

Epistemology of Tefila(Class 18) - 8/17/2020 — Shema and its Brachot part 4

Recap

1. The first line of the Shema contains the fundamental principle of Jewish faith that HaShem is Omnipotent. And we thereby accept the Yoke of Heaven/Ol Malchut Shamayim, HaShem's absolute sovereignty.
2. The second line, Baruch Shem Kavod means "May the revelation of the glory of HaShem's Kingdom be increased forever" and is our wish for the Geulah/Final Redemption when the whole world will acknowledge HaShem's oneness.
3. The first paragraph consists of the 5 verses after the Shema in Devarim/Deuteronomy(6:5 - 9 Parshat Va'etchanan) and they focus on the commandment to love HaShem.
4. The second paragraph are the verses from Devarim/Deuteronomy(11:13-21 Parshat Eikev) and they focus on the practical observance as a means to attain oneness with HaShem.
5. The third paragraph are the verses from Bamidbar/Numbers(15:37-41 Parshat Shelach) which contains the five basic ideas of Judaism :
 1. Awareness of Hashem(through the Tzizit)
 2. Acceptance of the Mitzvot
 3. Suppression of heresy
 4. Avoidance of sinful thoughts
 5. Redemption from Egypt

Class Strategy

Today we now continue with the brachot that precede the Shema and its paragraphs and those that conclude the section. As mentioned before there are two Brachot before in Shacharit/Morning service and Ma'ariv/Evening service but only one after for Shacharit/Morning service but two/three for Ma'ariv/Evening service.

The table on the next page shows the layout of the Brachot before and after the Shema:

BRACHOT OF THE SHEMA

PAGE NUMBERS (RCA ARTSCROLL)	Daily Shacharit	Shabbat Shacharit		Daily Ma'ariv	Shabbat Ma'ariv
First Bracha before Shema					
Yotzer HaMeorot/Who fashions the luminaries	88	412	Hama'ariv Aravim/Who brings evenings	258	330
Second Bracha before Shema					
Habocher beamo Yisrael BeAhavah/Who chooses His people Israel with love	90	414	Oheiv Amo Yisrael/Who loves His nation Israel	258	330
First Bracha after Shema					
Ga'al Yisrael/ Who redeemed Israel	96	420	Ga'al Yisrael/Who redeemed Israel	262	334
Second Bracha after Shema					
	None	None	Homer Amo Yisrael Le'ad/ Who protects His people Israel forever	264	336
Third Bracha after Shema only added in Daily Ma'ariv					
	None	None	Tamid Yimloch Aleinu Le'olam Va'ed/He Shall constantly reign over us forever and ever.....	266	None

BRACHOT OF THE SHEMA

PAGE NUMBERS (THE KOREN)	Daily Shacharit	Shabbat Shacharit		Daily Ma'ariv	Shabbat Ma'ariv
First Bracha before Shema					
Yotzer HaMeorot/Who fashions the luminaries	95	467	Hama'ariv Aravim/Who brings evenings	245	335
Second Bracha before Shema					
Habocheh beamo Yisrael BeAhavah/Who chooses His people Israel with love	97	469	Oheiv Amo Yisrael/Who loves His nation Israel	245	337
First Bracha after Shema					
Ga'al Yisrael/ Who redeemed Israel	107	479	Ga'al Yisrael/Who redeemed Israel	251	343
Second Bracha after Shema					
	None	None	Homer Amo Yisrael Le'ad/ Who protects His people Israel forever	253	343
Third Bracha after Shema only added in Daily Ma'ariv					
	None	None	Tamid Yimloch Aleinu Le'olam Va'ed/He Shall constantly reign over us forever and ever.....	255	None

1. First bracha before the Shema for Shacharit Daily, Shabbat and Yom Tov

The Brachot of the Shema follow after Barechu or more exactly begins with Baruch atah HaShem....Oseh shalom UVoreh Et Hakol(RCA page 84, KOREN page 89). Bracha is found in the paragraph LeKel Baruch/To the Blessed G-d(RCA page 88, KOREN page 95). Rabbi Sacks(pg 94) says the theme of these preceding paragraphs and this bracha is about creation and that HaShem renews the creation daily. Rav Munk(pg 93) explains that since light was the first thing HaShem created it is the greatest gift he gives us everyday with the first ray of morning light that renews the universe each day At the beginning of the paragraphs of this blessing we start with the words "Kel Baruch - Blessed G-d and now in the last paragraph that ends with the actual blessing we return to this theme by again praising HaShem for his creation and in particularly the heavenly luminaries/radiations(RCA page 88). Rav Schwab(pg 288) says we use the plural as we are thanking haShem for creating both physical and spiritual light. Rabbi Twerski(pg 134) says this bracha impresses on us the need for clarity of thought, of distinguishing between the light of truth and the darkness we get by following our earthly desires and to have a goal to achieve true perception for our spiritual needs.

