's personal life), "career" (at the expense of one's family or social life), etc.

Lesson C - The Yoke of Sanctifying God's Name (*Ol Kiddush Hashem*)

(Sources #9-#13)

The goal of this lesson is to show the connection between accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* when reciting "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" and the willingness to sanctify the name of heaven in the face of an evil earthly kingdom. Accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* freely is not just a reaction to redemption - like Israel's response after the Parting of the Red Sea - rather it is an expression of loyalty in a period of exile and persecution.

We begin this lesson with an extremely demanding and disturbing description of the meaning of *Kavannah* in *Kriyat Sh'ma*. It is quoted in the **Aruch Hashulchan (source #9)**, whose author lived right before the Holocaust. Students should be given an opportunity to react freely to this halachic demand of Aruch Hashulchan; its demand is frightful and students should respond honestly. Recall the kidnapping and execution of Jewish journalist Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002. Should a foreign journalist make a statement of willingness to die for his values before going on a dangerous assignment? Should a 21st century Jew be asked to make a similar commitment daily?

Source #9 - Surrendering One's Soul in *Kriyat Sh'ma*

Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Hachayim *Kriyat Sh'ma* 61

When reciting the *Sh'ma*, one must concentrate on accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and on surrendering one's body and soul in sanctification of God's name, that is, "with all your soul" -- even if your soul is taken from you by God. One must imagine that even if terrible agony is inflicted upon oneself, you will not consider that suffering a matter of importance, because of your love of God. It should be just like Rabbi Akiva, whose body was combed with iron rakes and yet he called out *Kriyat Sh'ma*. Similarly, other holy martyrs at the time they were killed and burned shouted out loud *Sh'ma Yisrael*.

- 1) In Jewish history there were many incidents when Jews who chose to remain loyal to Judaism were in fact forced to pay the price "with all your soul." Give an example.
- 2) According to the author of Aruch Hashulchan, how does reciting *Kriyat Sh'ma* each day prepare Jews to withstand the yoke of the sanctification of God's name?
- 3) In your opinion, is it desirable to think about death in sanctification of God's name each time one recites *Kriyat Sh'ma*? Explain. If your answer is negative, how do you understand the phrase "acceptance of the yoke?"

Source #10 - The Death of Rabbi Akiva

Rabbis studied. Once, the kingdom of evil [Rome] ruled that Israel must not study Torah. Along came Papos son of Yehuda and found Rabbi Akiva who was gathering congregations in public and studying Torah. He said to him: Akiva, do you not fear the kingdom?

He answered him: Allow me to provide you with a metaphor. It is like a fox walking along the riverbed. The fox saw fish gathering in one place and moving together to another.

He said to them: From what are you fleeing?

They said to him: From nets that people cast upon us.

He asked them: Would it be your wish to come up on land and you and I shall live as did our ancestors together?

They answered him: Are you the one about which people say "the slyest of animals"? You are not sly - you are foolish! In the place we live we are fearful, so naturally we are even more fearful in the place of our death!

Similarly, if we are now sitting and studying Torah, as it says, "*For it is your life and the longevity of your days*" - and so [we are afraid of persecution happening to us]. Hence if we go and refrain from studying Torah, won't it be even worse for us?

Not many days went by before Rabbi Akiva was caught and taken to prison. But they also arrested Papos son of Yehuda [even though he had refrained from Torah study out of fear for his life] and placed him in the same cell.

Akiva said to him: Papos! What brought you here?

He answered him: Lucky are you who have been caught for studying Torah; woe is me, Papos, for having been caught for idle matters.

At the time of Rabbi Akiva's execution, it was the time for the recitation of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. They were combing his flesh with iron rakes, but he was accepting *Oi Malchut Shamayim* upon himself.

His students asked him: Rabbi, even under these conditions?

He told them: My whole life I have been worried about living up to the verse "*with all your soul*" and its interpretation: "That is, even if your soul is taken from you by God." I said to myself, when will I have the opportunity to observe this? Now that the opportunity has presented itself, should I miss my chance to observe it?!

Akiva was lengthening the recitation of the word "*Echad*" until his soul departed his body in the midst of that "*Echad*."

A voice from heaven (*Bat Kol*) came out and said: Happy (*Ashreicha*) are you, Rabbi Akiva, that your soul departed at "*Echad!*"

- 1) What was the offense for which Rabbi Akiva was executed? Why did Rabbi Akiva prefer to study Torah despite the danger posed by the Roman kingdom?
- 2) Papos asked Rabbi Akiva: "Do you not fear the kingdom?" To which kingdom was he referring? What do you think gave Rabbi Akiva the courage not to be afraid?
- 3) Explain the parable of the fox and the fish and compare it in a chart with the details of Akiva's and Papos' situation.
- 4) How did Rabbi Akiva end his life?
- 5) How do you feel about the story?
- 6) Should this story be read before *Kriyat Sh'ma* daily?

The stories of Rabbi Akiva and Shlomo Z'lichovsky (Sources #10-#11) are meant to illustrate the price loyalty to Judaism requires us to pay. The stories also enrich students' worlds of meanings for "*Sh'ma Yisrael.*" But they might also arouse a certain degree of revulsion from a religion that asks so much, and might also make room for doubts about God's kingdom in a world in which the Holocaust occurred. These doubts can contribute, to a certain extent, to the creation of a new concept of acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* that is not contingent upon God's redemption, just on the initiative of people who wish to correct the world in the kingdom of God (on this matter, read the imaginary dialogue of **Yossele Rakover** and his Creator in **source #12**). These stories of sanctification of God's name are brought in order to illustrate, by means of vivid examples, what one is capable of accepting voluntarily under the topic of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*, even in a world that seems to be devoid of an active, redeeming God.

In the story of Rabbi Akiva and Papos (**source #10**) we see the internal will to live a life of Torah not out of coercion, but out of a sense that it is our life, and without Torah there is no point to a biological existence. Out of a love for the Kingdom of Heaven, **Rabbi Akiva** sees no choice but to continue teaching Torah, even in times of the forced conversions of Jews. But **Papos son of Yehuda** represents the possibility that a person would reject a life of *Malchut Shamayim* in order to save one's life. He is not willing to accept the yoke of *Malchut Shamayim*, because he is afraid of the earthly kingdom of Rome. Papos represents a very pragmatic notion of accepting the authority of a human kingdom because of its power to punish. **In the opinion of Papos, authority is derived of strength!**

In his period, the powerful international kingdom is **Rome**, not Divine Kingship, therefore Papos attempts to manage within its rules. Finally, he is caught having been accused of committing another crime and he suffers from the arbitrary nature of the Roman kingdom. The message is that **the meaning of life** cannot be constructed upon the acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* just because of its power. Power is always blind,

therefore people must take into consideration **only** the spiritual content of their lives. Only the Kingdom of Heaven as a spiritual kingdom is worthy of recognition, **but** there is no avoiding the fact that free choice of the Kingdom of Heaven could cost a person his or her life on this earth. A person must be prepared for that, **out of an awareness that one who does not live a life laden with values has undermined the purpose of life itself.**

Source #11 - The Eve of Shavuot in the Ghetto: "Those who Did Not Surrender" by Moshe Praeger

Moshe Praeger describes the execution of ten Jews on the Eve of Shavuot 5703 (1944) in front of all the ghetto Jews:

"Shlomo Z'lichovsky, he's the one who really did it. The damned murderers were busy with their preparations and he was busy with his own preparations. Later the Jewish policemen, who were in the service of the Germans, reported to us secretly Shlomo Z'lichovsky's amazing behavior while in solitary confinement, where all ten Jews who were being executed in the gallows were held. Shlomo Z'lichovsky, who had a lovely voice, suggested to the minyan of Jews in solitary confinement to fast on the eve of the day on which the hangings were scheduled, and further suggested that they all pray the prayers of Yom Kippur together, and they all agreed. Thus the private "Yom Kippur" of the ten condemned Jews was conducted in solitary confinement, and the prayers of Shlomo Z'lichovsky, when he reached *Neila*, were so emotional that even the tough Jewish ghetto policemen, who were present in the jail yard, wept like children... But the prayer of *Neila* did not come to an end within solitary confinement, because Shlomo Z'lichovsky intentionally postponed the end of the service until the next day, for the time at which they would walk to the gallows.

And so it was. All ten Jews' hands were tied behind their backs, and they were led in line across the city, from the jailhouse to the intended location. Along the way Shlomo Z'lichovsky raised his voice in loud song "*I shall remember God and yearn.*" The ten Jews stood tall, and with murmurs from deep within their souls they accompanied him in completing the prayer of *Neila*. When they arrived at the place of the gallows, their heads were high and their eyes looked upwards, in preparation for their final prayer.

At that time of final preparations for the hanging, I took a look at the smiling, joyous face of Shlomo Z'lichovsky. I was one of thousands in the crowded mass of hurting and insulted Jews. Suddenly, a breeze of encouragement passed over the depressed crowd. The hanging poles stood all in a line, one next to the other. Under each hanging tree stood a bench to get on. The

Nazi murderers were in no hurry; they had plenty of time for their "game." But Shlomo Z'lichovsky, who began to burst into song, hurried them: "*Shoien?*" (Ready?), he asked the executioner who stood beside him impatiently. Then Shlomo Z'lichovsky stood up and jumped onto the bench, in order to put his neck in the noose. For a few moments all held their breath. A fearful silence spread all around, and in a split second the heavy silence was torn by a thundering voice: "*Sh'ma Yisrael!*" It was the voice so familiar to me, the voice of Shlomo Z'lichovsky. Who could describe what was occurring in the hearts of the masses of Jews, the miserable bystanders, at that moment? We were elated, elevated, we shouted without voices. We cried without tears. We stood tall without moving. We all cried out "*Sh'ma Yisrael!*" from within our souls...

- 1) **On Yom Kippur** God is depicted as a Ruler sitting on the throne of judgment. **On Shavuot** the nation stood at Sinai and accepted God and the Torah upon itself. But it seems that during the Holocaust the shots were called by the Nazis: they set the rules and decided who would live or die. If so, why and how did Shlomo bring himself to pray and shout *Sh'ma Yisrael* on the day of his death as we do at end of Yom Kippur Neilah?
- 2) In light of a story like this, what is the meaning of "*Malchut Hashem?*" What is the meaning of "*Ol Malchut Hashem?*" What is the meaning of "to crown God upon us?"

Source #13 - Aleinu

- 1) Read the first and second paragraphs of "*Aleinu.*" What is the difference between the description of God's reign in the two paragraphs?
- 2) *Who* accepts the kingdom of God upon themselves?
- 3) According to the prayer of "*Aleinu*" ("Then the world will be a true kingdom of God"), *when* will the kingdom of God in the world be realized? What is the power and authority of the kingdom of God in light of the second paragraph?

The prayer "*Aleinu*" (source #13) expresses some of the problematic nature of the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the first paragraph, the nation crowns God as the Ruler of rulers. But in the second paragraph the concept of God's kingdom upon earth is postponed and becomes a vision of the days of the Messiah. In this paragraph, the worshippers of idols and evil people who do not recognize the Kingdom of Heaven are at an advantage. But there is a hope that God will come and **"correct the world in the Kingdom of God."** Acceptance of *Malchut Shamayim* in *Aleinu* and also in *Kriyat Sh'ma* turns the Jewish people into the avant-garde, those proclaiming and living the true Kingdom of God in this world, despite the fact that the current reality is that of God's Kingdom being limited to those who accept it. The importance of personal acceptance is not necessarily an acknowledgement of an already existing reality. It

may be creating a new reality, at first very tentative. **In the recitation of *Kriyat Sh'ma* there is an act of courage and faith in crowning God in a world in which God does not yet rule exclusively, universally, and tangibly.**

It is very important to note the historical background of the prayer "*Aleinu*." It comes from part of the "*malchuyot*" portion of the *Amidah* on Rosh Hashana. During the period of the Crusades it became a permanent prayer located at the end of all services.

The researcher Ismar Elbogen writes,

"The prayer *Aleinu Leshabeiach*, which serves as the opening ("*reshut*") of the Rosh Hashana Musaf's *Seder Malchuyot* (the Order of Divine Sovereignty) ... was composed by a rabbi in Babylon. It declares, explicitly and in a soul-elevating manner, our firm and absolute belief in one eternal God who created the whole world. With this same recognition and the same song on their lips, those who sanctified God's name in medieval Israel ended their lives at the stake. The prayer of *Aleinu* spread throughout the nation and became a prayer recited each day" (*Prayer in Israel*, pages 48-49).

Standing before the kingdom of evil, those who sanctified God's name said, "Let us praise God, Lord over all the world...God made our lot **unlike** that of other peoples...God assigned to us a **unique** destiny..." Jews who accept **the yoke of God's Kingdom** and pay the maximal price **also voluntarily reaffirm their identity and fate as Jews in the world.**

Lesson D - "When You are My Witnesses, I am God" (Source #14)

The purpose of the final lesson is to explain the bold idea of the midrash that makes God's Kingdom, even in the Heavens, contingent upon the acceptance of God's kingdom by people on earth. In the prayer *Aleinu* we saw the postponing of the Kingdom of God on earth until the days of the Messiah. Then all nations will accept the Kingdom of God on earth. But in the prayer *Aleinu* there is no doubt that at all times God rules Heaven. But in **Midrash HaGadol (source #14)** and in many other midrashim, some of which we will learn in the following unit, **God's Kingdom in heaven is the direct result of the acceptance of that Kingdom on earth by the Jewish people.** The boldness of this idea is expressed in the midrash by extensive use of the term "**as if**" ("*kivyachol*") - "as if God's place is not in heaven, as if God is not enshrined, as if God's name is not great, as if God is not God!"

Source #14 - "You are My Witnesses!"

Midrash HaGadol, Deuteronomy 14:1

"You shall not cut yourselves up." ("*Lo Titgodedo*") (Deuteronomy 14:1)

[Though literally the verse refers to cutting one's limbs and face voluntarily, which was Cannanite pagan practice of mourning, involving self-inflicted gashes, the Midrash understands it metaphorically.]

You shall not be in separate groups [*agudah*], rather you should all be one group [*agudah*], as was written, "*Who built God's chambers in heaven and founded God's vault [*agudah*] on the earth?" (Amos 9:6).*

The answer is that when Israel is united and does the will of God, God's chambers are in heaven. And if Israel does not unify into one group [*agudah*], and does not do the will of God, then it is as if to say God's heavenly chambers are not built].

Similarly, you say, "*This is my God and I will enshrine [*an-vehu*] God" (Exodus 15:2). When I acknowledge God then God is lovely [*naveh*], and if I do not acknowledge God it is as if to say [God is not enshrined.]*

Similarly, you say, "*For the name of God I proclaim: Give glory to our God" (32:3). If I call God's name, God is great, and if I do not call God's name, it is as if [God's name is not great].*

Similarly, you say, "*O Jeshurun, there is none like God" (33:26). When Israel is righteous and does the will of God there is none like God, and if Israel is not righteous and does not do God's wish it is as if [there is no God].*

Similarly, you say, "*So you are my witnesses, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 43:12). When you are my witnesses I am God, and if you are not my witnesses, it is as if [I am not God].*

Similarly, you say, "To You, enthroned in heaven, I turn my eyes" (Psalms 123:1). Because of me You reign in heaven, and if it weren't for me it is as if [You would not be reigning in Heaven.].

- 1) What does "as if" ("*kivyachol*") mean? How can all the unclear sentences in the midrash ending with the phrase "*kivyachol*" be completed?
- 2) What is the bold idea hidden in the words of the midrash "when you are my witnesses I am God, and if you are not my witnesses...as if?"
- 3) In light of this ancient midrash, what is the supreme importance of the recitation of "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God*" by every Jew, every day?

