

## BREAKING THE FORCE OF HABIT

### Background

The Torah is describing an extremely emotional reunion: Yaakov's most beloved son Yosef – the *ben zekunim*, the one who looked like Yaakov, the one who learned the Torah he taught, and the one whose entire life paralleled his – was tragically taken from him. For the next twenty-two years, they lived apart. Yaakov spent those years in unrelenting mourning. This was the moment of their reunion. Yosef's behavior was quite understandable – the dam that held back the build-up of emotions had burst, and he fell on his father's shoulder crying many, many tears. Yet, Rashi brings the statement of Chazal that Yaakov wasn't crying, and he wasn't kissing his son; rather, he was reading the Shema.

### Questions

Why in the world would Yaakov be reading the Shema at this moment? If it was the time to read the Shema, then shouldn't Yosef be doing the same? Yet only Yaakov was reading the Shema. Clearly, it wasn't the time to fulfill the daily obligation for saying Shema, but Yaakov's optional acceptance of HASH-EM's sovereignty. Why would Yaakov feel this to be the appropriate reaction at such a highly-charged, emotional time?

#### ספר בראשית פרק מו

כט) וַיֵּאָסֶר יוֹסֵף מְרֻבָּתוֹ  
וַיַּעַל לְקִרְיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיו  
גִּשְׁנָה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפֹּל עַל  
צַוְאָרָיו וַיִּבֶךְ עַל צַוְאָרָיו  
עוֹד

*And Yosef hitched up his wagon and went up to greet Yisroel, his father, in the land of Goshen. And he saw his father, and he fell on his neck, and he cried on his neck some more.*

#### רש"י על בראשית פרק מו פסוק כט

ויבך על צואריו עוד -  
אבל יעקב לא נפל על  
צואריו יוסף ולא נשקו  
ואמרו רבותינו שהיה  
קורא את שמע

**And he cried on his neck some more** – *But Yaakov didn't fall on Yosef's neck and didn't kiss him. Our Rabbis said, "Yaakov was reading the Shema."*