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# **Lo Bashamayim Hi: Talmud Bavli Berakhot, Perek 1, Making Meaning**

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## Abstract

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My text immersion focused on the study of the Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Berakhot*. Through the discussion in *Berakhot*, the rabbis outline the various *halakhic* demands and restrictions related to the recitation of both the *Shema* and *Amidah* prayers. The written component of my text immersion is an adult education curriculum on *Berakhot*. While this curriculum guide focuses primarily on the study of *Berakhot*, it uses the structure found in the three paragraphs of the *Shema* to serve as an entry point into a larger conversation about how Jews express their faith.

## Rationale

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Religious life consists of both the ritual and the spiritual. Ritual offers a concrete path through which one can attempt to engage the spiritual — that which is abstract, untouchable, and eludes complete understanding. That which we cannot define or comprehend drives humans to seek a system of understanding through which they can create meaning in the world.

Judaism in particular developed in such a way that the entire *halakhic* system is simply ritualized living. While Reform Judaism has a less formal relationship with *halakha*, Jews that belong to a congregation are most likely familiar with Jewish prayer/worship and therefore prayer can serve as an entry point into the deep study of Jewish texts (as opposed to studying obscure laws (e.g. *niddah*, that they rarely, if ever, come into contact with). Not every Jew feels it necessary to live a highly ritualized life in order to connect with The Divine. However, investigating/reevaluating the concrete (*halakha* and liturgy) can create opportunities/openings that encourage approaching the abstract.

The mantra of the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism is “There is more than one way to be Jewish” “Yesh yoter mi derech echad l’hiyot Yehudi”. As an American progressive Jew, I am in full agreement with this statement; however, while there are many ways to be Jewish, I fear that liberal Jew do not feel an ownership over a large portion of our vast inherited tradition, specifically regarding Rabbinic texts. My hope is that this course will serve to demystify rabbinic texts and invite the adult learners in a congregational setting to engage and become partners in the ongoing process of revelation through interpreting our texts.

Judaism’s core purpose is meaning making, the Jew’s core purpose is to be a meaning maker. Jewish law and sacred texts facilitate this process.

## Enduring Understandings

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- The ongoing process of revelation invites and requires active participation on the part of Jewish individuals and communities
- Prayer attempts to provide a concrete path through which one can commune with the abstract, God

## **Unit 1: Lo BaShamayim Hi - It is Not in Heaven**

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The introductory unit serves to familiarize the learners with Rabbinic texts. The conversation centers around Jewish ritual as a concrete method of expressing abstract ideas. By focusing on Jewish rituals the learners are already familiar with, they can then zoom out and play with the concepts the rituals may be trying to concretize. Understanding Jewish practice through this lens frames the conversation around what the rabbis of the Talmud might have been attempting to accomplish through their discussions on Jewish law.

### **Lessons**

1. Expressions of Faith
2. Introduction to Rabbinic Texts
3. Introduction to Shema/Berakhot

### **Enduring Understandings**

- Ritual serves to concretize Jewish values
- Judaism requires intentionality/mindfulness

### **Goals and/or Essential Questions**

- To provide learners with a brief understanding of rabbinic text, specifically the Talmud.
- To invite learners to engage in the process of interpreting Jewish tradition through its texts.

### **Knowledge**

- *Mishnah*
- *Talmud*
- *Gemara*
- *Berakhot*
- *Shema*

### **Skills (students will be able to...)**

- decipher connections between Jewish beliefs and Jewish practices
- imagine the process of creating Jewish law

## **Lesson 1: Expressions of Faith**

### **Goals:**

- To stimulate conversation regarding what constitutes living a Jewish life
- To create a safe space and begin to build a classroom community

### **Objectives (Students will be able to):**

- Articulate a personal definition of Judaism's core purpose
- Describe how Jewish practices are connected to Jewish core beliefs and/or values

### **Enduring Understandings:**

- Faith cannot exist without action
- One way Jews express faith is through prayer

### **Materials Needed:**

- Laptop, Projector & Projector Screen
- Paper
- Writing implements

### **Time Table:**

00:00 - 00:15	Welcome and Introductions: Why are you here?
00:15 - 00:30	Poll Everywhere: How do Jews Express Their Faith?
00:30 - 01:00	Turning Core Beliefs into Practice
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up & What's Next

### **Method:**

#### **00:00 - 00:15 Welcome and Introductions: Why are you here?**

First, the facilitator introduces him/herself and asks the students to also introduce themselves by sharing their name, why they are here, and one way in which Judaism adds/contributes meaning to their lives.

#### **00:15 - 00:45 Poll Everywhere: How do Jews Express Their Faith?**

Before class, create a live participation poll on [polleverywhere.com](http://polleverywhere.com) or a similar website with the following questions:

- What ways do you express your Judaism/Faith?
- What constitutes living a Jewish life? What does it look like?
- How would you explain the most important tenets of Judaism?
- How would you define the essence of Judaism?
- What are Judaism's core beliefs?

Discuss each question as you go. Try to pull out how students view the essence of Judaism.

**00:45 - 01:00      Turning Core Beliefs into Practice**

Based on the responses to the poll, ask learners to split into small groups of three or four people. Their task is to create some sort of ritual and/or practice that reflects one of Judaism's core beliefs (according to their responses earlier). The practice could be related to a specific Jewish value, belief, or concept. What could someone do on a daily or weekly basis that would reflect that belief and/or remind them of it? Give groups paper and writing implements for them to write down their ideas.

**01:00 - 01:15      Wrap-up & What's Next**

Ask groups to share how they turned a core belief into a practice. The instructor should then inform the students that this is what the rabbis discussed after the destruction of the Second Temple. How could they structure Jewish life and practice to create a Jewish consciousness? While Jewish law, *halakha*, covers nearly every aspect of what Jewish life should or could look like, laws surrounding prayer are the first topic discussed within the Babylonian Talmud. Prayer, which for traditional Jews is a daily practice, provides an opportunity for the pray-er to review and reacquaint themselves with Judaism's most central beliefs. Throughout this course, we will delve deeply into these texts which deal primarily with the recitation of the Shema.

## Lesson 2: Introduction to Rabbinic Texts

### Goals:

- To introduce students to Rabbinic texts
- To familiarize students with the process of engaging with Jewish texts

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Define Rabbinic Texts
- Model the process of creating law

### Enduring Understandings:

- Religion/Ritual requires expressing belief through action

### Materials Needed:

- Pens
- Paper
- Copies of p. 48 from *The Talmud (Steinsaltz Edition): A Reference Guide*
- *Berakhot 7b & Kiddushin 40b* Handout

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:15	Welcome and Follow-up
00:15 - 00:45	Creating Jewish Law, You Be The Rabbi (clean your room)
00:45 - 01:00	What is Talmud Anyway? Talmud in a nutshell
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's Next

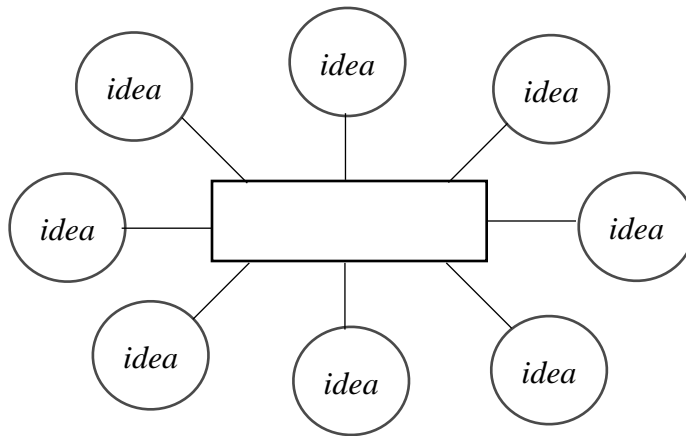
### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:15 Welcome and Follow-up

“Last week, we discussed how to turn abstract thoughts/beliefs into concrete actions/ritual.”...Remind them of some of the examples the group came up with. Turn the conversation to Jewish rituals they are already familiar with and try to break them down as a group into which values or Jewish religious beliefs they may be trying to communicate and/or actualize. Some examples might include any holiday rituals (but be careful to push them past the reasoning of it being commanded), lighting candles, the structure of a service, Jewish mourning rituals, etc.

**00:15 - 00:35      Creating Jewish Law, You Be The Rabbi (clean your room)**

Write the phrase “Clean your room” on the board. Instruct that class that together you are going to create a thought web about how these three words might be



interpreted.

How might different people interpret this phrase? Think of as many reactions as possible. Think about how a parent asks a child to clean their room. To the child, this might mean to shove everything in the closet while to the parent it might have meant to put everything in its correct place.

Since there are so many interpretations of what this phrase could mean, what questions do you now have that would help you clarify them and what is your argument supporting your position?

**00:35 - 01:00      What is Talmud Anyway? Talmud in a nutshell**

Although it is a much simplified version, the process we just experienced can be used as an analogy for how Talmud was created. The instructions were given in the Mishnah (“clean your room”) and the Gemara interpreted the meanings of these laws and provided arguments in some cases for a position.

*Make use of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's The Talmud (Steinsaltz Edition): A Reference Guide for a general history and explanation of the Talmud when teaching its history, pp. 37-60.*

**Four Definitions<sup>1</sup>**

“The formal definition of the Talmud is the summary of oral law that evolved after centuries of scholarly effort by sages who lived in Palestine and Babylonia until the beginning of the Middle Ages.” (Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, 3)

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<sup>1</sup> From “What is Talmud?” Handout, compiled by Rabbi Dr. Dvora Weisberg



“The Talmud is made up of a philosophical law code, the Mishnah, and an extensive analysis of and commentary upon the Mishnah. (Abraham Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, x)

“[The Talmud] embodies the mental labors of the ancient Jewish teachers during a period of about eight hundred years.... Directed particularly to expounding and developing the religious, moral, and civil law of the Bible.... Replete with wise observations, ethical maxims, beautiful legends and parables, and exegetical explanations.” (Moses Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, preface)

“...the Babylonian Talmud, a systematic commentary on an earlier law code, the Mishnah.... Forms the authoritative statement of the Judaism that took shape in late antiquity and predominated until modern times.... The Babylonian Talmud provides us with a sizable example of how a community of intellectuals (sages) with a continuous past of half a millennium proposed to say everything they wished to say about every subject....” (Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Classical Statement*, xi)

Because the Talmud is based on the Mishnah, it is organized according to the six orders of the Mishnah: Seder Zeraim (seeds), Seder Moed (Appointed Time, “Festival”), Seder Nashim (Women), Seder Nezikin (Damages), Seder Kodashim (Holy things), and Seder Teharot (Purity).”

We will be studying Seder Zeraim, the first volume of the Talmud, from its first tractate, Berakhot.

What does a page of Talmud look like?

Distribute page 48 from the Steinsalz Reference Guide. Walk students through all the pieces on the page by using pages 49 - 55 as background information for the instructor.

Ask for any clarifications or questions.

### **01:00 - 01:15      Wrap-up and What’s Next**

We are now going to do a short text study from Berakhot to frame our time together.

