

JUDAISM 101

by Rabbi Dovid Green

In this week's parsha we encounter much of the Judaism 101 which is the foundation of Jewish beliefs. The receiving of the Torah, and the ten commandments are repeated. The first of the three paragraphs of the Sh'ma Yisrael is in this parsha as well. We will focus on the Sh'ma. "Sh'ma Yisrael," listen Jewish People, "Hashem Elokainu", Hashem our G-d, "Hashem Echad", is One. There are several thoughts we will discuss.

In Hebrew the word sh'ma, listen, can mean "accept" as well. The sages say that when we recite the "Sh'ma" we should accept G-d's sovereignty over ourselves. That means we accept to do His will as it is stated in the Torah.

Hashem Elokainu, Hashem our G-d, is our personal G-d. He maintains a personal relationship with each and every one of us individually. He creates our life circumstances to best bring out the greatness we were created with.

"Hashem Echad." Hashem is One. G-d is unique. He is unity. He can not be divided, nor does He share His sovereignty. He is not made of of parts or entities. He is King of the universe.

"And you should love Hashem your G-d." Love of G-d manifests itself in several ways. "With all your heart." This means we should even channel our desires to do things which go against G-d's will and use that strength for the right things.

"And with all of your soul," even if G-d chooses to take one's soul, we should give up our lives for Him. There are only three commandments for which a person must die rather than commit. They are immorality, murder, and idol worship. Other commandments one is required to break in order to save his life.

"And with all of your might." This refers to one's money. There are unusual times when one would be required to give up his money. in the service of G-d.

Another important idea behind loving G-d is that G-d should be loved because of you. People should look at a Torah Jew and say "so and so who learned Torah, look how beautiful his deeds are," and not the opposite, G-d forbid.

"And these things which I command you today;" We should look at the commandments as if we received them today. We should perform them with a freshness and enthusiasm.

"Shall be on your heart." We should think about these words and internalize them. The more we think about them, the more we live with them as our world view.

"You shall teach them to your children." Jewish children need quality Jewish education! They should be educated to love G-d and live by these principles.

"And you shall speak about them." Teach by example. Don't wonder why your child isn't interested if you don't model interest yourself. In the house, while travelling, at leisure time, etc., one should make conversation about Hashem and His commandments.

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your houses, and your gates." Hashem is the only King Who stays outside and guards his subjects.

The Sh'ma is recited twice daily, once in the morning, and once in the evening. People also recite it before retiring for the night. Lastly, it is the affirmation of faith which is said before dying.

The Sh'ma is our opportunity daily to declare G-d's sovereignty and oneness. It is a special privilege we have as His close servants. May we all merit to truly accept G-d's sovereignty.

This weeks DvarTorah is dedicated in the memory of Esther bas Avraham O"HS

Good Shabbos!

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