What is the meaning of this idea? These midrashim are meant to emphasize the supreme importance of the Jewish people's loyalty to God. Instead of making **demands** on the people, the midrash addresses a **request** to them to remain faithful to God. God's Kingdom is not contingent upon God's revealed strength. The acceptance of God's Kingdom is not the result of being impressed by God's miraculous redemption as it is described in the bracha *Go'el Yisrael*. No! The Kingdom of God depends only on the free will - free from coercion or promise of incentives - of the Jewish people, to crown God upon them. The mitzvah of accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* by each Jew every day becomes essential to the continuity and extension of God's Kingdom. In fact, **the reality of *Malchut Hashem* is a subjective reality located within the intentionality of the heart of the people who pray.** Only as a result of an act of free will, a personal acceptance of *Malchut Shamayim* by each individual, will this subjective personal kingdom become an international messianic kingdom, as described at the end of the prayer of *Aleinu*.

Unit VIII. What is Intentionality of the Heart? Declaring and Enhancing God's Unity (*Yichud Hashem*)

Unit Goals

Educational Guide to Sources

Lesson A - The Belief in the Uniqueness of God

Source #1- "*Echad - One*"- Shulchan Aruch, O.H. 61

Source #2 - The Truths of *Emet VeYatziv*
from the bracha after *Kriyat Sh'ma* in the Siddur

Source #3 - *Yichud Hashem* - God's Uniqueness
-Maimonides, Sefer HaAhava, *Kriyat Sh'ma* 1:1-2

Source #4 - Avraham Seeks the Truth
-Maimonides, Sefer HaMadda, Hilchot Avodah Zara 1:3

Lesson B - "On that day, God will be One and God's Name will be One"

Source #5 - "*And you shall know today*"- Deuteronomy 4:39

Source #6 - "*One Parent for us All*" - Malachi 2:10

Source #7 - "*You are God's Children*"
Midrash Sifri #13 on Deuteronomy 14:1 and Ritba on TB Yevamot 13b

Source #8 - "*All as one Community*" - Midrash, Vayikra Rabba 30

Source #9 - "*And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler*"
-Midrash, Sifrei Piska 346 on Deuteronomy 33

Unit VIII. What is Intentionality of the Heart? Declaring and Enhancing God's Unity (*Yichud Hashem*)

Unit Goals and Lessons Overview

The intentionality of the heart for the verse "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" may be understood both as the acceptance of *OI Malchut Shamayim* and as the belief in God's unity. Accepting of *OI Malchut Shamayim* is an act of will, a voluntary commitment to God's sovereignty, while declaring and/or enhancing God's unity is an intellectual act of faith, recognizing or enhancing the truth of the Unity of God.

"*Yichud Hashem*" can be explained in two ways:

Derived of the word "*yachid*," individual, meaning "One and Only."

Derived of the word "*yichud*," meaning "*achdut*," unity.

The term "*Yichud Hashem*" is often explained exclusively as the **negation** of idol worship. According to this approach, "*Adonai is One*" means that God is the only God, and there is no other. In the modern world, many **accept** this belief as a convention. They do not see in idolatry a plausible spiritual opinion; the belief in One God is taken for granted. The easy-come, general agreement with the Unity of God could inadvertently empty the content of the declaration "*Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.*" Our educational problem is **this**: how are we to value a declaration as important as "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" when it innovates nothing and requires no effort? The importance of *Kriyat Sh'ma* becomes decreased because its content is taken for granted.

There are many ways to remedy the situation:

The meaning of idolatry can be discussed historically through Yehezkel Kaufman's book, *Toldot HaEmuna HaYisraelit (The Religion of Israel)*.

Modern movements comparable to idolatry can be addressed through the writings of many modern theologians like A.J.Heschel or David Hartman.

In this unit we have chosen two additional approaches:

In Lesson A we present the belief in **God's exclusivity**, not as a given convention that each person must accept as a belief, but rather **as a personal truth** that each individual must examine and substantiate for himself or herself. Belief in God is not supposed to be an inherited legacy or social convention upon which all must agree; rather, it should be the result of a critical, personal search like that of our ancestor Avraham.

But this approach to belief is still intellectual. It isolates the area of *belief in God* from other areas of life. In our opinion, a person's belief-world must also be expressed in the *interpersonal* field of *action*.

. In **Lesson B**, which deals with **the Unity of God**, we have included midrashic sources on the social ramifications of belief in God. In light of these midrashim we can explain **the metaphysical-theological concept of the belief in the Unity of God as a human-moral concept regarding the duty of social unity**. Instead of asking what the belief content is of 'Adonai is One,' we may ask, with the midrash: "**What human behavior is required in line with the belief that God is the ultimate symbol of unity?**" To what kind of behavior does a Jewish society that believes in a God of unity commit itself as a result of its belief?

The goals of this unit are:

To see in *Kriyat Sh'ma* **a declaration of faith in the Unity of God, based on search and personal reflection.**

To understand the uniqueness of God not only as faith in God's exclusivity but also in God's Unity.

To expect that a commitment to **God's Unity requires social cohesion, at least among the Jewish people**. Therefore, certain moral behavior not only reflects social morality, but it also makes concrete God's Unity in practical terms. (This midrashic idea is a continuation of the idea learned in Unit VII that the Kingdom of God in the world depends to a great extent on the will of the nation to accept God's Kingdom upon itself.)

Lesson A - The Belief in the Uniqueness of God (Sources #1-#4)

The goal of this lesson is to understand *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a declaration of faith in God, that is the result of a personal search.

We begin this lesson with the question: what is the intentionality of the heart of the first verse of *Kriyat Sh'ma* according to its verbal content and according to the custom of lengthening the utterance of the word "*Echad*?" (source #1). This question clarifies the distance between the concept of acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and the belief that God is One. "*Ol Malchut*" belongs to the realm of sovereignty and authority, while "God is One" belongs to a metaphysical realm. "Acceptance of the Yoke" is the voluntary act of will which defines a relationship of loyalty and subject status to the sovereign God, while "Adonai is our God, Adonai is One" is an expression of an intellectual stand, a faith statement about the nature of reality. One is a question of duty, the other a question of truth.

Source #1- "*Echad* - One"

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Hachayim 61

"One must lengthen the letter *Heyt* of "*Echad*" ("Adonai is One") in order to crown God in the heaven and in the earth and one must lengthen the *Daled* for a length of time sufficient to think about the fact that God is exclusive in the world and that God rules the four winds (directions) of the earth."

- 1) Try out the custom described here. Cover your eyes and read "*Echad*" according to the halachic directions in this source.
- 2) What, then, is implied about the idea of the intentionality of the heart in the recitation of "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai, is One*"?

The concept of *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a declaration of faith is confirmed in the bracha immediately after *Kriyat Sh'ma*, known as "*Emet Veyatziv*" (source #2). (According to Rabbi Yehuda - TB Brachot 21a, reciting the blessing "*Emet Veyatziv*" is a mitzvah from the Torah.). If we mark the key word "truth" throughout this paragraph, we will discover a list of basic beliefs almost like Maimonides' 13 Basic Tenets (13 *Ikarim*). Apparently, "*Emet Veyatziv*" serves as a personal confirmation for readers of *Kriyat Sh'ma* that they also personally believe all they recited. The relationship between *Kriyat Sh'ma* and "*Emet Veyatziv*" is similar to the relationship between reading a book outloud for information (with an objective stance of distance) and the reading interjected with subjective comments such as: "How true! My feelings exactly! Here, here!"

Source #2 - The Truths of *Emet VeYatziv*

from the bracha after *Kriyat Sh'ma* in the Siddur

"Your teaching is true and enduring; the content of *Kriyat Sh'ma* is eternally right."

"It is true that the eternal God is our RulerÖthe Rock of Jacob."

"God's teachings are true and everlasting." (refers to Torah)

"It is true that You are Adonai, our God, and the God of our ancestors."

"You are in truth the God of your people, You are their Defender and mighty Ruler."

"You are the first and You are the last."

Sephardi siddurim often add: "It is **true** that you redeemed us from Egypt."

- 1) Jews have the halachic obligation to continue with reciting *Emet VeYatziv* immediately after reading *Kriyat Sh'ma*, without pausing. Why? (Look at the content of this paragraph, located right after *Kriyat Sh'ma*).
- 2) Read the bracha that begins "*Emet Veyatziv*" and mark the words "true" and "truth" every time they appear. (Did you know that *Emet* is the same as *Amen*? It is simply the ancient female form of *Amen*).
- 3) Look at the list of phrases beginning with the word *Emet* /"truth." What do you think the meaning of these sentences is in their context immediately following *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

Maimonides' words describing the content of the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" (in contrast to the words of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha in the previous unit) emphasize **God's Uniqueness, Love and Teachings (source #3)**. God's Teachings, according to Maimonides, is the scientific, intellectual study of God's connection to the nation. "The whole world depends on it," according to Maimonides. The belief in God's Unity and all being's dependence upon it is not just a blind faith, this truth can be known by intellectual means.

Source #3 - *Yichud Hashem* – God is Uniqueness

Maimonides, Sefer HaAhava, *Kriyat Sh'ma* 1:1-2

Twice each day one reads *Kriyat Sh'ma*, in the evening and in the morning, as it is written: "when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

What does one read? Three paragraphs - *Sh'ma*, *Vehaya Im Shamoá*, and *Vayomer*. The first paragraph of *Sh'ma* comes first because it includes the Uniqueness of God, the Love of God, and the Torah of God, which is the most important thing upon which all is dependent.

Afterwards comes *Vehaya Im Shamoá*, which includes the commandments regarding all the other mitzvot. Then comes the paragraph of *Tzitzit*, which also includes a commandment to remember all the mitzvot.

- 1) We learned that among the Rabbis there is a dispute: Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai says, the essence of **the paragraph of "Sh'ma"** is "study," and Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha says, it is "acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*." What is its content according to Maimonides? How does his understanding of the paragraph change the meaning of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?
- 2) What do you think "*Yichud Hashem*" means? What is the meaning of the word "Torah" here?"

For Maimonides, "belief does not contradict knowledge." From the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" we learn the mitzvah of **knowing** God with all our scientific-critical-intellectual powers. For Maimonides, the representative of faith in God as a result of an intellectual search is **our ancestor Abraham. His faith is not the result of loyalty to his ancestors' tradition** (see the source in Unit V about our ancestor Jacob who inquires to find out if his children have indeed kept up their faith in the God of their father, himself). Maimonides (*Sefer HaMadda*, Hilchot Avodah Zara 1:3 - **source #4**) describes Avraham who had "a heart and mind that wandered and searched for understanding until he found the path of truth and understood what was right using his own reason. Then he knew that there was one God" (see also *Sefer HaAggadah* on Abraham in Ur Kasdim). There are many signs that Maimonides saw in Abraham his personal role model as a believing philosopher.

Source #4 - Avraham Seeks the Truth

Maimonides, *Sefer HaMadda*, Hilchot Avodah Zara 1:3

Abraham our Ancestor:

When this great man was weaned [at age three or four], he began to ponder in his thoughts - though he was young -and he thought day and night. He wondered: how can it be that these circular heavens [as the stars, sun, and moon appear to an observer on earth] spin without a force to move them? Who is the first cause of their motion? Why, is it not possible for it to spin itself? Abraham did not have a teacher or anyone to inform him since he was deep in Ur Kasdim among the ignorant idol worshippers, including his father and mother. All the people were idol worshippers and he worshipped them with the rest. Yet his heart and mind wandered, seeking understanding until he found the path of truth and understood what was right with his own reason. Then he knew that there was one God and that God guides the motion of the heavens, God created all, and there is none other than God anywhere. He knew that the entire world was mistaken and he realized how they had erred in worshipping the stars and the constellations [astrology as a pseudo-science] until they no longer knew the truth.

Abraham was forty years old when he came to know his Creator. Since he had learned about God, he began to challenge the people of Ur Kasdim and to debate them saying: this is not the

road to truth that you are taking. He broke the idols and began to tell the people that it is not worthy to worship any other than the God of the world. God is the only One worthy of worship (by bowing down, making sacrifices, and pouring libations), so that all creatures to come will get to know God. Therefore all the idols should be destroyed and broken so that the people do not fall into error again, like those who imagine that there is no god other than them.

Since his evidence was stronger than theirs, the king wanted to kill Abraham, but by a miracle he escaped to Haran. There he began to publicize to the entire world and inform them that there is one God for the entire world, and God alone is worthy of worship. He travelled, calling out and gathering the people from city to city, and kingdom to kingdom, until he reached the land of Cana'an. That is what is written: "There he called out in the name of the Adonai, the God of the world [the eternal God]" (Genesis 21:33).

- 1) How did Avraham discover God?
- 2) In light of the story, what does "*Yichud Hashem*" mean?
- 3) Try to define the difference between believing and knowing. In light of the story, would it be correct to claim that "Avraham **believed** in *Yichud Hashem*" (Genesis 15)? To what extent do you think, as Abraham seems to, that a personal declaration "*Hear, Israel... Adonai is One*" requires a prior personal search for the truth?
- 4) What is the difference between acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and knowing *Yichud Hashem*? Which do you think is more important?

Maimonides' words still leave the question unanswered: is the intention of reading "*Hear O' Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One*" every day to send the reader on a journey, accompanied by Abraham, until the Divine truth is discovered? Or is *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a mitzvah a harsh form of propaganda and brainwashing which leaves no room for critical thought because not everyone is capable of wandering until they find the truth like Abraham?

Can Judaism be built upon a foundation of personal quests of the truth, or must we educate the public to believe in God and give up individual, personal philosophy?

As far as this unit is concerned, we will have achieved our goal if:

Kriyat Sh'ma is also understood as a personal declaration of faith in the Divine truth.

The character of Abraham, wandering and searching for the truth of One God is affiliated with the experience of *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

Lesson B - "On that day, God will be One and God's Name will be One"

(Sources #5-#9)

The goal of this lesson is to understand *Yichud Hashem* both as God's **Exclusivity** and God's **Unity**, and to translate that belief between God and human beings into duties of social behavior implied by this belief in God's Unity.

The prayer "*Aleinu*" connects acceptance of *Malchut Hashem* with belief in God as the sole sovereign (**Unit VII, source #13**). In the first paragraph of "*Aleinu*," *Yichud Hashem* means a mental recognition of God's Exclusivity. the verse "***And you shall know today and keep in mind that Adonai alone is God in heaven above and on earth below there is no other***" is quoted from Deuteronomy 4 (**source #5**).

Source #5 - "And you shall know today"

Deuteronomy 4:39

"And you shall know today and keep in mind that Adonai alone is God in heaven above and on earth below - there is no other."

- 1) In light of this verse, what is the meaning of "*Yichud Hashem*"?
- 2) Read the prayer *Aleinu*. How does this verse fit into the prayer?
- 3) In light of this verse, how can we understand the verse quoted at the end of "*Aleinu*" from Zecharia 14 "***And Adonai shall be Ruler over all the earth; in that day there shall be one God with one name***"?

But in the second paragraph a verse is quoted from Zecharia 14 which postpones God's Unity to the future. The verse serves as a commentary to the coronation of God at the Red Sea when Isarel declared, "God *will* rule forever" (in future tense). There seems to be a visible **contradiction**. The verse from Deuteronomy speaks of getting to know the **eternally valid metaphysical truth** about the Creator of the world, while the verse from Zecharia describes **a future historical recognition** by all people that God is One. This future recognition will lead to the realization of God's Unity as Ruler of the world. However **God's Exclusivity as Ruler depends on the unity of human opinion, on joint recognition by all humanity of God's Exclusivity.**

Not only the theological unity of opinions is important for the concept of God's Unity. According to **sources #6-#7** (Malachi and the midrash on "do not slice yourselves up"), belief of all people or all Jews in One God, requires moral behavior among people. **The belief in One God becomes a factor in the development of faith in one humanity and in the duty to preserve human unity.**

Source #6 - "One Parent for us All"

Malachi 2:10

"Have we not all one parent? Did not one God create us? Why do we break faith with one another?"

Source #7 - "You are God's Children"

Midrash Sifri 13 on Deuteronomy 14:1

"You are children of the Lord your God. You shall not slice yourselves up" (Deuteronomy 14:1) - means, do not cut yourselves up into separate communities, rather unite into one community.

Ritba, the Spanish Talmud commentator, on TB Yevamot 13b, writes:

"You are children of Adonai your God" - means, you are the children of one God, so it is worthy that you do not create separate communities as if there were two Torahs, two gods.

