
THE MISHNAH OF HILLEL

KIR'AT SHEMA

D'varim 6:4-9 4 ¶ "Hear, O Israel! The L-RD is our God, the L-RD is one! 5 "You shall love the L-RD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Berachot 1:3 The House of Shammai say, "In the evening everyone should recline in order to recite [the Shema] and in the morning they should stand, "as it says [in the passage of the Shema], When you lie down and when you rise (Dt. 6:7)." But the House of Hillel say, "Everyone may recite according to his own manner [either reclining or standing], "as it says, And as you walk by the way (ibid.)." If it is so [that one may recite however he wishes] why does [the verse] say, When you lie down and when you rise? [It means you must recite the Shema] at the hour that people lie down [night] and at the hour that people rise [in the morning]. Said R. Tarfon, "I was coming along the road [in the evening] and reclined to recite the Shema as required by the House of Shammai. And [in doing so] I placed myself in danger of [being attacked by] bandits." They said to him, "You are yourself responsible [for what might have befallen you], for you violated the words of the House of Hillel."

HILLEL'S LOGIC

The Mishnah weighs Hillel's thoughts and logic against the logic of Shammai. Because the text of the scripture says when you lie down and when you rise up Shammi has deduced that Kiriath Shema should be said either lying or standing. Hillel furthers the logic of the text by saying when "you walk by the way." This logic demonstrates that fact that one may need to recite the Shema. Therefore, one recited the Shema in the manner that is appropriate for him. Hillel's logic continues with a hermeneutic on the text. One should recite the Shema at the appropriate time. The logic demonstrated here by Hillel is consistent with his seven rules of hermeneutic. The logic is exemplified in the case of Rabbi Tarfon in the related Mishnah to demonstrate the idea of good common logic and that a person is not entitled to endanger himself for the sake of Rabbinic rulings. However, we must also note that this in no way an excuse to abandon the wisdom of the Chazzal¹ (Sages of blessed memory). The Chazzal were not trying to make life a bitter experience by imposing and interpreting halachah. Their goal was to teach the Jewish people how to live the Torah on an everyday basis. The Torah is a VERY complex book. The text of the Torah is filled with complexities. Very few (outside of Orthodox Judaism) really know how to interpret the text according to the Hermeneutic rules. There

¹ "CHAZAL" - an acronym, using "CH," "Z," and "L," where "CH" stands for "Chachameinu," Our Sages, and the "Z" and "L" correspond to the expression "Zichronam Livrocho," "of blessed memory;" this means basically the authoritative opinion of the Talmud.

are those “Theologians” who have their hermeneutic practices. However, few if any really match the hermeneutics of Hillel or any of the other hermeneutic systems of the Chazzal. I am surprised to see how liberal most Theologians are with their interpretations of the Torah given the fact that Yeshua subscribed to the teaching of Hillel. My point here is that these theologians should also subscribe to the Hermeneutic practices of Hillel like our Majesty Yeshua haMashiach. Likewise, I am surprised at the Karite mentality that has permeated many communities that believe that Yeshua was an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi. Actually, I believe that this is an oxymoron. How can you believe that Yeshua was an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi and then abandon the Teachings and Hermeneutics of the Mishnah? Why do I include the entire Mishnah? I include the entire Mishnah because the stringent rules of Shammai have been abandoned in favor of the rulings of Hillel. This does not make the entire Mishnah a Hillelite document per se. However, the rulings and practices are VERY Hillelite so to speak. Therefore, we need to more clearly re-investigate the Mishnah for appropriate conduct according to the School of Hillel, who was the master of our Master Yeshua.

