

# The Bedtime Sh'ma

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# Goodnight Sh'ma

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**THEME:** *Making Bedtime Moments Jewish Moments*

➤ Infants to 4 year olds   ➤ 45 minutes–1 hour

## Book Overview



**B**oth **Goodnight Shema** and **The Bedtime Shema** feature gentle verse and soft, serene illustrations which follow a young child as he/she prepares for bed. While **Goodnight Shema** focuses on the actions that one small boy takes before going to bed (i.e. reading a book, hugging a bear, reciting a prayer), **The Bedtime Shema** contains child-friendly verses, adapted from various psalms and prayers, which a parent and child recite as a young girl prepares for bed. Each book concludes with the timeless words of the Shema prayer.

## Program Goals & Activities

During the course of this program, families will explore several different ways of adding Jewish content their nightly bedtime routines. In addition to examining the words and meaning of the Shema, a traditional bedtime prayer, families will:

- Discover ways to incorporate the Shema and/or expressions of gratitude into bedtime rituals
- Learn several different tunes for the Shema prayer
- Create a beautiful framed bedtime sign which will encourage families to use bedtime as a time for expressing gratitude for all which has occurred over the course of the day

Additionally, children will create a delicious bedtime snack, and will “practice” putting their stuffed animals and dolls to sleep, while joyfully reciting the Shema.

## ADVANCED PREPARATIONS

- Choose a “comfy” space, one with soft floor that is conducive to cuddling
- Encourage children to bring a well-loved stuffed animal or doll
- Bring extra dolls and stuffed animals for those who forget to bring their own
- For larger groups, consider enlarging or projecting book illustrations
- Choose an introductory and follow-up activity that best suits your community

## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY #1: Creating a Starry Night Mural

*Mural will be used to help set the scene for the storytelling session.*

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Large sheet of black paper—cut from a roll of bulletin board paper, or created by stapling several pieces of black paper or craft foam or poster board together.
- Gold and silver mini stars—self-stick or the kind which are applied by licking

### ADVANCED PREPARATIONS:

- Tape the black paper to the floor or to several small, low tables, lined up in a row.
- Place small handfuls of stars in plastic containers or bowls so that each child will have his/her own supply of stars to work with.

### Introductory Remarks:

*In a few minutes we are going to read a book about bedtime and going to sleep:*

*When do you and your dolls and stuffed animals usually go to sleep?*

*Do you go to sleep when it's dark outside or when it's light outside?*

*That's right; we usually go to sleep when it's dark outside. So to help set the mood for our story, we're going to make our own night sky.*

*Can you help us add stars and moons to our sky?*

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Show children how to attach stars to the black paper.
2. When children have finished attaching their small supply of stars, encourage them to move on to Introductory Activity #2 – decorating a frame.

## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY #2: Decorating a Frame

*For the "Bedtime Picture" which will be created in the second half of the program*

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Frames cut from craft foam or construction paper (8.5 x 11 in.)
- Stickers (include star and moon stickers)
- Paper cut outs of stars and moons

## The Bedtime Shema / Goodnight Shema

- Cut-outs of the Hebrew letters—Shin, Mem, and Akin  
(for those families who would like to display Hebrew Letters on their frames)
- Handout with the word Shema, written in Hebrew
- Glue sticks or white/school glue, bowls, and q-tips
- Optional: sequins, jewels, foam shapes etc.

### Introductory Remarks:

*Later, we are going to make a special bedtime sign which can be taken home and hung in your bedroom. We hope that these beautiful signs will help you feel even more relaxed and comfortable at bedtime. Before you paint your bedtime sign, we want you to first decorate the frame which will surround your sign.*

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Encourage children to spread glue all around the edges of their frame
2. Ask children to select the shapes, sequins, etc. which they would like to use on their frame
3. Ask children to place their chosen materials on top of the glue.
4. Have several copies of the word Shema available, so that those who wish, will be able to see how to arrange the letters on their frame.

## Hints for Sharing the Book

### PROPS:

- Completed night sky
- Stuffed animal for the group leader
- Parents to hold up night sky

### Introducing the Book:

Invite all to come and join you, bringing their cuddle toys, leaving their art pieces at the table. Assure them that their work will be safe:

- As everyone settles in, welcome all; encourage little ones to snuggle with their parents. Have families briefly introduce themselves and their special cuddle toy.
- Pass out extra stuffed animals to those children who did not bring one from home.
- Comment on how busy everyone was today working on their projects

*Oh, I'm seeing lots of dolls and stuffed animals who are yawning—(demonstrate a few yawns) and looking very sleepy. I think that soon it's going to be time for us to put our toys to bed."*

- Ask parents to help you hold the completed starry night mural over the children's head.

*Look at what time it is? It's dark outside and the stars are out. That means it's time for the dolls and stuffed animals to go to sleep. How should we help them get ready for bed? What do you do before bedtime?*

- Ask for suggestions and encourage the entire group to pantomime gestures for whatever actions are suggested—brushing teeth, taking a bath, etc.