- 1) In these sources, to what is the relationship between God and people or God and Israel compared? How do these mutual feelings differ from those of the metaphor of God-Israel as ruler-slave?
- 2) According to the logic of these sources, how is the concept of God's Unity as "One Parent for us all" supposed to affect human behavior? What is the ramification of the children splitting into competing communities which behave differently, regarding the belief in One God?
- 3) What does "Adonai is One" mean in light of these sources? To what kind of behavior are you committing yourself when you describe God as One? Give an example.

In the midrash **in sources #8-#9** on "*in Yeshurun there was a Ruler*" and midrash on the lulav the Rabbis develop a frequently quoted and highly original Rabbinic concept based on the verse "*Who built God's chambers in heaven and founded God's vault on the earth*" (Amos 9:6). Here we find **the same bold idea that transforming people into one community on earth is what crowns and unites God in heaven**. Serious treatment of this idea suggests the need to discuss the many difficulties of creating **social unity** in humanity at large and within the Jewish people specifically. The authors of the midrash dared to use the faith in God's Unity and the will to worship God in order to encourage the nation to overcome its internal divisions. They followed the biblical that the behavior and unity of the Jewish people attests to the true power of God's Unity and Kingdom in the eyes of other peoples. Conversely, Jewish infighting constitutes a *Hillul HaShem*, desecration of God's name.

Source #8 - "All as one Community"

Midrash, Vayikra Rabba 30:12

“The fruit [*etrog*] of a citrus tree” [and the whole mitzvah of the four species, *lulav*, *etrog*, *hadas*, and willow] (Leviticus 23:40) - refers to the Jewish people, Israel. Just as an *etrog* has both a flavor and a fragrance, so Israel has people that have learned Torah and have done good deeds.

And the “date *palm*” [*lulav*] - also refers to those in Israel. Just as the *lulav* has a flavor but no fragrance, so Israel includes people among them that have Torah but no good deeds.

And “a branch of a myrtle” - also refers to Israel. Just as the *hadas* has a fragrance but no flavor, so Israel has among them people with good deeds but no Torah.

And “willows of the brook” - also refers to Israel. Just as the *arava* has no fragrance and no flavor, so among the people of Israel there are some who have neither Torah nor good deeds. So what does God do with them? To destroy them is not possible. Rather God says, **all should come bound (*agudah*) together into one community and each atones for the other. If you do so, at that time I ascend as is written, "*Who built God's chambers in heaven*" (Amos 9:6). So when does God ascend? When they are as one community [on earth], as it is written, "*and founded God's vault on the earth*" (Amos 9:6). Therefore Moshe warned Israel, "*On the first day you shall take [all of them, the whole Jewish community of whatever kind and unite them in one bond]*" (Leviticus 23:40).**

- 1) Since God is one and the people of Israel (the Jewish nation) represent God on earth, it is important that they too be united. What difficulties in uniting the people into one community emerges from this famous midrash about *Arba'at HaMinim*?
- 2) According to the midrash, unity is not a constant and natural state, it is the result of certain activities. Explain the sentence: "God said, all should come bound together into one community and each atones for the other. To which halachic activity connected with *Arba'at HaMinim* does this sentence refer? (Hint: How are the four species bound together?)
- 3) At the end of the midrash appears a bold idea that as God ascends in heaven to the Divine throne, the nation becomes united on earth. Provide an example of the opposite: a situation in which the lack of unity of a group causes the desecration of the cause for which it was established. In light of this idea, how can a person who recites *Kriyat Sh'ma* unite God's name in practice, and not just express belief in God's oneness or uniqueness among the gods?

Source #9 - "And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler"

Midrash, Sifrei Piska 346 on Deuteronomy 33

"And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler, when the heads of the people assembled, the tribes of Israel together" (Deuteronomy 33).

"And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler." When Israel is equal in one opinion from below, God's great name is praised from above, as is written, *"and in Yeshurun there was a Ruler"* - only when *"The tribes of Israel are together."* In other words, when they create one community, not when they create many separate communities. So it is written, *"Who built God's chambers in heaven and founded God's vault on the earth"* (Amos 9:6).

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says: it is like a person who brought two ships and tied them together tightly with strong ropes and placed them deep in the sea, and built a palace atop them. As long as the boats remain tied together, the palace subsists. If the ships part, the palace exists no longer. So is Israel: when they do God's will, "God's chambers are in heaven," and when they do not do God's will, it is as if [God was not enthroned in the Divine palace in heaven] - that is, "Founded God's vault on the earth."

So it is written: *"This is my God whom I will enshrine."* (Exodus 15:2) - when I acknowledge God, God is enshrined, and when I do not acknowledge God, it is as if God is not enshrined. Similarly, *"For the name of God I proclaim"* (Deuteronomy 32:3). When I proclaim God's name - God is great, and if not, it is as if God's name is not great. Similarly, *"So you are my witnesses declares the Lord."* (Isaiah 43:12) I am God when you are my witnesses, and when you are not my witnesses, *it is* as if I am not God. Similarly, *"To You, enthroned in heaven, I turn my eyes"* (Psalms 123:1). If not for me, it is as if You would not be enthroned in heaven, and here too it is said, *"The tribes of Israel together"* - when they unite into one community and not when they divide into multiple communities.

- 1) In light of the verse from Deuteronomy 33, under which conditions is God crowned over Israel (Yeshurun)?
- 2) How is the Jewish people's togetherness expressed in Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's parable? What is dependent upon their unity?
- 3) In light of this midrash, on what does God's uniqueness as Ruler depend? Therefore, what is the importance of morning and evening *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

In summary, in these midrashim, belief in the metaphysical existence of God's Exclusivity is transformed into a social ideal of unity that is realized in a process of uniting of hearts.

In light of this commentary, the great degree of concentration required for the utterance of "*Echad*" in *Kriyat Sh'ma*, symbolically expresses the extent of the effort required for the creation of the oneness of the people, the unity of humanity, which attests to God's Unity.

These lessons on the abstract terms Unity and Uniqueness of God are not complete without drawing attention to the problem of the acute split in the nation between different sects of believing Jews. **How does "a nation that unites God's name" become a nation of religiously divided sects?** How does a minyan of people who declare their belief in the Unity of God divide so often into disputing sects? Christianity and Islam, which separated out of Judaism, accentuated issue of divisiveness further and turned religious disputes into religious wars that are contrary to the spirit of the midrashim on unity.

It is important for the educator to encourage students to discuss the gap between faith and action.

This gap highlights the importance of *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a declaration of faith in *Yichud Hashem*. The Uniqueness and Exclusivity are ideals that are meant to awaken believing Jews at prayer from their complacency and encourage them to try to unite the name of God in their community and hope for "*that day in which God will be One and God's name will be One*" in all the world. **A believer must not only recognize the Unity of God but also help make God "*Echad*" through a process of uniting the hearts.**

Unit IX. Kriyat Sh'ma as an Expression of Love –
"And You shall Love Adonai, your God with all your Heart "

Unit Goals

Educational Guide to Sources

Lesson A - Kriyat Sh'ma and the Powers of the Soul

Lesson B - A Parable for Marital Love

Source #1 - Engagement - the Blessing of Tefillin

Source #2 - God's Tefillin - TB Berachot 6b

Lesson C - Worshipping God out of Love

Source #3 - "*And with all your might*"- TB Brachot 55a

Source #4 - Worshipping God out of Love - Maimonides Sefer HaMadda, Teshuvah 10: 1-4

Appendix: The Mystic's *Kriyat Shma*: Calling out GOD's Name! by Arthur Green

Unit IX. *Kriyat Sh'ma* as an Expression of Love -

"And You shall Love Adonai, your God with all your Heart"

Unit Goals

All along the study of *Kriyat Sh'ma* we have sought broad concepts and metaphors that illuminate the general meaning of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. Each concept addressed a different part of the human character ("with all your heart"), enabling a multi-directional approach to *Kriyat Sh'ma* by different people who hold different opinions and possess different temperaments. Just as there are seventy sides to Torah and to one's personality, so one can find **seventy sides to *Kriyat Sh'ma***. Let us review the different approaches in parallel to the **powers of the soul** to which each approach appeals.

Concepts of *Kriyat Sh'ma* as referring to various Powers of the Soul

Unit II *Kriyat Sh'ma* as reconstruction of the **Sinai Experience** appeals to **the imagination**, the ability to relive a founding moment in Jewish experience

Unit III *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a daily reminder of the **Ten Commandments** appeals to **the moral conscience** that guides practical behavior

Unit V *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a **public** ceremony appeals to the **courage** to declare one's personal loyalty in public

Unit VI *Kriyat Sh'ma* as ***Kavannah***, intentionality of the heart appeals the **intellectual concentration** on ideational content

Unit VII *Kriyat Sh'ma* as acceptance of ***Ol Malchut*** Shamayim appeals to **will and willingness** to make a **commitment**

Unit VIII *Kriyat Sh'ma* as a declaration of belief in ***Yichud Hashem*** appeals to **belief** in God's Unity and in human unity

Unit IX *Kriyat Sh'ma* as an expression of **Love of God - *Avodah v'Ahava*** appeals to the emotion of **love**

In Unit IX we focus on the mitzvah "***you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart***" that appears in the second verse of the first paragraph of *Sh'ma*. In the opinion of Bar Kapara and Rabbi Elazar, every reader of *Kriyat Sh'ma* must have intentionality of the heart at least from the beginning of the *Sh'ma* until the end of the phrase "***Al Levavecha***" ("upon your heart"). Apparently, in their opinion, **the concept of love is the essence of *Kriyat Sh'ma***. Here, intentionality of the heart is not limited to intellect; it includes an expression of feeling and of a personal attitude towards God that is similar to the relationship of a married

couple. It is not enough just to believe in God or accept God's authority and study the Torah carefully, there is also a need for personal, emotional feeling.

The metaphor of God as Creator of the world, as Ruler, or as the Teacher of Torah to the Jewish people does not exhaust the variety of feelings of people at prayer. People also strive for a feeling a love, devoid of any element of authoritative distance or subjectivity. In *Kriyat Sh'ma*, as in the mitzvah of **Tefillin**, there is a metaphor of love derived from the love of a man and a woman. In this unit we shall examine that metaphor as it is expressed in the first paragraph of "*Sh'ma*," in the mitzvah of Tefillin and in Maimonides' concept of *Avodat Hashem*, worshipping God out of pure motives of love.

The goals of this unit are:

To understand ***Kriyat Sh'ma* in light of the powers of the soul** to which it appeals, and to discover the vital connection between *Avodat Hashem* (worshipping God) and the personality of the person praying.

To see how **the mitzvah of love** is expressed in the symbolic world of "*Sh'ma*" in general, and in the mitzvah of Tefillin specifically.

To become familiar with **the ideal of *Avodat Hashem*** out of love, in contrast to worship motivated only by the acceptance of the yoke.

To summarize and take a second look at what was learned in all the previous units, from a new angle.

Remarks to the Educator: Unit IX in Contrast to the Previous Units

This unit is meant to summarize and juxtapose the conclusions drawn from studying the previous units. We will try to enrich the concept of *Kriyat Sh'ma* with emotional content, and suggest an ideal relationship with God that reaches beyond intellectual belief and practical obedience.

We begin by counterbalancing the impression created by the opening Unit I's starting point. From the start, we claimed that ***Kriyat Sh'ma* is not a prayer**. Prayer is a personal and usually emotional encounter between a person who asks and even begs for the fulfillment of personal needs, and God as Savior and Redeemer. People who are about to recite *Shmoneh Esrei* are supposed to feel that they are in the presence of God. In contrast, *Kriyat Sh'ma* remains a study-oriented reading, or without a direct connection to God. But in this unit **we focus on *Kriyat Sh'ma* as an expression of a personal relationship of love for God, as a part of an emotional continuum leading from *Kriyat Sh'ma* to prayer**.

The study of *Kavannah*, intentionality of the heart, in the previous units could have created the impression that *Kriyat Sh'ma* requires accepting God's authority since we are subject to God's yoke, or that *Kriyat Sh'ma* deals only with abstract faith in *Yichud Hashem*. In order to counterbalance this impression, we

devote this unit to establishing the ideal of “*you shall love Adonai your God.*” Meaning, ***Avodat Hashem*** **out of love, and not just out of acceptance of the yoke; Worship with an enthusiastic heart, not just through mental faith.**

Overview of Lessons

In **Lesson A** we present a new angle for the understanding of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, and through it we summarize the previous units and prepare for the last unit. Up till now we have emphasized the **content** of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, and in the latest units we have dealt with our **perception of God**. Here we shall review *Kriyat Sh'ma* from the perspective of the reader's **character** and the powers of the soul required for *Kriyat Sh'ma*. Afterwards, we shall present the topic of Unit IX by studying the first paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" and describing the loving personality delineated in it.

In **Lesson B** we will study **the metaphor of the love of a man and a woman** as a parable for the love of a human being for God, through the study of the mitzvah of Tefillin.

In **Lesson C** we will describe the concept of "***Avodat Hashem***" **out of love** according to Maimonides' Hilchot Teshuvah.

Lesson A - *Kriyat Sh'ma* and the Powers of the Soul

This lesson summarizes the approaches to *Kriyat Sh'ma* from the previous units, and presents a new approach. *Kriyat Sh'ma* is meant to encourage a relationship of love with God, "with all your heart."

Instead of discussing the content of the Shma or its ritual performance, we begin the unit with a general discussion about the personality of a religious person who recites *Kriyat Sh'ma* with the full *Kavannah* of the heart. Beyond mental concentration, *Kavannah* taps into the treasures of the soul. Therefore, we attempt here to identify the emotional side required in *Kriyat Sh'ma*, in line with the many concepts of *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

We ask the students to review what they have learned and organize the information in a table of approaches correlated with powers of the soul. Compare it with the the table located at the beginning of this unit, under the heading "Unit Goals."

We study the siddur in order to describe **the loving personality** of the person described in the "*Sh'ma*" and its bracha "*Ahava Rabba*." In the "*Sh'ma*," people are commanded to love "*with all their hearts and all their souls and all their might*." One must focus all the powers of the soul, the two instincts of the heart, and all one's physical power - to worship God. The love of God is also expressed through the "crazy" [*meshuga*] behavior including talking about God's words all the time, everywhere, and wearing tangible symbols of God's love, such as Tefillin, and decorating one's home with God's love letters like the parchment in the mezuzot. In the analogy of a couple in love, the two people's consciousness is full of obsessive love thoughts. So in the marriage ceremony they are sanctified to one another. Similarly the Jewish people commit themselves exclusively to their one and only God. The exclusivity is not a metaphysical expression, it is an expression of exclusive loyalty, like that of two engaged people.

In the bracha "*Ahava Rabba*" **the mutual love of God and the nation of Israel** is described. God reveals to the nation the "Divine plaything" - the Torah - because God wishes to include the beloved nation in the Divine inner world, and also because of God's wish to help the subject of God's love grow and mature. God draws the nation closer, forgoing the authoritative distance of a Ruler. God chooses them as a person chooses his or her love. The nation also asks that their love - God - assist them in uniting their heart exclusively in order to achieve intimacy.

(We recommend preceding the analysis of the Love of God in the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" with the preparation of a list of characteristics and idiosyncrasies of a person in love. Afterwards, try finding parallels to Rambam's ideal religious personality).

Lesson B - A Parable to Marital Love (Sources #1-#2)

The goal of this lesson is to learn to use the metaphor of the love of a man and woman in explicating the mitzvah of Tefillin mentioned twice in *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

In the previous lesson we saw that the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" is comprised of three sections:

a declaration of exclusive loyalty to God: "Adonai is our God, Adonai is one."

The mitzvah of love with all the power of the soul.

Tangible mitzvot, such as Tefillin and mezuzah. In this lesson we deal with the mitzvah of Tefillin, and research the connection between Tefillin and the mitzvah of Loving God.

Source #1 - Engagement: The Blessing of Tefillin

- 1) Where does the mitzvah of Tefillin appear in *Kriyat Sh'ma*? What do you think the connection is between the mitzvah of Tefillin and the main theme of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?
- 2) Read the verse from Hoshea, what symbolic act does its recitation accompany?
- 3) In light of this verse, to what is the relationship between a person and God compared? Where in the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" is a similar parable hinted? What does the word "*Veyadata*" (and you shall know) mean in the verse from Hoshea? (See the complete parable in Hoshea, chapters 1-2).

