

WHAT TO PRAY: SET PRAYERS: SHEMA

SHEMA: MENTAL PREPARATION

Shema: Mental Preparation

When saying the shema, focus on the idea that God is:

- Everywhere,
- Infinite,
- Unique,
- Present now and always.

Witness to God's Uniqueness

We are witnesses to the fact that God is unique, as alluded to in the word "eid"--made up of the "ayin" of shema and the "dalet" of echad.

Love God

We are required to love God with our:

- **Hearts** (Good Inclination--yetzer ha'tov--and Evil Inclination--yetzer ha'ra),
- **Souls** (regardless of whether we are happy with Hashem's decrees or not), and
- **"Much-ness"** (interpreted to mean with all of our material belongings).

SHEMA: WHAT TO WEAR

What To Wear for Shema in Shacharit

Men should wear a talit katan (for married men, also wear a talit gadol) and tefilin in order to say shema in shacharit. However, if none are available, say the shema without them.

SHEMA: WHAT TO SAY

Men and Shema in Shacharit

Men must say shema in shacharit and the blessings before and after.

Women and Shema in Shacharit

Women are not required to say the full shema or the blessings before it. Even if women do not say the whole shema, it is proper for them to say the first line of the shema and baruch shem kevod malchuto l'olam va'ed.

NOTE If women say entire shema, even though they are not required to do so, it is a mitzva.

Amen before Shema

Some say the pre-shema blessing in shacharit or ma'ariv with the leader. Best is to finish the blessing before the leader does and then reply amen when he finishes saying the blessing.

Baruch Hu before Shema

Don't say baruch hu u'varuch shemo in response to a prayer leader saying the two pre-shema blessings.

Starting Shema before Prayer Leader Says

If you are late to shacharit or ma'ariv minyan and start the shema before the prayer leader has finished saying "emet" at the end of the shema, do not say El melech ne'eman.

SHEMA: HOW TO SAY

Covering Eyes for First Line of Shema

Cover your eyes with either hand when saying the first line of shema. This is to help prevent distraction. There is no need to remove your glasses first.

NOTE Covering your eyes for the shema is a widespread custom, not a halacha.

"Stretching Out" Echad in Shema

Stretch out the first line of the shema by pausing after saying “echad” and before saying Baruch shem kevod malchuto l'olam va'ed.

NOTE

- It is incorrect to stretch out the “chet” + vowel sound (chaaaaaad).
- It is incorrect (and much worse) to say a vowel sound after the “dalet” (echadihhh!), since that changes the word and by doing so, you are not saying the shema.
- The “dalet” stops the sound and should not be pronounced as a syllable.

Kissing Tzitziyot in Shema

Kiss all four tzitziyot in a talit gadol when saying the shema. Just kiss the front two tzitziyot if you only wear a talit katan. Doing either one is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.

GA'AL YISRAEL/ HAMELECH BI'CHVODO

Saying Ga'al Yisrael with Leader or Amen

The prayer leader should say out loud the blessing preceding the amida (ga'al yisrael for shacharit; ha'melech bi'chvodo for ma'ariv). If you:

- Are up to where he is in the prayers, say the last blessing with him (and don't say amen but do say amen in ma'ariv).
- Pray slowly and will not be able to join the minyan for saying the amida, you should start earlier than the minyan and catch up at ga'al yisrael.