

T B D & T R

Review... A note on the pronunciation of the name of Yosef's wife. Many people mistakenly break the name into syllables of ALEF-SAMACH and NUN-TAV. That would be the case if the SH'VA under the SAMACH were NACH (which it isn't). And that would mean that the KAMATZ under the ALEF is KATAN (which it isn't). And that would make the first syllable sound like the first syllable of the words Austin or austerity (which it doesn't).

The SH'VA is NA. This means that the ALEF-KAMATZ is the first syllable and that the KAMATZ is GADOL and in Israeli pronunciation of Hebrew is sounded like a PATACH, making the first syllable of her name like the first syllable of A-VO-CA-DO. And in Ashkenazic pronunciation, the first syllable is sounded like the English word 'awe'. The second syllable is S'NAT, with the SAMACH sound separated from the NUN sound. S - NAT, and not like a consonant blend of English which would render the second syllable like... okay, we won't mention the word...

MORE on consonant-blends, which English has and Hebrew does not:

The Hebrew word for blessing is B'RACHA. The apostrophe is there to indicate that the BET/SH'VA-REISH (of B'RACHA) should NOT be sounded like the BR of brain, breath, or broccoli. The SH'VA NA under the BET is sounded like a very short vowel, and it contributes to the sound of the BET. Hence, B'RACHA.

SH'VA NACH, by the way, is silent and does not contribute to the sound of the letter. Table is SHUL-CHAN. The LAMED has no vowel sound at all. Neither does the final NUN, which is considered to have a virtual SH'VA NACH under it.

All of this presents a problem or challenge for a native English speaker in his pronunciation of Hebrew - especially in davening and layning. For example, you can shmooze with someone and ask for a shmear (of cream cheese) on your English muffin. The SH and the M blend. But in SH'MA, the SHIN with its SH'VA NA is supposed to be distinct and not blended with the MEM. That's why we write SH'MA rather than SHMA. And also not SHEMA or BERACHA, because this gives the first letter with a SH'VA NA too much vowel sound.

The above TBD&TR review is in honor of A-S'NAT, wife of Yosef and mother of Efrayim and Menashe, who we name in our B'RACHOT of our sons and grandsons (and s-i-l).