We will take a look at **the brachot of Tefillin (source #1)** emphasizing the verse from the book of Hosea: "*I shall engage you to me forever*" and the description of tying Tefillin around the finger. **An extensive comparison can be developed between the love of a man and woman and the love of people and God.** For example, a person in love often makes a commitment and declares his or her feelings to the lover. The commitment is symbolized through marking the loved one's name on a necklace or wearing a ring. Similarly, Tefillin is tied like a ring around the finger, and tying God's name on the hand and the neck. Isn't a person who speaks of devoted love and who is yet not willing to carry an external sign of commitment suspect of hypocrisy? Along those lines we can understand the words of Rav Ula: "One who reads *Kriyat Sh'ma* without wearing Tefillin - is as if committing perjury to oneself."

We end with bold midrashim (source #2) that deal with **God's Tefillin and the mutual love between God and the nation.** According to TB Brachot, **God's Tefillin are inscribed with the verse: "*who is like Your nation Israel, one nation in the land,*" in parallel to "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One*" in the Tefillin of the Jewish people.** Love begins with a declaration of exclusive loyalty. This declaration is understood as **mutual praise**. Similarly it is customary for lovers to praise each other to the point of

exaggeration, describing the uniqueness and the virtue of their "one and only" lover. When donning Tefillin on one's finger one makes the shape of a ring which recalls the exchange of vows in Deuteronomy "***You have affirmed this day that Adonai is your God, that you will walk in God's ways...***" and immediately thereafter "***and Adonai has affirmed this day that you are, as promised, God's treasured people ...and that God will set you ... above all nations...a holy people to God***" (Deuteronomy 26:17-18). So too, in the bracha "Ahavat Olam" in Arvit we hear "*and you shall love Adonai your God*" (Midrash Sifrei, Deuteronomy).preceeded by God's ecpression of love in giving us the Torah.

Source #2 - God's Tefillin

TB Berachot 6b

Rabbi Avin son of Rav Ada said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak:

How do we know that the Holy One puts on Tefillin? As it was written "God swore with God's right, the arm of strength." "God's right" - that is the Torah as we learn from the phrase"from God's right, the fire of law"(Deuteronomy 33:2). "The arm of strength" - that is Tefillin, as it says, "God will give strength to God's nation." ...

Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak said to Rav Chiya Bar Avin: What is written in the Tefillin that the Master of the world wears?

He replied: "Who is like Your nation Israel, a unique nation in the land (Chronicles I 17:21).

Does that mean that God is praised by praising the people of Israel? Yes.

Thus it is written [about the mutuality of the God-Israel relationship]: "*You have affirmed this day that Adonai is your God, that you will walk in God's ways...*" and immediately thereafter "*and Adonai has affirmed this day that you are, as promised, God's treasured people ...and that God will set you ... above all nations...a holy people to God*" (Deuteronomy 26:17-18).

God said to Israel: You have made Me uniquely one in the world, and I shall make you uniquely one in the world. [You declared] "*Hear O' Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One [Echad].*" So I shall make you uniquely one in the world, as is written: "*Who is like Your nation Israel, a unique [Echad] nation in the land.*"

- 1) What is written in God's Tefillin? Why?
- 2) What is similar between the key verse written in the Tefillin worn by human beings (that includes the first two paragraphs of the *Shma*) and the verse written in God' Tefillin?
- 3) What is the meaning of the word "Echad" in the phrases "Goy Echad" (one nation), "Adonai Echad" (One God). (Note that *Echad* cannot mean literally "one nation" like "one God," for there are many nations. Recall that people in love have eyes only for each other, you are the only one in my world. The Tefillin as we will see are an expression of mutual love akin to marriage).

- 4) If, according to the midrash, God too dons Tefillin, then apparently there is a strong parallel between the people's relationship with God, and God's relationship with people. Try to define that parallel.
- 5) How does Levi Yitzchak use the Tefillin metaphor to argue in favor of the Jewish people.

“Disqualified Tefillin” (Psulin): A Story of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev

The Rabbi from Berdichev who was an enthusiastic advocate for the Jewish people used to say:

Master of the Universe, if You do not forgive the sins of Israel, I will stand and reveal the secret that the Tefillin You don on Your head is disqualified! For it says in your Tefillin, "Who is like Your nation Israel, a unique [Echad] nation in the land." If You do not forgive their sins, God forbid, they will not be called "one unique nation" and your Tefillin will be disqualified.

In conclusion, the Sinai Experience as the place of marriage of the nation and God becomes a model for the marriage of each individual and God in an everyday ritual renewal of profound romantic love expressed both in *Kriyat Sh'ma* and donning Tefillin.

Lesson C - Worshipping God out of Love - (Sources #3-#4)

The goal of this lesson is to explain the concept of *Avodat Hashem* out of love, as Maimonides understood it, so that it may enlist one's entire personality in one's relationship with God.

The paragraph of "Sh'ma" with its inclusive demands for "love with all your soul and all your heart and all your might" creates a difficult educational problem. How can people be expected to forgo all personal needs, and totally commit themselves emotionally and spiritually? Further, how can the emotion of love be required? To what model of human behavior can the most desirable relationship between people and God be compared?

It is important to note that a totalistic relationship in which one gives up everything for God is not the only possible relationship with God. If we understand *Kriyat Sh'ma* as **accepting *Ol Malchut*** we must admit that only in special cases of sanctification of God's name, is the subject required to give everything to the Kingdom. The subjects know that they too have rights, and there are limitations on the rights of the Kingdom. The model of a loyal subject of the kingdom is not as demanding as the model of love appearing in the paragraph of *Sh'ma*. The concept of the relationship between people and God that is found in the prayer of *Shmone Esrei* is not based on demands that contradict people's needs, it is quite the opposite. In *Shmone Esrei*, a person turns to God and asks for consideration of many needs. The paragraph "***Vehaya Im Shamo***" also knows how to limit and counterbalance the demands of God from people. There, God's demands are a part of a **bilateral covenant** that promises reward to its upholders and punishments to its violators. The relationship with God in the paragraph "***Vehaya Im Shamo***" assumes that a person has legitimate self-centered material interests of livelihood (rain), land, and longevity. The relationship with God does not necessarily put an end to people's healthy selfishness. **The personality of the worshiper of God in *Shmone Esrei* and in the paragraph "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" is completely different from that of the first paragraph of "*Sh'ma* as Rambam understands it.**

In this lesson we will attempt to understand this special concept of *Avodat Hashem* out of love in which a person's relationship with God is removed from the realm of a needy human creature turning to the Divine power to help.

A Love without Ulterior Motives

Source #3 - "And with all your might"

TB Brachot 55a

One must recite a blessing acknowledging the bad just as one recites a blessing acknowledging the good. For it says, "you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart and all your soul and

all your might." *"With all your soul"* - even if God takes your soul [your life]; *"and with all your might"* - with all your wealth.

Or an alternative explanation: *"And with all your might (M'oDecHa)* - with whatever occurrences God measures (MiDaH / MoDeid) [or tests or judges] you, you must acknowledge *(MoDeH)* God.

- 1) Which words in the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" strengthen the claim that "One must give thanks for the bad just as one gives thanks for the good?"
- 2) In light of this source, under which conditions is one supposed to stop loving God?

In the source from TBBrachot 54 (**source #3**) a love of God is described, in which there is a willingness to give all to God and a promise that the love will remain strong even when it does not create immediate personal benefit. Accordingly, one makes a blessing over the bad ("*Baruch Dayan HaEmet*") just as one blesses the good ("*SheHechyanu*"). A person does not change one's love according to whether God acts toward us according to judgement or according to mercy. For example, mature children should love their parents both when they punish and when they give presents. This is not to say that one is not angry or disappointed from the reactions of a beloved partner, but despite it all, the basic relationship of love remains because it is not dependent upon material reward. That is love which is not dependent upon anything. It is important to use examples from everyday life to clarify **the difference between a basic relationship of love and the dynamic ups-and-downs within a loving framework. In mature adult love there is no place for childish reactions such as: "if you don't share the candy with me - I won't be your friend anymore."** **This is the ideal of Love of God and perhaps an ideal role model for married couples.**

We end with the words of **Maimonides in Hilchot Teshuva** chapter 10 (**source #4**).

Maimonides distinguishes between worshipping God out of fear and worshipping God out of love that does not depend on anything.

Source #4 - Worshipping God out of Love

Maimonides *Sefer HaMadda*, Hilchot Teshuvah 10: 1-4

(1) A person must not say: I observe the mitzvot of the Torah and study Divine wisdom, so that I will receive all the blessings written in it, or so that I will be eligible for a life in the next world. [Nor shall one think:] I shall refrain from all the forbidden actions (*aveirot*) about which the Torah has warned me, so that I am spared from all the curses written in the Torah, or so that I am not denied life in the next world. This is not a worthy way of

worshipping God. One who worships this way, worships out of fear and such a person does not reach the level of prophets or masters of wisdom. God is not worshipped this way by anyone other than the ignoramuses, the women [who did not study Torah in the medieval period]. It is the way of children, who are taught to worship *out of fear* [negative and positive external reinforcement] until they acquire knowledge and worship *out of love*.

(2). One who worships out of love studies Torah, performs mitzvot and walks in the paths of wisdom without any ulterior worldly motive. Not out of fearing the bad, not in hope of inheriting the good rather one is motivated to do the truth because it is the truth, though good will end up coming from it.

This level [of spirituality] is a very great one; indeed, not every scholar succeeds in acquiring it. This is the level of Avraham our ancestor whom the Holy One called, "my lover," since he worshiped only out of love. This level is what God commanded us through Moshe, as it says: "You shall love Adonai your God" (Deuteronomy 6:5). When a person loves God with a worthy love, that person will immediately observe all the mitzvot out of love.

What is a "worthy love"? It is the love of one who loves God with a very great and very strong love, to the point that one's soul is preoccupied and attached to the love of God, and one thinks about it all the time as if lovesick. It is like someone who is in love with a woman and his mind is not free to think about anything else, when he gets up or lies down, eats or drinks. Furthermore, the love of God is to be in the heart of God's lovers all the time [as if crazy with love- *shogim* like the word *meshuga*], So have we been commanded, "*with all your heart and all your soul.*" That is what Solomon said as a parable: "*For I am lovesick*" (Song of Songs 2:5), and all of the Book of Song of Songs is a parable to this very matter.

The first Hachamim [in Pirkei Avot] said: Lest you think: I will study Torah - so that I become rich; so that I am called "Rabbi"; so that I am rewarded in the next world. The Torah teaches: "*To love Adonai*" (Deuteronomy 11:13). All that you do, do only out of love.

Hachamin added the advice: "Have great desire for God's mitzvot" (Psalms 112:1) - and *not* for the *reward* for the mitzvot. [In Pirkei Avot] the greatest of scholars would, discretely, command the most brilliant and knowledgeable of their students: Do not be as slaves who serve the master in order to receive a reward, rather because the master is worthy of service. In other words: worship out of love!

- 1) Define the difference between observance of God's mitzvot out of fear and out of love, according to the opinion of Maimonides. Give some everyday examples of both religious observance and doing schoolwork according to these two categories.
- 2) Read halacha 3. To what is a person's love to God compared? Provide examples to illustrate the similarity.
- 3) Note that the lovesick personality is described as meditating on God in all sorts of places. What verses in the first paragraph of the Shema do they recall? Why does Maimonides use the term "*shogim*" like the word *meshuga*?
- 4) Read halacha 4. In what way is this description of the relationship between a person who loves God or God's mitzvot similar or different to the metaphor for *Kriyat Shma* as an act of **acceptance of the Divine yoke**? What is positive and negative about these two great metaphors - bearing a yoke and being lovesick? Which metaphor is closer to your ideal? Can you suggest another more appropriate metaphor?

In the first halacha, Maimonides describes "*Avodat Hashem*" **out of a fear of punishment and the love of reward**. It can be exemplified through the paragraph "*Vehaya Im Shamo'a*" which portrays a covenantal relationship of reward and punishment with God which correlates with a personality concerned with concrete benefits.

The second halacha describes a person who worships out of love as did Avraham, who lived before the establishment of the quid pro quo of the Sinai Covenant. He demonstrated his unconditional love of God in his willingness to sacrifice his son in the name of his relationship with God. Here it is important to distinguish between worshipping out of love and accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim*. **In the acceptance of Ol Malchut Shamayim** a person surrenders to the authority of God. One observes the commandments because it is a duty and because God said so. But Avraham, as a person who **worshiped out of love**, lived before there existed a compelling framework of mitzvot. He sought God and followed God because he believed in the truth of God's path, **not because of God's authority**. That is a love which not only does not depend on anything, it also constitutes worship out of free will without a feeling of duty or yoke of any kind.

In the third halacha Maimonides delineates the experience of worship out of love. It is a very powerful and exciting experience. Maimonides finds that the starting point for loving God is a knowledge that creates great enthusiasm. **He compares the love of God to love for a woman**, as we saw in the brachot of Tefillin, but he goes even further and compares the experience of love to the experience described in the Song of Songs. This love is not the result of external coercion or a legal duty, it is the result of an internal impulse that fascinates one's thoughts about the lover all the time. The person in love is capable of concentrating one's heart only on God - to the point that one "is not free to think about anything else, when one gets up or

lies down." The terminology Maimonides chooses is reminiscent of the language of the first paragraph of *Sh'ma*: "Speak of them... when you lie down and when you get up." **This obsessive experience is like a state of craziness but only one who knows crazed love can appreciate the value of this emotional state.** In this state love itself is rewarding without a need for any external gratification. In a state like this, someone who loves someone else prefers the other's needs over one's own. Constraints of time or demands don't matter, one wants to give all as an expression of love. This is the character of a person who worships God out of love. This is the way we can understand the experience of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, which is the foundation for the rest of Judaism. It is an ideal which is not easily acquired, but it is the ideal towards which *Kriyat Sh'ma* strives.

In the fourth halacha Maimonides wishes to apply the loving relationship without ulterior motive to the motivation for practicing Judaism.. A Jew who treats God according to the description of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, is naturally attracted to Torah study and the observance of mitzvot, not as the acceptance of a yoke but as a true love for its own sake and with great enthusiasm. *Kriyat Sh'ma* may be seen as an attempt to educate Jews to reach for such a love. The morning and evening recitation of *Kriyat Sh'ma* reflects ideally, not a duty or a routine, but an inner need of a person who is preoccupied with love of God and Torah, from morning till night.

Appendix: The Mystic's *Kriyat Shma*

Calling out GOD's Name!

by Arthur Green (unpublished)

The great calling out of God's name is the recitation of *Shema Yisra'el* -- "Hear O Israel, Y-H-W-H our God, Y-H-W-H is one!" The Torah tells us to speak this verse twice each day, upon rising at dawn and before going to sleep. It is a first prayer taught to young children and it has graced the lips of martyrs from Rabbi Akiva in Roman times to pious Jews in the Holocaust. No act of piety is more characteristic of Judaism than this. It is a statement of intimacy, devotion, and abstraction all at once. Its recitation is referred to in our sources as *yihud ha-shem*, the proclamation of God's oneness....

The union of intimacy and abstraction is expressed in Judaism's special devotion to the name of God, the four-letter name referred to as *shem ha-meforash*, God's explicit name that may never be written or pronounced. The name is an impossible configuration of the verb "to be," and should probably best be translated "was/is/will be." But the sounds that comprise the name also indicate abstraction. There is no firm consonant among them; the *y*, the *w*, and the *h* are all nothing more than shapings of the breath. Indeed these letters are used in ancient Hebrew to indicate vowel signs, showing that they are only marginally to be seen as "real" letters. The name of God is but a breath, nothing you can hold onto very firmly. Indeed if you

try to hold onto it, if you think that Y-H-W-H is indeed a noun that indicates some substantial and defineable entity, Scripture laughs at you as God conjugates His own name, showing its true status as a verb, and says: "*I am that I am*" or perhaps better translate: "*I shall be whatever I choose to be*" (Ex. 3:14).

