

The Shema

It's Meaning for B'nai Noah

NOTE* This is taken from commentary provided in Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz in The Pentateuch And HafTorahs, commentary pages 920-924 for the Virtual Yeshiva Discussion Group. We highly recommended that you obtain the Hertz Chumash because of the wealth of information contained in it.

“ Hear O Israel, the L'rd is our G'd, the L'rd is One.”

The Shema is the declaration of our faith in solidarity with Israel in that we along with Israel are declaring:

- **The G'd of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**
- **His existence**
- **His Torah**

The Negative Implications

Denounces:

- **Polytheism** “the worship of many deities”
- **Paganism** “the deification of any finite, natural force or being”
- **Moral guidance** from the many other supposed divinities worshiped by mankind.
- **Dualism** “two rival powers of light and darkness”
- **Pantheism** “the belief that the totality of all things are equally divine”
- **The Trinity** “the belief in three separate gods or the addition of the “virgin” or “saints” as intermediaries”

The Positive Implications

Acknowledges:

- **Brotherhood of man**
- **Unity of the Universe**
- **Unity of History**
- **Israel**
- **The Messianic Kingdom**

The highest implication

The passionate conviction that the day will dawn when All of mankind will call upon the One

and Only G'D, and all peoples will recognize that they are the children of ONE Father!

- **Rashi comments:**

'He who is now our G'd and is not yet recognized by the nations as their G'd, will yet be the One G'd of the whole world. As it is written in **Zephaniah 3:9**

“I will turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the L'rd to serve Him with one consent”

and it is also said in **Zechariah 14:9**

“And the L'rd shall be King over all the Earth; in that day shall the L'rd be One and His name One”.

According to Rav Hertz: “These two proof texts cited by Rashi foretell a time when there will be a transformation of spirit that will come over the peoples of the Earth.” On page 922 in the Hertz Chumash, left column, paragraph 2 it further says “They are now only groping dimly after the True G'd, and stammering His praise. But the time will come when they shall adore Him with a full knowledge of Him; and with one consent (Lit. 'shoulder to shoulder', i.e. without any superiority of one over the other) They will form a universal chorus to chant His praise.’

- This prophecy foresees the time when the curse of Babel will be removed from the children of men, and the confusion of tongues will end.

And so,

The Shema “Hear O Israel, the L'rd is our G'd, the L'rd is One; *(Traditionally said in a whisper)* Blessed be His glorious Kingdom forever and ever!”

Teaches the Unity of the Creator, The unity of creation and the unity of ALL mankind. It is therefore appropriate for us as non-idolaters who attach ourselves to Israel by accepting Torah as it applies to us to also say the Shema in solidarity with Israel in anticipation of the coming Kingdom of G'd twice a Day as our own statement of faith and as a consistent reminder to live our lives according to His ways and to teach them to our children and those that G'd brings into our lives.

A couple of suggestions for the saying of the Shema in an appropriate way for B'nai Noah:

Deuteronomy 6:4-8

“Hear O Israel, the L'rd is our G'd, the L'rd is One;
(the next statement is added by the Sages is traditionally said in a whisper)
Blessed be His glorious Kingdom forever and ever!”

And you shall love the L'rd your G'd with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and (you) shall talk of them

when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

See the booklet* "Prayer, Blessings, Principles of Faith, and Divine Service for Noahides," by Rabbi Moshe Weiner and Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, 2nd Ed., pub. '10 Ask Noah International:

“It is a worthy and meritorious practice for a Gentile to make a verbal statement of his/her acceptance of G-d's Unity and Kingship, which could be one or more times per day.

To this end, Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet has provided an exemplary statement that a Gentile can use for verbally accepting G-d's Unity and Kingship, which includes correctly quoted verses from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Almighty G-d, we accept upon ourselves that which is written in Your Torah: “You shall know this day and take to your heart that G-d [alone] is G-d, in the heavens above and on the earth below – there is none other!”[1] We affirm the precepts of “You shall love G-d, your G-d, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might;”[2] and “Fear G-d, your G-d, and serve Him, and in His Name [alone] shall you vow;”[3] and, as it says, “Fear G-d and keep His commandments, for that is a person's entire duty.”

[1] Deuteronomy 4:39.

[2] Ibid. 6:5.

[3] Ibid. 6:13.

[4] Ecclesiastes 12:13.”

What a beautiful way to begin and end our day :-)

Next:

we will with the help of Rav Hertz break down the Shema statement by statement to gain a deeper insight to what is being said.

Please see what you can bring to the discussion from your own resources too! It will make for a more interesting discussion :-)