Distribute Berakhot 7b/Kiddushin 40b handout. Ask students to read through the texts with a neighbor/partner. Discuss which text resonates more with partner.

Group Discussion: What are times that study has led you to action? What are times that you have felt as though your actions were “in service of Torah”?

### **Lesson 3: Introduction to Shema/Berakhot**

#### **Goals:**

- To familiarize students with the three full paragraphs of Shema
- To prepare students for the study of Gemara

#### **Objectives (Students will be able to):**

- Evaluate the intention/purpose of these texts
- Interpret both biblical and rabbinic texts/Distinguish between Biblical and Rabbinic Texts

#### **Enduring Understandings:**

- The Shema provides a map for Jewish practice, belief, and living.

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Pens
- Paper
- Full Shema Text Sheet
- Mishnah Berakhot 1:1 handout

#### **Time Table:**

00:00 - 00:15	Welcome and Follow-up
00:15 - 00:45	Delving into the Shema
00:30 - 01:00	Start with Mishnah Berakhot!
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's Next

#### **Method:**

##### **00:00 - 00:15 Welcome and Follow-up**

What do you know about the Shema? Short Discussion, include examples. Reform Judaism used to only use first paragraph and last few verses of the third. Tefillin, mezuzah, before death, when you wake up, in services, Jewish pledge of Allegiance, etc.

##### **00:15 - 00:45 Delving into the Shema**

Break the class up into three groups. Each group will study a different paragraph of the Shema. Distribute the Shema study sheets to each participant of the group. Groups should answer the questions on their handouts making sure they summarize the purpose and content of the paragraph and highlight any questions they might have (clarification or otherwise).

After fifteen minutes, jigsaw the groups by creating new groupings of three students each, making sure that one student from each of the three original groups is represented. Students will then share with the other two people in their new group

about their paragraph. This new group should theorize about *why these three paragraphs* were chosen for this central Jewish prayer.

Bring the class back together and ask for volunteers to share their thoughts on these three paragraphs. Write their responses on the board.

**00:45 - 01:10      Start with Mishnah Berakhot! Explain what Berakhot is.**

As was discussed last week, the Mishnah preceded the Talmud and is the first written summary of the Oral Law, codified around 200 CE by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, who edited together almost three hundred years' worth of oral tradition. We will be looking at the first verse of the Mishnah which will prepare us to look at where the Talmud takes it next week.

Distribute Mishnah Berakhot 1:1 handout. Ask for volunteers to read each line, stopping after each one so students may ask questions and so that the teacher can explain certain terms or rituals. What are the rabbis concerned about? Outline the arguments.

Conclude by discussing, so what? Why is this where the rabbis started? What would you have started with?

**01:10 - 01:15      Wrap-up and What's Next**

Next week will focus on the first paragraph of Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-9

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# Unit 1

# Resources

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## Lesson 1

N/A

## Lesson 2

*Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 7b & Kiddushin 40b Handout*

## Lesson 3

Full Shema Text Study Sheets  
*Mishnah Berakhot 1:1 Handout*

## Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 7b<sup>1</sup>

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ואמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי: גדולה שמושה של תורה יותר מלמודה, שנאמר: (מלכים ב ג, יא) "פה אלישע בן שפט אשר יצק מים על ידי אליהו", "למד" לא נאמר, אלא "יצק" — מלמד שגדולה שמושה יותר מלמודה.

**And Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: Service of Torah is greater than its study**, i.e. serving a Torah scholar and spending time in his company is greater than learning Torah from him. Torah study is one component of a Torah life, but one who serves a Torah scholar learns about every aspect of life from his actions. This is derived from the verse that speaks in praise of Elisha, **as it is stated: "Here is Elisha son of Shafat, who poured water over Elijah's hands"** (II Kings 3:11). The verse **does not say that he learned from Elijah, rather that he poured water**, which **teaches that the service of Torah represented by Elisha pouring water over Elijah's hands is greater than its study.**

## Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 40b<sup>2</sup>

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וכבר היה רבי טרפון וזקנים מסובין בעלית בית נתזה בלוד, נשאלה שאילה זו בפניהם: תלמוד גדול או מעשה גדול? נענה רבי טרפון ואמר: מעשה גדול, נענה ר"ע ואמר: תלמוד גדול, נענו כולם ואמרו: תלמוד גדול, שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה.

Rabbi Tarfon and some elders were reclining in an upper chamber in the house of Nitza in Lod when this question came up: Which is greater, study or action? Rabbi Tarfon spoke up and said: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva spoke up and said: Study is greater. The others then spoke up and said: Study is greater because it leads to action.

<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersch Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 46. Formatting is the author's.

<sup>2</sup> adapted from [halakhah.com](http://halakhah.com), Soncino translation

### Deuteronomy 6:4-9<sup>1</sup>

[4] שִׁמְעַיִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד: [5] וְאַהֲבָתָה אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל־מְאֹדְךָ: [6] וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִּי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־לִבְּךָ: [7] וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם בְּשֹׁבְתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלַכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: [8] וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטָטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: [9] וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל־מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשָׁעֶיךָ:

4] Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is one! 5] You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your might. 6] Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. 7] Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. 8] Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; 9] inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

<sup>1</sup>Translation from, Rabbi Elyse D. Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Center Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 66.

# Deuteronomy 11:13-21<sup>1</sup>

13] וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ שְׁמִיעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצִוְהָ אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעַבְדּוֹ בְּכָל־לִבְכֶּם וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁכֶם: 14] וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר־אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאֶסְפַּת דָּגָנְךָ וְתִירְשְׁךָ וִיצְהָרְךָ: 15] וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשָׂדְךָ לְבְהֵמָתְךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ: 16] הַשְׁמְרוּ לָכֶם פֶּן יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם וְסָרְתֶם וְעַבַּדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם: 17] וְחָרָה אֶף־יְהוָה בָּכֶם וְעָצָר אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבֹדְתֶם מִהָרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם: 18] וְשַׂמְתֶּם אֶת־דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹהֵי עַל־לִבְכֶּם וְעַל־נַפְשְׁכֶם וְקִשְׁרֹתֶם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל־יְדֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם: 19] וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר בָּם בְּשַׁבָּתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: 20] וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל־מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ: 21] לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְתִּיכֶם לָתֵת לָהֶם כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

13] If you carefully heed my commandments, the ones I command you today, to love Adonai your God and worship God with all your mind and body, then I shall grant your land's rain in its season, in the autumn and in the spring, that you might gather your grain, wine and oil. 11] I shall grant grass in your fields for your cattle, that you might eat your fill. 12] Take care lest your mind tempt you to rebel by worshipping other gods and by bowing down to them. 13] For then the fire and fury of Adonai will turn against you. 14] Adonai will stop the flow of the sky. 15] There will be no rain. 16] The earth will not grant its produce. 17] You will quickly perish from the good land that Adonai grants you. 18] So put these words of mine in charge of your mind and body, bind them to your hand as a sign and set them between your eyes as a symbol; 19] teach them to your children, using them when you sit at home and when you walk about, when you lie down and when you stand up; 20] write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates — 21] that your days and your children's days in the land that Adonai promised to give to your ancestors may be as numerous as the days that the sky overlooks the earth.

<sup>1</sup> Translation from, Rabbi Lawrence H. Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayerbook: Volume 1: The Shema and Its Blessings* (Philadelphia: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998), 84.

# Numbers 15:37-41<sup>1</sup>

37] וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 38] דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית  
עַל־כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתַנּוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכָּנָף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת: 39] וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם  
אֹתוֹ וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־תִתְּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶּם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: 40] לִמְעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים  
לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: 41] אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר וָצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים  
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

37] Adonai said to Moses as follows: 38] Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the ring at each corner. 39] That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of Adonai and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. 40] Thus you shall remember to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. 41] I am Adonai, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am Adonai your God.

<sup>1</sup>Translation from, Rabbi Elyse D. Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Center Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 66.



## Mishnah Berakhot 1:1<sup>1</sup>

מאימתי קורין את שמע בערבין? משעה שהכהנים נכנסים לאכול בתרומתן, עד סוף האשמורה הראשונה; דברי רבי אליעזר. וחכמים אומרים: עד חצות. רבן גמליאל אומר: "עד שיעלה עמוד השחר."

From when may one recite the Shema in the evening? From the hour when the priests enter to eat the *Teruma* until the end of the first watch, these are the words of Rabbi Eliezer. The Sages say, "until midnight." Rabban Gamliel says, "until the break of dawn."

מעשה ובאו בניו מבית המשתה; אמרו לו: "לא קרינו את שמע." אמר להם: "אם לא עלה עמוד השחר חייבין אתם לקרות." ולא זו בלבד אמרו, אלא כל מה שאמרו חכמים עד חצות מצותן עד שיעלה עמוד השחר;

It once happened that [Rabban Gamliel's] sons came home from a house of feasting, they said to him, "We did not recite Shema." He said to them, "If the break of dawn has not arrived, you are obligated to recite it." Not only in this case, but rather in every case where the Sages said, "until midnight," the mitzvah (commandment) can be performed until the break of dawn.

הקטר חלבים ואברים—מצותן עד שיעלה עמוד השחר וכל הנאכלים ליום אחד—מצותן עד שיעלה עמוד השחר.

[For Example:] Burning the fats and organs [of the sacrifices, on the Temple altar] — this precept [can be performed] until the break of dawn. [Another example:] All [sacrifices] which may be eaten for one day — the precept [of eating them can be performed] until the break of dawn. "If dawn has not broken, you are obligated to recite it."

אם כן למה אמרו חכמים עד חצות? כדי להרחיק אדם מן העבירה.

If so, why did the Sages say [that these precepts can be performed only] until midnight? In order to distance a person from transgression.

<sup>1</sup>Translation adapted from [sefaria.com](http://sefaria.com)

## **Unit 2: Accepting the Yoke of the Sovereignty of God**

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The unit unpacks the first paragraph of the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Recitation of these verses is understood as accepting the yoke of the sovereignty of God. While this is a vague concept, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 instructs the worshipper as to which actions they can perform for God. While humans will never be able to completely understand God, we can understand the actions we perform for God (Hammer 124). This paragraph emphasizes God's existence as the sole ruler and that Jews are commanded to love God. Throughout this unit, learners will study texts related to the first paragraph of Shema in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot as well as texts addressing active expressions of Jewish faith.

