

שמע: Concentrate on these two thoughts before you say

1. I WILL NOW FULFILL THE מצות עשה, THE POSITIVE COMMANDMENT, TO RECITE THE שמע.

2. BY RECITING THE שמע, I ACCEPT UPON MYSELF עול מלכות שמים, HASHEM'S ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY.

שמע ישראל, ה' אלרינו, ה' אחד:

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד

When I say the שמע - especially the first פסוק - I am declaring that Hashem is our G-d. I am accepting upon myself, Hashem - the Master of the World - as the One and Only G-d.

When I say אחד ה', I am reminding myself that everything in the world and everything I have comes only from Hashem. I therefore dedicate my heart, soul, and all that I have to serving Hashem and keeping His מצוות. This is עול מלכות שמים.

When I say שם ברוך, I have in mind that having proclaimed Hashem as our King, I am grateful for the privilege of serving the One Whose Kingdom is eternal and infinite.

The Shulchan Aruch in ס"ק ה' rules that one who does not have proper כוונה when saying the first פסוק of שמע has not fulfilled the מצוה and קבלת עול מלכות שמים.

הקורא את שמע ולא כוון את לבו בפסוק הראשון שהוא שמע ישראל, לא יצא ידי חובתו. כוונה זו הוא להתבונן ולשום על לבו מה שהוא אומר ולכן היא. The Mishnah Breurah adds: לעיכובא רק בפסוק ראשון שיש בו עיקר קבלת עול מלכות שמים ואחדותו ית'.

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- I will now fulfill the מצות עשה to recite שמע.
- By reciting the שמע, I accept upon myself עול מלכות שמים Hashem's Absolute Sovereignty.

The Force of Habit  
54,516 Mitzvos Gained...or Lost

When you do something often enough - whether that something is good or bad - it becomes your natural way of acting - a habit.

Imagine the terrible result of having a habit of saying the שמע without כוונה. Between the age of 13 and 90, you would have lost 54,516 opportunities to fulfill the מצוה דאורייתא קבלת עול מלכות שמים, even if you say the שמע twice every day.

But imagine the power of a good habit, of stopping for just a mere five seconds before reciting the שמע and thinking about the two כוונות you should have. Each day in which you recite the שמע properly is a day in which you fulfill this incredible מצוה of עול מלכות שמים and imagine the difference between a day in which you fulfill this מצוה and a day in which you do not. Then multiply by an entire lifetime!

This sticker is for you to use as a tool to build this new, tremendously powerful habit. Train yourself to look at it, each and every time, before you say the שמע. In just 40 days, you will find that this new habit has been formed. Your eyes will turn to the sticker and your mind will focus on the כוונה you should have.

Think about it. Five seconds, twice a day. 54,516 chances to be מקבל עול מלכות שמים. How can you possibly afford to miss this opportunity?

The large sticker is designed to be affixed to the inside front cover of your siddur. You may turn to this sticker immediately before you recite the Shema, or you may affix the small sticker to the page in your siddur where the Shema appears.