

The Mary Hytken Dumont
University @ASBEE
presents..

From the liturgical department...



The Mary Hytken Dumont University @ASBEE Presents

Liturgical Department

*Prayer Unlocked:
Understanding the Siddur
with Rav Kook, Rav Soloveitchik and
more*

with Rabbi Joel Finkelstein, a three part Series

Wednesday Evenings in November, 8:00 pm

November 4th- *Shema & Its Blessings*

November 11th- *Amida*

November 18th- *Blessings*

Questions

What is the meaning of Shema?

Why is it important?

How does it relate to the mitzvah to learn torah every day?

How do we understand the blessings that surround it?

How does it relate to the Amida?

The Facts, an Outline

Blessings before Shema

Light/Darkness

Love, choosing Israel, Torah

Shema

Oneness, Our G-d, Love

Keep the mitzvot or else

Tzitzit and Exodus

Blessing after Shema: Redemption, Exodus

The Shema: How central is it?

Brachot 15b

אמר

ר

שְׁנֵי מַלְכִים בָּהּ תִּשְׁלַג בְּצִלְמוֹן — אֵל תִּקְרֵי "בְּפִרְשׁ" אֶלָּא "בְּפִרְשׁ", אֵל תִּקְרֵי "בְּצִלְמוֹן" אֶלָּא "בְּצִלְמוֹת" ב

On this same topic, **Rabbi Ḥama, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said: Anyone who recites *Shema* and is punctilious in enunciating its letters, Gehenna is cooled for him, as it is stated: “When the Almighty scatters [*befares*] kings over it, it will snow in Tzalmon”** (Psalms 68:15). **Do not read *befares***, When He scatters, **but *befaresh***, When he enunciates. When one enunciates the name of God with precision, God will fulfill the verse: It will snow in Tzalmon, on his behalf. **Do not read *beTzalmon***, in Tzalmon, **but *betzalmavet***, in the shadow of death, a reference to Gehenna. As reward for enunciating God’s name precisely, God will cool Gehenna for him.

Where does it say we must read it?

And these words which I command you today should be on your heart and you should teach them to your children and speak of them... when you go to sleep and when you get up.

ודברת בם

בשכבך ובקמך

What is the source of learning Torah?

And these words which I command you today should be on your heart and you should teach them to your children and speak of them... when you go to sleep and when you get up.

Zohar Pinechas

והעמידו חכמים, כל הקורא קריאת שמע שחרית וערבית, כאלו מקיים והגית בו יומם ולילה

Shema= learning Torah

The distinction

ושננתם לבנך

Teach them to your children

ודברת בם

You should speak of them

P.S. There is an opinion in the Talmud that Shema is a rabbinic idea and the verses only speak of Torah study

Sefer Habatim #5. Who needs Shema if you learn?

If you only learned torah day and night maybe you would not mention his Oneness and the yoke of heaven

Menachot 99b: If you say Shema do you need to learn?

אמר ר' אמי מדבריו של ר' יוסי נלמוד אפילו לא שנה אדם אלא פרק אחד שחרית ופרק אחד ערבית קיים מצות (יהושע א, ח) לא ימוש (את) ספר התורה הזה מפיו

The *baraita* teaches that according to Rabbi Yosei, even if the old shewbread remained on the Table for a short while in the morning, and the new shewbread was placed on the Table toward evening, and even though it did not reside constantly on the Table, this fulfills the requirement that the shewbread should always be on the Table. **Rabbi Ami says: From Rabbi Yosei's statement we may learn that even if a person learned only one chapter of the Mishna in the morning and one chapter of the Mishna in the evening, he has thereby fulfilled the mitzva of: "This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall contemplate in it day and night, that you may take heed to do according to all that is written in it, for then you shall make your ways prosperous, and then you shall have good success" (Joshua 1:8).**

אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי אפילו לא קרא אדם אלא קרית שמע שחרית וערבית קיים לא ימוש ודבר זה אסור לאומרו בפני עמי הארץ ורבא אמר מצוה לאומרו בפני עמי הארץ

Rabbi Yoḥanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai: Even if a person recited only the recitation of *Shema* in the morning and in the evening, he has fulfilled the mitzva of: "This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth." And it is prohibited to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses [*amei ha'arets*], as they are likely to get the impression that there is no need to study Torah beyond this. And Rava says: On the contrary, it is a mitzva to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses, as they will realize that if merely reciting the *Shema* leads to such a great reward, all the more so how great is the reward of those who study Torah all day and night.