### **Lessons**

4. Accepting the Yoke of Heaven
5. Heart & Soul

### **Enduring Understandings**

- Multiple opinions regarding Jewish law encourage productive questioning
- The Shema promotes mindfulness

### **Goals and/or Essential Questions**

- To familiarize students with Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- To engage with Jewish text on multiple levels
- To engage deeply with Deuteronomy 6:5
- To create connections between Torah and Gemara

### **Knowledge**

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Berakhot 2a, 54a, and 61b

### **Skills (students will be able to...)**

- Distinguish between Mishnah and Gemara
- Outline arguments from Berakhot 2a
- Articulate their own interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:5
- Theorize about why the Gemara discusses Shema as part of this Mishnah

## Lesson 4: Accepting the Yoke of Heaven

### Goals:

- To familiarize students with the first paragraph of Shema
- To engage with Jewish text on multiple levels

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Distinguish between Mishnah and Gemara
- Outline arguments from Berakhot 2a

### Enduring Understandings:

- Multiple opinions regarding Jewish law encourage questioning

### Materials Needed:

- Pens
- Paper
- Scotch Tape
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9 printed signs
- Copies of Berakhot 2a Handout

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:30	Deuteronomy 6:4-9
00:30 - 01:00	Study Gemara, Berakhot 2a
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's Next

### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:30 Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Before class, post each verse from this paragraph of Shema separately around the room. When students arrive, welcome them and instruct them to walk around the room reading the verses and writing their own questions about, reactions to and/or interpretations of each verse. This can include things they know are done in Judaism because of these verses or any new ideas that occur to them (Save these for use next week).

After students have mostly responded to each verse, collect all of the pages. Take the pages for verse 7 out ("Impress them upon your children, Recite them when you stay home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up) and ask a volunteer to read the responses from the pages on this particular verse.

When you get to the sheet that says "when you lie down and when you get up" remind them of the Mishnah they studied last week. Based on our study of Mishnah Berakhot 1:1 last week, we know this was the verse the rabbis decided to tackle first.

Now we will take a look at the Talmud text to see how they answered the question, “From when does one recite Shema in the evening?”

**00:30 - 01:00**

**Study Gemara, Berakhot 2a**

Split students into small groups of about 4-6. Distribute Berakhot 2a handouts. Students should follow instructions on handout (reading the text carefully, outlining the Gemara’s argument, and writing any questions they may have).

**01:00 - 01:15**

**Wrap-up and What’s Next**

Bring the class back together and outline the Gemara’s arguments together on the white board. Then ask for volunteers to ask some of the questions they came up with as they studied the text and discuss as a class. Why was this so important to determine exactly? Why was this a concern? Why does the Talmud start here? Berakhot 2a gives us a glimpse into the rabbinic mind — how the rabbis built their arguments, etc.

## Lesson 5: Heart & Soul

### Goals:

- To engage deeply with Deuteronomy 6:5
- To create connections between Torah and Gemara

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Articulate their own interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:5
- Theorize about why the Gemara discusses Shema as part of this Mishnah

### Enduring Understandings:

- The Shema promotes mindfulness

### Materials Needed:

- Pens
- Paper
- Copies of Berakhot 54a & 61b Handout(s)

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:10	Deuteronomy 6:5
00:10 - 00:30	Study Gemara, Berakhot 54a & 61b
00:30 - 01:00	Back to the Mishnah
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's Next

### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:20 Deuteronomy 6:5

Use the page from last week on which students wrote commentary on the verse, “You shall love Adonai your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” Draw three columns on the board and write one of the following phrases in each column: with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. Distribute post-it notes and writing implements to students and ask them to take three post-its each, labeling each post-it with the header from each column on the board. Instruct students to write as many as possible interpretations of each these three phrases. Once they are finished, they should stick their post-it under the appropriate column.

Once everyone was posted, read (or ask a volunteer to read) a selection of the interpretations to the class. Ask what questions they might have regarding this verse. The Talmud we are looking at today will examine the meaning of this verse.

**00:20 - 00:40      Study Gemara, Berakhot 54a & 61b (heart, soul, & might)**

Distribute Heart, Soul, and Might handout and read through these texts as a class. Ask students to call out when a Sage defines one of the three terms and add their definition to the correct column. Ask: What does the Gemara add to what the Mishnah stated?

**00:40 - 01:00      Back to the Mishnah, Berakhot 54a - In Context**

Look back to the whole Mishnah in order to see what context this section is within. Break up into small groups of four to five students and discuss the conversation in which the discussion of heart, soul, and might appear. Why are these included in the same chapter/Mishnah? What might be the connection? How might this change how you interpret with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might? What could it look like today to love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might?

All about intentionality and taking an active role in keeping God on your mind.

**01:00 - 01:15      Wrap-up and What's Next**

How does Deuteronomy 6:4-9 help Jews express their faith? What are other ways these verses could be interpreted — what could they look like in practice (besides what we already do with Tefillin, mezuzah, etc.)?

Next week, we will begin to look at the second paragraph of Shema — Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

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# Unit 2

# Resources

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## Lesson 4

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 printed signs  
Babylonian Talmud: *Berakhot* 2a Handout

## Lesson 5

Babylonian Talmud: *Berakhot* 54a & 61b Handout  
Full *Berakhot* 54a Mishnah Handout

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה |  
אֶחָד:

Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our  
God, Adonai is one!



וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְּךָ  
וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל־מְאֹדְךָ:

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

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי  
מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־לִבְּךָ:

Take to heart these  
instructions with which I  
charge you this day.

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיכֶּ

Impress them upon your  
children.

וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ  
וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ

Recite them when you stay  
at home and when you are  
away,

וּבְשִׁכְבְּךָ וּבִקְוִמְךָ:

when you lie down and  
when you get up.

וְקִשְׂרֵתָם לְאֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ  
לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:

Bind them as a sign on your  
hand and let them serve as  
a symbol on your forehead;

וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל־מְזוּזֹת בֵּיתְכֶּךָ  
וּבְשַׁעְרֵיכֶּךָ:

inscribe them on the  
doorposts of your house and  
on your gates.

## ***Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 2a<sup>1</sup>***

תנא היכא קאי דקתני מאימתי? ותו מאי שנא דתני בערבית ברישא? לתני דשחרית ברישא!  
What does the Tanna refer to, asking "From when"? Furthermore, why does he deal with [the Shema reading] of the evening first, rather than dealing with that of the morning first?

תנא אקרא קאי, דכתיב בשכבך ובקומך. והכי קתני: זמן קריאת שמע דשכיבה אימת — משעה שהכהנים נכנסין לאכול בתרומתן.

The Tanna refers to Scripture, which says, "...when you lie down and when you get up," (Deut. 6:7), and he means to say thus: What is the time of the reciting of the Shema at lying down? From the time when the kohanim enter to eat their terumah.

ואי בעית אימא: יליף מברייתו של עולם דכתיב: ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד.  
And if you want, you can say that he learned [the order] from the creation of the world, thus: "...and it was evening and it was morning, day one." (Genesis 1:5).

אי הכי, סיפא דקתני בשחר מברך שנים לפניו ואחת לאחריה, ובערב מברך שנים לפניו ושנים לאחריה — לתני דערבית ברישא!

If so, in the concluding Mishna, where it states: "In the morning one says two blessings before [the Shema] and one after it, while in the evening one says two blessings before it and two after it," he should have dealt with the evening first!

תנא פתח בערבית והדר תני בשחרית, עד דקאי בשחרית — פריש מילי דשחרית, והדר פריש מילי דערבית.  
The Tanna started with the evening one first, and then dealt with the morning one; while he was dealing with the morning one, he expounded the details of the morning one, and then expounded those of the evening one.

אמר מר: משעה שהכהנים נכנסים לאכול בתרומתן. מכדי, כהנים אימת קא אכלי תרומה — משעת צאת הכוכבים, לתני משעת צאת הכוכבים!

The master said, From the time when the kohanim enter to eat their terumah. Seeing that when do the kohanim eat terumah? – from the emergence of the stars, it should have stated, "from the emergence of the stars"!

מלתא אגב אורחיה קמשמע לן, כהנים אימת קא אכלי בתרומה — משעת צאת הכוכבים והא קמשמע לן: דכפרה לא מעכבא. כדתינא: ובא השמש וטהר — ביאת שמשו מעכבתו מלאכול בתרומה, ואין כפרתו מעכבתו מלאכול בתרומה.

It teaches us something in passing: From when do kohanim eat terumah? – from the time of the emergence of the stars; this teaches us that the atonement is not preclusive [of eating terumah], as it is taught: "And the sun would set and he would become [ritually] pure" (lit.: and it would be pure) (Leviticus 22:7) – his sun-setting precludes him from eating terumah, but his atonement does not prevent him from eating teruma.

וממאי דהאי ובא השמש ביאת השמש והאי וטהר — טהר יומא,  
How do we know that this [Scriptural reference], "and the sun would set" (lit.: "and the sun would come") refers to sunset, and "...and it would be pure" means that the day would be cleared?

<sup>1</sup>Translation adapted from [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org)



## Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 2b<sup>2</sup>

דילמא ביאת אורו הוא, ומאי וטהר — טהר גברא! אמר רבה בר רב שילא: אם כן לימא קרא ויטהר, מאי וטהר טהר יומא. כדאמרי אינשי: איערב שמשא ואדכי יומא.

It means perhaps: And when the sun [of the next morning] appears, and ve-taher means the man becomes clean? Rabbah son of R. Shila explains: in that case, the text would have to read ve-yithar. What is the meaning of ve-taher? The day clears away, conformably to the common expression, as people [commonly] say: the sun has set and the day has cleared away.

במערבא הא דרבה בר רב שילא לא שמיע להו, ובעו לה מיבעיא: האי ובא השמש — ביאת שמשו הוא, ומאי וטהר — טהר יומא, או דילמא ביאת אורו הוא, ומאי וטהר — טהר גברא?

In the West, this explanation of Rabbah son of R. Shila was unknown, and they raised the question: This u'va hashemesh, does it mean the real setting of the sun, and ve-taher means the day clears away? Or does it perhaps mean the appearance of the sun, and what is ve-taher? the man becomes clean?

והדר פשטו לה מברייטא, מדקתני בברייטא סימן לדבר צאת הכוכבים שמע מינה: ביאת שמשו הוא, ומאי וטהר — טהר יומא. אמר מר: משעה שהכהנים נכנסין לאכול בתרומתן. ורמינהו: מאימתי קורין את שמע בערבין? משהעני נכנס לאכול פיתו במלח, עד שעה שעומד ליפטר מתוך סעודתו. סיפא דאי פליגא אמתניתין; רישא, מי לימא פליגא אמתניתין? לא עני וכהן חד שיעורא הוא.

They resolved it from a baraita, for it was taught in a baraita: The sign of the thing is the appearance of the stars. Hence you learn that it is the setting of the sun [which makes him clean] and the meaning of ve-taher is the clearing away of the day. The Master said: From the time when the kohanim enter to eat their terumah. They threw [a contradiction] against it: From what time may one recite the Shema in the evening? From the time that the poor man comes [home] to eat his bread with salt till he rises from his meal. The last clause certainly contradicts the Mishnah. Does the first clause also contradict the Mishnah? No. The poor man and the priest have one and the same time.

ורמינהו: מאימתי מתחילין לקרות קריאת שמע בערבית? משעה שבני אדם נכנסין לאכול פתו בערבי שבתות, דברי רבי מאיר. וחכמים אומרים: משעה שהכהנים זכאין לאכול בתרומתן, סימן לדבר: צאת הכוכבים. ואף על פי שאין ראיה לדבר — זכר לדבר, שנאמר: ואנחנו עושים במלאכה וחצים מחזיקים ברמחים מעלות השחר עד צאת הכוכבים, ואומר: והיו לנו הלילה משמר והיום מלאכה.

