

The Shema: A Daily Declaration of Faith in the One True God

The Shema is the central prayer in Judaism and most Jewish scholars consider it the number one declaration of faith. The first verse of the Shema comes from Deuteronomy 6:4; *"Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one," (Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad).*

The Shema is the most powerful and unifying statement a Jew can make. It establishes that God is One. It also conveys a very strong and deep loyalty to the Lord, the Torah, to Israel and to all the principles, values and commandments in the Bible.

Some see it as the Jewish "Pledge of Allegiance" and as "accepting the authority of the kingship of God." Observant Jews recite the Shema in prayer twice a day, in the morning and the evening to fulfill the command: *"...when you lie down, and when you rise up..."* (Deut. 6:7).

The Jewish prayer book, the Siddur says: *"Fortunate are we, how great is our portion, how precious our heritage. Fortunate are we that we rise early and stay up at night, morning and evening, proclaiming the Shema!"*

The Shema is also part of the morning blessing, called the Modeh Ani, or the "Thank you Lord" prayer. It's recited underneath the tallit, the Hebrew prayer shawl. It is the first prayer that a Jewish child is taught and the last words a Jew will say prior to death.

This prayer is so important that as a powerful reminder God said to write it on the scroll inside the mezuzah we affix to the doorpost of our homes. It is also written inside the tefillin that observant Jews wrap around the right arm and forehead during prayer times.

It's traditional to cover one's eyes with the right hand as its being recited. In its entirety, the Shema consists of three biblical passages from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41.

The beauty of the Shema is that it goes beyond establishing there is but One True God. It is a declaration that 'God is all there is.' Whether Jew or Christian, we fully believe 'nothing truly exists outside of God.' In other words, life without God is really no life at all. This is what the Lord is teaching us in Acts 17:28; *"...in Him we live and move and have our being..."*

This divine principle is underscored by Moses, who combined the Shema with the greatest of all commandments: *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."* Deut. 6:4-5

Most Christians don't realize that Jesus Himself both affirmed and prayed the Shema in Mark 12:28; *"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?'"* 29 Jesus answered him, *"The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* (NKJV)

In essence, this Jewish scholar is asking Jewish Jesus "what is the basic principle or foundation on which the Torah stands?" Jesus' answer is to quote the Shema, and thus confirm what has unified Jews since Abraham some 4,000 years ago... that there is only One True God.

As Christians better understand our Jewish roots, our common spiritual heritage with the Jewish people and powerful prayers like the Shema, we believe it releases a new flow of revelation knowledge, brings unity between Christians and Jews and generates a powerful prophetic and end-time restoration that will usher in the return of the Messiah.



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