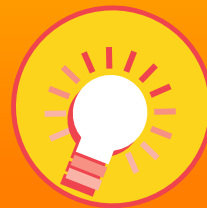


The Shema

(Ancient prayer)



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

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Jewish faith

Matches the requirements of the Literacy Strategy and designed to integrate with the study of world religions. (This material is independent of any specific text book and can be used alongside any publisher's books including our Jewish Faith, Synagogue, Jewish art and writing and Jewish holy days books.)

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Unit 10: The Shema

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The Shema

The Shema is the oldest prayer in Judaism. It is made up of three passages from the Jewish Bible – the Torah. Many Jews recite the Shema twice each day.

The first part of the Shema tells Jews to remember and teach the lessons of the Torah. It also tells Jews to write the words of the Shema on the doorposts of their houses and to wear them on their hands and between their eyes. To fulfill this commandment, some Jews wear special pouches, called tefillin on their foreheads and arms when they pray. The tefillin contain copies of the Shema. Many Jews also have a small decoration, called a mezuzah, on their doorways which contains a copy of the Shema. Here is the first part of the Shema:

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.
Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.
And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
And these words that I give you today shall be in your heart.
And you shall teach them to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.
And you shall wear them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be worn between your eyes.
And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The second part of the Shema is about the rewards for following the commandments and the punishment for not following them. This is some of the second part:

And it shall come to pass if you surely listen to the commandments that I command you today
To love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul,
That I will give rain to your land, the early and the late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine and your oil.
And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle and you will eat and you will be satisfied.
Beware, if you turn and serve other gods and worship them.
Anger of the Lord will blaze against you, and he will close the heavens and there will not be rain,
and the earth will not give you its fullness, and you will perish quickly from the good land that the Lord gives you.

The third part of the Shema tells the Jewish people to wear strings or fringes, called tzitzit, on their clothing as a reminder of the commandments. This part also reminds Jews to remember the way that God saved them from slavery in

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
Speak to the children of Israel and say to them
they should make themselves tzitzit on the corners of their clothing
throughout their generations,
And when you look at them you will remember all of the Lord's commandments and do them
In order to remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.
I am the Lord, your God, who lead you from the land of Egypt to be a God to you.
I am the Lord, your God.



Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write a sentence in which you found the word '**commandment**'.

b From that sentence, write what you think '**commandment**' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word '**commandment**'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to '**commandment**'.

e What is an example of a '**commandment**'.



Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: special	exceptional

3

Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

1 Write a heading for your summary.

2 Now write the main idea in one sentence.
e.g. "This story tells us..."

3 Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,
can you rewrite your
summary to make it better?**

- 1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.**
- 2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.**
- 3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.**
- 4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?**

**There is
nothing wrong
with rewriting; even
the best authors
rewrite their
work.**

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

I am the Lord, your God, who lead you from the land of Egypt to be a God to you.

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

And when you look at them you will remember all of the Lord's commandments and do them and not follow after your heart and after your eyes.

That I will give rain to your land, the early and the late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine and your oil.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Anger of the Lord will blaze against you, and he will close the heavens and there will not be rain.



Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.



Write a sentence to answer each of these questions:

- (a) What is the name of the pouch that some Jews wear on the arms and foreheads when they pray?
- (b) What are Jews commanded to do in the third line of the Shema?
- (c) In the first part of the Shema, where does God command his words to be written?
- (d) In the third part of the Shema, what does God tell the Jews to wear on the corners of their clothing?
- (e) In the first part of the Shema, who does God command to be taught?



Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.

1 In part two of the Shema, what is the reward for loving and serving God?

2 In part two of the Shema, what is the punishment for serving and worshipping other gods?

3 What are tzitzit remind people to do?

4 In the first part of the Shema, what are the four times or places when Jews should speak of the word of God?



Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

- 1 This prayer is said twice each day by observant Jews as part of the morning and evening worship service. Does it seem like a long prayer to say twice each day?
- 2 In the fifth line, Gods commands people to speak about his commandments at four different times or places. What are some ways people might do this? For example, could they fulfill the command to speak about the commandments “when you lie down” by praying at bedtime?
- 3 Why are people commanded to wear tzitzit?
- 4 What part of the Shema tells people to wear tefillin? Does the Shema use the word tefillin or pouches?
- 5 In this prayer, Jews are commanded to remember different things. What are some of the things Jews are commanded to remember?



Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.



Discussion topic: Punishment

Discuss the punishments and rewards in the second part of the Shema. Do these seem like very harsh punishments and very good rewards? Do you think these punishments may have seemed much worse thousands of years ago, when people depended on the rains and on the crops?



Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.



Explain the Shema

Your friend is curious about what is in the Shema. You begin to tell them about each part of the prayer...

(Now describe what each part of the Shema prayer is about; what commands are in each part – these start with “you shall”; and the different ways that some Jews obey the commands.)

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And these words that I give you today shall be in your heart.

And you shall teach them to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.

And you shall wear them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be worn between your eyes.

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Beware, if you turn and serve other gods and worship them.

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And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying

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they should make themselves tzitzit on the corners of their clothing throughout their generations,

And when you look at them you will remember all of the Lord's commandments and do them

In order to remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

I am the Lord, your God, who lead you from the land of Egypt to be a God to you.

I am the Lord, your God.