Why do we need the Shema? Tzror Hamor

והענין הזה הוא כמו שכתבתי שהתורה הגיעה לסוף הצרות והגזרות שעתידין לגזור על ישראל. להעבירם על דת ושלא יעסקו בתורה. כמו שקרה בגירוש פורטוגא"ל שגזרו שלא ידרשו ברבים ושלא ילמדו לתינוקות. ולקחו כל הספרים והבתי כנסיות באופן שלא יתפללו ולא יעסקו בתורה. עד שכמעט נשתכחה תורה מישראל. כי איך ילמדו לבניהם בלי ספר ובלי מלמד. **ולא נשאר להם אלא שילמדום שמע ישראל וידעו איך ה' אחד. ושראוי לאהבו ולמסור נפשו על קדושתו.** ולכן נתן השם לישראל לאותם זמנים פרשה קצרה של שמע ישראל שהיא כלל כל התורה. ואם לא יוכלו לידע כל הפרשה. למעט ידעו פסוק שמע ישראל שהוא עיקר הייחוד. וילמדו אותו פסוק לבניהם בענין שידעו שהוא השם אחד ולו היכולת. ואם יבואו בני בליעל להדיחו מעל השם. שילמד לו: שימסור נפשו למות על קדושת השם. כאומרם בכל נפשך וכל שכן בכל ממונך וזהו ובכל מאודך

G-d knew the things that would happen as they did in the expulsion from Portugal..
All that is left is to teach them Shema

What is the basic theme? Berachot 13b

ה לַרְבִּי דְמִקְבֵּל עֲלֶיהָ מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם. אָמַר לֵיהּ: בַּר פְּחַתִּי, בְּשַׁעָה שְׁמַעְבִּיר יָדָיו עַל פָּנָיו, מִקְבֵּל עָלָיו עוֹל מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: The single verse, “**Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One**”; **this is Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi’s recitation of *Shema***. The Gemara relates: **Rav said to his uncle, Rabbi Ḥiyya: I did not see Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi accept the kingship of Heaven upon himself**, meaning that he did not see him recite *Shema*. **Rabbi Ḥiyya said to him: Son of noblemen [*bar paḥtei*], when Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi passed his hands over his face in the study hall in the middle of his lesson, he accepted the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven upon himself**, as his *Shema* was comprised of a single verse.

Brachot Mishnah 2, 1

אָמַר

רַ

לְעָלְיוֹ עַל מִצְוֹת. וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע לְוַיֹּאמֶר, שְׁוֹהֶיָּה אִם שָׁמַע נֹהֵג בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה, וַיֹּאמֶר אֵינוֹ נֹהֵג אֶלָּא בַּיּוֹם

Rabbi Joshua ben Korhah said: Why was the section of “Shema” placed before that of “And it shall come to pass if you listen”? So that one should first accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and then take upon himself the yoke of the commandments. Why does the section of “And it shall come to pass if you listen” come before that of “And the Lord said”? Because “And it shall come to pass if you listen” is customary during both day and night, whereas [the section] “And the Lord said” is customary only during the day.

Reshit Chochma

מתוך מלאכת שלמה מסכת ברכות הקדמה

על כן היה סדר רבותינו הקדושים להתחיל סדר המשנה ביחודו של הקב"ה ואמרו שחייב אדם לקרא ק"ש לייחד שמו של הקב"ה ולקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים ועול תורה והמצות ערב ובוקר שנאמר ובשכבך ובקומך

The mishnah begins with Shma which has the unity of G-d and to accept the yoke of heaven and the yoke of torah and mitzvot..

