Reciting the Shema

Keriat Shema Aleph: Deut. 6:4-9

We first say:

אלֹ אלהִי נָא מָוֵת נָא מָוֵת
El melekh ne’eman: God is a faithful King.

Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu¹, Adonai echad²

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

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

1 The Name הוהי represents God's attributes of love and mercy (דבורה), as opposed to the Name אלהים, 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: ("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 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").
6 I.e., with the will and all your desires. With every breath we are obligated to thank the Creator.
7 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.
8 The sages note this implies that the Shema should be recited twice daily: in the evening (after three stars appear) and in the morning.
9 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.
10 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.