

An Exposition on the Shema

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About a year ago after saying the first paragraph of the Shema all my life, I discovered something so obvious and profound. I forwarded it to rabbi Bleich who immediately replied " excellent "and told me the same insight had been noted in the Talmud Yerushalmi. The Shema begins "hear oh Israel the Lord our G-d is One". When was the last time the entire Jewish people were gathered together and told to listen? I would say at Mount Sinai! Then they all heard the first two commandments spoken by G-d. The first was I am the Lord your G-d the 3rd and 4th words of that first line and the second commandment was no other G-ds before me, the 5th and 6th words. After that, the people were unable to listen directly to G-d and asked Moshe to relay the other 8 commandments to them . The first line of the Shema brings us to Sinai and is appropriate for the prayer that reminds of G-d's commandments. The first line of the Shema is stating the first two commandments. This explanation of the first line of the Shema avoids using G-d's name 3 times in that sentence when one time would not have changed the meaning.

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