

CHAPTER 4: SHEMA YISROEL AND ITS BLESSINGS □

PARAGRAPH 2

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

We'll need to backtrack a bit here to explain more about the subject of G-d being the Sovereign of the Universe which we cited in the last chapter.

As we'd said early on (see 1:1:2), G-d assumes two roles, if you will. That of G-d Almighty as He is unto Himself in all His Glory (which we sometimes call His "transcendence"); and that of Sovereign of the Universe as He is when He interfaces with us (called His "immanence"). And the Shema Yisroel expresses both.

The point of course is that the same one and only G-d functions on both levels at the same time, depending on how we experience Him.

Compare it if you will to someone who runs his own business and acts as field-manager at times, as when he's right there with the sales people and production staff, meeting with them, buying and selling right along with them, advising, prompting, and encouraging them while at their side; and conversely acting as Chief Executive Officer when he alone makes ultimate decisions, covers costs on his own, fires and hires, etc. at other times. How can the very same person serve in such diametrically opposite capacities in the same organization? Apparently easily enough, seeing how often it's done.

And so while the analogy is quite inadequate because G-d is not at all human and isn't at all subject to the "sturm und drang" of business decisions, and the universe doesn't function like a corporation, nonetheless thanks to this comparison we can begin to grasp how His transcendence and immanence can merge.

But the question now arises as to how *dare* we speak of G-d as the Sovereign of the Universe? After all, while sovereignty certainly implies eminence and control, it still-and-all points to a need the king would seem to have for subjects (after all, our employer needs his employees). Yet we've already depicted G-d in the last chapter as utterly "independent ... of anything" and "wholly and sublimely self-sufficient".

The discrepancy seems too great, and it actually sounds almost shameful to declare G-d Almighty as "merely" the Sovereign of the Universe, which we're meant to affirm when we recite Shema Yisroel. But as we'll see, our doing that serves G-d's purposes indeed.

To begin with, let's reiterate the fact that G-d Almighty, in all His transcendent Glory, *purposely* set out to create a universe and to reign over it -- so as to bestow His goodness upon others. So, He purposefully deigned to "descend", as it were, from His transcendent status in order to interact with His creations that way and *so that we could pay homage to Him*. Thus while His act of "descent" certainly made His sovereignty possible, our acknowledging it affirms it.

As such, we recite Shema Yisroel everyday so as to affirm G-d's immanent presence and reign in our lives, as well as for all the other reasons we cited in the previous chapter.

Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman and **Torah.org**.