They threw [a contradiction] against it: From what time may one begin to recite the Shema in the evening? From the time that the people come [home] to eat their meal on a Sabbath eve. These are the words of Rabbi Meir. But the Sages say: From the time that the priests are entitled to eat their terumah. A sign for the matter is the appearance of the stars. And though there is no real proof of the matter, there is a hint to the matter. For it is written: "So we engaged in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rise of the dawn till the appearance of the stars" (Nehemiah 4:15) And it says further: "That in the night they may be a guard for us, and in the day" (Nehemiah 4:17) may work.

מאי ואומר? וכי תימא: מכי ערבא שמשא ליליא הוא, ואינהו דמחשכי ומקדמי תא שמע: "והיו לנו הלילה משמר והיום מלאכה".

(Why this second citation? — If you object and say that with the setting of the sun the night really begins, but that they left late and came early, [I shall reply]: Come and hear [the other verse]: "That in the night they may be a guard to us, and in the day may labour").

<sup>2</sup>Translation adapted from [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org)

### Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 54a<sup>1</sup>

חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שמברך על הטובה, שנאמר: (דברים ו, ה) ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך וגו'. בכל לבבך — בשני יצריך, ביצר טוב וביצר הרע; ובכל נפשך — אפילו הוא נוטל את נפשך, ובכל מאדך — בכל ממונך. דבר אחר: בכל מאדך — בכל מדה ומדה שהוא מודד לך הוי מודה לו.

The mishnah articulates a general principle: **One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad that befalls him just as he recites a blessing for the good that befalls him, as it is stated: “And you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).** The mishnah explains this verse as follows: **“With all your heart” means with your two inclinations, with your good inclination and your evil inclination,** both of which must be subjugated to the love of God. **With all your soul means even if God takes your soul.** **“And with all your might” means with all your money,** as money is referred to in the Bible as might. **Alternatively,** it may be explained that **“with all your might” means with every measure that God metes out to you;** whether it is good or troublesome, thank God.

### Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 61b<sup>2</sup>

ואהבת את י"י אלהיך: תניא, ר' אליעזר אומר: אם נאמר בכל נפשך, למה נאמר בכל מאדך? ואם נאמר בכל מאדך, למה נאמר בכל נפשך? אלא: אם יש לך אדם שגופו חביב עליו מממונו — לכך נאמר בכל נפשך, ואם יש לך אדם שממונו חביב עליו מגופו — לכך נאמר בכל מאדך. רבי עקיבא אומר: בכל נפשך — אפילו נוטל את נפשך.

We learned in our mission the explanation of the verse: **“And you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).** This was elaborated upon when it was taught in a *baraita*: **Rabbi Eliezer says: If it is stated: “With all your soul,” why does it state: “With all your might?”** Conversely, **if it stated: “With all your might,” why does it state: “With all your soul?”** Rather, this means that **if one’s body is dearer to him than his property, therefore it is stated: “With all your soul”;** one must give his soul in sanctification to God. **And if one’s money is dearer to him than his body, therefore it is stated: “With all your might”;** with all your assets. **Rabbi Akiva says: “With all your soul” means: Even if God takes your soul.**

<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersch Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 349. Formatting is the author’s.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 395.

## Babylonian Talmud: Berakot 54a, Mishnah<sup>1</sup>

הרואה מקום שנעשו בו נסים לישראל, אומר: "ברוך...שעשה נסים לאבותינו במקום הזה". מקום שנעקרה ממנו עכו"ם, אומר: "ברוך...שעקר עכו"ם מארצנו".

**One who sees a place where miracles occurred on Israel's behalf recites: Blessed...Who performed miracles for our forefathers in this place. One who sees a place from which idolatry was eradicated recites: Blessed...Who eradicated idolatry from our land.**

על הזיקין ועל הזועות, ועל הרעמים, ועל הרוחות, ועל הברקים אומר: "ברוך...שכחו וגבורתו מלא עולם". על ההרים ועל הגבעות, ועל הימים, ועל הנהרות, ועל המדברות אומר: "ברוך...עושה בראשית". רבי יהודה אומר: הרואה את הים הגדול אומר: "ברוך...שעשה את הים הגדול", בזמן שרואהו לפרקים.

One who sees conspicuous natural occurrences recites a blessing. **For *zikin* and *zeva'ot***, which the Gemara will discuss below, **for thunder, gale force winds, and lightning**, manifestations of the power of the Creator, one **recites: Blessed...Whose strength and power fill the world. For extraordinary (RaMBaM) mountains, hills, seas, rivers, and deserts, one recites: Blessed... Author of creation.** Consistent with his opinion that a separate blessing should be instituted for each individual species, **Rabbi Yehudah said: One who sees the great sea recites a special blessing: Blessed...Who made the great sea.** As with all blessings of this type, one only recites it **when he sees the sea intermittently**, not on a regular basis.

על הגשמים, ועל בשורות טובות, אומר: "ברוך הטוב והמטיב". על בשורות רעות, אומר: "ברוך דיין האמת". בנה בית חדש, וקנה כלים חדשים, אומר: "ברוך...שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה". מברך על הרעה מעין על הטובה, ועל הטובה מעין על הרעה.

**For rain and other good tidings, one recites the special blessing: Blessed...Who is good and Who does good.** Even **for bad tidings, one recites a special blessing: Blessed...the true Judge.** Similarly, when **one built a new house or purchased new vessels, he recites: Blessed...Who has given us life, sustained us, and brought us to this time.** The mishnah articulates a general principle: **One recites a blessing for the bad that befalls him just as he does for the good.** In other words, one recites the appropriate blessing for the trouble that he is experiencing at present despite the fact that it may conceal some positive element in the future. **Similarly**, one must recite a blessing for **the good that befalls him just as for the bad.**

והצועק לשעבר — הרי זו תפלת שוא; היתה אשתו מעוברת, ואומר: "יהי רצון שתלד אשתי זכר" — הרי זו תפלת שוא; היה בא בדרך ושמע קול צוחה בעיר, ואומר: "יהי רצון שלא תהא בתוך ביתי" — הרי זו תפלת שוא.

The mishnah states: **And one who cries out over the past** in an attempt to change that which has already occurred, **it is a vain prayer.** For example, **one whose wife was pregnant and he said: May it be God's will that my wife will give birth to a male child, it is a vain prayer.** Or **one who was walking on the path home and he heard the sound of a scream in the city, and he says: May it be God's will that this scream will not be from my house, it is a vain prayer.** In both cases, the event already occurred.

הנכנס לכרך מתפלל שנים, אחת בכניסתו ואחת ביציאתו; בן עזאי אומר: ארבע, שנים בכניסתו ושנים ביציאתו, נותן הודאה על שעבר וצועק על העתיד.

The Sages also said: **One who enters a large city**, the Gemara explains below that this is in a case where entering the city is dangerous, **recites two prayers: One upon his entrance**, that he may enter in peace, **and one upon his exit**, that he may leave in peace. **Ben Azzai says:** He recites **four** prayer, **two upon his entrance and two upon his exit.** In addition to praying that he may enter and depart in peace, he **gives thanks for the past and cries out in prayer for the future.**

<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersch Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 349-350. Formatting is the author's.

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חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שמברך על הטובה, שנאמר: (דברים ו, ה) ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך וגו'. בכל לבבך — בשני יצריך, ביצר טוב וביצר הרע; ובכל נפשך — אפילו הוא נוטל את נפשך, ובכל מאדך — בכל ממונך. דבר אחר: בכל מאדך — בכל מדה ומדה שהוא מחד לך הוי מודה לו.

The mishnah articulates a general principle: **One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad that befalls him just as he recites a blessing for the good that befalls him, as it is stated: “And you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).** The mishnah explains this verse as follows: **“With all your heart” means with your two inclinations, with your good inclination and your evil inclination,** both of which must be subjugated to the love of God. **With all your soul means even if God takes your soul.** **“And with all your might” means with all your money,** as money is referred to in the Bible as might. **Alternatively,** it may be explained that **“with all your might” means with every measure that God metes out to you;** whether it is good or troublesome, **thank God.**

לא יקל אדם את ראשו כנגד שער המזרח, שהוא מכוון כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים. ולא יכנס להר הבית במקלו, ובמנעלו, ובפונדתו, ובאבק שעל רגליו, ולא יעשנו קפנדריא; ורקיקה — מקל וחומר.

The mishnah teaches several Temple-related *halakhot*. **One may not act irreverently or conduct himself flippantly opposite the eastern gate of the Temple Mount, which is aligned opposite the Holy of Holies.** In deference to the Temple, one **may not enter the Temple Mount with his staff, his shoes, his money, belt, or even the dust on his feet.** One may **not make the Temple a shortcut to pass through it, and through an a fortiori inference,** all the more so **one may not spit on the Temple Mount.**

כל חותמי ברכות שבמקדש היו אומרים: “עד העולם”. משקלקלו הצדוקים ואמרו אין עולם אלא אחד — התקינו שיהיו אומרים: “מן העולם ועד העולם”.

The mishnah relates: **At the conclusion of all blessings recited in the Temple, those reciting blessing would say: Blessed are You, Adonai, God of Israel, until everlasting [haolam], the world.** But **when the Sadducees strayed and declared that there is but one world** and there is no World-to-Come, the Sages **instituted that at the conclusion of the blessing one recites: From everlasting [haolam] to everlasting [haolam].**

והתקינו שיהא אדם שואל את שלום חברו בשם, שנאמר: (רות ב, ד) “והנה בעז בא מבית לחם ויאמר לקוצרים: ה' עמכם ויאמרו לו: יברכה ה'”; ואומר: (שופטים ו, יב) “ה' עמך גבור החיל”; ואומר: (משלי כג, כב) “אל תבוז כי זקנה אמך”; ואומר: (תהלים קיט, קכו) “עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך”. רבי נתן אומר: הפרו תורתך משום עת לעשות לה'.

The Sages also **instituted that one should greet another in the name of God, i.e., one should mention God's name in his greeting, as it is stated: “And presently Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the harvesters, Adonai is with you, and they said to him, May Adonai bless you” (Ruth 2:4).** And it says: **“And the angel of God appeared to him and said to him, God is with you, might man of valor” (Judges 6:12).** And it says: **“And despise not your mother when she is old” (Proverbs 23:22), i.e., one must not neglect customs which he inherits.** And lest you say that mentioning God's name is prohibited, it says: **“It is time to work for Adonai; they have made void Your Torah” (Psalms 119:126), i.e., it is occasionally necessary to negate biblical precept in order to perform God's will, and greeting another is certainly God's will.** Rabbi Natan says another interpretation of the verse: **“Make voice Your Torah” because “it is the time to work for Adonai,” i.e., occasionally it is necessary to negate biblical precept in order to bolster the Torah.**

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### **Unit 3: Accepting the Yoke of the Commandments**

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This unit analyzes the second paragraph of the Shema, Deuteronomy 11:12-21. Whereas the recitation of the first paragraph is understood as accepting the yoke of the sovereignty of God, the second paragraph is understood as accepting the yoke of the commandments. Commandments are a tangible way to serve God, however, these verses do not detail any new commandments (though it does repeat some from the first paragraph). Instead, Deuteronomy 11:12-21 outlines how God will reward and/or punish those who follow and/or neglect God's commandments. In this way, we understand God as a Judge and as interested/involved in human actions/life (Hammer 127). A theology of reward and punishment is problematic in contemporary times and it also concerned the rabbis of the Talmud. Throughout this unit, learners will study texts related to the second paragraph of Shema in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot as well as texts addressing a theology of reward and punishment.

