

KRIAT SHEMA 1:02

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

2. What is read? Three parashiot, which are: *Sh'ma* (Devarim 6:4-9), *V'haya Im Shamo'a* (ibid. 11:13-21) and *Vayomer* (Bamidbar [Numbers] 15:37-41). We read Sh'ma first because it contains the [concepts of the] unity of God, love and study of Him which is the great principle upon which all else depends. Afterwards, [we read] V'haya Im Shamo'a, which contains the command regarding all of the other Mitzvot. After that, [we read] the Parasha of Tzitzit ("Vayomer") which also includes the command to remember all of the Mitzvot.

Q1: Why does Rambam need to explain the order of the Parashiot?

YF: Because we don't read the Parshiyot in the order they are in the Torah.

YE: In addition - why should there be a prescribed order at all? If the purpose is purely Talmud Torah, why should it matter which is read first? (This may support the thesis that K'riat Sh'ma is also a Kiyyum of Yichud Hashem and Kabbalat Ol -which, due to the emotional response they are intended to effect, would demand a specific order).

Q2: What is the "great principle upon which all else depends"? - unity? love? study? all three?

YF: The fundamental principle would be the unity of G-D because everything else would stem from that.

YE: Since the last item mentioned by Rambam was study, it seems that that is the "great principle". All else depends upon it because, as Rambam mentions several times in Hilkhos Talmud Torah, all action (including loving God, understanding and declaring His Unity etc.) depends and relies upon study.

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