

TEFILLAH TIPS

TEFILLAT SHACHARIT—SHABBAT

Please respond describing if and how these Tefillah Tips are disseminated to members. Thank you

Vehaya Im Shamo'a Tishme'u

The second paragraph of *Shema* originates from *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 11:13 and is referred to as *Kabbalat Ol Mitzvoth* (acceptance of the yoke of mitzvot). The passage begins, “*Vehaya Im Shamo'a Tishme'u Mitzvosai Asher Anochi Metzaveh Eschem Hayom..*” - And it shall come to pass that if **you** (pl) listen and adhere to my commandments that I command **you** (pl) today...” It is noteworthy that the previous section of *Shema*, *Veahavata et Hashem Elokecha*, And you shall love G-d, is written in the singular and *Vehaya* is in the plural. This demonstrates that the Torah that we learn, the *Mitzvoth* we perform and the loving kindness we express impact us individually and also as a nation. In fact, we are taught on Rosh Hashanah that *Hashem* evaluates and judges our deeds as individuals in addition to judging everyone as part of a greater whole. Although the 21st century societal ethos breeds a life philosophy of narcissism and egocentricity i.e. *it's all about me*, the Torah teaches us it's about a lot more than me!

Rav Avigdor Miller zt”l writes that we see from the words *Vehaya Im Shamo'a* that the Torah does not demand results, rather it commands listening/ adherence. “*Vehaya Im Shamo'a*” - “and if you listen...” There are times in life that one may not be able to follow through due to extenuating circumstances, but one can always listen and resolve to do the best that they can. The *Baal Shem Tov* was reputed to have said that in heaven we are judged not only by what we did, but rather by what we **desired** to do. Finally, in *Pirkei Avot* 2:16 we are taught that it is not necessarily our responsibility to complete all tasks, but it most certainly is our responsibility to try and grow and accomplish as much as we can during the years we are granted here on earth. *Hashem* asks us to do ours, and He will take care of the rest.

Let's analyze the language of the first verse, “*Vehaya im Shamo'a Tishme'u*” – “and when you listen”. Why the double language? Would it not have been sufficient to simply delete either *Shamo'a* or *Tishme'u*, why do we need both? The *Mechilta / Midrash Halacha* advances that from these words the following lesson is taught - When you listen to one mitzvah, you will be able to listen to many more. The simple understanding of this *Mechilta* is that Torah knowledge is learned and lived by listening and adhering to one *Mitzvah* at a time; and after learning about one *Mitzvah* we are able to advance towards the next one (they are all interrelated). There is another *Mishna* in *Avot* 4:2 which states that the reward of a *mitzvah* is the opportunity to perform another one. Yet there is another deeper understanding to be learned as well. We know that every morsel of Torah is layered with multiple levels of knowledge. Another message of this *Mechilta* is that the way to dig deeper and find more meaning in life is by listening and learning the Torah over and over again. Each analysis will yield a different lesson to learn from and incorporate. It is incredible that the same *Chumash* and *Rashi* is taught to five year olds and is also expounded upon by the greatest Torah scholars of the generation. This is a reason why we read the same Torah reading over and over each year. Every time we study there is more to discover.

Take Home Tip: *Vehaya* reminds us how important it is to listen. When we listen carefully, there is so much more to hear and then apply to our lives and for the benefit of *Klal Yisrael*.

Shabbat Shalom.

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