Obsessive love!

You shall love the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day.

Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay **at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.**

Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; (like a tattoo some would make)

inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.(like graffiti some would make)

Maybe it is a way to mention the 10 commandments

Berachot 12a

וְקוֹרִין עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרוֹת "שְׁמַע", "וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמוּעַ", "וַיֹּאמֶר", "אָמֵת וַיִּצִיב", וְעַבֹּדָה, וּבְרַכַּת כֹּהֲנִים.

The Gemara related above that the priests in the Temple **read the Ten Commandments**, along with the sections of ***Shema, VeHaya im Shamo'a, VaYomer, True and Firm, Avoda, and the priestly benediction.***

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: אִף בְּגִבּוּלֵין בְּקִשּׁוֹ לְקִרוֹת כּוֹן, אֶלָּא שֶׁכָּבַר בְּטָלוּם מִפְּנֵי תַרְעוּמַת הַמֵּינִין.

Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: Even in the outlying areas, outside the Temple, **they sought to recite** the Ten Commandments **in this manner** every day, as they are the basis of the Torah (Rambam), **but they had already abolished** recitation of the Ten Commandments **due to the grievance of the heretics**, who argued that the entire Torah, with the exception of the Ten Commandments, did not emanate from God (Jerusalem Talmud). If the Ten Commandments were recited daily, that would lend credence to their claim, so their recitation was expunged from the daily prayers.

10 commandments in the Shema

Shema= I am the L-rd. Hashem is one= don't have any other gods

v'ahavta= don't take Hashem's name..

Write them on your doorposts= don't covet your neighbor's house

Gather your grain= do not steal

You will be wasted from the land= do not murder

Lengthen your days= honor your folks

Don't go after your eyes= don't commit adultery

Remember all the commandments= Remember Shabbat

I am Hashem your G-d..= don't bear false testimony

What is the reason for the mitzvah? Sefer Hachinuch

צריך על כל פנים זכרון תמידי במלכות שמים לשמרו מן החטא, על כן היה מחסדו לזכותנו וצונו לזכר שני העתים האלה בקבע ובכונה גמורה, אחת ביום להועיל לכל מעשינו שביום, כי בהיות האדם זוכר בבקר אחדות השם ומלכותו, וכי השגחתו ויכלתו על הכל, ויתן אל לבו כי עיניו פקוחות על כל דרכיו, וכל צעדיו יספר, לא יתעלם ממנו דבר מכל דבריו, ולא יוכל ממנו להחביא ממנו אחת מכל מחשבותיו. הלא יהיה לו למשמר מחשבתו זאת והודאת פיו בדבר הזה כל היום ההוא, ויהיה לו הודאת הלילה בזה גם כן למשמר כל הלילה.

he certainly requires a constant reminder of the Kingdom of the Heavens to guard him from sin. Hence it was from His kindness to have us merit and He commanded us to remember [this at] these two times, regularly and with great intention. [The] one at the day is to help for all of our actions during the day; as when a man remembers in the morning the unity of God and His Kingdom, and that His Providence and Omnipotence is over everything, and he places to his heart that His eyes are open upon all of his ways and that all of his steps are marked - that he cannot obscure anything from Him and he cannot hide any of his thoughts - will this thought and the acknowledgement of his mouth in the thing not be a protection for him that whole day? And the acknowledgement of the night will also be a protection the whole night.

Sefer Habatim 5

When he sleeps he will be ready to speak with the cherub and the angel...

