

שמע  
Sh'ma

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.

HEAR O ISRAEL, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va-ed.

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל *Sh'ma Yisrael* . . . *Hear, O Israel* . . . Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a single unit. (The line שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל *Sh'ma Yisrael* is Deuteronomy 6:4). Israel is called upon to be totally devoted to God, whose Torah is to be ever-present in our waking thoughts. The Rabbis call the content of this paragraph "Accepting the Yoke of Divine Sovereignty" (*M. B'rachot* 2:2). The first verse is singled out for special focus: over the centuries it was understood to refer to the unity and singularity of God. It also came to be associated with Jewish martyrdom. These are the last words to be recited before going to bed at night as well as before one's death. Classical Reform Judaism treated this verse as the core statement of Jewish faith. Hence the Reform custom has been to rise before reciting the *Sh'ma*. Rabbi Yochanan taught that the entire first paragraph should be said standing (*B'rachot* 13*b*). Historically, following the old Babylonian custom, one remains seated.

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד *Baruch shem k'vod* . . . *Blessed is God's glorious majesty* . . . According to *M. Yoma* 3:8, this was the congregational response in the Temple courtyard on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would pronounce the name of God and the people would prostrate themselves in awe. Classical Reform practice grouped this response with the *Sh'ma* for singing or congregational recitation; traditionally it is recited silently because it interrupts the biblical paragraph.

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