But at the same time that this word bears within it the Bible's most abstract notion of the deity, it also serves as a *name*. Names are fraught with both power and intimacy, in the ancient world as well as our own. To know someone's name is to stand in relationship, to be able to call in such a way that the other must respond. "*I raise him up because he knows My name*" (Ps. 91:14). A pious Jew refers to *ha-shem yitbarakh*, "God's blessed name" as an intimate, familiar way of speaking. To call out God's name in prayer is to transcend all other words one might speak. In fact a well-known Hasidic teaching claims that in true prayer *every* word becomes a name of God.

We do not fully speak the name. Y-H-W-H is too holy a word to be spoken. We for whom words come and go so easily are not allowed to pronounce this word, lest it be profaned by us. Instead we sheath it in the pious garb of *adonai*, "my Lord." But each time we pronounce that word in prayer, the Kabbalists tell us, we are to see the letters Y-H-W-H standing before us, visually filling us with an intensity of divine presence that we dare not permit our mouths to speak.

I conclude with a quotation from a Hasidic master, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Ger (1847-1904), author of *Sefat Emet*. In a letter to his children and grandchildren he spoke with unusual directness about the *Shema* and its meaning:

The proclamation of oneness that we declare each day in saying *Shema Yisra'el*...needs to be understood as it truly is. That which is entirely clear to me...based on the holy writings of great Kabbalists, I am obligated to reveal to you...The meaning of "Y-H-W-H is one" is not that He is the only true God, negating other gods (though that too is true!). But the meaning is deeper than that: there is no being other than God. [This is true] even though it seems otherwise to most people...Everything that exists in the world, spiritual and physical, is God Himself...These things are true without a doubt. Because of this, every person can become attached to God wherever he is, through the holiness that exists in every single thing, even corporeal things...This is the foundation of all the mystical formulations in the world.

Sources and Guideline Questions

Unit VI. Intentionality of the Heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma*

Source #1 - "If One Had the Intentionality of the Heart, One Fulfilled the Requirement."

Mishna Brachot 2:1

"If one happened to be reading [the paragraphs of the *Sh'ma*] from the Torah and the time for reading [*Sh'ma*] arrived, then if one had intentionality, one fulfilled the requirement."

Rabbi Steinsaltz explains:

The first problem, discussed only implicitly in the Mishna, is the question of intentionality of the heart.

"If one was reading Torah" - reading those very paragraphs of *Kriyat Sh'ma*; "and the time for reading arrived" - in the morning or in the evening; "if one had intentionality of the heart - one fulfilled the requirement." - and one is not required to read *Kriyat Sh'ma* an additional time. Nor does the fact that the brachot of *Sh'ma* were not recited detract from the fulfillment of the mitzvah.

- 1) According to this cryptic Mishna, it seems that a person who was reading the paragraphs of *Sh'ma* at the time of *Kriyat Sh'ma* fulfilled the requirement of the mitzvah of *Kriyat Sh'ma*, as long as - besides reading from the Torah - the person also had intentionality of the heart. Try to explain what the difference could be between reading the paragraphs of *Sh'ma* while reading or studying Torah in class and reading *Kriyat Sh'ma* separately from the siddur during services. Is there a difference?

Source #2 - The Whole *Sh'ma*

Tosefta, Brachot 2:2

The reader of *Sh'ma* must have intentionality of the heart.

Rabbi Achi says in the name of Rabbi Yehuda: If one had intentionality of the heart in the first paragraph "*Sh'ma...VeAhavta*," even if one fails to have intentionality of the heart in the final paragraphs, one fulfilled the requirement [of *Kriyat Sh'ma*].

- 1) What is the dispute in this Mishnaic source?
- 2) What do you think is the reasoning underlying the first opinion? What do you think of this reasoning? Explain.

Source #3 - The First Paragraph Only or the Second Only

TB: Brachot 13a

"Take to heart."

Rabbi Zutra says: Through here [the paragraph of *Sh'ma*] the mitzvah requires intentionality. From here onward, only a ritual reading is required.

Rabbi Yoashia says: Through here the mitzvah is of ritual reading. From here onward [the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*"] - the mitzvah requires intentionality.

- 1) What is the difference between the mitzvah of intentionality and the mitzvah of ritual reading (*kriyah*)?
- 2) Read the paragraph of *Sh'ma and V'Ahavata* in parallel to the paragraph of *Vehaya Im Shamo* and define in one sentence the essence of each paragraph.
- 3) Try to provide reasoning for the opinion of Rabbi Yoashia in light of the definition of the essences of these paragraphs.

Source #4 - The First Paragraph Only

TY Brachot 2:5

Rabbi Achi says in the name of Rabbi Yehuda: If one had intentionality of the heart in the first paragraph [the paragraph of *Sh'ma*], even if one fails to have intentionality of the heart in the second paragraph [the paragraph of "*Vehaya Im Shamo*"], one has fulfilled the requirement of *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

What is the difference between the first and second paragraphs?

Rabbi Chanina said: All that is written in one is written in the other.

So [if there is no conceptual difference] should a person only read one of them from now on?

Rabbi Ila said: The first teaches about the individual, the second about the community; the first is for study and the second is for action.

- 1) What are the differences between the two paragraphs according to Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Ila respectively?
- 2) Are Rabbi Ila's claims correct? Check the content of the paragraphs.

Source #5 - First Three Verses Only

TY Brachot 2:1

Bar Kapara said: One does not need intentionality of the heart other than during the first three verses only, and so we learned "teach them" ("*Veshinantam*") - until here intentionality is required, and from here on only recitation ("*shinun*") is required.

Source #6 - First Three Verses Only

TB Brachot 13a,b

"The words of Rabbi Eliezer: 'Take to heart these instructions.'" Is it possible that the entire paragraph requires intentionality? Rather, "these" - until here it requires intentionality, but from here on it does not require intentionality.

Rabbi Akiva said to him: But it says "take to heart...with which I charge you this day," from here we learn that the entire paragraph requires intentionality.

- 1) Compare the distinction made by Bar Kapara between intentionality and recitation with that made in source #3 from TB Brachot 13.
- 2) Why did Bar Kapara choose the phrase "recitation" ("*shinun*")?
- 3) With whom does Bar Kapara agree - Rabbi Eliezer or Rabbi Akiva?
- 4) What are the claims of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer?
- 5) Read the two parts of the paragraph of *Sh'ma* and define their essence.
- 6) Why do you think Rabbi Eliezer ignored their essence? Why do you think Rabbi Eliezer discarded the second part and determined that it did not require intentionality of the heart during its reading?

Source #7 - First Verse Only

TB Brachot 13b

**The Rabbis taught: "Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One" – up through here, intentionality of the heart is required, said Rabbi Meir.
Rava said: The halacha is according to Rabbi Meir.**

- 1) What is the halacha in this dispute? Try to define the essence of the verse that requires intentionality of the heart.
- 2) What can we learn from the fact that so many scholars disputed over this central issue of the intentionality of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?
- 3) Compare the opinion of Rabbi Meir to the first opinion in Tosefta (source #2).
- 4) Why do you think the halacha was ruled in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Meir?
- 5) Do you find it desirable to focus intentionality of the heart just on the first verse and then read the rest of the *Sh'ma* as a simple, regular reading?

Appendix - A Story about Saying *Kriyat Sh'ma* in a Foreign Language

TYerushalmi Sotah 7a, according to the commentary *Hakorban Edah*:

Rabbi says: I say *Kriyat Sh'ma* must not be said in any other language but the Holy Tongue. For what reason? "Take to heart *these* instructions" (Deuteronomy 6) [exactly as they were pronounced in the Torah].

Rabbi Levi Bar Chayta went to Caesaria (or Katzrin). There he heard the the people reading in Greek and he wanted to stop them, so that they would not read in any language other than the Holy Tongue.

Rabbi Yossi heard about this and was angry at him. He said [rhetorically]: Do you mean [to be so strict about the form of the *Sh'ma*] that one who does not know how to read Assyrian [Hebrew written in the Assyrian alphabet as we use today, since Hebrew is no longer written in the same alphabet as the First Temple Jews once wrote it] should not read it at all? Rather, one fulfills one's obligation [for *Sh'ma*] in any language one knows.

Unit VII. What is Intentionality of the Heart in *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

Acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* - The Kingdom of Heaven

Sources and Guiding Questions

Source #1 - Why is the First Paragraph “First”?

TB Brachot 13a

Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha said:

Why does the paragraph "*Sh'ma*" come before the paragraph "*Vehaya Im Shamo*?"

So that one accepts the Kingdom of Heaven upon oneself first, and then one accepts the yoke of mitzvot.

And why does "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" come before "*VaYomer*?"

Because reading "*Vehaya Im Shamo*" is obligatory both during the day and at night [Ma'ariv], and "*Vayomer*" is only obligatory during the day [Shacharit, since Tzitzit - the main portion of *VaYomer* - are worn only during the day when they can best be seen [without artificial light].

- 1) In the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha, what should be taking place in people's hearts every time they recite each of the two paragraphs: "*Sh'ma*" and "*Vehaya Im Shamo*?"
- 2) What do you think the connection is between this daily, internal event of “accepting a yoke” and Matan Torah at Sinai, the unique event occurring to the Jewish people who had just left Egypt?
- 3) The word “yoke” and “kingdom (*malchut*)” implicitly compare the relationship between God and people to the relationship between a ruler and subjects. Try to describe the relationship between a ruler and the subjects of the kingdom.
- 4) Does that fit the image of the relationship in this text? To what extent do you find this metaphor as used in this source appropriate to a democratic society? For example, do subjects "accept" the ruler's authority upon themselves, or does the ruler coerce them to accept it?
- 5) Would you describe your own attitude towards God as comparable in some way to a person towards a ruler?

Source #2 - "And They Accepted God's Sovereignty Joyfully"

The Bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*" - Arvit, Siddur Ashkenaz

- 1) In the bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*," which follows *Kriyat Sh'ma*, the Rabbis describe poetically the "acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*" by the entire nation in a famous historical experience. Which experience was it? What is the meaning of "*Malchut*" (kingdom) in the context of that experience?
- 2) Based on the bracha, what are the feelings of the nation when accepting the sovereignty of God? Does it fit the metaphor for acceptance of a "yoke?" Explain. Can you offer a better term?
- 3) What is the familial term used to describe the nation who sees the splitting of the Red Sea and accepts the sovereignty of God? What does this term teach us?

Source #3 - The Slave and the Voluntary Acceptance of the Yoke

TY Brachot 3:3

Mishna:

Slaves... are exempt from *Kriyat Sh'ma*.

Gemara:

How do we learn this? As it is written: "*Hear, Israel, Adonai [My Lord] is our God, Adonai is One.*" [Who is obligated?] Those who have no other lord or master but God.

Therefore, excluded from (this law) is the slave, who has a different lord.

- 1) Do you think that it is relevant to compare a Jew who has accepted *Ol Malchut* to a slave? Explain.
- 2) Read the Gemara. Why is a slave not required to recite *Kriyat Sh'ma*? (Note the word "One" and the word "Lord" in the quoted verse).
- 3) Prior to the reception of the Torah and prior to the acceptance of God's sovereignty at the sea (described in the Bracha "*Go'el Yisrael*"), God redeemed the Jewish People from Egypt. In light of this source about slaves being exempt for *Sh'ma*, why did the Exodus from Egypt precede the acceptance of *Ol Malchut* and the yoke of mitzvot?

Source #4 - *Matan Torah*

Exodus 19:1-8

- 1. In the third month, when the people of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.**
- 2. For they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the desert of Sinai, and had camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.**
- 3. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel;**

4. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.

5. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure among all peoples; for all the earth is mine;

6. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the people of Israel.

7. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

8. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord.

1) Sometimes a person accepts the authority and orders of another out of coercion, not of free will. Give an example of such an instance.

2) Read Exodus 19: 1-8. Is the description of signing a covenant with God at Mt. Sinai more similar to accepting a yoke out of free will or out of coercion? Explain.

Source #5 - The Covenant of Yehoshua

Joshua 24:14-26

14. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river, and in Egypt; and serve you the Lord.

15. (K) And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

17. For the Lord our God, he is who brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way where we went, and among all the people through whom we passed;

18. And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, the Amorites who live in the land; therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.

19. And Joshua said to the people, You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20. If you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and hurt you, and consume you, after he has done you good.

21. And the people said to Joshua, No; but we will serve the Lord.

22. And Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

23. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.

24. And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Torah of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under a terebinth, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

- 1) Is the signing of the covenant described in Joshua voluntary or coerced? Compare it to the Sinai covenant.
- 2) If the nation has already made its commitment at Sinai, why should they make an additional commitment in the days of Joshua? Do you think that today we also have free will regarding whether or not to accept *Ol Malchut Shamayim*? Explain.
- 3) In light of these descriptions of signing covenants, how can we understand what should take place in the hearts of people when they read *Kriyat Sh'ma* every day?

Source #6 - "But Israel chose God for themselves"

Midrash Dvarim Rabba, "Va'Etchanan"

"Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One." That [the emphasis that God belongs to us, written as "our Adonai"] is like what is written:

"Adonai is my allotment, I say with full heart" (Lamentations 3:24) and it is like [the following:]

"When the Most High gave nations their homes and set the divisions of people, God fixed the boundaries of peoples in relation to Israel's numbers. For the Lord's allotment is God's people, Jacob God's own allotment" (Deuteronomy 32:8-9).

and (Deuteronomy 29:25) *"They turned to the service of other gods and worshipped them, gods whom they did not know and whom God had not allotted."*

What is "Adonai is my allotment?"

At the time that God divided the world into the different nations, as it was written *"When the Most High gave nations their homes,"* **each and every nation chose itself a god** - one chose the angel Michael, another chose Gabriel, another yet chose the sun and the moon.

But the people of Israel chose God, as is written *"For the Lord's portion is God's people" and it is also written "For Jacob was chosen for God, Israel as God's treasured possession"* (Psalms 135:4) [which can also be translated: "For Jacob chose God ."]

God said: You have chosen me; I too shall choose you, as is written, "*For the Lord's portion is God's people, Jacob God's own allotment*" (Deuteronomy 32:9). And on the day of Matan Torah God tore open the sky and showed the people of Israel what exists up there...God told them: See, there exists no other alongside me, as is written, "*It has been clearly demonstrated to you that Adonai alone is God, there is none besides God*" (Deuteronomy 4:35). "*Know therefore this day and place in your heart that Adonai is God in heaven and earth, there is no other*" (Deuteronomy 4:39).

(God asked them): Do you accept the kingdom upon yourselves? Do you wish to choose a god as did all the other nations who chose one of the angels who serve me? You can choose thousands of them if you so wish.

(The people of Israel) answered: "*You, out of tens of thousands, are holy to us*" (Deuteronomy 33:2). You are our God, You are our allotment, and You are holy, so I declare and enhance Your unity, Your Divinity and Kingdom upon me twice daily. Every day we say, "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is the only One.*"

- 1) Read the verses in the first paragraph. What is the meaning of "*Adonai our God*" in light of these verses?
- 2) According to the second paragraph, what is the meaning of "*Adonai is my allotment or portion*"?
- 3) According to the third and fourth paragraphs, what choice did God give the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai?
 - 4) According to the fifth paragraph, what do Jews mean when they recite "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One*" twice a day? Could this become your feeling during *Kriyat Sh'ma*? Explain.

Source #7 - "To the Molech"

Leviticus 18:21 - "*Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech.*"

TB Sanhedrin 64a –

Rabbi Chanina son of Antiganus says: To what does the Torah refer when it uses the term "Molech"?

Anything they crowned upon themselves, even a bundle of objects or a small stick.

- 1) What is the question about the verse posed by the commentator Rabbi Chanina son of Antigonus?
- 2) According to Rabbi Chanina, a person decides what to crown upon oneself be it God, loyalty to a certain country, or the pursuit of money (see for example, the story of the Golden Calf). How can the desire to crown something upon oneself be understood?

- 3) Describe the behavior of a person who decided to crown upon oneself the love of food.
- 4) When Jews accept upon themselves the sovereignty of God reciting "*Adonai is our only One*," how is this supposed to affect their behavior?

