



## CHIZUK & IDUD

for Olim & Not-yet-Olim

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Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

As we read through Sefer Devorim, we listen-in to Moshe Rabbeinu's monologue as he reviews major episodes in our national history and summarizes many different Mitzvot. As we follow Moshe's words certain verses vividly stand out. One such verse appears in this week's Parasha as we hear the familiar words of a Pasuk that most every Jew knows by heart from the earliest stages of life. As Rabbi S.R. Hirsch points out it is both the first verse we choose to teach young children as they begin to speak, as well as the last verse we expect an elderly person to utter upon leaving this world in order to meet their Maker.

'She'ma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!'

Continuing up until this day, Rav Hirsch adds, even when if a Jew has separated himself entirely from the rest of our people, and lives an isolated existence ['Biddud' is the word he uses...] - the Shema would remain on his lips!

What is so special about these short words? The Vilna Gaon writes in his 'Aderet Eliyahu' that this single verse encapsulates all of the ten commandments. This suggestion may offer an opening, or a partial explanation, as to the uniqueness of this verse. However, I would like to explore

the issue through the prism provided by the words of the Sifri (Devarim Piska 31) which zeroes in on one word: 'Yisrael' - Shema Yisrael.

The Sifri wishes to answer the following question: Why do we not say 'Shema Avraham', or 'Shema Yitzchak'? - If we wish to define ourselves through our lineage, and mention the ancestral link connecting us to our forefathers, why do we not mention the other Patriarchs? The Midrash answers by noting that our nation includes each and every one of Yaakov's children: "By what merit are all of Yaakov's children included when we say "Daber el Bnei Yisrael"?"

For as opposed to Avraham who was painfully forced to remove Yishmael from his home, and Yitzchak who counted Eisav amongst his progeny, Yaakov merited to have all his children surround his bed in unison.

The Sifri writes that throughout Yaakov's life this was a question which deeply troubled him. Yaakov had seen the Pesolet (-waste) which had emanated from his fathers and feared that the same might happen to him. He was constantly on guard, and perpetually worried by the prospect that wastrels might emanate from him. [The Cambridge dictionary defines a 'wastrel' as someone who does