

How Shema Found Her Smile



By Alex Weinberg



Yaakov's siddur sat in a special spot on his bedroom bookcase.

It was worn with tattered edges— not from being treated poorly, but because Yaakov loved to *daven*—to pray with his siddur every day.



And his siddur waited each day with the anticipation of being picked up and held close to Yaakov's heart.

What better compliment for a siddur than to be worn-in from loving use?

Even the pages of the
siddur were happy
because they too were
crinkled and showed
signs of Yaakov's love
for their
tefillot-prayers!



All of the pages were happy,
that is, except for the Shema.



Shema didn't enjoy
Yaakov's davening like the
others.



She knew that she was
important—after all
Shema reminds us that
we have only One God,
but she didn't like how
Yaakov sang her important words.

Every morning Shema would watch as Yaakov stood and then bowed when he sang Barchu—the prayer used to call people together to pray.



Or how Yaakov would
take
three
steps
backward
and
then
three
steps
forward
before singing Amida—
the standing prayer.

Shema even noticed how
Yaakov would
sway and clap with
ruah—spirit
when he
chanted Halleluyah—
psalm 150.



“How could it be,” Shema thought,

“That those other prayers
are honored and celebrated
and yet Yaakov sings me
with his hand over his eyes
and his head down?”



“Is he ashamed of me?”
thought Shema.

“Doesn’t he know how special my
teachings about God are?”

“Why doesn’t he stand or bow or sing my
words out loud?”

Amidah, lived only a few pages away from Shema and overheard Shema wondering and sighing to herself.



Amidah called out,
“Why do you think Yaakov covers his eyes when he chants you?”



“I think he must be ashamed of me,” said Shema.

“No—not at all!” cried Amidah.

“Of course
Yaakov knows how important your words
are—
they are so important to him that he covers
his eyes so that nothing will distract him
when he sings your words.”

“So he does think
I am important?” cried Shema.

“Not just important—

SO important
that he covers his eyes
so that he can focus all of

His heart,
Soul and
Might on the
singing of your words.”
Amidah continued.



“What a relief”
Shema thought!

“Now I can enjoy
Yaakov davening
every morning too!” she said.



Shema smiled—but not
too much—after all she
didn’t want to
straighten out her
precious crinkled pages!