#### **Lessons**

6. Deuteronomy 11:13-21
7. Theodicy and Suffering

#### **Enduring Understandings**

- Actions yield consequences
- Suffering challenges humans' ability to make meaning

#### **Goals and/or Essential Questions**

- To familiarize students with Deuteronomy 11:13-21
- To discuss a theology of reward and punishment
- To grapple with a theology of suffering, their own and the rabbis' of the Talmud

#### **Knowledge**

- Deuteronomy 11:13-21, 28:1-6, 30:15-20
- Berakhot 5a & 6a
- Bibliodrama

#### **Skills (Students will be able to...)**

- Evaluate the meaning of Deuteronomy 11:13-21
- Discuss the nature of God's relationship with humanity
- Explain rabbinic arguments for maintaining Deuteronomy 11:13-21
- Debate what to include as the Shema's second paragraph

## Lesson 6: Deuteronomy 11:13-21

### Goals:

- To familiarize students with Deuteronomy 11:13-21
- To discuss a theology of reward and punishment

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Evaluate the meaning of Deuteronomy 11:13-21
- Discuss the nature of God's relationship with humanity

### Enduring Understandings:

- Actions yield consequences

### Materials Needed:

- Pens
- Paper
- Copies of Deuteronomy 11:13-21 Handout
- Copies of Berakhot 6a Handout

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:30	Deuteronomy 11:13-21
00:30 - 01:00	Berakhot 6a
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's next

### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:30 Deuteronomy 11:13-21

Welcome students to class and distribute Shema Paragraph 2 handout and pens. As they enter, instruct students to review Deuteronomy 11:13-21. Ask them to free write (or answer the provided questions) about their interpretations, reactions, and questions about these verses. What do they notice? What do they connect with? What do they reject? What do they accept? Why is this paragraph omitted from Reform prayer books? Would they want to include or exclude this paragraph from our liturgy? Why do they think the rabbis wanted to include this paragraph?

Once students have had an adequate amount of time to journal, ask for volunteers to share their reactions. Ask, how might we make meaning out of this paragraph for us today?

#### 00:30 - 01:00 Berakhot 6a (Humans impact God too!)

Distribute Berakhot 6a text study sheets to class. Break class up into small groups of 3-4 students to study the text together. Groups should read through the text and document their reactions and questions as they go. What connections can groups make between Berakhot 6a & Deuteronomy 11:13-21? What is the relationship

between God and the People Israel in both texts? How can Berakhot 6a impact our understanding of Deuteronomy 11:13-21?

**01:00 - 01:15      Wrap-up and What's Next**

Reconvene the class and discuss their reactions and questions. Then turn the discussion to the questions they considered while studying: What connections can groups make between Berakhot 6a & Deuteronomy 11:13-21? What is the relationship between God and the People Israel in both texts? How can Berakhot 6a impact our understanding of Deuteronomy 11:13-21? Perhaps human actions impact God. Human actions matter. There are consequences for human action.

Next week, we'll delve more into the issues inherent in a theology of reward and punishment.

## Lesson 7: Theodicy & Suffering

### Goals:

- To grapple with a theology of suffering, their own and the rabbis' of the Talmud

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Explain rabbinic arguments for maintaining Deuteronomy 11:13-21
- Debate about what to include as the Shema's second paragraph

### Enduring Understandings:

- Suffering challenges humans' ability to make meaning

### Materials Needed:

- Bibliodrama script for Berakhot 5a
- Alternatives for Deuteronomy 11:13-21 Handouts
- Paper
- Pens

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:30	Berakhot 5a
00:30 - 01:10	Alternatives to Deuteronomy 11:13-21
01:10 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's Next

### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:30 Berakhot 5a

Berakhot 5a shows the rabbis grappling with why bad things happen to good people. Now, let's put ourselves in the Rabbis' shoes. As literally as possible. Introduce the concept of Bibliodrama (here we're calling it Rabbini-Drama since we're looking at Talmud).

The way bibliodrama works, I will ask for volunteers to read the various characters' lines. I will interrupt randomly to ask questions. When I do, I will be asking a specific character to comment on their behavior and/or thoughts. Anyone can answer the question, but must answer from the point of view of the character in question. I will also give sufficient wait time between when I ask the question and when you need to respond in order to give you the opportunity to carefully think of your response. I'd love to see as many people participate as possible.

Distribute Berakhot 5a handouts and assign roles to volunteers in the class.



**00:30 - 01:10          Alternatives to Deuteronomy 11:13-21**

Distribute handouts (One from Unit 1 with Deuteronomy 11:13-21; One for Deuteronomy 28:1-6 & 30:15-20 side by side). Facilitate group discussion analyzing each paragraph. Why were these two chosen as alternatives? What do they contribute to your understanding of Deuteronomy 11:13-21 or the Shema in general? Divide the class up into three groups to prepare for a debate. One group will argue for why to maintain Deuteronomy 11:13-21 within the Shema, one group will argue for why this paragraph should be completely removed from our liturgy, and one group will argue for a substitute paragraph to be offered instead of or in addition to Deuteronomy 11:13-21 in our prayer book.

**01:10 - 01:15          Wrap-up and What's Next**

Conclude the debate. Next week we will look at the third and final paragraph of the Shema, Numbers 15:37-41.

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# Unit 3

# Resources

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## Lesson 6

Deuteronomy 11:13-21 Handout (Unit 1 Resources)

Babylonian Talmud: *Berakhot* 6a Handout

## Lesson 7

Bibliodrama handout for Babylonian Talmud: *Berakhot* 5a

Alternatives for Deuteronomy 11:13-21 Handout

## *Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 6a<sup>1</sup>*

א"ר אבין בר רב אדא א"ר יצחק: מנין שהקב"ה מניח תפילין — שנאמר: (ישעיהו סב, ח) "נשבע ה' בימינו ובזרוע עוזו";

Rabbi Avin bar Rav Adda said that Rabbi Yitzhak said: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wears tefillin? As it is stated: "Adonai has sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength" (Isaiah 62:8). Since it is customary to swear upon holy objects, it is understood that His right hand and the arm of His strength are the holy objects upon which God swore.

"בימינו" — זו תורה, שנאמר: (דברים לג, ב) "מימינו אש דת למו", "ובזרוע עוזו" — אלו תפילין, שנאמר: (תהלים כט, יא) "ה' עוז לעמו יתן".

Specifically, "His right hand" refers to the Torah, as it is stated in describing the giving of the Torah: "From His right hand, a fiery law for His people" (Deuteronomy 33:2). "The arm of His strength," His left hand, refers to tefillin, as it is stated: "Adonai gave strength to His nation" (Psalms 29:11) in the form of the mitzvah of tefillin.

ומנין שהתפילין עוז הם לישראל — דכתיב: (דברים כח, י) "וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך" ותניא, ר' אליעזר הגדול אומר: אלו תפילין שבראש.

The Gemara ask: And from where is it derived that tefillin provides strength for Israel? As it is written: "And all the nations of the land shall see that the name of Adonai is called upon you, and they will fear you" (Deuteronomy 28:10). It was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: This is a reference to the tefillin for the head, upon which the name of God is written in fulfillment of the verse: "That the name of Adonai is called upon you."

א"ל: רב נחמן בר יצחק לרב חייא בר אבין: הני תפילין דמרי עלמא מה כתיב בהו? א"ל: (דברי הימים א יז, כא) "ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ".

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said to Rav Hiyya bar Avin: What is written in the tefillin of the Master of the World? Rav Hiyya bar Avin replied: It is written: "Who is like Your people, Israel, one nation in the land?" (I Chronicles 17:21). God's tefillin serves to connect God, in a sense, to the world, the essence of which is Israel.

ומי משתבח קוב"ה בשבחייהו דישראל? — אין, דכתיב: (דברים כו, יז) "את ה' האמרת היום" וכתיב: "וה' האמריך היום" — אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל: אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת בעולם, ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם;

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak continues: Is the Holy One, Blessed be He, glorified through the glory of Israel? Rav Hiyya bar Avin answered: Yes, as indicated by the juxtaposition of two verses; as it is stated: "You have affirmed this day, that Adonai is your God, and that you will walk in God's ways and keep God's laws and commandments, and listen to God's voice." And the subsequent verse states: "And Adonai has affirmed, this day, that you are God's treasure, as God spoke to you, to keep God's commandments" (Deuteronomy 26:17-18). From these two verses it is derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: You have made Me a single entity in the world, as you singled Me out as separate and unique. And because of this, I will make you a single entity in the world, and you will be a treasured nation, chosen by God.

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 34. Formatting is the author's.

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אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת בעולם, שנאמר: (דברים ו, ד) "שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד", ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם, שנאמר: "ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ". **You have made me a single entity in the world, as it is stated that Israel declares God's oneness by saying: "Hear, Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4). And because of this, I will make you a single entity in the world, unique and elevated with the utterance: "Who is like Your people, Israel, one nation in the land?"** Consequently, the Holy One, Blessed be He, is glorified through the glory of Israel whose praises are written in God's tefillin.

אמר ליה רב אחא בריה דרבא לרב אשי: תינח בחד ביתא בשאר בתי מאי? **Rav Aha, son of Rava said to Rav Ashi: It works out well** with regard to the contents of **one** of the four **compartments** of God's tefillin of the head. However, all four compartments of Israel's tefillin of the head contain portions of the Torah that praise God. **What** portions in praise of Israel are written in **the rest of the compartments** of God's tefillin of the head?

א"ל: (דברים ד, ז) "כי מי גוי גדול", "ומי גוי גדול", (דברים לג, כט) "אשריך ישראל", (דברים ד, לד) "או הנסה אלהים", (דברים כו, יט) "ולתתך עליון". **Rav Ashi said to him:** In those three compartments it is written: **"For who is a great nation**, to whom God is close, like Adonai our God whenever we call upon God?" (Deuteronomy 4:7); **"And who is a great nation**, who has righteous statutes and laws, like this entire Torah which I set before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:8); **"Happy are you, Israel**, who is like you? A people saved by Adonai, the shield of your help, and that is the sword of your excellence. And your enemies shall dwindle away before you, and you shall tread upon their high places" (Deuteronomy 33:29); **"Or has God attempted** to go and take a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and by wonders" (Deuteronomy 4:34); **"And to elevate you** above all nations that God has made, in praise, in name and in glory; that you may be a holy people to Adonai, your God, as God has spoken" (Deuteronomy 26:19).