NEXT OF KIN

Another major flaw in contemporary Theological thought is the negligence concerning first century thought and mindset. Yeshua did not just subscribe to the Hillel’s school because it sounded good and had sound logic. He subscribed to the School of Hillel because they were most likely next of kin. (That is southern for being relatives) This being the case we must understand the devotion to family, clan and tribe. Both Yeshua and Hillel were from Davidic lineage. Therefore, they not only possessed familiar blood, they also shared one common goal. That goal was the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d. The Nazarene Codicil opens with Yeshua’s proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our base text, the Shema, is based on the acceptance of the Yoke of Kingdom of Heaven. (Makchut Shamayim) Rabban Gamaliel, the direct descendant of Hillel and hakham Shaul’s teacher-mentor tells us that he was not able to suspend the yoke of the Kingdom for even one hour.² Why would Rabban Gamaliel suggest such an idea? Most likely, because he learned from his grandfather that nothing superseded the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, we should expect Yeshua who was most likely some direct relative, to echo the same mentality.

ASSUMING A SPECIFIC POSITION FOR KIRIAT SHEMA

The discussion in our Mishnah is devoted to whether or not a specific position is required in the Kiriath Shema. We have the School of Shammai that bases their opinion on D’varim 6:7. (When you lie down and when you rise up) The School of Hillel teaches us that the cited verse is a way of determining the time at which the Kiriath Shema is required. Therefore, we could surmise that the P’shat of D’varim 6:7 is not concerned with position. However, it is concerned with the z’manim.³ The z’manim deal with the appropriate time when certain halachic practices are observed. Certain halachic practices, like the Kiriath Shema are time bound. In simplistic terms you do not say the Morning Shema in the evening or the Evening in the morning. The issue of z’manim becomes very detailed, nor will we try to elaborate here.

² Berakot 2:2,5

³ Times or seasons

In summary the issue has nothing to do with position. Hillel allows each individual to determine how it is necessary to recite the Shema. He may be walking, lying and or sitting. The point Hillel is making is when to recite the Shema. And, the vitality of reciting the Shema daily.

THE MOST IMPORTANT MITZVAH

Mark 12:28-31 ²⁸ ¶ And coming up one of the scribes heard them reasoning, knowing that He had answered them well, he asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? ²⁹ And Yeshua answered him, The first of all the mitzvot is, "Hear, O Israel, the L-RD our G-d is one L-RD; ³⁰ and you shall love the L-RD your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. ³¹ And the second is like this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

Yeshua is asked the question; which is the greatest of all the mitzvot (commandments). His reply is the Kariat Shema. In short, Yeshua is also suggesting that the Kariat Shema is recited twice daily. It is also noteworthy to point out that Yeshua believed and taught that the Shema was the GREATEST of all the mitzvot. This text (the Shema) promotes the unity of HaShem. However, it also makes another profound statement. That statement is that HaShem is the core of everything in life. Therefore, by reciting the Shema we are acknowledging that HaShem is the core of life.

WHEN SHOULD THE SHEMA BE RECITED?

As Talmidim of Yeshua, we should recite the Shema. However, when should we recite the Magna-Carta of Jewish faith? Is there any clue in the Nazarene Codicil? (Specifically Mark) In point of fact, I believe there is. Before I cite text let me say this; I believe that Yeshua' life is a halachic book. In other words, we find halachic practice by observing the life of His Majesty Yeshua haMashiach. Yeshua' life is like a walking talking Torah. Or, a walking talking halachic decision. Therefore, when we need a halachic decision we can look at the life of His Majesty and emulate that practice. If we emulate his practices, we will be living an appropriate halachic life.

Mark 1:35 ³⁵ ¶ And rising up quite early in the night, He went out and went away into a deserted place, and He was praying there.

When did Yeshua go out to pray? Some translations suggest that he went out to pray before daylight. The Greek text literally reads, "in the morning at night." Obviously, this means VERY early in the morning.

I recently taught this in one of my Thursday Night Live classes. My dear friend Courtney Walker suggested that some people would not be praying the Shema at this hour. His belief was that most people would be addressing the Synagogue of the inner spring at that hour rather than praying the Shema. (In other words, most people would rather sleep than recite the Shema at its appropriate hour) Unfortunately, this is very much the case with many people. However, I believe all of this serves to teach us that Yeshua, like Hillel believed that the Kariat Shema should be recited at it appropriate halachic time.

See ya in the Morning...

Maybe we can recite the Shema together