

Shema

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The Shema is one of only two prayers that are specifically commanded in Torah (the other is Birkat Ha-Mazon -- grace after meals). It is the oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism, recited morning and night since ancient times. It consists of three biblical passages, two of which specifically say to speak of these things "when you lie down and when you rise up." This commandment is fulfilled by including the Shema in the [liturgy](#) for Ma'ariv (evening services) and Shacharit (morning services). Traditional prayerbooks also include a Bedtime Shema, a series of passages including the Shema to be read at home before going to bed at night.

Part 1: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The first part of the Shema begins with one of the best-known, most fundamental expressions of Jewish belief, and the one from which this prayer gets its name: Shema Yisra'el... (Hear, Israel). This expression is so fundamental that the most liberal Reform synagogue I know has these words carved on the outside of the building in foot-high letters (albeit in English). The second line of this part (Barukh sheim k'vod...) is actually not part of this passage from the [Torah](#). It doesn't even appear anywhere in the Bible. It's a congregational response from the days of the [Temple](#): whenever the High Priest would say the Divine Name, the people would respond with this line. Today, it is not said aloud except during [Yom Kippur](#) services.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yisra'eil YAHWEH Eloheinu YAHWEH echad.
Hear, Israel, YAHWEH is our El, YAHWEH is One.

In an undertone:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va'ed.
Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.

וְאַהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ

V'ahav'ta eit YAHWEH Elohekha b'khol l'vav'kha uv'khol naf'sh'kha uv'khol m'odekha.

And you shall love YAHWEH your El with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your might.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לְבָבְךָ
V'hayu had'varim ha'eileh asher anokhi m'tzav'kha hayom al l'vavekha.
And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart.

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבַנְיֵיךָ וּדְבַרְתָּ בָם
V'shinan'tam l'vanekha v'dibar'ta bam
And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them

בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלַכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ
b'shiv't'kha b'veitekha uv'lekh't'kha vaderekh uv'shakh'b'kha uv'kumekha
when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.

וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ
Uk'shar'tam l'ot al yadekha v'hayu l'totafot bein einekha.
And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.

וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ
Ukh'tav'tam al m'zuzot beitekha uvish'arekha.
And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Part 2: Deuteronomy 11:13-21

The second part of the Shema repeats many of the themes from the first part, but adds promises of rewards and punishments.

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעַתְּ מְעֹוֹ אֵל מִצְוֹתַי
V'hayah im shamo'a tish'm'u el mitz'votai
And it shall come to pass if you surely listen to the commandments

אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְהָ אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם
asher anokhi m'tzaveh et'khem hayom
that I command you today

לְאַהֲבָה אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעִבְדוֹ בְּכֹל לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכֹל נַפְשְׁכֶם
l'ahavah et YAHWEH Eloheikhem ul'av'do b'khol l'vav'khem uv'khol naf'sh'khem

to love YAHWEH your El and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul,

וְנָתַתִּי מָטָר אֲרֻצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ
וְאִסְפֹּתָ דְגָנְךָ וְתִירֹשְׁךָ וַיִּצְהַרְךָ

*V'natati m'tar ar'tz'khem b'ito yoreh umal'kosh
v'asaf'ta d'ganekha v'tirosh'kha v'yitz'harekha.*

That I will give rain to your land, the early and the late rains,
that you may gather in your grain, your wine and your oil.

וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשָׂדֶךָ לְבַהֲמֹתֶךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ

V'natati eisev b'sad'kha liv'hem'tekha v'akhal'ta v'sava'ta.

And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle and you will eat and you will
be satisfied.

הִשָּׁמְרוּ לָכֶם פֶּן יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם
וְסָרְתֶם וְעַבַּדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם

*Hisham'ru lakhem pen yif'teh l'vav'khem
v'sar'tem va'avad'tem Elohim acheirim v'hish'tachavitem lahem*

Beware, lest your heart be deceived
and you turn and serve other gods and worship them.