Source #8 - "With all your Soul"

Mishna Brachot 9:1

One must make a blessing over the bad as one would over the good, as it is written:

"You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

"With all your heart" - with both your instincts - the instinct to do good and the instinct to do bad.

"With all your soul" - even if your soul is taken from you by God.

"And with all your might" - with all your wealth.

Or an alternative explanation: "And with all your might (M'oDecHa) - with whatever occurrences God measures (MiDaH / MoDeid) [tests or judges] you, you must acknowledge (MoDeH) God.

- 1) To crown something upon you means to accept the "yoke," or to be willing to pay the price of your choice. Give an example of accepting something upon yourself willingly and then having to pay a price for it.
- 2) In light of this source, what is the "price" a person must pay when committing to love God "with all your soul and all your might?"
- 3) Try to define three values for which you would be willing to pay the price of "with all your might" = with all your wealth. Rate the three according to their order of "crowning" upon you, that is, which takes precedence for you in directing your life?

Source #9 - Surrendering One's Soul in Kriyat Sh'ma

Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Hachayim *Kriyat Sh'ma* 61

When reciting the *Sh'ma*, one must concentrate on accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and on surrendering one's body and soul in sanctification of God's name, that is, "with all your soul" -- even if your soul is taken from you by God. One must imagine that even if terrible agony is inflicted upon oneself, you will not consider that suffering a matter of importance, because of your love of God. It should be just like Rabbi Akiva, whose body was combed with iron rakes and yet he called out *Kriyat Sh'ma*. Similarly, other holy martyrs at the time they were killed and burned shouted out loud *Sh'ma Yisrael*.

- 1) In Jewish history there were many incidents when Jews who chose to remain loyal to Judaism were in fact forced to pay the price "with all your soul." Give an example.
- 2) According to the author of Aruch Hashulchan, how does reciting *Kriyat Sh'ma* each day prepare Jews to withstand the yoke of the sanctification of God's name?
- 3) In your opinion, is it desirable to think about death in sanctification of God's name each time one recites *Kriyat Sh'ma*? Explain. If your answer is negative, how do you understand the phrase "acceptance of the yoke?"

Source #10 - The Death of Rabbi Akiva

TB Brachot 81b

Rabbis studied. Once, the kingdom of evil [Rome] ruled that Israel must not study Torah. Along came Papos son of Yehuda and found Rabbi Akiva who was gathering congregations in public and studying Torah. He said to him: Akiva, do you not fear the kingdom?

He answered him: Allow me to provide you with a metaphor. It is like a fox walking along the riverbed. The fox saw fish gathering in one place and moving together to another.

He said to them: From what are you fleeing?

They said to him: From nets that people cast upon us.

He asked them: Would it be your wish to come up on land and you and I shall live as did our ancestors together?

They answered him: Are you the one about which people say "the slyest of animals"? You are not sly - you are foolish! In the place we live we are fearful, so naturally we are even more fearful in the place of our death!

Similarly, if we are now sitting and studying Torah, as it says, "*For it is your life and the longevity of your days*" - and so [we are afraid of persecution happening to us]. Hence if we go and refrain from studying Torah, won't it be even worse for us?

Not many days went by before Rabbi Akiva was caught and taken to prison. But they also arrested Papos son of Yehuda [even though he had refrained from Torah study out of fear for his life] and placed him in the same cell.

Akiva said to him: Papos! What brought you here?

He answered him: Lucky are you who have been caught for studying Torah; woe is me, Papos, for having been caught for idle matters.

At the time of Rabbi Akiva's execution, it was the time for the recitation of *Kriyat Sh'ma*. They were combing his flesh with iron rakes, but he was accepting *Ol Malchut Shamayim* upon himself.

His students asked him: Rabbi, even under these conditions?

He told them: My whole life I have been worried about living up to the verse "*with all your soul*" and its interpretation: "That is, even if your soul is taken from you by God." I said to myself, when will I have the opportunity to observe this? Now that the opportunity has presented itself, should I miss my chance to observe it?!

Akiva was lengthening the recitation of the word "*Echad*" until his soul departed his body in the midst of that "*Echad*."

A voice from heaven (*Bat Kol*) came out and said: Happy (*Ashreicha*) are you, Rabbi Akiva, that your soul departed at "*Echad*!"

- 1) What was the offense for which Rabbi Akiva was executed? Why did Rabbi Akiva prefer to study Torah despite the danger posed by the Roman kingdom?
- 2) Papos asked Rabbi Akiva: "Do you not fear the kingdom?" To which kingdom was he referring? What do you think gave Rabbi Akiva the courage not to be afraid?
- 3) Explain the parable of the fox and the fish and compare it in a chart with the details of Akiva's and Papos' situation.
- 4) How did Rabbi Akiva end his life?
- 5) How do you feel about the story?
- 6) Should this story be read before *Kriyat Sh'ma* daily?

Source #11 - The Eve of Shavuot in the Ghetto: "Those who Did Not Surrender" by Moshe Praeger

Moshe Praeger describes the execution of ten Jews on the Eve of Shavuot 5703 (1944) in front of all the ghetto Jews:

"Shlomo Z'lichovsky, he's the one who really did it. The damned murderers were busy with their preparations and he was busy with his own preparations. Later the Jewish policemen, who were in the service of the Germans, reported to us secretly Shlomo Z'lichovsky's amazing behavior while in solitary confinement, where all ten Jews who were being executed in the gallows were held. Shlomo Z'lichovsky, who had a lovely voice, suggested to the minyan of Jews in solitary confinement to fast on the eve of the day on which the hangings were scheduled, and further suggested that they all pray the prayers of Yom Kippur together, and

they all agreed. Thus the private "Yom Kippur" of the ten condemned Jews was conducted in solitary confinement, and the prayers of Shlomo Z'lichovsky, when he reached *Neila*, were so emotional that even the tough Jewish ghetto policemen, who were present in the jail yard, wept like children... But the prayer of *Neila* did not come to an end within solitary confinement, because Shlomo Z'lichovsky intentionally postponed the end of the service until the next day, for the time at which they would walk to the gallows.

And so it was. All ten Jews' hands were tied behind their backs, and they were led in line across the city, from the jailhouse to the intended location. Along the way Shlomo Z'lichovsky raised his voice in loud song "*I shall remember God and yearn.*" The ten Jews stood tall, and with murmurs from deep within their souls they accompanied him in completing the prayer of *Neila*. When they arrived at the place of the gallows, their heads were high and their eyes looked upwards, in preparation for their final prayer.

At that time of final preparations for the hanging, I took a look at the smiling, joyous face of Shlomo Z'lichovsky. I was one of thousands in the crowded mass of hurting and insulted Jews. Suddenly, a breeze of encouragement passed over the depressed crowd. The hanging poles stood all in a line, one next to the other. Under each hanging tree stood a bench to get on. The Nazi murderers were in no hurry; they had plenty of time for their "game." But Shlomo Z'lichovsky, who began to burst into song, hurried them: "*Shoien?*" (Ready?), he asked the executioner who stood beside him impatiently. Then Shlomo Z'lichovsky stood up and jumped onto the bench, in order to put his neck in the noose. For a few moments all held their breath. A fearful silence spread all around, and in a split second the heavy silence was torn by a thundering voice: "*Sh'ma Yisrael!*" It was the voice so familiar to me, the voice of Shlomo Z'lichovsky. Who could describe what was occurring in the hearts of the masses of Jews, the miserable bystanders, at that moment? We were elated, elevated, we shouted without voices. We cried without tears. We stood tall without moving. We all cried out "*Sh'ma Yisrael*" from within our souls...

- 1) **On Yom Kippur** God is depicted as a Ruler sitting on the throne of judgment. **On Shavuot** the nation stood at Sinai and accepted God and the Torah upon itself. But it seems that during the Holocaust the shots were called by the Nazis: they set the rules and decided who would live or die. If so, why and how did Shlomo bring himself to pray and shout *Sh'ma Yisrael* on the day of his death as we do at end of Yom Kippur *Neilah*?
- 2) In light of a story like this, what is the meaning of "*Malchut Hashem?*" What is the meaning of "*Ol Malchut Hashem?*" What is the meaning of "to crown God upon us?"

Source #12 - Yossele Rakover in Dialogue with his Creator, by Zvi Kolitz

Din Torah – Bringing Suit in Court against God

In one of the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto, among mounds of rubble and human bones, the following will was found, hidden in a little bottle of gasoline. It was written by a Jewish man named Yossele Rakover in the final hours of his life in the Warsaw Ghetto, which was ablaze.

Warsaw, April 28th, 1943

I, Yossele son of Yossele Rakover of Tarnopol, of the followers of the Rabbi of Gur, a descendant of holy roots and great Tzaddikim from the families Rakover and Miezeles, am writing these lines while the Warsaw Ghetto is burning, and the house in which I am located is one of the last to catch fire. For a few hours now, heavy artillery has been aimed at us, the walls around me are being consumed by the threatening fire and are crumbling. It won't be long now before this house too, in which I am located, will turn into the grave of its inhabitants, such as has been the case for all our houses in the ghetto. I can tell that it's dusk by the dark red sun beams piercing through the partially blocked porthole of my room, through which we fired for days and nights at the enemy. The sun probably does not know anything about how much I will not regret never being able to see it again.

Millions of people across the vast world are in love with day, with the sun and light. They know nothing, they have no idea how much darkness and disaster the sun has brought upon us. It has become a tool in the hands of the evil: they have used it as a searchlight in order to find those escaping and trying to save themselves from them. At the time that my wife and children - there were six - and I hid in the woods, it was the night, only the night, that hid us in its midst. The day has turned us over to our murderers. Could I ever forget the day of German hail-fire raining down on the heads of thousands of refugees on their way from Grodna to Warsaw? When the sun came up so did the planes, shelling down death and murder all day. In that aerial murder my wife and little chick, only seven months old in her arms, perished. Two more of my remaining five children disappeared that day. My three remaining children died in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Now my time has come. And like Job I am able to say about myself, and I am not the only one who can say it: I left my mother's womb naked, and so I shall return. I am forty years old, and when I look back on my years I can say as confidently as a man can be, I lived an honest life. My home was open to the needy, and I was happy to be able to help people. I worshipped God enthusiastically, and my only request was that God let me worship "with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might." I cannot say, after all I have been through, that my relationship with God has not changed. But what I can say with all the certainty I possess is that my belief has not been changed, not one little bit. Before, in the good days, my attitude was to a God who provided wonderful things for me, I will always be indebted to God for that. Now my attitude is to a God who also owes me something. Therefore I feel I have the right to make demands of God. But I do not say, as Job did, "Tell me why you are punishing me." People much greater and better than me are sure that

now it is not a question of punishment for sins, rather something entirely unique is occurring in this world: it is a time that God is hiding the Divine face from us (*Hester Panim*).

God has hid the Divine face from the world and has sacrificed the beings to their own wild desires. Therefore I am afraid that at a time that the instincts rule the world, all those within whom lives the Divine, the pure, must be the first victims. There is no comfort in it, but since the destiny of our nation is not determined by mundane calculations, rather by super-mundane, spiritual, and Divine calculations, believers must see in these events a part of the greater Divine scheme, in comparison to which human tragedies are quite small. This is not to say that the religious Jews must justify the sentence and say, 'God is just and the judgment is just.' To say that we deserve the beating we have taken would be desecration of ourselves and of God...

In this situation, of course, I do not expect miracles. Nor do I ask God to have mercy on me. I will no longer try to save myself, nor will I escape from here. I will assist the fire in its task by soaking my clothes in gasoline. Three bottles of gasoline are still in my possession. After I emptied a few tens of them on the heads of the murderers. It was a moment of elation in my life and I laughed wholeheartedly during the action. I had never imagined that the death of people, even enemies, enemies like them, would make me so very happy. The stupid Humanists may claim whatever they wish, but revenge was and always will be the final experience of battle and the greatest satisfaction of the soul. Until now I have not understood so clearly the saying from the Gemara: "Great is revenge that was mentioned between two Divine names, as was written: '*A God of revenge is Adonai*' (*El Nekamot Adonai*)."

And now, when it is in my power to see the face of life and the world clearly in a special way, an opportunity that is given only rarely to a person before his death, I think there is a fundamental difference between our God and their god: Our God is a God of revenge and our Torah is all about laws of death for even the smallest transgression, yet even so it was enough for the Sanhedrin, that high court of our nation in its land, to sentence a person to death once in seventy years to be considered a 'lethal Sanhedrin.' Their god, on the other hand, commanded that they love every person who was created in God's image, and in his name they have been spilling our blood every day for nearly two thousand years.

Yes, I said "revenge." All too infrequently we had the opportunity to feast our eyes on true revenge, but when we saw it, the sight was so very pleasant that I was filled with satisfaction, a great joy - it was like an entirely new life for me. A tank suddenly burst its way into our street, and from all the blockaded buildings all around, bottles of flaming gasoline were thrown down at the tank, but the target was missed. My friends and I waited until the tank came right up to us, then we attacked again, through the half blocked porthole. Immediately, the tank burst into flames, and six Nazis escaped from it, the fire having caught on to them. Boy, how they burned. They burned like the Jews they had burned, but they shouted much more than the Jews. Jews do not shout. They accept death as their redeemer. The Warsaw Ghetto died in battle, with gunshots, through struggle, in flames - but not in shouts.

I have but three bottles, and they are dear to me as an alcoholic loves wine. After I empty one bottle on myself I will place this paper inside it and hide it among the bricks of my half-sealed porthole. If someone

ever finds it and reads it, maybe that person will understand the feelings of a Jew, one of millions, who died, abandoned by the God in which he believed so dearly. The remaining two bottles I will explode on the heads of the evil when the final moments arrive.

I am proud to be a Jew. This is not a *davka* act of being contrary in reaction to the way the world treats us, but precisely because of that relationship. I would be embarrassed to belong to those nations that breed and cultivated those evil people, responsible for the actions committed towards us.

I am proud to be a Jew, for it is difficult to be a Jew, oh how difficult it is. There is nothing courageous about being English or French. It is easier, more comfortable to be one of them, but not at all more respectable. Yes, it is an honor to be a Jew!

I believe that being a Jew means being a fighter, an eternal swimmer against the murky, heinous human current. The Jew is courageous, a martyr, holy. You the haters say it is we who are bad. We are gentle and better than you - I would like to see what you would look like in our place.

I am happy to belong to the most miserable of all nations. Its Torah is the representative of the highest and most beautiful of rules and their ethics. That Torah is now sanctified even more and is immortalized by its being desecrated and trampled by haters of God.

I believe that one is born Jewish just as one is born an artist. You cannot prevent one from being Jewish. It is a Divine virtue in us that made us the Chosen People - a stranger could not understand it. A stranger could never understand the higher essence of our sanctification of God's name. "There is nothing more complete than a broken heart," said one great tzaddik, and there is no nation more chosen than a nation that is always persecuted. If it were not for my belief that God chose us at some point to be God's nation, I would believe it was our trouble that had chosen us.

I believe in the God of Israel even though God did everything to prevent me from believing. I believe in God's laws, even if I cannot justify God's actions. My relationship with God is no longer as that of a slave to a master, rather as a student to a teacher. I bow my head to God's greatness, but I will not kiss the stick with which God beats me. I love God, but I love the Torah even more, and if I had been disappointed with God I would keep the Torah. God means religion, but the Torah means a lifestyle. And as much as we are killed over that lifestyle, so it becomes more and more immortal.

You claim we have sinned - of course we have sinned. For that we are being punished? I can understand that too. But I want You to tell me if there is a sin on this earth that is worthy of the kind of punishment with which we have been punished?

You claim You will repay our haters what they deserve! I am confident in this, that You will repay without sparing them. I don't doubt it. But I want You to tell me if there is a punishment in this world that can make up for the crimes committed against us?

You claim, perhaps, that now it is not a question of crime and punishment, rather a kind of hiding of the Divine face from us (*Hester Panim*), in which You have abandoned the creations to their instincts. I wish to

ask You, my God, and this question burns me from within like fire, what else, oh what else must take place in order for You to reveal Your face to us once more?