כי כאשר [ר] יקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים והמצות בעת השכיבה יהיה לבו נכון לעשות מצות ה' ולאהבתו ואמונת יחודו, ובעת השינה תהיה נפשו מצויירת לדבר עם הכרוב והמלאך. ולחוזק ההערה צוו רבותינו¹² לקרא פרשה ראשונה של ק"ש על מטתו ואז מובטח שמזיקים בדילים ממנו¹³, שלא ישלח דמיונותיו בדעות כוזבות ומובטח לו שהוא בן הע"ה¹⁴, וחזק ההערה לשמירת הדמיון הכוזב צריך

Why three paragraphs?

Yoke of Heaven

Also Talmud Torah (Batim)

Yoke of mitzvot

Doing the mitzvot (Gemara)

The mitzvot should always be before you

Sefer Habatim

Exodus

Providence

The three themes

Franz Rosenzweig calls them

Blessings of Shema

Creation

Existence (Shema)

Creation, light, darkness

Revelation

Torah

A great love

Redemption

Exodus

Exodus

Reb Chaim Soloveitchik: Exodus is also simply to show the acceptance of the divine yoke.

The Shema vs. Its Blessings

Shema

Oneness, Yoke of Heaven, Love, Torah

By day and night

Mitzvot, Torah

Exodus, doing the mitzvot

Blessings

Day (and night, it's all one)

Love, Torah, redemption

Exodus, singing the song

Rav Samson Rafael Hirsch, interconnectedness

Shema, Hashem is One

Rashi: Hashem who is our G-d now will one day be one when all recognize Him

Blessing, Ahava Rabbah, we will show G-d as one in the bland of Israel

Blessing, Ga'al Yisrael, G-d will reign forevermore

Shema, Love G-d or G-d is one?

It's the same because if it is all one then we need to worship him always and with every part of ourselves, even the bad part. (light and dark)

The Rav

In the am

Shema as Prayer

Blessings of shema have prayers

In the pm

Shema as statement

Blessings have no requests

Two different modes of the yoke of G-d

How can we know G-d?

What is the source of inspiration?

Nature

Torah

History, G-d's hand in our lives

Rav Lord Sacks point out re. The entire service

Psalms about creation

Amida in front of G-d, Revelation

Uva letzion goel, aleinu, redemption

Rav Soloveitchik & the meaning of the three blessings

Kadosh Kadosh... ` = Shema

Ahava Rabbah = Accepting the yoke of commandments, 2nd paragraph

Redemption = Remembering the Exodus

The Rav: Themes of Ahava Rabbah

Concentration of the heart

and put into our hearts [comprehension] to understand and to be intellectually creative, to listen, to learn, and to teach, to preserve, to practice, and to fulfill all the words of instruction in Your Torah with love. And enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, and cause our hearts to hold fast to Your commandments, and unify our hearts to love and fear Your Name;

We should not be ashamed, what will the nations say??

and may we not be subject to shame,³⁴*When one has to receive a favor that is completely undeserved, he feels a sense of shame. We therefore pray to God, that our redemption will not be “handed out” to us without merit and cause us to be ashamed. We proclaim that since we “trusted in His Name” and accepted the bitterness of our exile our deliverance is not totally undeserved.—Siach Yitzchok* disgrace or stumbling forever, for in Your holy Name— great, mighty and awesome— have we trusted; may we exult and rejoice in Your deliverance.

The flow or intersectionality of the 3 blessings

Yotzer Ohr, light

A new light you shall shed on Zion, and may we soon merit to see its light

Ahava Rabbah

And march us upright to our land

Emet VeEmunah

Who saves us from all brutes...

Why this verse? This concept?

First blessing before Shma

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת־הַכֹּל:

Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Former of light, Creator of darkness, Maker of peace, Creator of all things.

Berachot 11a

אֵלָא אָמַר רַבָּא: כְּדִי לְהַזְכִּיר מֵדַת יוֹם בַּלַּיְלָה וּמֵדַת לַיְלָה בַּיּוֹם.

Rather, Rava said: The reason we recite: “Who creates darkness” is **in order to mention the attribute of day at night and the attribute of night during the day**, and thereby unify day and night as different parts of a single entity.