אי הכי נפיש להו טובי בתי! אלא: "כי מי גוי גדול" "ומי גוי גדול" דדמיין להדדי — בחד ביתא, "אשריך ישראל" "ומי כעמך ישראל" — בחד ביתא, "או הנסה אלהים" — בחד ביתא, "ולתתך עליון" — בחד ביתא, וכולהו כתיבי באדרעיה. **Rav Aha, son of Rava, raises an objection: If** all of these verses are included in God's tefillin of the head, **there are too many compartments** as more than four verses of praise were listed. **Rather**, the portions in God's tefillin of the head must be arranged as follows: The verses **"For who is a great nation"** and **"And who is a great nation"** are included **in one compartment**, as they are similar. **"Happy are you, Israel"** is **in one compartment**. **"Or has God attempted"** is **in one compartment** and **"And to elevate you"** is **in one compartment** in the tefillin of the head, where there are four separate compartments. **And all** of the verses **are written** together on one parchment **in** the tefillin of the **arm**, which has only one compartment.

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## Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 5a<sup>1</sup>

אמר רבא ואיתימא רב חסדא: אם רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו — יפשפש במעשיו, שנאמר: (איכה ג, מ) "נחפשה דרכינו ונחקורה ונשובה עד ה'"; פשפש ולא מצא — יתלה בבטול תורה, שנאמר: (תהלים צד, יב) "אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרנו יה ומתורתך תלמדנו".

**Rava, and some say Rav Hisda, said: If a person see that suffering has befallen him, he should examine his actions.** Generally, suffering comes about as punishment for one's transgressions, as it is stated: **"We will search and examine our ways, and return to God"** (Lamentations 3:40). **If he examined** his ways and **found no** transgression for which that suffering is appropriate, **he may attribute** his suffering to **dereliction** in the study of **Torah**. God punishes an individual for dereliction in the study of Torah in order to emphasize the gravity of the issues, as it is stated: **"Happy is the man whom You punish, Adonai, and teach out of Your law"** (Psalms 94:12). This verse teaches us that his suffering will cause him to return to Your law.

ואם תלה ולא מצא — בידוע שיסורין של אהבה הם, שנאמר: (משלי ג, יב) "כי את אשר יאהב ה' יוכיח".

**And if he did not attribute** his suffering to derelictions in the study of Torah, **and did not find** this to be so, **he may be confident** that these are afflictions of love, as it is stated: **"For whom Adonai loves, God rebukes,** as does a father the son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:12).

אמר רבא אמר רב סחורה אמר רב הונא: כל שהקב"ה חפץ בו — מדכאו ביסורין, שנאמר: (ישעיהו נג, י) "וה' חפץ דכאו החלי";

So too, **Rava said that Rav Sehora said that Rav Huna said: Anyone in whom the Holy One, Blessed be He, delights, He oppresses him with suffering, as it is stated: "Yet in whom Adonai delights, God oppresses him with disease; to see if his soul would offer itself in guilt, that he might see his children, lengthen his days, and that the desire of God might prosper by his hand"** (Isaiah 53:10). This verse illustrates that in whomever God delights, God afflicts with illness.

יכול אפילו לא קבלם מאהבה — תלמוד לומר: (ישעיהו נג, י) "אם תשים אשם נפשו", מה אשם — לדעת, אף יסורין — לדעת

**I might** have thought that God delights in him even **if he does not accept** his suffering with love. **Therefore the verse teaches: "If his soul would offer itself in guilt."** Just as a guilt-offering is brought knowingly, as it is one of the sacrifices offered willingly, without coercion, **so too** his **suffering** must be accepted knowingly.

ואם קבלם מה שכרו — (ישעיהו נג, י) "יראה זרע יאריך ימים"; ולא עוד אלא שתלמודו מתקיים בידו, שנאמר: (ישעיהו נג, י) "וחפץ ה' בידו יצלח".

**And if one accepts** that suffering with love, **what is his reward?** As the second part of the verse states: **"That he might see his children, lengthen his days."** Moreover, in addition to these earthly rewards, **his Torah study will endure** and his Torah study will be successful, as it is stated: **"The purpose of God,"** the Torah, the revelation of God's will, **"might prosper by his hand."**

<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 26-7. Formatting is the author's.

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פליגי בה רבי יעקב בר אידי ורבי אחא בר חנינא, חד אמר: אלו הם יסורין של אהבה — כל שאין בהן בטול תורה, שנאמר: "אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרנו יה ומתורתך תלמדנו";

With regard to the acceptance of affliction with love and what exactly this entails, **Rabbi Ya'akov bar Idi and Rabbi Ahabar Hanina disagree. One of them said: Afflictions of love are any that do not cause dereliction in the study of Torah, i.e., any which do not afflict his body to the extent that he is unable to study Torah, as it is stated: "Happy is the man whom You afflict, Adonai, and teach from Your Torah."** Afflictions of love are when You "teach from Your Torah."

וחד אמר: אלו הם יסורין של אהבה — כל שאין בהן בטול תפלה, שנאמר: (תהלים סו, כ) "ברוך אלהים אשר לא הסיר תפילתי וחסדו מאתי".

And one said: Afflictions of love are any that do not cause dereliction in the recitation of prayer, as it is stated: "Blessed is God Who did not turn away my prayer" (Psalms 66:20). Despite his suffering, the afflicted is still capable of praying to God.

אמר להו רבי אבא בריה דר' חייא בר אבא, הכי אמר ר' חייא בר אבא א"ר יוחנן: אלו ואלו יסורין של אהבה הן, שנאמר: "כי את אשר יאהב ה' יוכיח".

**Rabbi Abba, son of Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, said: My father, Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, said that Rabbi Yohanan said as follows: Both, even afflictions that cause dereliction in the study of Torah and those that cause dereliction in the recitation of prayer, are afflictions of love, as with regard to one who suffers without transgression it is stated: "For whom God loves, God rebukes," and inability to study Torah and to pray are among his afflictions.**

אלא מה תלמוד לומר "ומתורתך תלמדנו"? — אל תקרי "תלמדנו" אלא "תלמדנו"; דבר זה מתורתך תלמדנו;

What then, is the meaning when the verse states: "And teach him from Your Torah"? Do not read and teach to mean and teach him, rather, and teach us. You teach us the value of this affliction from Your Torah.

קל וחומר משן ועין: מה שן ועין שהן אחד מאבריו של אדם — עבד יוצא בהן לחרות, יסורין שממרקין כל גופו של אדם — על אחת כמה וכמה.

This is an *a fortiori* inference from the law concerning the tooth and eye of a slave: The tooth and eye are each a single limb of a person and if his master damages either, the slave thereby obtains his freedom; suffering that cleanses a person's entire body all the more so that one attains freedom, atonement, from his sins.

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והיינו דרבי שמעון בן לקיש, דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: נאמר "ברית" במלח ונאמר "ברית" ביסורין; נאמר "ברית" במלח, דכתיב: (ויקרא ב, יג) "ולא תשבית מלח ברית", ונאמר "ברית" ביסורין, דכתיב:

(דברים כח, סט) "אלה דברי הברית". מה "ברית" האמור במלח — מלח ממתקת את הבשר, אף "ברית" האמור ביסורין — יסורין ממרקין כל עונותיו של אדם.

And that is the statement of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, as Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: The word **covenant** is used with regard to salt, and the word **covenant** is used with regard to afflictions. The word **covenant** is used with regard to salt, as it is written: "The salt of the covenant with your God should not be excluded from your meal-offering; with all your sacrifices you must offer salt" (Leviticus 2:13). And the word **covenant** is used with regard to afflictions, as it is written: "These are the words of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 28:69). Just as, in the covenant mentioned with regard to salt, the salt sweetens the taste of the meat and renders it edible, so too in the covenant mentioned with regard to suffering, the suffering cleanses a person's transgressions, purifying him for a more sublime existence.

תניא, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: שלש מתנות טובות נתן הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל, וכולן לא נתנן אלא על ידי יסורין. אלו הן: תורה וארץ ישראל והעולם הבא.

Additionally, it was taught in a baraita with regard to affliction: **Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, gave Israel three precious gifts, all of which were given only by means of suffering**, which purified Israel so that they may merit to receive them. These gifts are: **Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and the World-to-Come.**

תורה מנין? שנאמר: "אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרנו יח ומתורתך תלמדנו".  
From where is it derived that **Torah** is only acquired by means of suffering? As it is said: "Happy is the man whom You afflict, Adonai," after which it is said: "And teach from Your Torah."

ארץ ישראל — דכתיב: (דברים ח, ה) "כי כאשר ייסר אב את בנו ה' אלהיך מיסרך", וכתיב בתריה:

"כי ה' אלהיך מביאך אל ארץ טובה".

Eretz Yisrael, as it is written: "As a man rebukes his son, so Adonai your God rebukes you" (Deuteronomy 8:5), and it is written thereafter: "For Adonai your God will bring you to a good land."

העולם הבא — דכתיב: (משלי ו, כג) "כי נר מצוה ותורה אור ודרך חיים תוכחות מוסר".  
The World-to-Come, as it is written: "For the mitzvah is a lamp, the Torah is light, and the reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Proverbs 6:32). One may arrive at the lamp of mitzvah and the light of Torah that exists in the World-to-Come only by means of the reproofs of instruction in this world.

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Deuteronomy 28:1-6 <sup>1</sup>	Deuteronomy 30:15-20 <sup>2</sup>
<p>[1] וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַשְׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם וּנְתַנֶּנְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עָלֶיךָ עַל כָּל־גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ: [2] עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהַשִּׁיגְךָ כִּי תִשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: [3] בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּעִיר וּבְרוּךְ אַתָּה בַּשָּׂדֶה: [4] בְּרוּךְ פְּרִי־בֶטֶןךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ וּפְרִי הַבְּמִתָּךְ שֹׁגֵר אֶלְפֶיךָ וְעֹשֵׂתֶרֶת צֹאנְךָ: [5] בְּרוּךְ טַנְאֶךָ וּמִשְׁאֲרֹתֶיךָ: [6] בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּבֹאֶךָ וּבְרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּצֵאתְךָ:</p>	<p>[15] רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת־הָרָע: [16] אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לָאֱהָבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכָּיו וּלְשַׁמֵּר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחֵייתָ וּרְבִיתָ וּבִרְכָךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה בָּא־שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: [17] וְאִם־יִפְנֶה לְבָבְךָ וְלֹא תִשְׁמָע וְנִדְחָתָּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְעַבַּדְתָּם: [18] הִגַּדְתִּי לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֶבְדְּ וְתִאבְדּוּ לֹא־תֵאָרִיכוּ יָמִים עַל־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹבֵר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לָבֹא שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: [19] הַעִידְתִּי בָכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְלָלָה וּבִחְרָתָּ בְּחַיִּים לְמַעַן תַּחֲיָה אַתָּה וְעַמְּךָ: [20] לָאֱהָבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֶעַ בְּקוֹלוֹ וּלְדַבְּקָה־בּוֹ כִּי הוּא חַיִּיךָ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֶיךָ לְשִׁבְתָּ עַל־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְתֶת לָהֶם:</p>
<p>1] Now, if you obey Adonai your God, to observe faithfully all of God's commandments which I enjoin upon you this day, Adonai your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2] All these blessings shall come upon you and take effect, if you will but heed the word of Adonai your God: 3] Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the country. 4] Blessed shall be the issue of your womb, the produce of your soil, and the offspring of your cattle, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock. 5] Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. 6] Blessed shall you be in your comings and blessed shall you be in your goings.</p>	<p>15] See, I set before you this day life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16] For I command you this day, to love Adonai your God, to walk in God's ways, and to keep God's commandments, God's laws, and God's rules, that you may thrive and increase, and that Adonai your God may bless you in the land that you are about to enter and possess. 17] But if your heart turns away and you give no heed, and are lured into the worship and service of other gods, 18] I declare to you this day that you shall certainly perish; you shall not long endure on the soil that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19] I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life—if you and your offspring would live— 20] by loving Adonai your God, heeding God's commands, and holding fast to God. For thereby you shall have life and shall long endure upon the soil that Adonai swore to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give to them.</p>

<sup>1</sup>Translation from: Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael A. Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 427-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 436-7.



