What would you say if someone asked you to summarize Judaism in one line? Hard to do, isn’t it? Yet, for many people, that line would be the שְׁמַע. The שְׁמַע declares that God is one. It is said every morning, every evening, and at bedtime. Saying the שְׁמַע helps connect us with Jews all around the world.

Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God.
Adonai is one.

Praised (Blessed) is the name of God’s glorious kingdom forever and ever.
Choose a Motto

Which motto, slogan, or tag line below means the most to you?

“If you will it, it is no dream.”  
—THEODOR HERZL

“A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop of honey left inside.”  
—WINNIE THE POOH

“The world stands on three things: On the Torah, on divine service, and on deeds of loving-kindness.”  
—PIRKEI AVOT

“Shoot for the moon.”  
—NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”  
—MAHATMA GANDHI

“Do one thing every day that scares you.”  
—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

If you prefer, write your own motto:

What made you choose that motto? Why do you believe in the message?

Do you think you would be likely to choose a different quote in ten years? Why or why not?

What is it about the words of the יָשָׁר that make it an appropriate motto for Jews?
Prayer Words

Think about the words of the שְׁמַע. Below, write a way that each word makes you feel connected to Judaism or to the Jewish people. If a word doesn’t, write why not.

Example: שְׁמַע—We can listen to other Jews’ points of view, even if we disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>שְׁמַע</td>
<td>hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ישראל</td>
<td>Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אדונai</td>
<td>our God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אחד</td>
<td>one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example: We listen to other Jews’ points of view, even if we disagree.
Prayer Reading
Practice reading the שְׁמַע in Hebrew on page 1.

How Did I Do?
How well did you read? Circle the face that shows how you feel.

Singing the שְׁמַע
Listen to the recording of the traditional שְׁמַע tune. Whom do you imagine singing this prayer, and where? Describe or draw a picture of this person and the setting below. Then answer the questions on the next page.
What was it about the music that inspired you to write or draw that?


Look at the descriptions or drawings done by other students in your class. What does yours have in common with theirs? What is different?


Big Idea!

The שְׁמַע is recited, chanted, or sung by Jews all over the world. No matter whom you imagined, their words are the same!
Being a Witness

The שְׁמַע comes from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4). The picture below shows the way the שְׁמַע appears in the Torah.

First, find the שְׁמַע. Notice how two letters in the sentence are larger than the others.

Write the two letters here: ■ ■

Together, these letters form the Hebrew word עֵד, "witness."

Jewish tradition teaches that the letters או יn and דאל appear larger in the שְׁמַע in the Torah to remind us to be a witness to the oneness of God. What do you think that means?

Bonus: What do we call the pointer shown in the picture? Write its name in Hebrew or English. If you aren’t sure, ask your classmates for help.
Adonai, Our God

In the siddur we often refer to God as both Adonai, יְיָ, and our God, אֱלֹהֵינוּ, in the same sentence. Practice reading the following phrases with both of these names for God.

Underline the Hebrew word for “Adonai” in each line. Then circle “our God” in each line.

1. שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

2. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

3. רְצֵה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּעַזְוֵךְ יְשֵׁרָאֵל

4. בָּרֵךְ עָלֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת

5. נָתַתָּ לָּנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ תּוֹרַת חַיִּים

Search and Circle

Read each word below. Find and circle the words of the שְׁמַע.

Say the words aloud as you find each one.

1. שְׁמַע לָיְלָה לְבַשְׂרֵי הַמְבֹרָ קָהַל שְׁמַע יוֹם לָיְלָה אֶת שֵׁם הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל שַׁבָּת בָּרְכוּ

2. בָּרוּךְ שֶׁבֶטֶת שְׁמַע לְבַשְׂרֵי הַמְבֹרָ קָהַל שְׁמַעYoֹם לָיְלָה אֶת שֵׁם הָאָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל שַׁבָּת בָּרְכוּ

3. מֶלֶךְ לְעָלָם מִלְכוֹתֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וָעֶד אֲשֶׁר בָּרוּךְ תּוֹרָה

4. מִלְכוֹתֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וָעֶד אֲשֶׁר בָּרוּךְ תּוֹרָה

5. בָּרוּךְ מֶלֶךְ לְעָלָם מִלְכוֹתֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וָעֶד אֲשֶׁר בָּרוּךְ תּוֹרָה

Put a ✓ next to the word that is also a number.
Understanding God’s Love

How do parents show they love their children? List some examples below:

Some prayers refer to God as a parent (אָב—“father”). The two blessings before the שְׁמַע say that God shows love for us by giving us the Torah—rules and laws by which to live our lives.

A Different שְׁמַע Melody

Listen to the version of the שְׁמַע written by Svika Pick.

How is the Pick version different from the traditional melody?


Does this version help you understand the שְׁמַע in a different way? Explain your answer.


Think of the times people say the שְׁמַע—morning, night, and bedtime. Which time do you think fits best with the Pick melody? Which time fits best with the traditional melody?

Go online to hear another version of the שְׁמַע tune.

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Sharpen Your Focus

In a prayer service, in class, or when you’re alone, try chanting the שְׁמַע while concentrating deeply. We call that praying with כּּּוּ—with intention or purposefulness. We try to pray with כּּּוּ by being fully present and by focusing on the words we are saying. What will you do to help yourself focus? Perhaps choose a quiet space, close your eyes, or block out other thoughts.