WHY IS THIS AN IMPORTANT INTRO TO THE AMIDA?

Sefer Habatim ibid. Why Yotzer or, about light?

G-d creates existence and the deficits too!

צריכה אל ההויות כמו שגזרה חכמת ה'. ואמר עושה שלום ובורא הכל, על הויה
והפסד, ואמנם אמר שלום על ההויה שהוא השלמות, גם שההויה תעשה עם
הרכבת המתנגדים, ר"ל הרכבת היסודות שהם רחוקים זה מזה ושונאים זה את
זה, ובעת ההויה יהיו לאחדים לפי מה שגזרה חכמת ה'. ואמר ובורא את הכל,
על ההפסד שהוא סבת בא ההויות זו אחר זו כשפושט החמר צורה אחת ולובש

Are the blessings in the day different from the night?

1. Yotzer Or, Maariv Aravim

Creates light, brings night

2. Ahava rabbah, prayer for concentration, for salvation

Ahavat olam, to rejoice with the torah

3. Emet veyatziv, Emet Ve'emuna

Rashi: וברכת אמת ויציב כולה על חסד שעשה עם אבותינו היא שהוציאם ממצרים ובקע להם הים והעבירם וברכת אמת ואמונה מדבר בה אף על העתידות שאנו מצפים שיקיים לנו הבטחתו ואמונתו לגאלנו מיד מלכים ומיד עריצים ולשום נפשנו בחיים ולהדריכנו על במות
Day: Past. Night: Future.

Why did the Rabbis insist on juxtaposing Shema and the Amida?

Berachot 9b הֵעִיד רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בֶּן אֱלִיָּקִים מִשּׁוּם קִהְלָא קִדְיָשָׁא דְּבִירוֹשָׁלַיִם: כָּל הַסּוֹמֵךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה אֵינוֹ נֶזְזֵק כָּל הַיּוֹם כּוּלּוּ

Rabbi Yosei ben Elyakim testified in the name of the holy community in Jerusalem, a title accorded a particular group of Sages who lived there, that one who juxtaposes redemption and prayer at sunrise will incur no harm for the entire day.

4b אָמַר מֶר, קוֹרָא קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע וּמְתַפְּלֵל. מִסִּיעַ לִיה לְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן. דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵיזְהוּ בֶּן הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא — זֶה הַסּוֹמֵךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה .. שֶׁל עֶרְבִית

In this *baraita*, **the Master said** that when one returns from work in the evening, he enters the synagogue, **recites *Shema*, and prays**. From this *baraita*, we see that at night, just as during the day, one first recites *Shema* and then prays. This **supports** the opinion of **Rabbi Yoḥanan, as Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Who is assured of a place in the World-to-Come? It is one who juxtaposes** the blessing of **redemption**, recited after *Shema*, **to the evening prayer**.

6 theories

One: It's a way of starting Shmoneh Esreh out of joy

Brachot 31a

וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ שִׂיחָה, וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ קְלוּת רֵאשׁ, וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ דְּבָרִים בְּטָלִים, אֶלָּא מִתּוֹךְ שִׂמְחָה שֶׁל מִצְוָה

On the topic of proper preparation for prayer, **the Sages taught: One may neither stand to pray from an atmosphere of sorrow nor from an atmosphere of laziness, nor from an atmosphere of laughter, nor from an atmosphere of conversation, nor from an atmosphere of frivolity, nor from an atmosphere of purposeless matters. Rather, one should approach prayer from an atmosphere imbued with the joy of a mitzva.**

This explains the emphasis on Shira

Shira chadash shibchu geulim

A new song sang the redeemed

Brachot 14b, a Palestinian version of Ga'al yisrael

אמר הכי מודים אנחנו לך ה' אלהינו שהוצאתנו מארץ מצרים ופדיתנו מבית עבדים ועשית לנו נסים וגבורות על הים ושרנו לך

We thank you Hashem our G-d that you took us out of Egypt and redeemed us from the house of bondage and you did miracles and wonders for us at the sea and we sang to you.

