

**Eikev - Re-Imagining the First Two Paragraphs of the Shema**  
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Because we recite them so often as part of our daily prayers, we may not notice some of the subtle differences between the 1st and 2nd paragraphs of the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21).

**To Be On the Heart vs. To Place on the Heart**

| 1st Paragraph (Deut. 6:6)                                                     | 2nd Paragraph (Deut. 11:18)                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לְבָבְךָ.      | וְשָׂמְתָם אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים עַל לְבַבְכֶּם וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם                   |
| And these words, which I command you today, <b>are to be upon your heart.</b> | You are to <b>place</b> these my words <b>upon</b> your heart and upon your being; |

There is a difference between having the words **be on** the heart and actually **placing** them **on** the heart.

**Example: The Kippah.**

|                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                      |
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| The kippah is <b>to be on</b> your head.                                                                                              | You <b>should place</b> a kippah <b>on</b> your head.                                                                                |
|  I am aware that it is <b>on</b> my head. I wear it. |  I select it and actively <b>put it on</b> my head. |

| 1st Paragraph of Shema                                                                                        | 2nd Paragraph of Shema                                                                                                  |
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| וְהָיוּ... עַל                                                                                                | וְשָׂמְתָם... עַל                                                                                                       |
| Passive expression                                                                                            | Active expression                                                                                                       |
| The words are <b>on</b> your heart because they have been put there already.                                  | The words are on your heart because <b>you actively put them there.</b>                                                 |
| I derive meaning by going about my day <b>bearing</b> these words and the values they represent to the world. | I derive meaning from the act of <b>actively placing</b> those words on my heart, in other words, <b>learning</b> them. |

But what are the **דְּבָרִים**-words that we are either to **have on** or to **place on** our hearts? This is a complicated question because it depends on the context. In the broadest sense **דְּבָרִים**-words could be referring to the whole Torah, which consists of the approximately 80,000 words! In a narrower sense, it could refer to the entire book of **דְּבָרִים** (Deuteronomy) based on the first verse of this book:

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל... |
| <b>These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel...</b>    |

But in an even narrower sense, **דְּבָרִים** can also refer to more specific things, like the Ten Commandments or specific laws, blessings and curses, and more.<sup>1</sup> Examples:

|                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                            |
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| אֵת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל כָּל קְהִלְכֶּם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ...<br><b>These words God spoke... from the fire.</b> | Deut. 5:18:<br>In that context <b>הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה</b> refers to the Ten Commandments. |
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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of space, I will only list three examples. But for further study, see Deut. 4:30 where **הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה** refers to the punishments that will befall you for idolatry, 28:69 where it

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| שָׁמַר וְשָׁמַעְתָּ אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ...<br><i>Take care to hearken to these words that I command you...</i> | Deut. 12:28:<br>In that context <b>הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה</b> refers to the dietary laws.                                                  |
| וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ עֲלֶיךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה...<br><i>Now it shall be: when there come upon you all these things.</i>                | Deut. 30:1:<br>In that context <b>הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה</b> refers to the blessings and the curses at the end of the book of Deuteronomy. |

Given that the expression, **הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה**-these words, means something different in each of its contexts, it stands to reason that, when that phrase occurs in both the first and second paragraphs of the Shema, it is referring to different **words**. Based on their contexts, what are the **words** that are being referenced in the first two paragraphs of the Shema?

**The Words in the 1st Paragraph of the Shema:**

The 1st paragraph of the Shema is located in the larger context of Deut. 5:1-6:5. In this passage, Moses recalls the scene at Sinai and repeats the **Ten Commandments** (5:1-18). This is the foundational moment of Israel's moral identity.

**Therefore, when we recite the 1st paragraph of the Shema, we are, in a sense, going back to Sinai.** We should also point out that two verses before the text says, **these words-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה shall be on your heart** it presents the most famous declaration of God's unity in the bible:

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|--------------------------------------------------------|
| שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד               |
| <b>Hear O Israel, Ado-nai our God, Ado-nai is One.</b> |

Following **Hear O Israel** is this verse:

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| וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ                |
| <b>Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.</b> |

**So which words should be on our hearts?** Either the **Ten Commandments**, or **Hear O Israel...**, or **Love the Lord...**, or all of them combined! **Our main task, therefore, is to present those words to the world as if we were in fact, wearing them like a kippah on our heads.** Or to put it another way: **The 1st paragraph of the Shema is demanding of us that we should always adhere to the Ten Commandments; that we should constantly be aware of the unity of God and the moral implications of that unity; and that we should be steadfast in our love and loyalty to the One God throughout our lives.** That's what it means to have those words on our hearts.