וְחָרָה אַף יְיָ בְּכֶם וְעָצַר אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָטָר
וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ

*V'charah af YAHWEH bakhem v'atzar et hashamayim v'lo yih'yeh matar
v'ha'adamah lo titein et y'vulah*

And anger of YAHWEH will blaze against you, and he will close the heavens
and there will not be rain,
and the earth will not give you its fullness,

וְאֵבַדְתֶּם מְהֵרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יְיָ נָתַן לָכֶם

va'avad'tem m'heirah mei'al ha'aretz hatovah asher YAHWEH notein lakhem.
and you will perish quickly from the good land that YAHWEH gives you.

וְשָׂמְתֶם אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֲלֹהָ עַל לְבַבְכֶם וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם
וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יְדְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם

*V'sam'tem et d'varai eileh al l'vav'khem v'al naf'sh'khem
uk'shar'tem otam l'ot al yed'khem v'hayu l'totafot bein eineikhem.*

So you shall put these, my words, on your heart and on your soul;

and you shall bind them for signs on your hands, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.

וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם לְדָבָר בָּם

V'limad'tem otam et b'neikhem l'dabeir bam

And you shall teach them to your children, and you shall speak of them

בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ

b'shiv't'kha b'veitekha uv'lekh't'kha vaderekh uv'shakh'b'kha uv'kumekha
when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.

וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ

Ukh'tav'tam al m'zuzot beitekha uvish'arekha.

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיְמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאָדָמָה
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְיָ לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר לָהֶם כִּי־יִמַי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ

L'ma'an yirbu y'maychem vi-y'may v'naychem al ha-adamah
asher nishba YAHWEH la-avotaychem latayt lahem ki-y'may ha-shamayim al
ha-aretz.

In order to prolong your days and the days of your children on the land that YAHWEH promised your fathers that he would give them, as long as the days that the heavens are over the earth.

Part 3: Numbers 15:37-41

This third part of the Shema does not mention the need to speak of these things morning and night. It talks about the [tzitzit](#) (fringes) that are traditionally worn like a string around the finger as a reminder of the commandments, like the [tefillin](#) and [mezuzot](#) that are commanded in the first two paragraphs. The passage is also included to fulfill the [mitzvah](#) to remember the Exodus from Egypt every day of our lives.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר

Vayo'mer YAHWEH el mosheh lei'mor

And YAHWEH spoke to Moses, saying...

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

Dabeir el b'nei Yis'ra'eil v'amar'ta aleihem

Speak to the children of Israel and say to them

וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרוֹתָם
וְנָתְנוּ עַל צִיצִית הַקַּנָּף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת

v'asu lahem tzitzit al kan'fei vig'deihem l'dorotam
v'nat'nu al tzitzit hakanaf p'til t'kheilet
they should make themselves tzitzit (fringes) on the corners of their clothing
throughout their generations,
and give the tzitzit of each corner a thread of blue.

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹת יְיָ
וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא תִתּוּרוּ אַחֲרָיו לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם
אֲשֶׁר אֹתָם זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם

V'hayah lakhem l'tzitzit ur'item oto uz'khar'tem et kol mitz'vot YAHWEH
va'asitem otam v'lo taturu acharei l'vav'khem v'acharei eineikhem
asher atem zonim achareihem
And they shall be tzitzit for you, and when you look at them you will remember
all of YAHWEHS commandments
and do them and not follow after your heart and after your eyes
which lead you astray.

לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי וַיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם

L'ma'an tiz'k'ru va'asitem et kol mitz'votai viyitem k'doshim lei'loheikhem
In order to remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your El.

אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Ani YAHWEH Eloheikhem
I am YAHWEH, your El,

אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים

asher hotzei'ti et'khem mei'erezt Mitz'rayim lih'yot lakhem leilohim
who lead you from the land of Egypt to be a El to you.

אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Ani YAHWEH Eloheikhem
I am YAHWEH, your El.