I wish to tell You explicitly and clearly, that now more than during any other period along our endless road of misery, we the tortured, the trampled, the choked, the buried live, and the burned live; we the humiliated, the embarrassed, those becoming extinct by the million, we have the right to know where the boundaries of Your tolerance lie.

And furthermore, I wish to tell You, please do not increase the tension of the rope, for I fear that, God forbid, it might not be capable of enduring additional tension and it could snap. The test You have put us through is so very difficult, so very hard and bitter that You should, You must forgive those of Your nation who, in their grief and anger, have turned their backs to You.

Forgive those who have left You due to their disaster, but also those of Your nation who left You in their moment of happiness. You who have changed our lives in such an endless battle of yearnings, to the point that those afraid among us were forced to circumvent that battle, to flee from it wherever the wind took them. Do not inflict suffering upon them for it. One does not inflict suffering on cowards, one has mercy on them. And them even more than us, pardon them, God!

Pardon those who defamed You, those who followed other gods, those who became indifferent to You. You have inflicted so much suffering upon them that they have lost their faith that You are their parent, and that they have one parent at all.

And I will tell You this, for I believe in You more than ever, for now I know that You are *my* God, since You could not be *their* god, because their actions are the horrible manifestations of a warrior non-god. And if you are not *my* God - whose God are You? The God of the killers?

If those who despise me, who murder me, are so dark, so evil, what am I if not the one carrying something of Your light, of Your goodness within me?

I cannot praise You for the actions You tolerate, but I bless You and praise Your very existence, Your terrible greatness that is, apparently, so awesome that all that is taking place is a tiny fraction to You.

But specifically because You are so great and I am so very small, I ask You, I beg of You, for the sake of Your name, please stop emphasizing Your greatness by enabling that the miserable be inflicted with suffering.

I do not ask that You make the guilty suffer. The dreadful nature of the events will cause them to make themselves suffer, for in our death died the conscience of the world, because an entire world was murdered when the Jews were murdered.

The world will consume itself in its own evil, it will drown in its own blood.

Death can wait no longer, and I must finish my writing. From the upper floors above me the gunshots are becoming weaker with every passing moment. The last defenders of our fortress are falling now, and with them falls and dies the great, beautiful Warsaw, the God-fearing, Jewish Warsaw. The sun is going down and I thank God for never seeing it again. Fiery red is bursting through the window and the bit of sky that I

see is red and bloody. In an hour I will already be with my wife and children and with millions of my people who have perished, in that better world in which there are no longer doubts and in which God rules alone.

I die peacefully, but not with satisfaction. Beaten, but not in despair. As a believer, not a beggar. As a person in love with God, but not as a blind amen-sayer.

I followed God even when God distanced me. I have observed the mitzvot even if God punished me for it. I have loved God; I was and remain in love with God even though God oppressed me down to the dust, tortured me to death, mocked me.

My Rabbi would repeat to me many times a story about a Jew who escaped with his wife and children from the clutches of the Spanish Inquisition, and in a tiny boat in stormy waters arrived to an island of rocks. Lightning came along and killed his wife. A storm came along and cast his children into the sea. He remained as lonely as a stone, naked and barefoot, inflicted by storm and fearful of thunder and lightning. His hair disheveled, his hands cast out to God, the Jew continued to walk along his path on the deserted stone island, and he turned to God and said,

Master of the Universe, I have fled here so that I could worship You uninterrupted, to observe Your mitzvot and sanctify Your name. You are doing much to cause me to abandon my religion. But if You think Your attempts to drive me away from the true path will succeed, I hereby inform You, my God and the God of my ancestors, that it just won't work. You can oppress me, You can take from me all that is dear to me and all the good of this world, You can make me suffer to the death, and I shall always believe in You. Know that against the will of the dwellers of the sky I am a Jew and I will always be a Jew. And all that You have brought upon me will serve no purpose.

And these are also my last words to You. God of my anger, it will do You no good. You have done everything so that I would not believe in You. But I die as I have lived, with belief in You strong as a rock.

Blessed forever be the God of the dead, the God of revenge, the God of truth and justice who will again shine the Divine face on the world and unsettle its foundations with God's great voice -

Hear, Israel! Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

In Your hands I deposit my soul!

- 1) In light of Yossele Rakover's suffering, why does he "choose" to remain Jewish?
- 2) If God, as a Ruler in power of the world, chose to hide during the period of the Holocaust, why did Yossele choose to remain loyal to God?
- 3) In light of these stories, what are the considerations a person must consider before accepting *Oi Malchut Shamayim* in *Kriyat Sh'ma*? Is acceptance of the yoke a voluntary or a coerced act?

Source #13 - Aleinu

- 1) Read the first and second paragraphs of "*Aleinu*." What is the difference between the description of God's reign in the two paragraphs?
- 2) *Who* accepts the kingdom of God upon themselves?
- 3) According to the prayer of "*Aleinu*" ("Then the world will be a true kingdom of God"), *when* will the kingdom of God in the world be realized? What is the power and authority of the kingdom of God in light of the second paragraph?

Source #14 - "You are My Witnesses!"

Midrash HaGadol, Deuteronomy 14:1

"You shall not cut yourselves up." ("Lo Titgodedo") (Deuteronomy 14:1)

[Though literally the verse refers to cutting one's limbs and face voluntarily, which was Cannanite pagan practice of mourning, involving self-inflicted gashes, the Midrash understands it metaphorically.]

You shall not be in separate groups [*agudah*], rather you should all be one group [*agudah*], as was written, "Who built God's chambers in heaven and founded God's vault [*agudah*] on the earth?" (Amos 9:6).

The answer is that when Israel is united and does the will of God, God's chambers are in heaven. And if Israel does not unify into one group [*agudah*], and does not do the will of God, then it is as if to say God's heavenly chambers are not built].

Similarly, you say, "This is my God and I will enshrine [*an-vehu*] God" (Exodus 15:2). When I acknowledge God then God is lovely [*naveh*], and if I do not acknowledge God it is as if to say [God is not enshrined.]

Similarly, you say, "For the name of God I proclaim: Give glory to our God" (32:3). If I call God's name, God is great, and if I do not call God's name, it is as if [God's name is not great].

Similarly, you say, "O Jeshurun, there is none like God" (33:26). When Israel is righteous and does the will of God there is none like God, and if Israel is not righteous and does not do God's wish it is as if [there is no God].

Similarly, you say, "So you are my witnesses, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 43:12). When you are my witnesses I am God, and if you are not my witnesses, it is as if [I am not God].

Similarly, you say, "To You, enthroned in heaven, I turn my eyes" (Psalms 123:1). Because of me You reign in heaven, and if it weren't for me it is as if [You would not be reigning in Heaven.].

- 1) What does "as if" ("*kivyachol*") mean? How can all the unclear sentences in the midrash ending with the phrase "*kivyachol*" be completed?
- 2) What is the bold idea hidden in the words of the midrash "when you are my witnesses I am God, and if you are not my witnesses...as if?"
- 3) In light of this ancient midrash, what is the supreme importance of the recitation of "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God*" by every Jew, every day?

Unit VIII. What is Intentionality of the Heart? Declaring and Enhancing God's Unity (*Yichud Hashem*)

Source Guide for the Educator

Source #1- "*Echad* - One"

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Hachayim 61

"One must lengthen the letter *Heyt* of "*Echad*" ("Adonai is One") in order to crown God in the heaven and in the earth, and one must lengthen the *Daled* for a length of time sufficient to think about the fact that God is exclusive in the world and that God rules the four winds (directions) of the earth."

- 1) Try out the custom described here. Cover your eyes and read "*Echad*" according to the halachic directions in this source.
- 2) What, then, is implied about the idea of the intentionality of the heart in the recitation of "*Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai, is One*"?

Source #2 - The Truths of *Emet VeYatziv*

from the bracha after *Kriyat Sh'ma* in the Siddur

"Your teaching is true and enduring; the content of *Kriyat Sh'ma* is eternally right."

"It is true that the eternal God is our RulerÖthe Rock of Jacob."

"God's teachings are true and everlasting." (refers to Torah)

"It is true that You are Adonai, our God, and the God of our ancestors."

"You are in truth the God of your people, You are their Defender and mighty Ruler."

"You are the first and You are the last."

Sephardi siddurim often add: "It is true that you redeemed us from Egypt."

- 1) Jews have the halachic obligation to continue with reciting *Emet VeYatziv* immediately after reading *Kriyat Sh'ma*, without pausing. Why? (Look at the content of this paragraph, located right after *Kriyat Sh'ma*).
- 2) Read the bracha that begins "*Emet Veyatziv*" and mark the words "true" and "truth" every time they appear. (Did you know that *Emet* is the same as *Amen*? It is simply the ancient female form of *Amen*.)
- 3) Look at the list of phrases beginning with the word *Emet* /"truth." What do you think the meaning of these sentences is in their context immediately following *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

Source #3 - Yichud Hashem – God is Uniqueness

Maimonides, Sefer HaAhava, *Kriyat Sh'ma* 1:1-2

Twice each day one reads *Kriyat Sh'ma*, in the evening and in the morning, as it is written: "when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

What does one read? Three paragraphs - *Sh'ma*, *Vehaya Im Shamo*, and *Vayomer*. The first paragraph of *Sh'ma* comes first because it includes the Uniqueness of God, the Love of God, and the Torah of God, which is the most important thing upon which all is dependent.

Afterwards comes *Vehaya Im Shamo*, which includes the commandments regarding all the other mitzvot. Then comes the paragraph of *Tzitzit*, which also includes a commandment to remember all the mitzvot.

- 1) We learned that among the Rabbis there is a dispute: Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai says, the essence of the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" is "study," and Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Korcha says, it is "acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim*." What is its content according to Maimonides? How does his understanding of the paragraph change the meaning of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?
- 2) What do you think "*Yichud Hashem*" means? What is the meaning of the word "Torah here?"

Source #4 - Avraham Seeks the Truth

Maimonides, *Sefer HaMadda*, Hilchot Avodah Zara 1:3

Abraham our Ancestor:

When this great man was weaned [at age three or four], he began to ponder in his thoughts - though he was young -and he thought day and night. He wondered: how can it be that these circular heavens [as the stars, sun, and moon appear to an observer on earth] spin without a force to move them? Who is the first cause of their motion? Why, is it not possible for it to spin itself? Abraham did not have a teacher or anyone to inform him since he was deep in Ur Kasdim among the ignorant idol worshippers, including his father and mother. All the people were idol worshippers and he worshipped them with the rest. Yet his heart and mind wandered, seeking understanding until he found the path of truth and understood what was right with his own reason. Then he knew that there was one God and that God guides the motion of the heavens, God created all, and there is none other than God anywhere. He knew that the entire world was mistaken and he realized how they had erred in worshipping the stars and the constellations [astrology as a pseudo-science] until they no longer knew the truth.

Abraham was forty years old when he came to know his Creator. Since he had learned about God, he began to challenge the people of Ur Kasdim and to debate them saying: this is not the road to truth that you are taking. He broke the idols and began to tell the people that it is not worthy to worship any other than the God of the world. God is the only One worthy of worship (by bowing down, making sacrifices, and pouring libations), so that all creatures to come will get to know God. Therefore all the idols should be destroyed and broken so that the people do not fall into error again, like those who imagine that there is no god other than them.

Since his evidence was stronger than theirs, the king wanted to kill Abraham, but by a miracle he escaped to Haran. There he began to publicize to the entire world and inform them that there is one God for the entire world, and God alone is worthy of worship. He travelled, calling out and gathering the people from city to city, and kingdom to kingdom, until he reached the land of Canaan. That is what is written: "There he called out in the name of the Adonai, the God of the world [the eternal God]" (Genesis 21:33).

- 1) How did Avraham discover God?
- 2) In light of the story, what does "Yichud Hashem" mean?
- 3) Try to define the difference between believing and knowing. In light of the story, would it be correct to claim that "Avraham **believed** in *Yichud Hashem*" (Genesis 15)? To what extent do you think, as Abraham seems to, that a personal declaration "*Hear, Israel... Adonai is One*" requires a prior personal search for the truth?
- 4) What is the difference between acceptance of *Ol Malchut Shamayim* and knowing *Yichud Hashem*? Which do you think is more important?

Source #5 - "And you shall know today"

Deuteronomy 4:39

"And you shall know today and keep in mind that Adonai alone is God in heaven above and on earth below - there is no other."

- 1) In light of this verse, what is the meaning of "Yichud Hashem"?
- 2) Read the prayer *Aleinu*. How does this verse fit into the prayer?
- 3) In light of this verse, how can we understand the verse quoted at the end of "*Aleinu*" from Zecharia 14
"*And Adonai shall be Ruler over all the earth; in that day there shall be one God with one name*"?

Source #6 - "One Parent for us All"

Malachi 2:10

"Have we not all one parent? Did not one God create us? Why do we break faith with one another?"

Source #7 - "You are God's Children"

Midrash Sifri 13 on Deuteronomy 14:1

"You are children of the Lord your God. You shall not slice yourselves up" (Deuteronomy 14:1)
- means, do not cut yourselves up into separate communities, rather unite into one community.

Ritba, the Spanish Talmud commentator, on TB Yevamot 13b, writes:

"You are children of Adonai your God" - means, you are the children of one God, so it is worthy that you do not create separate communities as if there were two Torahs, two gods.

- 1) In these sources, to what is the relationship between God and people or God and Israel compared? How do these mutual feelings differ from those of the metaphor of God-Israel as ruler-slave?
- 2) According to the logic of these sources, how is the concept of God's Unity as "One Parent for us all" supposed to affect human behavior? What is the ramification of the children splitting into competing communities which behave differently, regarding the belief in One God?
- 3) What does "Adonai is One" mean in light of these sources? To what kind of behavior are you committing yourself when you describe God as One? Give an example.

Source #8 - "All as one Community"

Midrash, Vayikra Rabba 30:12

"The fruit [*etrog*] of a citrus tree" [and the whole mitzvah of the four species, *lulav*, *etrog*, *hadas*, and willow] (Leviticus 23:40) - refers to the Jewish people, Israel. Just as an *etrog* has both a flavor and a fragrance, so Israel has people that have learned Torah and have done good deeds.

And the "date palm" [*lulav*] - also refers to those in Israel. Just as the *lulav* has a flavor but no fragrance, so Israel includes people among them that have Torah but no good deeds.

And "a branch of a myrtle" - also refers to Israel. Just as the *hadas* has a fragrance but no flavor, so Israel has among them people with good deeds but no Torah.

And "willows of the brook" - also refers to Israel. Just as the *arava* has no fragrance and no flavor, so among the people of Israel there are some who have neither Torah nor good deeds.

So what does God do with them? To destroy them is not possible. Rather God says, all should come bound (agudah) together into one community and each atones for the other. If you do so, at that time I ascend as is written, "Who built God's chambers in heaven" (Amos 9:6). So when does God ascend? When they are as one community [on earth], as it is written, "and founded God's vault on the earth" (Amos 9:6). Therefore Moshe warned Israel, "On the first day you shall take [all of them, the whole Jewish community of whatever kind and unite them in one bond]" (Leviticus 23:40).

- 1) Since God is one and the people of Israel (the Jewish nation) represent God on earth, it is important that they too be united. What difficulties in uniting the people into one community emerges from this famous midrash about *Arba'at HaMinim*?
- 2) According to the midrash, unity is not a constant and natural state, it is the result of certain activities. Explain the sentence: "God said, all should come bound together into one community and each atones for the other. To which halachic activity connected with *Arba'at HaMinim* does this sentence refer? (Hint: How are the four species bound together?)
- 3) At the end of the midrash appears a bold idea that as God ascends in heaven to the Divine throne, the nation becomes united on earth. Provide an example of the opposite: a situation in which the lack of unity of a group causes the desecration of the cause for which it was established. In light of this idea, how can a person who recites *Kriyat Sh'ma* unite God's name in practice, and not just express belief in God's oneness or uniqueness among the gods?

Source #9 - "And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler"

Midrash, Sifrei Piska 346 on Deuteronomy 33

"And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler, when the heads of the people assembled, the tribes of Israel together" (Deuteronomy 33).