*In a few minutes, we're going to read a book that shows a child getting ready for bed. The child in our book does something very special before she (The Bedtime Shema) /he (Goodnight Shema) goes to sleep – He/she says a prayer. There are many different kinds of prayers that children and grown-ups can say at bedtime. Sometimes, people like to think of all of the special things that happened to them during the day and say thank you for those special things. Other people, before going to bed, like to think about something that they hope might happen tomorrow—For example someone might say—Tomorrow, I hope I have fun riding my bike. The child in our book says a special Hebrew prayer before he/she goes to sleep. The prayer is called Shema and its words are written and spoken in Hebrew. Can I teach you the words to this Prayer?*

- Ask the children to repeat the Shema words after you.

*The words of the Shema tell us that there is only one God. Does anyone know who or what God is? Many people have many different ideas and thoughts about God. I like to think of God as someone whom I can't see and whom I can't hear and whom I can't feel, but who is all around. Even though I can't see God, I think that God is very important. Many people believe that God helped to make the world, and helped to make everything that we see around us—The trees, the grass, the birds, and people.*

- Ask: *What else do you think that God helped to make?*

*Sometimes before, going to bed, people like to talk to God and say “thank you God for all of the special things that you gave me today.” Saying Shema is a way of talking to God and saying thank you. Let's read our book and discover what the child in our book likes to do and say before he/she goes to bed.*

### Follow Up Questions:

- What were some of the things that the child in this book did before going to bed?
- Whom did the child take to bed with him/her?
- Do you take someone special to bed with you?
- What did the child say before going to bed?

## ADAPTATIONS FOR GROUP SIZE AND AGE

**Older Children:** With *Bedtime Shema*—you may pause on the 1<sup>st</sup> page and encourage parents and children to quietly think about any “I’m sorry” moments that they may have had either today or during the past several days. Ask parents and children to quietly whisper these moments to one another.

**Younger Children:** If children get restless during the story reading, encourage them to hug and kiss their stuffed animals.

### FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY #1: Putting Stuffed Animals and Dolls to Bed

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ▶ Pieces of felt, 8.5 x 11—in a variety of colors
- ▶ Night sky mural (which was made during the introductory activities)

#### Introductory Remarks:

- ▶ Invite parents to help you stretch the night sky mural over the children's head

*"Ohh..., I see that it's getting dark out again. Look at how tired these dolls and stuffed animals are—They're eyes keep closing. I think that it's time for us to put our special friends to bed. (Pass out pieces of felt) Here are some blankets for our friends. Before we cover them up, let's help them wash their faces, brush their teeth, and read a book. Let's give them a hug and a kiss. Now, let's cover them with their blankets.*

- ▶ Pantomime each of the activities above.

*There's one more thing that we need to do before putting them to bed. Do you know what it is? We need to help them say Shema. Can you sing the words with me? Let's see if we can teach this prayer to our cuddly friends.*

- ▶ Sing Shema to animals, Pretend to let the stuffed animals sleep for a few seconds. Take down the night sky. Announce:

*"Morning time. Boker Tov. Everybody up."*

- ▶ Encourage children to throw back the covers and wake their dolls/stuffed animals.

*Hmm...I wonder what our friends will do today. Maybe they'll dance or go on the swings or help cook*

- ▶ Invite children to pantomime each of these actions.
- ▶ Ask parents to help (again) with putting up the black sky. Announce.

*"It's time for our friends to go to sleep again! What do they need to do? What's the last thing that they should do?"*

### FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY #2: Make a special bedtime snack



#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ▶ Animal crackers, Teddy Bear Crackers, or Gingerbread cookies.
- ▶ Jelly or cream cheese
- ▶ Brown whole wheat bread, each slice cut in half
- ▶ White bread or potato bread-cut in half and then cut into a 1/3 and 2/3 piece (to be used as pillows and blankets for the cookie children or animals).

### ADVANCED PREPARATIONS (OPTIONAL):

- Arrange small snack plates for each child—each plate should contain:
  - a heaping spoonful of jelly or cream cheese
  - Plastic spoons or knives
  - Both white and brown bread (cut into its proper size)
  - One gingerbread man or other animal shaped crackers.
  - raisins (optional)

### Introductory Remarks:

*Wow, you guys are experts on putting your special cuddly friends to bed. To celebrate your excellent skills at putting animals to sleep, we'd like you to make a special snack which involves making a comfy bed for a tasty little gingerbread boy or girl (or teddy bear) cracker.*

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Demonstrate how to make an edible bed. Using a spoon, Spread jelly or cream cheese onto a piece of brown wheat bread.
2. Place the smaller white piece of bread on top of the jelly/cream cheese (This white piece of bread will represent the cookie's pillow.)
3. Lie the ginger bread boy/girl down on top of the jelly or cream cheese with its head resting on top of the white pillow.
4. Cover the gingerbread boy/girl with the remaining piece of white bread (This piece of bread will function as the cookie's blanket.)
5. Optional: Use a raisin (torn into small pieces) to form facial features for the gingerbread boy/girl or for the teddy bear cracker.

## FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY #3: Make A Bedtime Sign



### MATERIALS:

- Liquid water color or food coloring mixed with water (The paints need to be substantially watered down, so picture and words on the page peak through the paint.)
- Bowls—for storing various colors of diluted water colors.
- Paint brushes
- Shema cards (templates are available at the end of this program) ideally printed on card stock
- Scotch or masking tape

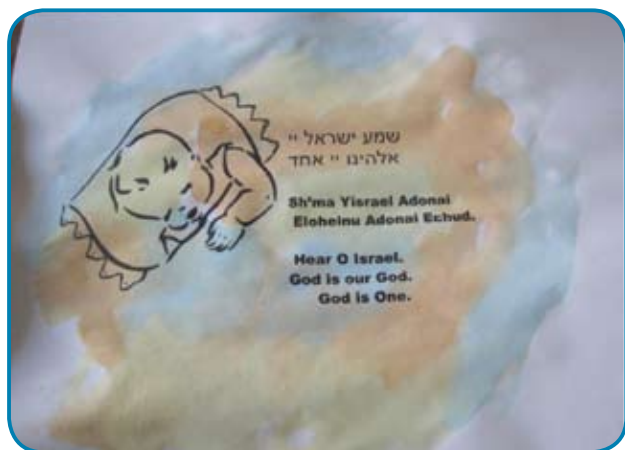
## The Bedtime Shema / Goodnight Shema

### ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- ▶ Create pages with the *Shema* on them (in Hebrew and English) Prepare several different types of *Shema* cards— Some with Hebrew and some without; some which mention giving thanks to God ; and some which avoid mentioning God.

### Introductory Remarks:

*We are now going to paint a special bedtime sign which we hope you'll take home and hang in your room. Every night before you go to sleep, we hope that you'll take a look at your bedroom Shema sign, and remember to say a prayer and/or a few words of thanks before you go to sleep. Parents, please note that while all of our Shema signs contain the same picture, they each feature slightly different wording. Please take time to find the wording which best meets your family's beliefs and needs.*



### DIRECTIONS:

1. Encourage children to use several different colors on their sign.
2. Demonstrate how to paint one color next to another, without overlapping colors
3. Families with more than one child might want to create one sign for each child.
4. If time permits (and the paints have sufficiently dried), encourage families to attach their completed picture to their corresponding frame, Use tape to attach the sign to the frame. (If picture has not fully dried, ask families to attach the picture to the frame at home.)

## FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY #4: Enjoy a Closing Song

As a closing activity, invite families to once again cuddle. You can again ask if anyone remembered a moment in their day that was “special” that they didn’t share earlier. Invite families to settle back and sing along with or listen quietly to several Jewish bedtime songs and finger plays. Some possibilities include:

- ▶ **Kobi's Lullaby** by Rick Recht  
Watch Rick performing Kobi's Lullaby and listen and download lyrics from Rick's website
- ▶ **Y'varech'cha** and **Bedtime Shema** by Sheldon Low
- ▶ **The Angel's Blessing** by Debbie Friedman
- ▶ Several different renditions of the *Shema* can be found at <http://www.totshabbat.com> (Recommended: Kenneth Cohen, and Judy Caplan Ginsburgh 's **Amazing Songs for Amazing Jewish Kids**.)

Conclude the program with hugs all around! Be sure everyone has their projects to take home.

### FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY #5: Shema Pillow to Take Home



Older preschoolers and primary age children can hand make Shema pillow cases, or as Toledo and Southern Arizona communities did, print and give out travel size Shema pillows to program participants, at a cost of \$6–7 / piece. Pillows and pillowcases were ordered from [PillowXpress.com](http://PillowXpress.com) and printed locally.

### NURTURING THE FAMILY

Following the program, try to e-mail each family, thanking them for coming and providing them with the words to some of the songs that you sang at the program. Parents may also enjoy reading up on Jewish bedtime ritual:

- **Goodnight, Sleep Tight: Bedtime Rituals**  
Interfaith Family.com
- **Creative Bedtime Rituals: Ending the Day with a Jewish Connection**  
Jewish Federations of North America
- **Jewish Bedtime Rituals**  
Kveller.com



Before I close my eyes at night and sleep,  
before I drift into my dreams,  
I give thanks for the blessings in my life  
for the people who care for me...  
(from *Kobi's Lullaby* by Rick Recht.)



Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu  
Adonai Echad. Listen Israel.  
God is our God. God is one.



Shema Yisrael Adonai  
Eloheinu Adonai Echad.



Thank you, for this  
special day  
that is now ending...