

Va'etchanan "And I besought"

Deuteronomy 3:23–7:11

Isaiah 40:1–26

Ya'akov 2:14-26

Hear O Israel!

You don't have to be around the Messianic Movement long before you begin to hear a prayer known as the *Sh'ma* from Deuteronomy 6:4. In quite short order you can even learn it in Hebrew and be singing it in harmony with others as you face Jerusalem to declare this wonderful truth. How many though can recite or even sing the *Sh'ma*, but do not know what it means or represents? The answer may be surprising.

This verse begins with a small but fascinating word, used to name the prayer, which is translated "hear." But the English word "hear" does not come close to a proper interpretation. The word really means to "hear with an understanding which produces action." The very thought that a person could hear an instruction but fail to do it is foreign to Hebraic thought. Instead, the possibility of "hearing" and not "doing" is a Greek/Western idea. Simply put, if you hear a message on *Shabbat*, but do not go away from the meeting and put the practice of *Shabbat* into your life, then you did not truly hear or "*sh'ma*" the teaching.

The commandment to hear is directed at a specific group of people. It is not directed to the whole world, but to a group called Israel, which is God's name for His family, including us adopted ones. It is through the living out of the *Sh'ma* by Israel that the world will come to see the wonderful message of this verse and in turn be brought face to face with what they are each to do with this knowledge of Him.

The "Adonai our Elohim" is used to describe and define who it is we are talking about and to make a distinction between Him and all other gods. In this case the term is saying that the God of Israel who has revealed Himself through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the one and only God being spoken of. And He is our Adonai. It is stating that to Israel there can be no other gods served. There is no way to be called Israel and not be under the kingship of this one YHVH.

History records man's habit of making gods out of just about anything. If it rained, there was a rain god. If the rain god was angry, he did not send rain and man had to worship the false god through a dance or sacrifice or whatever he dreamed up. If there was a volcano, then there must be a volcano god and to keep the lava from eating your town you sacrificed your child to the god of the volcano.

Today, we would say these ideas are a bit crazy or worse. Truth is that man is still serving many gods. There is the god of the new car, the god of the bigger house, the god of materialism and the god of leisure, just to name a few. The definition of a god is

whatever your focus of life is outside of your creator. Today we see the true Elohim destroying many of these false gods!

The word *echad* at the end of the *Sh'ma* reminds us that there is to be only one Elohim in our lives. He is to be the focal point of all we do. He is to be our desire and all of life should flow through Him. The new car, new house or even the day off is to never take the place of our service to our creator.

As we recite the *Sh'ma* on a daily basis, it should help to bring our lives back into focus. It reminds us to not only hear, but to hear in such a way that our lives are changed. The *Sh'ma* reminds us who we are and Whose family we belong to. It also reminds us to always be on guard against the multiple gods of man's making which try to take the place of the One True Elohim, the Elohim who has revealed Himself to us through the wonders of the scriptures.

The *Sh'ma* is also a call to Abba's people to return to Him. Many people will recite it as part of a New Moon celebration. It is a prayer for those who are called by His name to look up from the cares of this world and repent from the direction of walking away from Him and begin the journey to Him.

These words are not a conclusion within themselves, but rather a memory trigger to not forget the whole of scripture. As we recite them daily, teach them to our children and keep them before our eyes the words of the *Sh'ma* help us to remember our constant devotion to our Creator and our hope of His soon return. They are words which remind us to devote ourselves to His Kingdom and not to our own.

As you can see, there is a reason so many people learn the *Sh'ma* as some of their very first Hebrew words. Not only hearing, but also doing these words is a doorway to the vast wonders of the One True and Living YH VH.

Lastly. Many of us are familiar with the Amplified Bible. It expounds on the words and thoughts of the original text. My good friend Barry Phillips has written a sort of amplified Shema. I pray it brings new meaning to the words for you.

"So hear, grasp and comprehend, Yisrael, You covenant people chosen by YHWH, full of colors, nations, and tribes, YHWH, He Who is Mercy and Lovingkindness is our very own Elohim, our personal Creator and Judge Who will repay, this YHWH, the second mentioning, the revealing of the first mentioned, Y'shuah, is a mystical and wondrous unity of One; The first and the last together."