

Reciting the Shema

Keriat Shema Aleph: Deut. 6:4-9

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו,
הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ,
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל

May He who makes peace in
His high places make peace for
us, and for all Israel.

We first say:

אֵל מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָן

El melekh ne'eman: God is a faithful King.

וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ
עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
וְהָיָה יְהוָה אֶחָד וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד

"And the LORD will be king over all the
earth. On that day the LORD will be one
and his name one." (Zech. 14:9)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

Cover the eyes
with the right
hand:

Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu¹, Adonai echad²

The oversized Ayin
and Dalet form the
word עֵד, "witness."

HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD

This implies acceptance
of the yoke of heaven.

[בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד]

barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam va'ed

Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever.

Said in an undertone...
Pause briefly after reciting.

ve'ahavta et Adonai
Elohekha³ b'khol levavekha⁴
uvkhol nafshekha⁵ uvkhol
me'odekha⁶

וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ
וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ:

You shall love the LORD your
God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all
your "muchness" (resources).

vehayu hadevarim ha'eleh
asher anokhi metzavekha
hayom al-levavekha⁷

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי
מִצְוֶיךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לִבְבְּךָ:

And these words that I
command you today shall be
on your heart.

ve'shinantam⁸ levaneekha
vedibarta bam beshivtekha
b'vetekha uvlekhtekha
vaderekh uvshakhekha⁹
uvkumekha

וּשְׁנַנְתֶּם לְבַנְיֵיךָ וּדְבַרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשִׁיבְתְּךָ
בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ
וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ:

You shall impress them upon
your children, and shall talk
of them when you sit in your
house, and when you walk
by the way, and when you lie
down, and when you rise up.

ukshartam le'ot al-
yadekha¹⁰, vehayu le'totafot
bein enekha

וְקָשַׁרְתֶּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ
וְהָיוּ לְטַטְפֹּת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:

You shall bind them as a sign
on your hand, and they shall
be as frontlets between your
eyes.

ukhtavtam al-mezuzot
betekha u'vsharekha¹¹

וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל-מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

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

¹ The Name יהוה represents God's attributes of love and mercy (מִדַּת הַרַחֲמִים), as opposed to the Name אֱלֹהִים, which represents God's justice and role as our Creator.

² The seminal verse is an affirmation of the acceptance of God's sovereignty and our loyalty to God as His subjects. The word "hear" means "listen," "obey," "respond."

³ What is the proper kind of love for God? Loving others as yourself: וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself," Lev. 19:18).

⁴ The word "heart" is usually spelled with a single Vet. The double Vet is said to represent a double measure of love or a twofold love.

⁵ I.e., with the will and all your desires. With every breath we are obligated to thank the Creator.

⁶ I.e., with all your money (Berachot 54a, 61b, etc.). Me'od is related to middah, "measure," though some argue it means "much" (i.e., with all your "muchness").

⁷ I.e., by constant study and absorption of the truth of God's Torah and revelation. Study to show yourself approved. Pause between "hayom" and "al-levavekha."

⁸ The word means to "pierce sharply" or to impress sharply. The words of the Torah are to be "sharp" (i.e., familiar) in your mouth, not said with stammering.

⁹ The sages note this implies that the Shema should be recited twice daily: in the evening (after three stars appear) and in the morning.

¹⁰ Jewish tradition derives from this the various laws concerning the (hand and head) tefillin (phylacteries). The word totafot is obscure though refers to head tefillin.

¹¹ I.e., affixing a mezuzah scroll to each doorpost of the house. It is customary to touch the mezuzah when entering or leaving the house. "Gates" refers to public displays.