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The Mitzvah To Recite Kerias Shema Shema: Awakening Your Soul's Inner Will

The *Sefer HaChinuch* [\[1\]](#) writes that the *mitzvah* to say the *Shema*, which is twice a day, at morning and at night, is given to us because we must “accept the rule of Hashem” (*kabalas ol malchus shomayim*), and in addition, because it will get one used to avoiding sin.

If so, there are two reasons why we recite *Shema*. One reason is because our declaration of *Shema* is where we accept ourselves the yoke of Heaven, and in addition, this saves us from sinning.

It is also apparent from the words of the *Sefer HaChinuch* that “accepting upon ourselves the rule of Hashem” when we recite the *Shema* does not mean to simply “remember” that Hashem exists, when we say *Shema*. Rather, it means to accept Hashem’s rule over us in our very **soul**.

Our body, though, isn’t capable of this acceptance; our body rebels. Only our soul can accept Hashem’s rule over us. The soul in us wants to do the right thing and it yearns only to do only Hashem’s will.

Therefore, reciting *Kerias Shema* is meant to awaken our soul’s inner will, which is the will to do Hashem’s will. It is not just to superficially “remember” Hashem when we say *Shema*. This is the main point of accepting Hashem’s rule upon us: it is not about trying to subjugate our body to Hashem, rather, **to awaken our soul’s inner will**.

So when we recite *Shema*, we must awaken our soul’s will. How to do this exactly depends on each person, and everyone is different in this aspect. But the common denominator is, that all people need to awaken their innermost point of their soul, when they say *Shema*.

Awakening The Heart Each Day When We Say Shema

We have inner and outer layers in our soul. Some people are in touch with the more inner layers of the soul when they *daven*, and some are only davening through the outer layers of their soul when they *daven*. But when we say the *Shema*, we must each say it from the innermost depths of our soul - from our deepest point.

Although one still fulfills the *mitzvah* of *Shema* without this awareness, he will be missing the whole point of the *mitzvah*, if he doesn’t say it from the deepest point in himself.

Shema is about awakening the deepest point in our soul. From that, we can accept upon ourselves

Hashem's rule. It will then influence our body in turn and help us overcome our rebellious bodily drives.

Many people are not used to this concept when they recite *Shema*, but if someone gets used to this on a daily basis, he will reveal a whole new depth to his life. His inner point of the soul will become more and more sharpened as he continues to do this. He will reveal more and more depth to his soul, and be able to reach the innermost point of his heart. He can continue to reveal more and more depth to his heart, with the more gets used to this each day.

Our Avodah: Affecting Our Mind and Heart

One part of our life's task is that our **mind**\brain has to become filled with Torah. The other part of our life is that our **heart** must be penetrated, more and more, and to fill it with the truth.

The Sages say, "Hashem wants the heart." There are "50 Gates of *Binah*\Understanding", and the *sefarim hakedeoshim* explain that these "gates of understanding" are in the heart. One's general mission is to keep entering more and more inward, until he finally gets to the innermost point of our heart - which is to find the complete closeness with Hashem there. As it is written, "*The rock of my heart and my portion is G-d*".

The outer layer of our heart contains our *yetzer hora* (evil inclination); this is known as the *orlas halev*, the "blockage on our heart", which is present on the outer layer of our heart. This is basically referring to the pull towards materialistic pursuits. Even more so, the bad *middos* of every person are also contained there.

How To Penetrate Into The Heart

We need to penetrate this outer layer of our heart, by avoiding materialism.^[2] A person also needs to find out what his worst *middah* is and obliterate it, and through that, he will be able to penetrate into the essence of the heart.

A person needs constant prayer to Hashem for this for assistance.

The Innermost Point of the Heart

After overcoming our pull toward physicality and our bad *middos*, we then can reach the innermost point of our heart, and then we are truly able to accept Hashem's rule over us. If a person doesn't try to overcome physical desires and bad *middos*, his heart remains concealed from him, and he will not be able to truly accept upon himself the rule of Hashem.

Learning Torah and doing mitzvos is the first basic step to accomplish this, but in addition, saying *Shema* awakens our inner point of the heart, which in turn reveals it more and more. It can awaken our inner point not just twice a day when we say *Shema*, but throughout the rest of day as well.

This does not mean that it will become a 24|7 feeling of awareness of Hashem, but it creates a deep awareness of Hashem on a much more constant basis, each person on his own level. It transforms a person entirely.

In Summary

In summary, we must work to overcome our materialistic desires, together with working to overcome our worst *middah* [And we need to *daven* to Hashem for this]. Together with this, when we say *Shema*, we should say it with the intention that we are trying to awaken the inner will of our soul, the

innermost point of our heart.

Besides for concentrating on the words of the *Shema*, which is the *halacha*, we also have to be aware that we are trying to awaken our heart's innermost point, as we say it.

This is one of the greatest forms of *avodah* that exists.

Feeling Hashem All Day

We have explained here a great root in how to serve the Creator.

Most people do not feel that Hashem is seeing all their actions, because they live so deeply entrenched in materialism. But when a person gets used to accepting Hashem's rule over himself, he will start to feel all the time that Hashem is watching him.

This does not mean a kind of inspiration that comes and goes, but an attitude to live with through life. It is not a thought to have, but rather to enter a life in which a person **clearly** recognizes that Hashem sees him all the time.

Every day, if a person says *Shema* with this awareness to awaken the inner will of his soul (and this is not just something you **want** to reach, but what you can **actually** reach as you recite *Shema*!), he will awaken the light of his soul, and this will help him realize that Hashem sees him all the time.

This will not just be an intellectual knowledge to a person, but as a real feeling – he will truly sense all the time that Hashem is watching him. Through this, he will constantly be running to do Hashem's will.

The only thing that holds us back is our body, which gets us to sin and pursue its desires. But when we accept Hashem's rule over us during *Shema*, we can reveal the holiness of our soul, and this will illuminate our existence to only pursue what Hashem wants.

In Conclusion

May we be *zoche* to reveal the depth of our souls as we recite *Shema*, until we each get to the innermost part of our selves – the place in which Hashem dwells (as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes, that Hashem is inside a person, because He is everywhere. He resides in our heart, in the innermost chamber, which we have to get to.)

[1] *Sefer HaChinuch*: 420

[2] For suggestions on how to stop being materialistic, See ***Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus, Chapter 020, Avoiding Materialism.***

Source: <http://bilvavi.net/english/giving-meaning-your-mitzvos-020-shema>