



CONGREGATION AGUDATH ACHIM
FREEHOLD JEWISH CENTER

59 Broad Street · Freehold, New Jersey 07728
office@freeholdjc.org · (732) 462-0254 · www.freeholdjc.org

Parshat Va'Etchanan **July 24, 2021 – 15 Av 5781**

What is a memory that is sometimes forgotten and can wreak havoc in your home? Your anniversary! A spouse can get very angry if the partner forgets an anniversary. Human memory isn't perfect, and people have so many things on their minds.

Now we get to Parasha Va'Etchanan, the parashah of memory, the parashah with Shema in it. The Shema, the central theme of Jewish faith is all about remembering our responsibilities before HaShem. This statement that we recite thrice daily, morning, evening, and at bedtime is the great principle of our relationship with G-d Almighty. Within the paragraph we are directed to place these words on our hearts. The brain thinks. The heart remembers.

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno (1475-1550; Italy - Rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and physician) says that placing the Shema upon your heart means to remember it "all the time". Memory is a function of the heart. Our mind focuses on what we care about.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761-1837; Poland – Rabbi and Jewish law scholar) remarked once that he didn't have a very good memory. His students would not, could not come to an understanding of what he said. They said to him, we have seen and heard how you know the pearls of wisdom of the Tosafot of the Talmud. He cared about them so much he couldn't forget one.

The Shema is the same. It challenges us to put our Jewish philosophy on our hearts, to care about HaShem, and to create an emotional bond with the Creator of the universe. If we become habituated to it then we will by nature remember what the Torah tells or at least the words of Shema.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

