

## למען תזכרו

The Shema expresses a Jew's belief in God's unity. It requires not only proper intention, but punctiliousness in its reading and pronunciation. "Rabbi Hama berabbi Haninah said: Anyone who is meticulous and reads the Shema by its letters we chill Hell for him". (Bavli Berakhoth 15b)

An example of punctiliousness in reading the Shema familiar to all is stressing the letter *Zayin* in "tizkeru". This common practice has its origins in the Talmud Yerushalmi and is not mentioned at all in the Babylonian Talmud.

ר' לוי ר' אבדיא דחיפה בשם ר' לוי בר ססי צריך להתיז למען תזכרו. (ברכות ב: ד טז, ב)

This practice is already recorded and codified in a number of Geonic and early sources. *Halakhoth Gedoloth* (), Rabbi Amram Gaon in his *Siddur* (למען תזכרו) and Rabbi Yitzhak Alfasi (*Berachoth 15a-16a*,) all record this law.

What reading was meant to be avoided? The purpose of stressing the letter *zayin* is not specified in the Talmud Yerushalmi as we have it before us. However, some earlier sources, particularly those ascribed to the school of Rashi do provide an explanation.

*Siddur Rashi* (pg. 18) records: **וצריך להתיז בז"ין של למען תזכרו שלא יהא נשמע תשכרו משמע על מנת לקבל שכר ופרס**.

Similarly, in *Sefer Hapardes* (#63) attributed to Rashi: **ז' של שלמען תזכרו צריך להתיז בכח שתהא נשמע אות זה ואם יקראנו בשפה רפה משמע קריאתה ס' ונראה כאלו אומר למען תשכרו ותגן אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס**

The *zayin* is stressed in order to avoid reading "tizkeru" as "tiskeru" which has the sense of "reward". This reading would suggest that Jewish People should observe God's commandments in order to receive reward for them.

Similarly, a number of sages who may actually be citing a composition known as *Sefer Yerushalmi* attach an explanation. Even if its source is not the Talmud Yerushalmi itself it does originate from Eretz Yisrael. Tur (61) as an example cites the Talmud Yerushalmi with this explanation. Interestingly, *Tosafoth* (*Berakhoth 15b*) cite Rabbi Yitzhak Al-fasi with this explanation as well although in our editions it does not exist.

Rambam (Ahava, Laws of Reading the Shema, 2:12) also codifies stressing the letter *zayin* as a law of punctiliousness **וצריך לבאר זיי"ן של וזכרתם**. More importantly, his wording gives us important insight into the precise definition of "stressing". In describing the pronunciation of the *Zayin* he uses **לבאר** to disambiguate the word **להתיז** used in the Talmud Yerushalmi. By contrast, in regards to stretching the *daleth* in *ehadh* he uses **להאריך** which has the apparent

meaning of 'lengthening'. It would appear that he understood להתייז in the sense of "enunciate" to be distinguished from "lengthen" or "stretch".

The law is codified in the Shulkhan Arukh (102:1).