2. Second bracha before the Shema for Shacharit Daily, Shabbat and Yom Tov.

This Bracha is found in the paragraph Ahavah Rabah/With an abundant love(RCA page 88/9, KOREN page 97). Rabbi Sacks(pg 94) says the theme of this paragraph and this bracha is about revelation of the Torah and that HaShem has given it to us with love. Up till now we have thanked HaShem for lights of the heavens but there is a greater light and that is the light of the Torah and we now in this bracha thank HaShem for the Torah and ask that He grant us wisdom to understand it properly(RCA page 89). Rabbi Twerski(pg 135)says that the point of this bracha is to tell us of the love of HaShem for Israel and a prayer for enlightenment in His Torah. He quotes the Rambam saying this is done by observing greatness and wondrous nature of HaShem's works. Rabbi Potash says (page 195/6) we use the Ahavat Rabah/Abundant Love for the Shacharit blessing as it is in the morning when there is light that HaShem's love for us is more apparent.

In conclusion(Rabbi Potash pg 195) in this blessing we show our intense desire to draw close to HaShem and fulfill His Torah and mitzvot and this should be our concentration on this blessing.

3. First bracha after the Shema for Shacharit Daily, Shabbat and Yom Tov

This Bracha is found in the paragraph following the Shema that begins Tzur Yisrael/Rock of Israel (RCA page 96, KOREN page 107). Rabbi Sacks(pg 94) says the theme of the paragraphs and this bracha is about redemption connecting the redemption of the past when HaShem brought us out of Egypt/Yetziat Mitzrayim to the future in our belief that will again redeem us because of His covenant with Bnei Yisrael/Children of Israel. So this bracha continues our commitment to recall Yetziat Mitzrayim/The Exodus morning and night(RCA page 95). The Talmud in Berachot(12a) Chazal/our sages teach us that one who omits this morning or evening blessing has not fulfilled ones obligation. The Yerushalmi Talmud(Berachot 1:6) lists the following must be mentioned(Rabbi Travis pg 215) :

- Exodus from Egypt
- HaShem's Kingship
- Splitting of Sea of Reeds
- Killing of the Firstborn
- HaShem as the Rock and Redeemer of Israel

The morning section begins with the words Emet veyatziv/Truth and Certain which focuses on Hashem's kindness of redeeming us as from the verse in Psalms(92:3) LeHagid baboker chasdecha/to relate Your kindness at dawn(RCA pg 96). In this first paragraph we use 15 different affirmations of the Shema. One opinion as given by Rav Munk(page 86) as in King David's fifteen "Songs of Ascent" the number fifteen is used to reflect highest degree attainable in praise of HaShem. Another opinion is from the Talmud where 15 was the symbol for creation based on Yehshaya/Isiah(26:4) Ki BKah/Because in G-d using only the two letter name of a letter Yud the perfect 10 that created the perfect world and the letter Hay with numerical value 5 which created the imperfect world which adds to 15 the letters of the Divine Name(Rav Munk page 86). A third opinion is from Rabbi Twerski(pg146/7) who says these correspond to the 15 favors enumerated in Dayenu and thereby we show that we believe the ultimate goodness of everything HaShem does even if we may feel it is not good.

The paragraph starting Tzur Yisrael/Rock of Israel contains the bracha that reminds us to have faith of another greater redemption to come and we pledge that we believe HaShem will rise up again to redeem us from this exile/Galut. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch says the the reason we say Gaal Yisrael as the text for the bracha is because only after we have set forth our faith in Hashem as our redeemer can we begin the Amidah where we will bring our personal and national requests before HaShem. Rabbi Travis(pg 218/9) says these paragraphs after the Shema prepare Us for the powerful prayer of the Amidah and a Jew who completes the recitation of these concepts with great devotion will be able to stand before HaShem and have his requests granted.

One note we say the end of this bracha at Shacharit silently so as not to interrupt with Amen and thereby break the connection between this prayer with our Amidah where we will pray as our requests for the future redemption(Rabbi sacks page 102). Further more Rabbi Twerski(pg 149) says it is the concept of our unique freedom of choice as humans which allows us to choose to be servants of HaShem. So after we accept His sovereignty with the Shema our prayers must flow uninterrupted into the Amidah which is the zenith of our prayers.