"And in Yeshurun there was a Ruler." When Israel is equal in one opinion from below, God's great name is praised from above, as is written, *"and in Yeshurun there was a Ruler"* - only when *"The tribes of Israel are together."* In other words, when they create one community, not when they create many separate communities. So it is written, *"Who built God's chambers in heaven and founded God's vault on the earth"* (Amos 9:6).

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says: it is like a person who brought two ships and tied them together tightly with strong ropes and placed them deep in the sea, and built a palace atop them. As long as the boats remain tied together, the palace subsists. If the ships part, the palace exists no longer. So is Israel: when they do God's will, "God's chambers are in heaven," and when they do not do God's will, it as if [God was not enthroned in the Divine palace in heaven] - that is, "Founded God's vault on the earth."

So it is written: "*This is my God whom I will enshrine.*" (Exodus 15:2) - when I acknowledge God, God is enshrined, and when I do not acknowledge God, it is as if God is not enshrined. Similarly, "*For the name of God I proclaim*" (Deuteronomy 32:3). When I proclaim God's name - God is great, and if not, it is as if God's name is not great. Similarly, "*So you are my witnesses declares the Lord.*" (Isaiah 43:12) I am God when you are my witnesses, and when you are not my witnesses, it is as if I am not God. Similarly, "*To You, enthroned in heaven, I turn my eyes*" (Psalms 123:1). If not for me, it is as if You would not be enthroned in heaven, and here too it is said, "*The tribes of Israel together*" - when they unite into one community and not when they divide into multiple communities.

- 1) In light of the verse from Deuteronomy 33, under which conditions is God crowned over Israel (Yeshurun)?
- 2) How is the Jewish people's togetherness expressed in Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's parable? What is dependent upon their unity?
- 3) In light of this midrash, on what does God's uniqueness as Ruler depend? Therefore, what is the importance of morning and evening *Kriyat Sh'ma*?

Unit IX. Kriyat Sh'ma as an Expression of Love -
"And You shall Love Adonai, your God with all your Heart"

Source #1 - Engagement: The Blessing of Tefillin

- 1) Where does the mitzvah of Tefillin appear in *Kriyat Sh'ma*? What do you think the connection is between the mitzvah of Tefillin and the main theme of *Kriyat Sh'ma*?
- 2) Read the verse from Hoshea, what symbolic act does its recitation accompany?
- 3) In light of this verse, to what is the relationship between a person and God compared? Where in the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" is a similar parable hinted? What does the word "*Veyadata*" (and you shall know) mean in the verse from Hoshea? (See the complete parable in Hoshea, chapters 1-2).

Source #2 - God's Tefillin

TB Berachot 6b

Rabbi Avin son of Rav Ada said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak:

How do we know that the Holy One puts on Tefillin? As it was written "*God swore with God's right, the arm of strength.*" "*God's right*" - that is the Torah as we learn from the phrase "from God's right, the fire of law"(Deuteronomy 33:2). "*The arm of strength*" - that is Tefillin, as it says, "*God will give strength to God's nation.*" ...

Rav Nachman Bar Yitchak said to Rav Chiya Bar Avin: What is written in the Tefillin that the Master of the world wears?

He replied: "*Who is like Your nation Israel, a unique nation in the land* (Chronicles I 17:21).

Does that mean that God is praised by praising the people of Israel? Yes.

Thus it is written [about the mutuality of the God-Israel relationship]: "*You have affirmed this day that Adonai is your God, that you will walk in God's ways...*" and immediately thereafter "*and Adonai has affirmed this day that you are, as promised, God's treasured people ...and that God will set you ... above all nations...a holy people to God*" (Deuteronomy 26:17-18).

God said to Israel: You have made Me uniquely one in the world, and I shall make you uniquely one in the world. [You declared] "*Hear O' Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One [Echad].*" So I shall make you uniquely one in the world, as is written: "*Who is like Your nation Israel, a unique [Echad] nation in the land.*"

- 1) What is written in God's Tefillin? Why?
- 2) What is similar between the key verse written in the Tefillin worn by human beings (that includes the first two paragraphs of the *Shma*) and the verse written in God' Tefillin?

- 3) What is the meaning of the word "*Echad*" in the phrases "*Goy Echad*" (one nation), "*Adonai Echad*" (One God). (Note that *Echad* cannot mean literally "one nation" like "one God," for there are many nations. Recall that people in love have eyes only for each other, you are the only one in my world. The Tefillin as we will see are an expression of mutual love akin to marriage).
- 4) If, according to the midrash, God too dons Tefillin, then apparently there is a strong parallel between the people's relationship with God, and God's relationship with people. Try to define that parallel.
- 5) How does Levi Yitzchak use the Tefillin metaphor to argue in favor of the Jewish people.

"Disqualified Tefillin" (*Psulim*): A Story of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev

The Rabbi from Berdichev who was an enthusiastic advocate for the Jewish people used to say:

Master of the Universe, if You do not forgive the sins of Israel, I will stand and reveal the secret that the Tefillin You don on Your head is disqualified! For it says in your Tefillin, "*Who is like Your nation Israel, a unique [Echad] nation in the land.*" If You do not forgive their sins, God forbid, they will not be called "one unique nation" and your Tefillin will be disqualified.

Source #3 - "And with all your might"

TB Brachot 55a

One must recite a blessing acknowledging the bad just as one recites a blessing acknowledging the good. For it says, "*you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might.*" "*With all your soul*" - even if God takes your soul [your life]; "*and with all your might*" - with all your wealth.

Or an alternative explanation: "*And with all your might (M'oDecHa)*" - with whatever occurrences God measures (MiDaH / MoDeid) [or tests or judges] you, you must acknowledge (*MoDeH*) God.

- 1) Which words in the paragraph of "*Sh'ma*" strengthen the claim that "One must give thanks for the bad just as one gives thanks for the good?"
- 2) In light of this source, under which conditions is one supposed to stop loving God?

Source #4 - Worshipping God out of Love

Maimonides *Sefer HaMadda*, Hilchot Teshuvah 10: 1-4

(1) A person must not say: I observe the mitzvot of the Torah and study Divine wisdom, so that I will receive all the blessings written in it, or so that I will be eligible for a life in the next world. [Nor shall one think:] I shall refrain from all the forbidden actions (*aveirot*) about which the Torah has warned me, so that I am spared from all the curses written in

the Torah, or so that I am not denied life in the next world. This is not a worthy way of worshipping God. One who worships this way, worships out of fear and such a person does not reach the level of prophets or masters of wisdom. God is not worshipped this way by anyone other than the ignoramuses, the women [who did not study Torah in the medieval period]. It is the way of children, who are taught to worship *out of fear* [negative and positive external reinforcement] until they acquire knowledge and worship *out of love*.

(2). One who worships out of love studies Torah, performs mitzvot and walks in the paths of wisdom without any ulterior worldly motive. Not out of fearing the bad, not in hope of inheriting the good rather one is motivated to do the truth because it is the truth, though good will end up coming from it.

This level [of spirituality] is a very great one; indeed, not every scholar succeeds in acquiring it. This is the level of Avraham our ancestor whom the Holy One called, "my lover," since he worshiped only out of love. This level is what God commanded us through Moshe, as it says: "You shall love Adonai your God" (Deuteronomy 6:5). When a person loves God with a worthy love, that person will immediately observe all the mitzvot out of love.

What is a "worthy love"? It is the love of one who loves God with a very great and very strong love, to the point that one's soul is preoccupied and attached to the love of God, and one thinks about it all the time as if lovesick. It is like someone who is in love with a woman and his mind is not free to think about anything else, when he gets up or lies down, eats or drinks. Furthermore, the love of God is to be in the heart of God's lovers all the time [as if crazy with love- *shogim* like the word *meshuga*], So have we been commanded, "*with all your heart and all your soul.*" That is what Solomon said as a parable: "*For I am lovesick*" (Song of Songs 2:5), and all of the Book of Song of Songs is a parable to this very matter.

The first Hachamim [in Pirkei Avot] said: Lest you think: I will study Torah - so that I become rich; so that I am called "Rabbi"; so that I am rewarded in the next world. The Torah teaches: "*To love Adonai*" (Deuteronomy 11:13). All that you do, do only out of love.

Hachamin added the advice: "Have great desire for God's mitzvot" (Psalms 112:1) - and *not* for the *reward* for the mitzvot. [In Pirkei Avot] the greatest of scholars would, discretely, command the most brilliant and knowledgeable of their students: Do not be as slaves who serve the master in order to receive a reward, rather because the master is worthy of service. In other words: worship out of love!

- 1) Define the difference between observance of God's mitzvot out of fear and out of love, according to the opinion of Maimonides. Give some everyday examples of both religious observance and doing schoolwork according to these two categories.
- 2) Read halacha 3. To what is a person's love to God compared? Provide examples to illustrate the similarity.
- 3) Note that the lovesick personality is described as meditating on God in an all sorts of places. What verses in the first paragraph of the Shema do they recall? Why does Maimonides use the term "*shogim*" like the word *meshuga*?
- 4) Read halacha 4. In what way is this description of the relationship between a person who loves God or God's mitzvot similar or different to the metaphor for *Kriyat Shma* as an act of **acceptance of the Divine yoke**? What is positive and negative about these two great metaphors - bearing a yoke and being lovesick? Which metaphor is closer to your ideal? Can you suggest another more appropriate metaphor?

Appendix: The Mystic's *Kriyat Shma*

Calling out GOD's Name!

by Arthur Green (unpublished)

The great calling out of God's name is the recitation of *Shema Yisra'el* -- "*Hear O Israel, Y-H-W-H our God, Y-H-W-H is one!*" The Torah tells us to speak this verse twice each day, upon rising at dawn and before going to sleep. It is a first prayer taught to young children and it has graced the lips of martyrs from Rabbi Akiva in Roman times to pious Jews in the Holocaust. No act of piety is more characteristic of Judaism than this. It is a statement of intimacy, devotion, and abstraction all at once. Its recitation is referred to in our sources as *yihud ha-shem*, the proclamation of God's oneness....

The union of intimacy and abstraction is expressed in Judaism's special devotion to the name of God, the four-letter name referred to as *shem ha-meforash*, God's explicit name that may never be written or pronounced. The name is an impossible configuration of the verb "to be," and should probably best be translated "was/is/will be." But the sounds that comprise the name also indicate abstraction. There is no firm consonant among them; the *y*, the *w*, and the *h* are all nothing more than shapings of the breath. Indeed these letters are used in ancient Hebrew to indicate vowel signs, showing that they are only marginally to be seen as "real" letters. The name of God is but a breath, nothing you can hold onto very firmly. Indeed if you try to hold onto it, if you think that Y-H-W-H is indeed a noun that indicates some substantial and defineable entity, Scripture laughs at you as God conjugates His own name, showing its true status as a verb, and says: "*I am that I am*" or perhaps better translate: "*I shall be whatever I choose to be*" (Ex. 3:14).

But at the same time that this word bears within it the Bible's most abstract notion of the deity, it also serves as a *name*. Names are fraught with both power and intimacy, in the ancient world as well as our own. To know someone's name is to stand in relationship, to be able to call in such a way that the other must respond. "*I raise him up because he knows My name*" (Ps. 91:14). A pious Jew refers to *ha-shem yitbarakh*, "God's blessed name" as an intimate, familiar way of speaking. To call out God's name in prayer is to transcend all other words one might speak. In fact a well-known Hasidic teaching claims that in true prayer *every* word becomes a name of God.

We do not fully speak the name. Y-H-W-H is too holy a word to be spoken. We for whom words come and go so easily are not allowed to pronounce this word, lest it be profaned by us. Instead we sheath it in the pious garb of *adonai*, "my Lord." But each time we pronounce that word in prayer, the Kabbalists tell us, we are to see the letters Y-H-W-H standing before us, visually filling us with an intensity of divine presence that we dare not permit our mouths to speak.

I conclude with a quotation from a Hasidic master, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Ger (1847-1904), author of *Sefat Emet*. In a letter to his children and grandchildren he spoke with unusual directness about the *Shema* and its meaning:

The proclamation of oneness that we declare each day in saying *Shema Yisra'el*...needs to be understood as it truly is. That which is entirely clear to me...based on the holy writings of great Kabbalists, I am obligated to reveal to you...The meaning of "Y-H-W-H is one" is not that He is the only true God, negating other gods (though that too is true!). But the meaning is deeper than that: there is no being other than God. [This is true] even though it seems otherwise to most people...Everything that exists in the world, spiritual and physical, is God Himself...These things are true without a doubt. Because of this, every person can become attached to God wherever he is, through the holiness that exists in every single thing, even corporeal things...This is the foundation of all the mystical formulations in the world.

POPULAR CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS ON *KRIYAT SH'MA*

**LISTEN, O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD!
ONLY THE LORD!**

And you shall serve the Lord your God
Out of LOVE,
With an undivided heart,
With your very life,
With all that you have.

Take to heart
These things I am commanding you today.
Tell your children about them.
Talk about them
At home and on the street
night and morning.
Wear them on your arm and between
Your eyes
In t'fillin
To remind you
That your hands and your mind
Are dedicated to My work.

Write them on the doorpost of your
House,
and on the gates of your city
in order to tell all those who enter,
that these are the words
that this household lives by.

(Jack Riemer)

A Prayer by Naomi Levy

Help me, God, to listen with my entire being. When I am in pain, give me the courage to trust others enough to hare my heart to them. And when there is no one who will listen, hear me, God. Hear me, and heal me. Amen

THE VOICE OF GOD

When You train yourself to hear the voice of God in everything, you attain the quintessence of the human spirit. Usually the mind conceals the divine thoroughly by imagining that there is a separate mental power that constructs the mental images. But by training yourself to hear the voice of God in everything, the voice reveals itself to your mind as well. Then right in the mind, you discover revelation.

The most central Jewish prayer is the Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." These words are recited morning and night during the prayer service. They are also the last thing we say before we nod off to sleep. I pray them with my children every single night. These are also the last words we are commanded to say before we depart from this life. I have uttered them far too many times with men and women on their deathbeds. Why these words? Why is this the most crucial Jewish prayer? It asks us to listen, to look for God not with our eyes but with our ears and our hearts. In fact, it is customary for Jews to cover their eyes while reciting the first line of this prayer.

Often our eyes lead us astray. We pay attention to things that deceive us, things like beauty and wealth and skin color. Our eyes teach us to notice *distinctions* between things. When we listen, we gain a deeper sort of understanding, not just of those around us but of God, too. But in order to listen we have to be quiet, we have to shut out all distractions and learn to be receptive. Suddenly we may begin to notice not the differences between things, but the unity in all creation. We may even begin to comprehend what God's oneness really means.

There is nothing like opening our hearts up to someone who will listen.

A Near-Death Experience by R. Arnold Goodman

Thanksgiving and Sukkot are not the only contexts in which to give thanks. There is a wonderful blessing "Gomel" (gratitude for kindness) which is recited upon delivery from danger or illness. Two weeks ago, on a flight to New York, the pilot informed us that he was not certain whether the nose gear was locked into place. He was thus unsure whether there would be a crash landing—which is always dangerous. We were diverted to the Newark airport which has a longer runway and is not adjacent to a body of water. (Should the plane go out of control, it could conceivably go into the bay.)

I recited the Shema. I recalled the words of Rabbi Zalman Schachter that there is a special intensity when the Shema is recited in what could be fore the last time. I felt that the Shema connected me to Jews who had preceded me and would follow me.

Listening with the Heart by - Rabbi Sidney Greenberg (*Say Yes to Life*)

In a recent cartoon, our pathetic but lovable friend Ziggy passes a rather shabby-looking character who is sitting on the sidewalk propped up against a building. Beside him there is a sign that announced: "Good Listener - 25 cents for 5 minutes."

The sidewalk solicitor had greatly under priced his services, for we happen to be suffering from a terrible shortage of good listeners. Like the biblical woman of valor, a good listener's worth "is far above rubies."

When God appeared to King Solomon in a vision in the night and offered him any gift he wished, the wise monarch asked for neither power nor wealth, nor glory. He asked instead for "a listening heart." It is a gift worth cultivating. For, ultimately, true listening is not done with the ears. It is done with the heart.