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תשפ"ו PARSHAS VAYECHI RAV BRAZIL

THE SHMA AND OUR MISSION AS HASHEM'S AMBASSADORS

Why is it the custom to place our hand over our eyes when we recite the *Shema Yisrael*? In *Shemoneh Esrai* it is sufficient to merely close our eyes. The words *Shema Yisrael* (Hear Yisrael) is addressed to whom? If it is to *Am Yisrael* what should they hear since they themselves are also required to recite the *Shema Yisrael*?

This *parsha* of *Vayechi* is "*setumah*" closed up being that the beginning of the *parsha* omits the length of a nine letter space between the end of *Vayigash* and the beginning of *Vayechi*. One of the two reasons given by *Chazal* is that before Yaakov died he desired to reveal to his children the קץ of the *ימים* but the presence of the *Shechinah* abruptly went away from him thereby giving the message that *shamayim* was not agreeable with this revelation. What is the reason behind the heavenly refusal and what gain would have come about by divulging this secret to his children?

This week was the *yartzeit* of Rav Moshe Shapiro ztl. I would like to bring his explanation concisely to the best of my ability to serve as an *Aliya* for his *neshamah*. There are two sources for the mitzvah of reciting the *Shema*. One is in the *parsha* of *Vaeschanan* where the *Shema Yisrael* is written and the other is based upon the *Medrash Vayechi*. The *Medrash* relates that after the *Shechina*'s presence left, Yaakov was a little taken aback over the heavenly refusal. He addressed his children that maybe the cause of Hashem not giving me permission to execute his wish was due to the fact some of his children were not worthy of it and on the proper *madraigah*. The *Shevatim* responded with שמע ישראל our father Yisrael should hear that אחד ה' אלוקינו that by everyone of us we believe in the oneness of Hashem and serve no other deity. Upon hearing this one united response, Yaakov answered with the words ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. This response of Yaakov ברוך שם became part of the *Shema* to be recited right after the *passuk* שמע ישראל.

Of the two versions of *Shema*, one in *Parhas Vaeschanan* and the second in the episode of Yaakov and the *Shevatim* which included Yaakov's ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו response, why was the version of the שמע ישראל with Yaakov's insertion chosen as the daily mitzvah to fulfill the Torah's requirement.

It must be that when we recite the *Shema* we must envision that we are standing next to the bed of Yaakov Avinu before he passes away and he wants to reveal to us what spiritual state will we be in order to bring about the final *geulah*. It will only come when Yisrael are full believers in the oneness of Hashem with every bone and fiber in their body. והשבות אל לבבך כי ה' הוא האלקים. בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת אין עוד. This is the purpose of Yaakov's special gathering with his children before he leaves this world - מה יהיה באחרית הימים - האספו ואגידה לכם. But before he could bring them all to this *deveikus* consciousness, the *Shechinah* disappeared. Yaakov's reaction was maybe we are not worthy of such a revelation of the *geulah* reality. However when they

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answered אחד אלקינו ה' Yaakov understood that they are truly capable of reaching such a *ruchniyus* level. So why then did the Shechina leave which seemed to demonstrate that such an actualized state would be unfavorable?

The answer is that Hashem was messaging to them that such a state of deep spirituality must emerge and grow in midst of a culture that is just the opposite, from a galus where there is *hester panim*, evil and darkness reigns and flourishes just like in the scenario of our founding father Avraham Avinu. When the *Shechina* disappears which sets the atmosphere and condition that challenges our commitment to Hashem, that is the precise time that we must attain to live the model of a nation that is willing to sacrifice their lives for their G-d. Then all the nations of the world will take **their** cue from **us** and join *Am Yisrael* in our pilgrimage to the *Beis Hamikdash* to worship the one and only exclusive Hashem who created and sustains the cosmos.

Yaakov realized that the *Shechina's* departure from his presence at this encounter was not for the purpose of concealing but rather to be revealing. It was not a rejection of his wish but rather a correction in his thought process of defining the final redemption. *Geulah* cannot come without the preceding darkness and the *hester* of the *Shechina*. *Am Yisrael* must toil, fight, and sacrifice themselves in order to bring the light of the *geulah* into the eyes of the world and only then can we lead humanity to the ultimate recognition of Hashem the King of Kings.

This is the insert of the *Shema* which Yaakov added to their response ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד which parallels the יהוה שמיה רבה מברך לעולם ולעלמי עלמיה. We daven that the name of יהוה should be complete with all four letters. For as long as *Amalek* exists in the world, Hashem's name is compromised and missing the revelation of the last two letters וה. As the passuk says כי יד על יד that presently only the first two letters of Hashem's name is in tack as it refers to the neshama תהלה יה הנשמה.