After your prayer, write your reflections:

After chanting the שְׁמַע I felt…

Concentrating was hard/easy (circle one) for me because…

I could/could not (circle one) keep bringing myself back to my כּּוּ, my intention, while praying because…

My thoughts about using this approach in future tefillah experiences are…
The Blessings Before the שמע: God’s Love for Israel

Below are selections from the blessings said before the שמע in the evening and morning services. Read the Hebrew and English and answer the questions in “At the Root.”

In the evening.

אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם בִּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.

You have always loved

Your people Israel,

teaching us Torah and

mitzvot, statutes, and laws…

Praised are you Adonai,

who loves God’s people Israel.

In the morning.

אַהֲבָה רַבָּה.

You have loved us with a deep love,

Adonai Our God…

And instill in our hearts…

All the teachings

of your Torah with love…

Praised are You Adonai, who chooses

God’s people Israel with love.

At the Root

Words built on the root אַהֲבָה אֲהַבְתָּנוּ have to do with “love.” Circle the words on the right built on this root. How many words did you circle?

According to these blessings, how does God show love for us?

Why do you think the blessings before the שמע focus on God’s love for us?
The Prayer after the שְׁמַע: Loving God

The prayer after the שְׁמַע is the וְאָהַבְתָּ. Circle the three root letters in the word וְאָהַבְתָּ. Read these lines from the וְאָהַבְתָּ and answer the questions.

You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

And these words, which I command you this day, will be upon your heart.

What’s in a Name?

With a partner, take turns reading the line that follows the שְׁמַע. Try saying it in a softer voice, the way some congregations do.

Praised is the name of God’s glorious kingdom forever and ever.

Note how the prayer says “the name of God’s glorious kingdom.” It is a Jewish value to live your life so that you have a שם טוב, a “good name.” What does the term “a good name” mean to you?

Think of someone you know who has a שם טוב. What did that person do to earn it?
Phrases on the Fly

Divide into groups of two or three. Have one member of the group read the first word on the line. Then have a second member read the second word, and so on. Then read the phrase together as a group, blending the phrase smoothly while drawing an arch in the air with your arm.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
כָּבָל לְבָבְךָ וּבָכֵל נַפְשְׁךָ
אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ
אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם
אַהֲבָה רַבָּה אֲהַבְתָּנוּ

Love, Love, Love

You found the root אהב in the blessings before and after the שמע. Now read the prayer phrases below. Then circle all the words with the root אהב.

שלום רב לאהבי תורהך
אהוב עדכיה ומשפתי
ימוד לבבניא לאוהבי ולייראת אמת שמע
באוהבי וכרזו שמח קרישה
שומרني ני זאות כל אהביה

Words with the root אהב have ______________ as part of their meaning.
Our Connections

You may be surprised at all the ways you are connected to others in your community. Let’s try an experiment. Approach several classmates. Write each person’s Hebrew name, or their English name in Hebrew letters, in one box below. Find out, then write below the name, one thing that connects you. For example, you both play on the same soccer team, or you were both born in July.

Did you learn something new about your classmates? How did that change the connection you feel to them?

Are there other people in your life you wish you were more connected to? How can you make that happen?

Big Idea!

When we say the שְׁמַע, it reminds us to act as if the world is connected. Our actions matter. If God is One and the Creator of all, then we are all connected! Next time you say the שְׁמַע, try to remember all the ways you are connected to other people.
I am Echad
Because...

In the space on the right create a self-portrait showing what makes you unique. You can draw or write. Include your talents, passions, or activities you like to do.

Counting to Ten

Circle the word that means a number in the sentence שמע ישራל ו אלהינו יי אחד.

What is the number? [ ]

We count in Hebrew using the numbers listed below. Play a game with a partner. Hold up one to ten fingers. Ask your partner to say that number in Hebrew. Then try it without looking at the page. After that, switch.

1. אחד
2. שניים
3. שלש
4. ארבעה
5. חמישה
6. שישה
7.七星
8. שמונה
9. התשע
10. עשר
Count It Up

Draw a line from the Hebrew word for each number to its matching digit.

7 אַחַת 3 אַרְבַּע
1 חָמֵש 2 שְׁמוֹנֶה
9 נֵשֶׁע 4 שֶׁמוֹנֶה
6 נְבֵע 10 שֵׁשֶׁת
5 חָשֶׁע

Challenge: With a partner, toss a ball back and forth, counting from 1 to 10. You can refer to the numbers on page 14.

Sounds Like...

Sometimes the vowel א has the sound of the vowel “ו.”

Practice reading the words and phrases below. Be sure to say “ו” when you see the vowel א at the beginning or middle of the words. Then circle the words below that are in the וְאָהַבְתָּ on page 11.

1 כֹּל אֶזְנֵיָם וּכְלְכָל הַלֵּילוֹת וּכְלַכְל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְשָׁכְבְךָ
2 לְבַשׁ בֹּכְלִים בְּכָל הַלֵּילוֹת
My Musical Journey: שְׁמַע

*Compose your שְׁמַע music by filling in the responses below.*

To me the most important Hebrew word in the שְׁמַע is ______________ because

The שְׁמַע connects me to Judaism by

I am like other Jews who sing the שְׁמַע because

My favorite melody for the שְׁמַע is ______________ because

For me, praying with כַּוָּנָה means

One thing I learned about the שְׁמַע from a friend is