



When you think of the letter, you think of *fire*. It is a noisy letter, so when you say *aisb*—fire, spelled *Aleph-Shin*, you don't hear the quieter *Aleph*, but the louder *Shin*, connecting it to fire.<sup>1</sup>

It looks like fire as well. Its three arms reach for the sky like flames from a burning log. It is also the letter that is on the *tefillah shel rosh* of *Tefillin*, because it is the first letter of God's Name, *Shaddai*. This is the Name that teaches restraint,<sup>2</sup> alluding to how we should be passionate about our relationship with God.

One might think that passion is a matter of the heart, and it is. But its starting point is the *seichel*, as the *Shin* on

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah*, Ch. 3, *Mishnah* 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Dai* means enough; see *Bereishis Rashi*, *Bereishis* 43:14.

*tefillin* reminds us, and we already saw<sup>3</sup> in the *Rambam*:

What is the way to love and fear God? When one contemplates His actions and His wondrous and great creations and sees in them His wisdom, that it has no limit and no end, immediately he will love and praise Him, and desire tremendously to know His Great Name. (*Yad Chazakah, Yésodei HaTorah*, Ch. 2:2)

This is why we break the *Rasha*'s, of *Haggadah* fame, teeth for questioning the relevance of the *Korban Pesach*. The word *shayn*—teeth—(*Shin-Nun*) is the letter *Shin* spelled out as it sounds (*Shin-Yud-Nun*), without the *Yud*. The *Rasha*, exhibiting a lack of *Chochmah*—wisdom—which is always represented by the letter *Yud*, is left with only *shayn*. He broke his *Shin* and made it *shayn*, so we break his *shayn* and hope it will become *Shin* again.

On the other hand, there are *thirty-two* teeth in an adult mouth, the *gematria* of the word *leiv*—heart—and an allusion to the Thirty-two Paths of *Chochmah*. This is the true meaning of “wisdom teeth,” which hints that wisdom comes from “chewing” ideas to get to their essence. That puts the *Yud* back into the word *shayn* to make it *Shin*.<sup>4</sup>

In *gematria*, the three letters of *Shin* total 360,<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See the letter *Chof*.

<sup>4</sup> *Meiri, Pirkei Avos* 3:21.

<sup>5</sup> *Shin* (300) + *Yud* (10) + *Nun* (50).

which is ten times thirty-six, the number of hours the *Obr HaGanuz* shone in *Gan Aiden* before being hidden.<sup>6</sup> It is also the same *gematria* as Shechem,<sup>7</sup> where the brothers sold Yosef, associated with the *Obr HaGanuz*, into slavery,<sup>8</sup> which is fascinating since the *roshei teivos*<sup>9</sup> of the six words of *Boruch Shem*<sup>10</sup> is, *b'Shechem Lamed-Vav*—in Shechem, thirty-six. Yosef was buried in Shechem.

*Shin* is also the first letter of *shalom*—peace, the complete *opposite* of fire. Fire is the reality of *Gevurah* and source of disunity.<sup>11</sup> *Shalom* is based upon the very unity fire destroys. How can one letter represent two opposite concepts?

The answer again is, *restraint*. When fire is contained and controlled it can be very constructive. When it is not controlled and allowed to run its natural destructive course, *it will*. It's called an *aisb zarab*—strange fire:

*Abaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his pan, put fire in them, and placed incense upon it, and they brought before God a strange fire, which He had not commanded them. (Vayikra 10:a)*

---

<sup>6</sup> See the letter *Bais*.

<sup>7</sup> *Shin* (300) + *Chof* (20) + *Mem* (40).

<sup>8</sup> *Bereishis* 37:28.

<sup>9</sup> Literally, head-letters, that is, the first letters of each word.

<sup>10</sup> *Bais, Shin, Chof, Mem, Lamed, Vav*.

<sup>11</sup> If word is burned, it turns to countless ashes.

With the power of *seichel*, the *Yud* between the *Shin* and the *Nun*, fire can be harnessed in the most amazing ways, even to allow man to fly to the moon. Otherwise, it has the capacity to bring down even the greatest of man's accomplishments.

The *Chashmonaim* embodied all of this, and so does *Chanukah*. Their *seichel* ignited their passion for God and Torah, and that compelled them to act against the threat to both. When God saw this, He said "Enough!" to the oppression of the Greeks, and worked supernaturally to re-establish Jewish sovereignty. The candles of the *Menorah* are like *Shins* that burn from within the hearts of the Jewish people Heavenward.