**The Words in the 2nd Paragraph of the Shema:**

The 2nd paragraph of the Shema is located in the larger context of Deut. 10:12-11:17. This passage is a set of

refers to the covenant in the land of Moav, 31:1, where it refers to Moses' final words, and, 31:28, 32:45, 32:46, where they refer to the Song of Moses.

commandments on several different themes.<sup>2</sup> Then, directly preceding the verse, **you shall place these words-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה** - upon your heart it says this:

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעְתָּ תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי  
*If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the Ado-nai your God and serving him with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil. I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle. And thus, you shall eat your fill. Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. For Ado-nai's anger will flare up against you, and he will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that Ado-nai is assigning to you.*

In this context, the expression, **these words**, refers to love and loyalty to God, reward and punishment, sustenance or exile, *as it pertains to living a covenantal life with God in the Land of Israel. Therefore, when we recite the 2nd paragraph of the Shema, we are, in a sense, going back to the Land of Israel. The 2nd paragraph of the Shema demands of us that we should always be mindful of our obligations of love and loyalty to God lest we forfeit the land and its blessings of sustenance.*

Now we can appreciate another subtle, but very valuable difference between the two passages.

| 1st Paragraph (Sinai)                                                                                                                                                                         | 2nd Paragraph (The Land)                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| וְשָׁנַתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ<br>וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם<br>בְּשֹׁכְבְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ<br>וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ.                                                                 | וְלִמַּדְתָּם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם<br>לְדַבֵּר בָּם<br>בְּשֹׁכְבְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ<br>וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ.                                                      |
| <i>You are to repeat them with your children and are to speak of them in your sitting in your house and in your walking on the way, in your lying down and in your rising up. (Deut. 6:7)</i> | <i>You are to teach them to your children, by speaking of them in your sitting in your house, and in your walking on the way, in your lying down, and in your rising up. (Deut. 11:19)</i> |

We usually conflate the terms **וְשָׁנַתָּם-you shall repeat**, and **וְלִמַּדְתָּם-you shall teach**. To be sure, both are educational activities, but understanding the subtle differences between the two can have a lasting impact on the way we experience these texts as part of our daily prayer.

| 1st Paragraph                                       | 2nd Paragraph                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| וְשָׁנַתָּם<br><b>You shall repeat these words.</b> | וְלִמַּדְתָּם<br><b>You shall teach these words.</b> |

<sup>2</sup> Reverence and love of God (10:12), wholehearted observance (10:13), circumcision of the heart (10:16), awareness that God is great and mighty, that God cares for the orphan, widow, and stranger (10:17-18), the obligation to love the stranger (10:19), a reiteration of the obligation to revere God and a recognition that God has guided the

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| <i>As a parent my job is to repeat, sharpen, rehearse these words to my children over and over.</i>                                                    | <i>As a parent my job is to teach, interpret, explain, these words to my children over and over.</i>                                                                         |
| <i>The effect of doing that will commit those words to memory so that they will be able to speak them constantly and constantly be aware of Sinai.</i> | <i>The effect of doing that will enable those words to shape their understanding of who they are and influence the way they live out their covenantal lives in the Land.</i> |
| <i>As a result, we have a consistent set of words, phrases, laws, to summon - to represent God - when we walk in the world.</i>                        | <i>As a result, we have a well of ideas, teachings, wisdom, and laws, that informs our lives and shapes our conversations (in and outside the Land).</i>                     |

Both paragraphs include mention of Tefillin and Mezuzot

at their conclusions. These are the main symbols that function as constant reminders of **these words**. Tefillin are placed upon our arms (next to the heart) and on our heads (next to the brain), and Mezuzot are affixed on the doorposts of our homes and gates at the boundary between our homes and the world. But these symbols have two different sets of functions in the two paragraphs.

| 1st Paragraph                                                                               | 2nd Paragraph                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| וְהָיָה<br>These words are to be on the heart.                                              | וְשָׁמַתָּם<br>We are to place these words on our hearts.                                                      |
| We are to repeat them to our children so that they can remember them and internalize Sinai. | We are to teach them to our children so that they will understand them and know how to live a covenantal life. |
| Tefillin and Mezuzot are symbols that reinforce memory of Sinai.                            | Tefillin and Mezuzot are symbols that reinforce learning how to live a covenantal life in the Land.            |

The first two paragraphs of the Shema take us to Sinai and to the Land of Israel. Sinai creates moral identity. The most elemental way of reinforcing that is through the rehearsal and memorization of key texts. The Land of Israel is where the covenantal life of Israel plays out through the observance of mitzvot. The most elemental way of reinforcing that covenantal life is through constant education and performance of mitzvot. Symbols reinforce more memory, more study, more mitzvot, and therefore more life! **Shabbat Shalom!**

**MAZAL TOV TO  
MAAYAN AND JON  
ON YOUR UPCOMING WEDDING!  
סִימָן טוֹב וּמַזָּל טוֹב יִהְיֶה לָנוּ וּלְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל!**

people from its ancestors until now (10:21-22), more love of God, keeping the commandments (11:1), remembrance of the wondrous deeds that God has done (11:2-7), keeping God's commandments in the Land (11:8-9), concluding with a description of the Land (11:10-12).