Theory two

It's a way to start the Amida after studying torah

Rashi explaining a Palestinian way to pray..

Also, before this period is not considered the time for lying down. Therefore, if one read the Shema before, he does not fulfill his obligation. If so, why do we read the Shema in the Synagogue? In order to stand in Tefilah, in connection with words of Torah as is taught in the Briata in the Jerusalem Talmud Berachot.

Theory 3, it is a matir, a permit, a licence to pray

Brachot 32a

גְּדֹלָה וְאֵת יְדֵךְ הַחֲזָקָה אֲשֶׁר מִי אֵל בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ וְכַגְבוּרֹתֶיךָ". וְכָתִיב בְּתַרְיָה "אֶעֱבְרָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה וְגו'"ד

Based on Moses' prayers, **Rabbi Simlai taught: One should always set forth praise of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and then pray** for his own needs. **From where do we** derive that one should conduct himself in this manner? **From Moses, as it is written** in his prayer: **"And I beseeched the Lord at that time"** (Deuteronomy 3:23). **And** immediately afterward in his prayer, **it is written: "Lord, God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand, for what God is there in the heavens or on earth who can perform deeds such as Yours and Your might"** (Deuteronomy 3:24)? Here, Moses began with praise of God, **and it is only thereafter** that **it is written: "Please, let me pass over and see the good land** that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon" (Deuteronomy 3:25). Only after his praise did Moses make his personal request.

Theory 4: It obliges or permits you to pray

Rabbeinu Yona, Brachot 2b

רבינו יונה על הרי"ף מסכת ברכות דף ב עמוד ב

ואומר מורי הרב שהטעם שזוכה לשכר גדול כזה מפני שהקב"ה כשגאלנו והוציאנו ממצרים היה להיותנו לו לעבדים שנא' כי עבדי הם אשר הוצאתי אותם מארץ מצרים ובברכת גאל ישראל מזכיר בה החסד שעשה עמנו הבורא והתפלה היא עבודה כדאמרינן (בב"ק דף צב ב) ועבדתם את ה' אלהיכם זו היא תפלה וכשהוא מזכיר יציאת מצרים ומתפלל מיד מראה שכמו שהעבד שקונה אותו רבו חייב לעשות מצות רבו כן הוא מכיר הטובה והגאולה שגאל אותו הבורא ושהוא עבדו ועובד אותו וכיון שמכיר שהוא עבדו מפני שגאלו ועושה רצונו ומצותיו נמצא שבעבור זה זוכה לחיי העולם הב

If you were freed now you serve Him and we serve Him by asking from Him.

Theory 5: It shows we trust him as they did then

רבינו יונה על הרי"ף מסכת ברכות דף ב עמוד ב

ועוד אמר מורי נר"ו טעם אחר מפני שכשמזכיר גאולת מצרים ומתפלל מיד הוא מראה שבוטח בה'
בתפלה כיון שמבקש ממנו צרכיו שמי שאינו בוטח בו לא יבקש ממנו כלום

#6 The Rav: Amidah and Shema are one

שעורים לזכר אבא מרי ז"ל ב' עמ' נד

There is one fulfillment of acceptance of the yoke of heaven through Kriat Shma and Amida

One last thing: Kavanah

Rambam ch. 2

הַקּוֹרֵא אֶת

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל" לֹא יֵצֵא יְדֵי חוּבְתוֹ וְהִשָּׁאֵר אִם לֹא כִּנֵּן לְבוֹ יֵצֵא. אֶפְלוּ הָיָה קוֹרֵא בְּתוֹרָה כְּדַרְכּוֹ אוֹ מִגִּיּוֹת אֶת הַפְּרָשִׁיּוֹת הָאֵלּוּ בְּעוֹנֵת קְרִיאָהּ יֵצֵא וְהוּא שֹׁכֵן לְבוֹ בְּפֶסֶק רִאשׁוֹן שֶׁ

One who reads the *Shema* and does not concentrate his mind while reciting the first verse—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is One," has not fulfilled his duty. As to the remaining verses, if he did not concentrate his mind (while reciting them), he has nevertheless fulfilled his duty. Even if he was reading the Torah in his usual course of study or examining these sections in a scroll (to ensure correctness), and read them at the prescribed time, he has fulfilled his duty, provided however that he concentrated his mind while reciting the First Verse.

