

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

www.gatherthepeople.org

FAMILY SIDDUR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 11

LAST WEEK WE TALKED ABOUT THE שמע.

- *If we're thinking about the words, what kinds of thoughts does the Shema bring to mind when we're saying it?*
- We talked about three things in particular:
 1. That we have one and only One God;
 2. That we know about God from the Torah; and
 3. That our God rules everything and everybody, all the heavens and the earth, and all of us!
- Where did the שמע come from? (Deuteronomy 6:4)
- How does the first line read?
- שמע ישראל יהוה אחד—“Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.”

LET'S TURN TO PAGE 30 IN THE SIDDUR AND LOOK AT WHAT COMES AFTER THE FIRST LINE OF THE שמע.

- Can someone read the next Hebrew: בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
- And in English please: “Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.”
- *So what is the “kingdom of God”?*
- The kingdom of God is a place that's described in the Torah; it's the place where everything that God asks of us, we do; so that God's kingdom exists here on earth.
- *If God's kingdom actually existed here on earth, how would things be different?*
- Everywhere and all the time people would act righteously, telling the truth, standing up for justice, fighting for freedom, working for peace, and treating one another with compassion.
- *And what does it mean to bless God's kingdom?*
- Remember, we say “Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom.”
- **Is it enough to just say those words, or do we actually have to do something to bless God's kingdom—to change ourselves from what we are to what God wants us to be?**

- The root or שׁוּרֵשׁ of the word “bless” is ב-ר-ך, which means to bow or kneel, but it also refers to the *knee joint* that propels us, that allows us to move forward.
- So we can bless God’s glorious kingdom by *doing* all that God asks of us, moving forward in our lives to transform ourselves and the world.
- **How do we say these words**—בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד—**in the service?**
- **Why do you think we say them silently?**
 1. When Jacob—who was one of the first great Jewish people—was dying, his children stood around him and said the שְׁמַע.
 2. **Why might they have done that?**
 3. Perhaps they did it to let their father know that they all believed in the One God, which would make Jacob feel good at the end of his life—that he had taught his children well.
 4. When Jacob heard his children say the שְׁמַע, he answered them by saying בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, “Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.”
 5. Our rabbis decided many hundreds of years ago that because Jacob said those words after the שְׁמַע, we should say them too, so they put them in the סִידוּר.
 6. But since the words were not in the *Torah*, unlike the first line of the Shema which is in the Torah, the rabbis decided that we should say these words silently. (Pesachim 56a)

NOW WE COME TO THREE PARAGRAPHS THAT ARE TAKEN FROM THE TORAH, WHICH ARE ACTUALLY A PART OF THE שְׁמַע.

- So the שְׁמַע is not only the first two lines, but also the three paragraphs that follow.
- Someone read the first paragraph in English for us.
- **What is this paragraph about?**
- It’s a list of things we’re supposed to do:
 1. We’re to teach the Torah to others.
 2. **When are we to teach it?**
 3. We are to “bind these words as a sign upon our arm and they are to be a reminder above our eyes.”
 4. **Does anyone know what that’s about?**
- Many Jews pray not only on שַׁבָּת but on weekday mornings, and sometimes on weekday afternoons and evenings.
 1. When they pray in the morning, they put on תְּפִלִּין, called phylacteries in English, which contain Hebrew words from the Torah in small

boxes that are affixed to leather straps—one box placed on the arm and one on the head.

2. The boxes are called **בתי**, which means houses.
- Then there's the part that says we're to write these words on the doorposts of our houses.
 1. ***Does anyone know what that refers to?***
 2. Let's look at the **בתי** on the doors of the synagogue.
- What does this first paragraph of the **עשר** say about *why* we should do these things?
 1. What are the first three Hebrew words? (**יהוה אחד**)
 2. What do they mean in English?
 3. You shall love Adonai.
- So we're to do these things not because we fear God but because we love God.

BUT WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO LOVE GOD?

- ***Maybe the first question we have is, why should we love God?***
- ***We may be thinking something that we don't say out loud—what's in it for me?***
- Perhaps the most basic reason we come to love God is that eventually, from painful experience, we learn that God has created a *lawful* world, a world that has laws we can't escape; and God has given us a book of the laws, the Torah, to teach us how the laws work in our lives—which makes it possible for us to find true happiness, not because of what we own or possess or the power we have, but because of the fairness and kindness that come to fulfill our lives when we follow God's laws.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN PRACTICALLY TO LOVE GOD?

- One way to help us figure out what it means is to think about who else we love?
- ***Is there someone in your life that you love very much?***
- ***Are there things that you do or don't do because you love that person?***
 1. ***We try to please the people we love by doing the things they want us to do—as long as they're not bad for us.***
 2. And we can think about loving God in the same way.
 3. ***If so, what would that mean? What might please God—and how would we know that?***
 4. ***Isn't it true that we try not to do things that upset or anger the people we love?***
 5. ***So could we think about loving God in the same way. If so, what would that mean?***

6. What might make God angry—and how would we know that?

**DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE WHEN WE
CHANT THIS FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE עֲמֻשׁ?**

- Can anyone chant it for us in Hebrew?
- And does anyone know how we know what the tune is for chanting it?

© 2007-2024 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda Bat Sarah