## **Unit 4: The Tassels**

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This unit delves into the third paragraph of the Shema, Numbers 15:37-41. These verses give the commandment to wear fringes on the corners of garments. While one cannot see God, one can see and feel fringes. The fringes serve as a reminder that humans live within God's sight (Hammer 128) and need to observe God's commandments. This paragraph ends by mentioning the Exodus from Egypt — a reminder of the miracles that God performed for the Jewish people. Throughout this unit, learners will study texts related to the third paragraph of Shema in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot as well as texts concerning concrete representations of the abstract.

### **Lessons**

8. The Power of Narrative
9. The Power of Symbols

### **Enduring Understandings**

- Humans need physical reminders to maintain mindfulness
- The Shema provides a map for Jewish practice, belief, and living

### **Goals and/or Essential Questions**

- To familiarize students with the final paragraph of Shema, Numbers 15:37-41
- To consider which symbols could serve as daily reminders of God's presence
- To review all three paragraphs of Shema and their purpose
- To consider the role of community in Jewish practice

### **Knowledge**

- Numbers 15:37-41, 23:18b-24, 24:3b-9
- Berakhot 6a, 12b

### **Skills (Students will be able to)**

- Discuss the significance of the Exodus story in Judaism
- Analyze rabbinic arguments for which paragraphs to include in the daily recitation of the Shema
- Evaluate the intention/purpose of these texts
- Create a tangible takeaway from the course

## Lesson 8: The Power of Narrative

### Goals:

- To familiarize students with the final paragraph of Shema, Numbers 15:37-41
- To consider which symbols could serve as daily reminders of God's presence

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Discuss the significance of the Exodus story in Judaism
- Analyze rabbinic arguments for which paragraphs to include in the daily recitation of the Shema

### Enduring Understandings:

- Humans need physical reminders to maintain mindfulness

### Materials Needed:

- Pens
- Paper
- Numbers 15:37-41 & Parashat Balak Handout
- Copies of Berakhot 12b Handout

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:30	Numbers 15:37-41
00:30 - 01:00	Berakhot 12b
01:00 - 01:15	Wrap-up and What's next

### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:30 Numbers 15:37-41 & Parashat Balak

Begin by reading Numbers 15:37-41. What about this paragraph made the rabbis want to include it in the daily recitation of the Shema? (Tassels, Lustful urges, Exodus) What do each of the themes within this short paragraph offer?

Reform Judaism reintroduced Numbers 15:37-39 with the publishing of Mishkan Tefillah. What might have been problematic about this paragraph? Why do you think the verses regarding the Exodus from Egypt were maintained? What is the power of this story? Why would the rabbis want us to recall it daily?

As we saw with Deuteronomy 11, Contemporary Jews have discussed what should or should not be included as part of the Shema. This week, we will look at a rabbinic debate regarding what to include as part of the last section of Shema. The particular piece we will be studying discusses Numbers 15:37-41 (what we still include to this day) and the blessings uttered by Balaam, a non-Israelite prophet who is hired to curse Israel by the king of Moab, Balak, because he is scared of the Israelites and their God.

Take a look at Numbers 23:18b-24 & Numbers 24:3b-9, two of Balaam's blessings. Discuss why these verses might have been considered for inclusion within the Shema. Why might they not have been included? Now we will look at the rabbis' reasoning behind considering and ultimately opting not to include verses from Parashat Balak.

**00:30 - 01:00      Berakhot 12b**

Distribute Berakhot 12a text study sheets to class. Break class up into small groups of 3-4 students to study the text together. Groups should read through the text and document their reactions and questions as they go.

Reconvene the class. Do you agree or disagree with the Sages' arguments? Which paragraph do you think should be part of the Shema and why?

**01:00 - 01:15      Wrap-up and What's next**

We learn from the third paragraph about the importance of symbols and stories. If the commandment to wear fringes on the corners of our garments was to serve as a reminder of how we are to conduct ourselves in the world in the sight of God (Hammer 128), what alternatives can we think of that could serve as a symbol and reminder (since most of us do not have fringes on our garments)?

## Lesson 9: The Power of Symbols

### Goals:

- To review all three paragraphs of Shema and their purpose
- To consider the role of community in Jewish practice

### Objectives (Students will be able to):

- Evaluate the intention/purpose of these texts
- Create a tangible takeaway from the course

### Enduring Understandings:

- The Shema provides a map for Jewish practice, belief, and living.

### Materials Needed:

- Pens
- Paper
- Copies of Berakhot 6a Handout(s)
- String for tzitzit

### Time Table:

00:00 - 00:15	Power of Symbols (Collective?)
00:15 - 00:35	Berakhot 6a
00:35 - 00:50	Power of Shema
00:50 - 01:15	Jewish Mindfulness

### Method:

#### 00:00 - 00:15      **Power of Symbols (Collective)**

While Numbers 15:37-41 set forth a way to keep God and the covenant in our consciousness, we all surround ourselves with many more symbols. What are some of the symbols we find in a sanctuary? Or symbols/ritual items that help us with prayer?

#### 00:15 - 00:35      **Berakhot 6a (Communal)**

Distribute Berakhot 6a text study sheet. Throughout this course, we have discussed the importance of intentionality and symbols, now we turn to an important topic/symbol — community/the synagogue.

Read through the text together as a class. Discuss the text as you go along: Why would this text want to assert that God is present in synagogue? Why would the rabbis want people to go to synagogue to pray? Power of symbols! Power of Synagogue as symbol - benefit of praying together - intentionality and accountability. What are your reactions, thoughts, etc.?

**00:35 - 00:50      Power of Shema**

Go back to review and discuss: What do each of the Shema's three paragraphs really have to offer us? Did the rabbis pick well? How do they really fit together? How can we live by the spirit of these texts? Do you read any of them differently?

**00:50 - 01:15      Jewish Mindfulness (Individual)**

Students now have the opportunity to make a "symbol" to remind them of this course, the Shema, and of God's presence. Options include, but are not limited to: tie tzitzit that can be turned into a bracelet, can be attached to a garment, or hung somewhere visible in their lives; write a poem or create a piece of art related to expressing faith and remaining mindful of the way in which you intend to live your lives through Jewish values. When students have finished, ask for volunteers to share the meaning behind what they created.

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# Unit 4

# Resources

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## Lesson 8

Numbers 15:37-41 & *Parashat Balak* Handout  
Babylonian Talmud: *Berakhot* 12b Handout

## Lesson 9

Babylonian Talmud: *Berakhot* 6a Handout

## Numbers 15:37-41<sup>1</sup>

[37] וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: [38] דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתַנוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכָּנָף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת: [39] וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא־תָתְרוּ אַחֲרֵי לִבְבְּכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־אֲתֶם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: [40] לִמְעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדָשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: [41] אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר וָצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם לָכֶם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

37] Adonai said to Moses as follows: 38] Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the ring at each corner. 39] That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of Adonai and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. 40] Thus you shall remember to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. 41] I am Adonai, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am Adonai your God.

Numbers 23:21-24 <sup>2</sup>	Numbers 24:5-9 <sup>3</sup>
<p>[21] לֹא־הָבִיט אֵין בִּיעֶקֶב וְלֹא־רָאָה עֵמֶל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיו עִמּוֹ וְתִרְוַעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ: [22] אֵל מוֹצִיאֵם מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעַפֶת רָאִם לוֹ: [23] כִּי לֹא־נָחַשׁ בִּיעֶקֶב וְלֹא־קָסָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּעַת יֹאמַר לִיעֶקֶב וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִה־פָּעַל אֵל: [24] הֲרָעָם כָּל־בִּיא יָקוֹם וְכֹאֲרִי יִתְנַשֵּׂא לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד־יֵאכַל טֹרֶף וְדַם־חַלְלִים יִשְׁתֶּה:</p>	<p>[5] מִה־טֹּבוֹ אֵהְלִיךְ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֵיךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל: [6] כְּנַחְלִים נָטְיוּ כִּגְנֹת עָלֵי נָהָר כְּאֵהָלִים נָטַע יְהוָה בְּאֲרָזִים עַל־יָמִים: [7] יִזְל־מַיִם מִדְּלִי וְזָרְעוּ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים וְיָרֵם מִאֲגַג מִלְכּוֹ וְתִנְשֵׂא מַלְכָּתוֹ: [8] אֵל מוֹצִיאֵם מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעַפֶת רָאִם לוֹ יֵאכֹל גּוֹיִם צִדְיוֹ וְעַצְמֹתֵיהֶם יִגָּרֵם וְחִצָּיו יִמְחֹץ: [9] כָּרַע שָׁכֵב כְּאֲרִי וְכָל־בִּיא מִי יִקְיָמוּ מִבְּרִכְיָךְ בְּרוּךְ וְאַרְרִיךְ אָרוּר:</p>
<p>21] No harm is in sight for Jacob No woe in view for Israel. Adonai their God is with them, And their King's acclaim in their midst. 22] God who freed them from Egypt Is for them like the horns of the wild ox. 23] Lo, there is no augury in Jacob, No divining in Israel: Jacob is told at once, Yea Israel, what God has planned. 24] Lo, a people that rises like a lion, Leaps up like the king of beasts, Rests not till it has feasted on prey And drunk the blood of the slain.</p>	<p>5] How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel! 6] Like palm-groves that stretch out, Like gardens beside a river, Like aloes planted by Adonai, Like cedars beside the water; 7] Their boughs drip with moisture, Their roots have abundant water. Their king shall rise above Agag, Their kingdom shall be exalted. 8] God who freed them from Egypt is for them like the horns of the wild ox. They shall devour enemy nations, Crust their bones, And smash their arrows. 9] They crouch, they lie down like a lion, Like the king of beasts; who dare rouse them? Blessed are they who bless you, Accursed they who curse you!</p>

<sup>1</sup>Translation from: Rabbi Elyse D. Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Center Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 66.

