

**Shema**, (Hebrew: "Hear"), the Jewish confession of faith made up of three scriptural texts (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41), which, together with appropriate prayers, forms an integral part of the evening and morning services.

The blessing said while hanging a mezuzah: in English is: Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with God's commandments and commanded us to affix a mezuzah. The Shema is regarded by many Jews as the most important prayer in Judaism. This is because it reminds them of the key principle of the faith - there is only one God. This is a monotheistic principle. This part of the Shema is taken from the Torah : Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

### **What does mezuzah mean?**

A mezuzah means door post. The plural is mezuzot . It is a piece of parchment called a klaf contained in a decorative case and inscribed with specific Hebrew verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21).

The Torah tells parents to teach their children about Judaism and their duties as Jews. Most Jewish parents want to raise their children to be a mensch, meaning a kind, responsible and honourable person. Parents are expected to feed, clothe and educate their children and encourage them to support themselves.

### **The Shema**

The Daily Declaration of Faith

*Shema Yisrael*: Hear, O Israel are the first two words of a section of the Torah that is the centrepiece of the morning and evening prayer services, encapsulating the monotheistic essence of Judaism:

"Hear, O Israel: God is our Lord, God is one."

In its entirety, the Shema consists of three paragraphs: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.

### **When:**

"When you lie down and when you rise up"—Deuteronomy 6:7.

*Morning*: During the first quarter of the day—starting from when there is sufficient light to recognize a casual acquaintance from a short distance.

*Night*: From when the stars appear until dawn. Preferably, however, before midnight.

### **How:**

Say the Shema in your vernacular if you don't understand Hebrew.

Ascertain that the environment is clean and modest, and make sure to carefully articulate and enunciate each word. No interruptions for the duration of the prayer.

Cover the eyes with the right hand while saying the first verse—blocking out distracting external stimuli. Recite the verse aloud, for the same reason.

Ideally, men should wear *tallit* and *tefillin*—mitzvahs discussed in the Shema—for the morning Shema.

In the daily Shema prayer, where God's unity is pronounced by saying, "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,"<sup>1</sup> we add another line quietly: "Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever."

### **Why Do We Cover Our Eyes for Shema?**

By Yisroel Cotlar

The basic answer: While saying this important prayer, we should not to be distracted by anything around us. Closing our eyes enhances our concentration. (Code of Jewish Law, Orach Chaim 61:5)