

TORAH FOR K–3 · PARASHAT HASHAVUA

פָּרַשַׁת וַאֲתַחֲנֵן

Parashat Vaetchanan for Kids

Torah reading: Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11

Read on Shabbat: July 25, 2026 · August 14, 2027 · August 5, 2028 (diaspora)

THE STORY IN TWO MINUTES

What happens in this parasha?

Moshe begins with something brave and tender: he tells the people about his own unanswered prayer. Va'etchanan — “and I pleaded.” He had begged Hashem: let me cross over and see the good land. And the answer was no. But inside the no was a gift: “Go up the mountain, and see it with your eyes.” From the top of Mount Pisgah, Moshe sees the whole land spread out like a map — the mountains, the sea, the green valleys. He will not walk in; but he gets to see, and Yehoshua will carry the people the rest of the way. Sometimes the answer is no — and there is still a gift inside it.

Then Moshe gathers the people and says the Aseret HaDibrot — the Ten Commandments — again, out loud, for the generation that was too young (or not yet born) at Har Sinai. “Not only with your parents did Hashem make this covenant,” he tells them, “but with you — every one of you standing here today, alive.” The Torah is never just the parents' story.

And then — six words that Jewish children have said at bedtime for three thousand years: Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. “Listen, Israel: Hashem is our God, Hashem is One.” Right after it comes V'ahavta: love Hashem with all your heart; teach these words to your children; talk about them at home and on the road, at bedtime and in the morning.

And then the instruction that lives on your own doorpost: “write them on the doorposts of your house.” That is the mezuzah — inside every one is a tiny scroll with these exact words from this exact portion. Your front door has been quoting Parashat Vaetchanan all along.

THE ONE BIG IDEA

The Shema is the Torah's whisper to children: listen — you are part of one people, loving One God, and these words belong to YOU. The proof is on your doorpost: this week's portion is hiding inside your mezuzah.

READY TO TEACH · AGES 5–9

The 30-minute lesson

1 Tell the story

6 MIN

Start with Moshe on the mountaintop seeing the land (the no with a gift inside), then the Ten Commandments retold, landing on the Shema as the treasure of the week.

2 Wonder together

5 MIN

Ask: “Moshe asked for something with his whole heart and the answer was no — but he got to SEE the land. Have you ever gotten a no that had a gift hiding in it?”

3 Learn the Hebrew

5 MIN

This week: Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. Six words — say them slowly together, hand over eyes like at bedtime. If your child knows the tune, sing it.

4 Open a mezuzah (or visit one)

9 MIN

Take a chair to your doorpost. Show your child the mezuzah and tell them: the words we just said are written on a tiny scroll inside — from THIS week's portion. If you have a kosher scroll you can gently show, even better. Kiss-touch it the way many families do.

5 Wrap up at bedtime

5 MIN

Tonight, say the Shema together at bedtime and tell them: kids have said these exact words at bedtime for thousands of years — in Hebrew, the same six words, everywhere in the world. Your child is the newest link in that chain.

HEBREW, ONE WORD AT A TIME

This week's Hebrew words

SAY IT	WHAT IT MEANS	HEBREW
<i>Shema Yisrael</i>	“Listen, Israel” — the Torah's most famous sentence, in this portion	שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
<i>echad</i>	One — the last word of the Shema	אֶחָד
<i>v'ahavta</i>	“And you shall love” — the paragraph right after the Shema	וְאַהַבְתָּ
<i>mezuzah</i>	The scroll on the doorpost — its words come from this portion	מְזוּזָה
<i>Aseret HaDibrot</i>	The Ten Commandments, retold here to the new generation	עֲשֶׂת הַדְּבָרוֹת
<i>nachamu</i>	“Comfort!” — this Shabbat's name, the Shabbat of comfort	נַחֲמוּ

AT THE SHABBAT TABLE

Three questions to ask

- The Shema starts with “Listen.” What’s the difference between hearing and really listening? Who really listens to you?
- Moshe’s no came with a view from the mountaintop. What’s a no in your life that turned out to have something good inside?
- If the mezuzah on our door could talk, what do you think it would remind us as we walk in and out?

A GENTLE NOTE FOR PARENTS

This portion is read on Shabbat Nachamu — the Shabbat of comfort right after Tisha B’Av — so the week’s emotional arc for a family is gentle by design: after sadness comes comfort. Moshe not entering the land can land tenderly on a sensitive child; keep the mountaintop view front and center (he SAW it, and his student finished the journey), and let the Shema and the mezuzah be the week’s joy.

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