Tefilah 4, 15, 16

כּוֹנֵת הַלֵּב כִּיצֵד. כָּל תְּפִלָּה שְׂאִינָה בְּכוֹנָה אֵינָה תְּפִלָּה. וְאִם הִתְפַּלֵּל בְּלֹא כּוֹנָה חוֹזֵר וּמִתְפַּלֵּל בְּכוֹנָה. מִצָּא דַעְתּוֹ מְשֻׁבָּשֵׁת וְלִבּוֹ טְרוּד אֲסוּר לוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל עַד שֶׁתִּיָּשֵׁב
וְהוּא עֵיף אוֹ מִצָּר אֲסוּר לוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל עַד שֶׁתִּיָּשֵׁב דַּעְתּוֹ. אֲמָרוּ חֲכָמִים יִשְׁהֶה שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים עַד שֶׁיִּנְחַח וְתִתְקַרֵּר דַּעְתּוֹ וְאַחַר כֵּן יִתְפַּלֵּד

Concentration of the mind—how is this condition [to be fulfilled?] Any prayer uttered without mental concentration is not prayer. If a service has been recited without such concentration, it must be recited again devoutly. A person finds that his thoughts are confused and his mind is distracted: He may not pray till he has recovered his mental composure. Hence, on returning from a journey or if one is weary or distressed, it is forbidden to pray till his mind is composed. The sages said that he should wait three days till he is rested and his mind is calm, and then he recites the prayers.

Guide to the Perplexed iii, 51

The first thing you must do is this: Turn your thoughts away from everything while you read Shema⁴ or during the Tefilláh, and do not content yourself with being devout when you read the first verse of Shema, or the first paragraph of the prayer. When you have successfully practised this for many years, try in reading the Law or listening to it, to have all your heart and all your thought occupied with understanding what you read or hear. After some time when you have mastered this, accustom yourself to have your mind free from all other thoughts when you read any portion of the other books of the prophets, or when you say any blessing; and to have your attention directed exclusively to the perception and the understanding of what you utter. When you have succeeded in properly performing these acts of divine service, and you have your thought, during their performance, entirely abstracted from worldly affairs, take then care that your thought be not disturbed by thinking of your wants or of superfluous things. In short, think of worldly matters when you eat, drink, bathe, talk with your wife and little children, or when you converse with other people.

אַחַר כָּךְ יִפְטֹר. חֲסִידִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים הָיוּ שׁוֹהֵינ שָׁעָה אַחַת קִדְּם תְּפִלָּה וְשָׁעָה אַחַת לְאַחַר תְּפִלָּה וּמֵאֲרִיכִין בְּתְפִלָּה שָׁעָה כ

What is to be understood by concentration of the mind? The mind should be freed from all extraneous thoughts and the one who prays should realize that he is standing before the Divine Presence. He should therefore sit awhile before beginning his prayers, so as to concentrate his mind, and then pray in gentle tones, beseechingly, and not regard the service as a burden which he is carrying and which he will cast off and proceed on his way. He should, accordingly, also sit awhile, after concluding the prayers, and then leave. The ancient saints were wont to pause and meditate one hour before the service, one hour after the service and take one hour in its recital.

A two way conversation?

Shema: Hashem speaks to you, Hear O Israel, Love your G-d...

Amidah: We speak to Hashem

Or no!

1. Shema gives me a licence to pray!
2. Shema we accept the yoke of Heaven and Amidah we show we depend on Him.