

# The Sh'MAH

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Consider, if you will, the following scripture from the Old Testament: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (Deut. 6:4). This passage, is perhaps the *most frequently recited* passage by the Jews! It is known as “the Sh'MAH” (or “Sh'ma” or “Shema”).

Why is it known as “the Sh'MAH”? It's because the *first word* of verse 4 (“Hear”), is translated from the Hebrew word *spelled* “Shema.”

Now, *originally* (in their recitation), the Jews recited **only** verse 4. *Later*, however, they *expanded* their recitation to also include verses 5 through 9.

In this article, however, we will *focus* on verse 4... and we will come to see that this particular verse is greatly **misunderstood**—by many people! It is misunderstood by those who believe in the doctrine of “The Trinity”... and it is *also* misunderstood by some Jews, as well.

The *misunderstood part*, of course, is the part of the verse that says, “the LORD is **one**.”

Trinitarians (as well as *some Jews*) *erroneously* say that this phrase “the LORD is one,” refers to the “**NATURE** of God”—**that God is a SINGLE Being**. We are all familiar with the Trinitarian concept of “3 Persons in One.”

Yet, as this article will show, verse 4 is actually **not** referring to the “**NATURE** of God”!

Let's begin, by looking at Deuteronomy chapter 6, and let's notice the *entire* passage of verses 4 through 9:

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! <sup>5</sup> You shall **love** the LORD your God with **ALL** your heart, with **ALL** your soul, and with **ALL** your strength. <sup>6</sup> And **these** words [i.e., the words we just finished reading] which I command you today shall be **in your heart**. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Trinitarians say that verse 4 somehow refers to the *nature* of God—that God is a “single Being.” Yet, if that is the case, then doesn't it seem **very strange** that the first verse of the passage (verse 4) would *supposedly* speak about the “nature of God,” whereas *the next five verses* (verses 5 through 9) speak about something **entirely different**—about loving God with all your heart?!

It is a **mistake** to think that verse 4 stands **alone**! And, the proof of that is more clearly seen when we examine a particular passage in the NEW Testament—a passage which **quotes part of** that passage from Deuteronomy.

In Mark chapter 12, Jesus Christ quotes *from* the Sh'MAH, and we will now clearly see that verse 4 in Deuteronomy is **intricately tied-together** with the *remainder* of that passage in Deuteronomy!

In Mark 12: 28, a scribe *asked* Christ the following question: “Which is the **FIRST** [or, as translated in Matt. 22:36, “which is the **GREAT**”] **commandment of all**?”

So, the scribe was *asking* Christ, which is the *greatest* commandment of all. And, how did Christ reply?

Jesus **answered** him, “The first of all the commandments *is*: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This **IS** the **first** [or **GREATEST**] **commandment** (verses 29-30).

Notice now how the *scribe* replied to Christ’s statement: “So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, **for there is one God, and there is NO OTHER but He**. And to love Him with ALL the heart...is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (verses 32-33).

So, here it is made **plain**, that when Christ *quoted* the Sh'MAH, saying, “the LORD is **one**,” Christ was saying—**and the Sh'MAH was saying**—that **the LORD is the “ONE and ONLY God”**—**that there is no other**!

And, it is **because** of the fact that the LORD-*alone* **is God**, that we are to love Him with all our heart, soul, and might. It is **NOT** because He is, supposedly, a “single Being” that we are to “love Him with all our heart.” No! Instead, we are to “love Him with all our heart” **because** He—and He **alone**—is God!!

So, when we look at this passage in the New Testament, it becomes quite plain that these **two** verses (verses 29 and 30 in Mark) are **tied together** as **ONE THOUGHT**. And, **likewise**, these **same** words in **Deuteronomy chapter 6** (verses 4 and 5) are tied together as ONE-THOUGHT!

It is a **mistake** to think that verse 4 in Deuteronomy stands **alone**—as Trinitarians (and some Jews) say, when they suggest that this verse in Deuteronomy is a statement concerning the **NATURE** of God!

Let’s also consider the original Greek. In Mark 12:29, where Christ said, “the LORD our God, the LORD is **one**,” the Greek word, translated here as “**one**” can **also be translated** as “**only**” or “**alone**.” Christ is saying that the LORD **alone** is God—that the LORD **only** is God! Christ was **not** saying that “the LORD is a single Being”!

In fact, going back to the passage in Deuteronomy chapter 6, notice how this verse is rendered in the *New Revised Standard Version*: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD **ALONE**.”

Furthermore... that rendering in the *New Revised Standard Version* is **supported** by William L. Holladay in his book entitled *A Concise Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. There, Holladay renders the phrase as “YHWH **alone**” (p.9).

Finally, while we are looking at this passage in Deuteronomy 6, notice verses 14 to 15— which **continues the thought** that the LORD **only** is God: “You shall not go after **other** gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you...” No, the people were to *not* go after **other** so-called gods, because the LORD-**only** is God! (Gal.4:8).

## Conclusion

We have seen how verses 4 and 5 of Deuteronomy chapter 6 are **tied-together** as *one* thought. We have seen that Christ Himself said that **this** passage contains the greatest Commandment in the Old Testament. So... in closing, let's again read verses 4 and 5: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD **alone**. You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might ” (*NRSV*).

Yes, the LORD is our God... the LORD **alone**!

**Also See:** “Is God really a Trinity?” <https://www.lcg.org/bible-studies/study-topic-god-really-trinity>