

שמע

The Shema, Lesson 2

Last week we focused on the word "Shema" שמע and how it means "obedience." This week we will look at the phrase "our G-d" and the word one."



By using the phrase "our G-d," Adonai wanted the people to know that He desires friendship with them. Unlike the other false gods that surrounded Israel, the G-d of Israel was not distant and so far away that He could not be reached. G-d was not just sitting around with other gods but was actively involved in the every day life of His people. In fact, G-d actually travelled with us wherever we went. G-d wanted His people to talk with Him and to interact with Him every day.

The fact that He is "our" G-d (it doesn't say "my G-d") shows that G-d wanted His people to live in a community in which there were shared values and beliefs. G-d was not "owned" by one group or individual but wants friendship with everyone that believes in Him.

The second thing we will focus on is the word "one." The people that lived around Israel believed that there were many gods and in fact the more the merrier. Our G-d, however, the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, did not want competition for Israel's love and devotion. The G-d of Israel is a jealous G-d who wants to be the only one that Israel worships. To worship the G-d of Israel while at the same time worshipping any other god is idolatry. Since Israel was often tempted to idolatry, G-d established the Shema to say that He and He alone should be the object of our worship.

Let's review: The Shema teaches us that G-d wants our full, unconditional obedience to all that He has asked us to do. Secondly, He desires a relationship with us (friendship) within the fellowship of all who believe in Him, and thirdly G-d wants to be worshipped as the only G-d (since really the other gods are just made up by people who don't worship the One, true G-d). He wants us to love and follow Him alone without giving any part of our worship to any other god.