<sup>2</sup>Translation from: Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael A. Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 332.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 333.

## Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 12b<sup>1</sup>

אמר ר' אבהו בן זוטרת אמר רב יהודה בר זבידא: בקשו לקבוע פרשת בלק בקריאת שמע, ומפני מה לא קבעוה — משום טורח צבור.

**Rabbi Abbahu ben Zutarti said that Rabbi Yehudah bar Zevida said:** The Sages sought to establish the blessings of Balaam that appear in the Torah portion of Balak, as part of the twice-daily recitation of Shema. And why did they not establish it there? Because extending Shema would place an encumbrance on the congregation, from which the Sages sought to refrain.

מאי טעמא? אילימא משום דכתיב בה: (במדבר כג, כב) "אל מוציאם ממצרים" — לימא פרשת רבית ופרשת משקלות דכתיב בהן יציאת מצרים!

The Gemara seeks: Why did the Sages seek to add the blessings of Balaam in the first place? If you say that they did so because the exodus from Egypt is mentioned, as it is written therein: "God, who brought them forth out of Egypt, is like the horns of the wild ram" (Numbers 23:22), certainly mention of the Exodus is not unique to this Torah portion. Many other portions mention the exodus as well. Let us say the portion of usury (Leviticus 25:35-38) or the portion of weights (Leviticus 19:35-37), as the exodus from Egypt is written therein as well. In addition, they are brief and would not constitute an encumbrance on the congregation.

אלא אמר ר' יוסי בר אבין: משום דכתיב בה האי קרא: (במדבר כד, ט) "כרע שכב כארי וכלביא מי יקימנו".

Rather, **Rabbi Yosei bar Avin said:** The reason the Sages sought to establish the portion of Balak as part of the recitation of Shema is because it is written therein: "He couched, He lay down like a lion and a lioness; who shall rouse Him? Those who bless You are blessed and those who curse You are cursed" (Numbers 24:9). This is reminiscent of what is said in Shema: When you lie down, and when you rise. ולימא האי פסוקא ותו לא!

On this, the Gemara asks: And if it is important to include this as part of Shema because of this single verse, then let us say this verse and nothing more!

גמירי: כל פרשה דפסקה משה רבינו — פסקינן, דלא פסקה משה רבינו — לא פסקינן. The Gemara rejects this: It is impossible to do this, as they learned through tradition that any portion that Moses, our teacher, divided, we too divide and read separately. However, a portion that Moses, our teacher, did not divide, we do not divide and read separately. And as stated above, the Sages did not wish to institute the recitation of the entire portion of Balak to avoid placing an encumbrance on the congregation.

פרשת ציצית מפני מה קבעוה?

The Gemara continues: Why was the portion of ritual fringes established as part of the recitation of the Shema when its content is unrelated to that of the preceding portions?

<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 81-2. Formatting is the author's.



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א"ר יהודה בר חביבא: מפני שיש בה חמשה דברים: מצות ציצית, יציאת מצרים, עול מצות, ודעת מינים, הרהור עבירה, והרהור עבודה זרה.

**Rabbi Yehuda bar Haviva said:** The portion of ritual fringes was added **because it includes five elements** including the primary reason for its inclusion, the exodus from Egypt (*Melo HaRo'im*): **The mitzvah of ritual fringes**, mention of **the exodus from Egypt**, the acceptance of **the yoke of the commandments**, admonition against **the opinions of the heretics**, admonition against **thoughts of the transgressions** of licentiousness, **and** admonition against **thoughts of idolatry**.

בשלמא הני תלת — מפרשן; עול מצות — דכתיב: (במדבר טו, לט) "וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה'", ציצית — דכתיב: "ועשו להם ציצית וגו'" יציאת מצרים — דכתיב: "אשר הוצאתי וגו'" אלא דעת מינים, הרהור עבירה, והרהור עבודה זרה מנלן?

The Gemara clarifies: **Granted, these three are mentioned explicitly: The yoke of the commandments** is mentioned in the portion of ritual fringes, **as it is written: "And you shall look upon them and remember all the commandments of Adonai and you shall do them"** (Numbers 15:39). **Ritual fringes** are mentioned explicitly, **as it is written: "And they will make for themselves ritual fringes"** (Numbers 15:38). **The exodus from Egypt** is also mentioned explicitly, **as it is written: "I am Adonai, your God, who took you out from the Land of Egypt"** (Numbers 15:41). **But where do we** derive the other elements mentioned above: Admonition against **the opinions of the heretics**, admonition against **thoughts of idolatry**?

דתניא: "אחרי לבבכם" — זו מינות, וכן הוא אומר (תהלים יד, א) "אמר נבל בלבו אין אלהים", "אחרי עיניכם" — זה הרהור עבירה, שנאמר: (שופטים יד, ג) "ויאמר שמשון אל אביו אותה קח לי כי היא ישרה בעיניי", "אתם זונים" — זה הרהור עבודה זרה, וכן הוא אומר: (שופטים ח, לג) "ויזנו אחרי הבעלים".

In response, the Gemara cites a baraita where these elements were derived from allusions in the verse, "You shall stray neither after your hearts nor after your eyes, after which you would lust" (Number 15:39). **As it was taught: "After your hearts" refers to** following opinions **of heresy** that may arise in one's heart. The Gemara offers a proof, **as it is stated: "The fool said in his heart: 'There is no God'; they have been corrupt, they have acted abominably; there is none who does good"** (Psalms 14:1). The phrase: **"After your eyes,"** in **this** verse refers to following **thoughts of transgressions** of licentiousness, that a person might see and desire, **as it is stated: "And Samson said to his father, 'That one take for me, for she is upright in my eyes'"** (Judges 14:3). The passage: **"You shall stray after"** refers to promiscuity, which in the parlance of the prophets is a metaphor for **idol worship**, **as it is stated: "The children of Israel again went astray after the Be'alim"** (Judges 8:33).

## Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 6a<sup>1</sup>

תניא, אבא בנימין אומר: אין תפלה של אדם נשמעת אלא בבית הכנסת, שנאמר: (מלכים א ח, כח) "לשמוע אל הרנה ואל התפלה", במקום רנה — שם תהא תפלה.

It was taught in a baraita that **Abba Binyamin said: One's prayer is only fully heard in a synagogue, as it is stated** with regard to King Solomon's prayer in the Temple: "Yet have You turned toward the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, Adonai my God, **to listen to the song and the prayer** which Your servant prays before You on this day" (I Kings 8:28). The following verse concludes: "To hear the prayer Your servant directs toward this place" (I Kings 8:29). We see that one's prayer is heard specifically in the Temple, of which the synagogue is a microcosm (Rav Yoshiyahu Pinto). It may be inferred that **in a place of song, a synagogue where God's praises are sung, there prayer should be.**

אמר רבין בר רב אדא א"ר יצחק: מנין שהקב"ה מצוי בבית הכנסת — שנאמר: (תהלים פב, א) "אלהים נצב בעדת אל";

In explaining Abba Binyamin's statement, **Ravin bar Rav Adda said that Rabbi Yitzhak said: From where** is it derived **that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is located in a synagogue? As it is stated: "God stands in the congregation of God; in the midst of the judges God judges"** (Psalms 82:1). The congregation of God is the place where people congregate to sing God's praises, and God is located among God's congregation.

ומנין לעשרה שמתפללין ששכינה עמהם — שנאמר: "אלהים נצב בעדת אל";

**And from where** is it derived **that ten people who pray, the Divine Presence is with them? As it is stated: "God stands in the congregation of God,"** and the minimum number of people that constitute a congregation is a quorum of ten.

ומנין לשלשה שיושבין בדין ששכינה עמהם — שנאמר: (תהלים פב, א) "בקרב אלהים ישפוט";

**From where** is it derived **that three who sit in judgment, the Divine Presence is with them?** It is derived from this same verse, **as it is stated: "In the midst of the judges God judges,"** and the minimum number of judges that comprises a court is three.

ומנין לשנים שיושבים ועוסקין בתורה ששכינה עמהם — שנאמר: (מלאכי ג, טז) "אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וגו'".

**From where** is it derived **that two who sit and engage in Torah study, the Divine Presence is with them? "Then they that feared Adonai spoke one with the other, and Adonai listened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before God, for them that fear Adonai, and that think upon God's name"** (Malachi 3:16). The Divine Presences listens to any two God-fearing individuals who speak with each other.

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מאי (מלאכי ג, טז) "ולחושבי שמו"? אמר רב אשי: חשב אדם לעשות מצוה ונאנס ולא עשאה — מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו עשאה.

With regard to this verse, the Gemara asks: **What** is the meaning of the phrase, **"And that think upon God's name"**? Rav Ashi said: If a person intended to perform a mitzvah, but do to circumstances beyond his control, he did not perform it, the verse ascribes him credit as if he performed the mitzvah, as he is among those that think upon God's name.

ומנין שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה ששכינה עמו — שנאמר: (שמות כ, כד) "בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך".

The Gemara returns to Ravin bar Rav Adda's statement: **And from where** is it derived **that when even one who sits and engages in Torah study, the Divine Presence is with him?** As it is stated: **"In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you"** (Exodus 20:21); God blesses even a single person who mentions God's name, a reference to Torah study (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

וכי מאחר דאפילו חד — תרי מבעיא? — תרי מכתבן מלייהו בספר הזכרונות, חד לא מכתבן מליה בספר הזכרונות.

The Gemara asks: **Since** the Divine Presence rests **even** upon **one** who engages in Torah study, **was it necessary** to say that the Divine Presence rests upon **two** who study Torah together? The Gemara answers: There is a difference between them. **Two** people, **their words** of Torah **are written in the book of remembrance**, as it is stated: **"And a book of remembrance was written"**; however **a single** individual's **words** of Torah **are not written in the book of remembrance**.

וכי מאחר דאפילו תרי — תלתא מבעיא? — מהו דתימא: דינא שלמא בעלמא הוא, ולא אתיא שכינה — קמשמע לן דדינא נמי היינו תורה.

The Gemara continues: **Since** the Divine Presence rests **even** upon **two** who engage in Torah study, is it **necessary** to mention **three**? The Gemara answers: Here too, a special verse is necessary **lest you say that judgment is merely to keep the peace** among the citizenry, **and the Divine Presence does not come** and rest upon those who sit in judgment as they are not engaged in Torah study. Ravin bar Rav Adda **teaches us that sitting in judgment is also Torah**.

וכי מאחר דאפילו תלתא — עשרה מבעיא? — עשרה — קדמה שכינה ואתיא תלתא — עד דיתבי.  
The Gemara asks: **Since** the Divine Presence rests **even** upon **three**, is it **necessary** to mention **ten**, as the verse: **"God stands in the congregation of God,"** indicates that when the ten individuals who comprise a congregation arrive, the Divine Presence is already there. For a group of **three** judges, however, the Divine Presence does not arrive **until they sit** and begin their deliberations, as in the midst of the judges God judges. God aids them in their judgment, but does not arrive before them.

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Dr Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, ed. *Koren Talmud Bavli, Noe Edition* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, Ltd., 2012), 32-3. Formatting is the author's.

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