This is how the Machzor Vitri learns these words יהוה שמיה that we daven that the name יהוה should be bigger and expanded with the added letters of וה thereby completing the name of Hashem to יהוה which Amalek is blocking. This conveys that the *shelaimus* of Hashem's name ביום אחד ושמו אחד must first undergo a period of ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו, that we daven for the oneness of Hashem to be revealed because presently it is not unilaterally accepted but rather challenged by the world with the exception of *Klal Yisrael*. At this stage in history we as *Am Yisrael* must be the model through which we will change world opinion into believing the same *emunah* that we possess. It is we who are the ultimate model and character traits of what a *Tzelem Elokim* is supposed to be and act like. ויאמר כל אשר נשמה באפו ה' אלקי ישראל מלך ומלכותו and all nations will join us under our banner in praise and service to the One Hashem.

When we say the daily *Shema* we are not merely saying the *parsha* of *Shema* in Vaeschanan but rather the *Shema* that the **Shevatim** said to Yisrael their dying father surrounding his bed. We therefore must strive to have the clarity and resolve of dedication to Hashem to the highest degree as they had when they said. It is because the New World Order in the belief of Hashem

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will be based only upon us and our relationship with Hashem. If our commitment to Hashem and Torah is compromised, flimsy and fragile, how can such an *emunah* and lack of true devotion be transferred to the nations of the world to make this revolution when we are an imposter example for them.

With the above explanation we can explain the *minhag* to place our hand over our eyes when we recite the *Shema*. For it is upon us to realize that the real acceptance of the Yoke of *Shamayim* is during the darkness of *galus* when the strength of our *emunah* and *bitachon* are being tested everyday many times over. Our hands represent actions and hard toil. Part of being Hashem's ambassadors in the world is to resist the *galus* temptations and seductions and nevertheless cleave and cling tightly to Hashem and His Torah without yielding. We must perfect ourselves and our *middos* to be exemplary and admired by the nations of the world as being the faithful subjects of Hashem because only then they will readily accept Hashem and His following as the genuine and accurate transmitter of Divine light in the universe.

In fact we might now be able to have a new interpretation of the *passuk Shema Yisrael* and aligning it with this *mamar*. שמע ישראל who are we speaking or sending a message to that we want them to hear our declaration. Could it be that we are speaking to Yaakov Avinu יעקב אבינו, לא מת, repeating the same statement that the Shevatim said to their father conveying that by us there is also no compromise in our *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem and living as the model of the קץ era. Or maybe an even deeper insight which directs us to place a comma after saying the first word שמע, for we are addressing the **goyim** of the world, hear our proclamation and see our lives which is conducted with *emes*, *chesed*, *tikkun hamiddos*, *mesiras nefesh* as a vibrant testimony of gratitude to our Creator. As members of *Klal Yisrael* we are saying the next word ישראל which means by us Yidden, ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, He is absolutely one אין עוד. We are calling to the world that we are the loyal model in this darkness with the mission to enlighten the world with the reality of Hashem as the sole Master.

This ideal and undertaking is alluded to in the next *passuk* after *Shema Yisrael* ואהבת את ה' אלקיך You should love Hashem. The Sifri interprets the word to be read as *ve'eehavta* you should cause others to love Hashem like **Avraham** did during his lifetime. He was the super model of models in a dark jungle of *avodah zara*. Our mission of שמע וברוך שם is to bring the world to love Hashem just as we do. The ending of the *beracha* רבה אהבה is אהבה ביהודה. Hashem chose us to be the beacon light house by the stormy ocean. He chose us to attain and live the reality of אחד ה' הוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד and live **presently** as אחד ושמו אחד. Every Shabbos when we say Lecha Dodi אחד ושמו אחד which is stated in the present tense as if we are holding already at the קץ. That is because we receive a *neschama yesairah*. But what about every day of the week on days of חול x six which is the *gematriah* חרון. They are the days of the **week** when we become **weak** by not acting like the genuine representatives of Hashem and thereby anger Hashem in that He cannot bring the geulah to the world. The advice is that we must draw strength from the Shabbos and bring it into the days of חול as it says by Yaakov ויצא יעקב מבאר followed by וילך חרנה. Yaakov left the seventh day Shabbos known as a באר a well and

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fountain. It also spells the acronym of **ב**ידו **א**פקיד **ר**וחי **י**. That even though one returns the *neshama yesairah* to Hashem after Shabbos, he is still in the אפקיד mode **remembering** and thinking about the *neshama* and how it brought him close to Hashem. This helps one in bringing Shabbos into the חול by arousing the acronym of **ח**ול of **ח**זק ו**י**אמץ **ל**בך.

Gut Shabbos Rav Brazil