

# GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

[www.gatherthepeople.org](http://www.gatherthepeople.org)

## FAMILY SIDUR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 12

### LAST WEEK WE TALKED ABOUT THE SHEMA ON PAGE 30

- *Why do you think we call this prayer the “שמע”?* What’s the meaning of the word שמע?
- Many of our prayers are named by the first word or two of the prayer.
- *So who are we speaking to when we say “hear” this prayer? Are we asking God to listen to our prayer?*
- *Why should we want to pray to ourselves?*

### WE HAVE ALSO TALKED ABOUT THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE שמע.

- We said that the שמע is not just the first couple of lines on page 30, but the three paragraphs that follow those lines.
- The first paragraph is a list of things we’re to do.
- And it says we’re to do them because we love God.

### SO LET’S GO ON TO THE SECOND PARAGRAPH.

- Someone please read the first sentence of the second paragraph in English for us.
- *What is this sentence saying?*
  1. *What does the first part say?* (If you will earnestly heed the מצוות I give you this day, to love Adonai your God and to serve God with all your heart and all your soul....)
  2. *What does the second part of the sentence say?* (...then I will favor your land with rain at the proper season, in autumn and in spring, and you will have an ample harvest of grain, wine and oil.)
  3. *So what’s the idea here? What is God promising us?*
- *Is it true that only good things happen to people who do what’s right and only bad things happen to people who do wrong?*
  1. *Have you ever done anything bad and not been caught?*
  2. *Have you ever done anything good that no one knew about or that wasn’t appreciated by anyone?*

- *So what does it mean in the second paragraph of the וַחֲזַן when it says, “If you surely will listen to my commandments. . .” everything will go well for you?*
- *Who is this paragraph is talking about?*
  1. *Is it each one of us as individuals?*
  2. *Or is it talking about all of us together as a class or congregation?*
- *Have you ever been in a class in school when a couple of students misbehaved and, because of them, the teacher punished the whole class by canceling a party or field trip or by assigning everyone extra work?*
- *Or have you ever had a teacher who gave your class a special treat because the whole class was good?*
- So it’s like that with God:
  1. This paragraph is not just about how each of us individually should follow the commandments, but how if all of us together follow them, we’re going to have the good things mentioned in the prayer.
  2. So we not only have to help ourselves to do better but have to help other people as well, especially those who have a hard time doing the right thing.
- One of the things it’s important to understand about the Torah and the וַחֲזַן is that most often they speak to us not as individuals but as a community or whole people—which partly explains the survival and success of the Jewish people for thousands of years, far beyond what historians thought was possible.

**BUT ISN’T ALSO TRUE THAT EVEN WHEN *EVERYONE* IS GOOD, SOMETIMES BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO US.**

- *Have you ever been in a situation when something bad happened to a group of good students?*
- Once, many years ago, I lived in a small town that had just built a beautiful new high school building—the old building had been very old and the students hated it—and the new building accidentally caught fire and burned down.
  1. The students hadn’t done anything wrong—they loved the new building.
  2. But they lost their new school and all their belongings that were in the building when it caught fire.
- That doesn’t seem right, because the second paragraph of the וַחֲזַן says if we do the right things, good things will happen for us.
  1. But sometimes doing the right thing means taking care of one another.
  2. So when something bad happens, we’re not alone.

3. Sometimes it means that when something bad happens, we help other people and they help us.
- So this second paragraph of the שמע applies to us not only as individuals, each of us alone, but as a community, all of us together.
- The Hebrew word for community is צבור and the meaning of that word is a *gathering of people so that they don't become lost as individuals.*

**LET'S GO ON TO THE THIRD PARAGRAPH OF THE שמע ON PAGE 31.**

- Someone please read the first two sentences in English.
- *Does anyone know the English word for תציצ? [FRINGES]*
- *And what are תציצ?*
- *What does it mean to put them on?*
  1. *Have you ever come to תפיש services in the morning?*
  2. *What do people put on before they pray in the morning?* [טלית WITH תציצ]
  3. *Have you ever seen someone, probably an Orthodox Jew, wearing a טלית קטן, a kind of an undershirt with תציצ?*
- *What does the second sentence of this paragraph say?*
  1. If we look at the תציצ we will be reminded.
  2. *Does anyone know when in the morning service we “look” at the תציצ?* [שמוע ברוך שאמר AND שמע]
- *What are we to be reminded about when we look at the תציצ?*
  1. *How many threads and knots are on each fringe?*
  2. With eight threads and five knots, each fringe has the numerical value of 13, which is added to the numerical value of the letters making up the Hebrew word for תציצ.
  3. תציצ is spelled צ-י-צ—since צ is equal to 90 and י is equal to 10 two times, and ת is equal to 400, the word has the numerical value of 600, which is added to the 13 of the eight threads and five knots.
  4. *What does that add up to?*
  5. The total numerical value is 613, the number of commandments in the Torah.
  6. So when we look at the תציצ, we're to be reminded of the מצוות.
- It means to get in the habit of thinking about how, as we go through the day, we can treat others fairly and with kindness, and take care to do the other things that God asks of us.
- It's another important thing to remember about Judaism: We have many rituals, things we do over and over again, to remind us of things that are very important but which are easy to forget when we're caught up in what we have to do every day, like our work or school.

- We're also reminded not to be "led astray" by our eyes.
  1. *What do you think that means?*
  2. It means not to make the *things* we love so important that we forget what God wants us to love.
  3. *What are some of the things you really love?*
  4. *What are some of the things God wants you to love*
- *How are the תצ"צ tied?*
  1. You need a piece of cloth with a small hole near one of the corners, and four pieces of string, one of them twice as long as the others.
  2. Hold the ends of the four strings together and pass them through the hole.
  3. Pull them through until they meet the ends of the three short pieces, and tie them all in a double knot.
  4. Take the long string and wind it around the others SEVEN times.
  5. Make another double knot.
  6. Wind the long thread around the others EIGHT times, and make another double knot.
  7. Wind the long string around the others ELEVEN times, and make another double knot.
  8. Wind the long thread around the others THIRTEEN more times.
  9. A final double knot completes your תצ"צ.