

# Know the God of Scripture

Volume 1

## Week 8: The Shema - Answer Guide

*Below is the answer guide for this week's lesson. By no means are the answers complete or the only possible responses to each question. They are a guide to fully understanding the intent of the questions posed.*

1. As described in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, there are four ways to bind these words (repeated again in Deut. 11:18):

- These words are to be in your heart ... memorized
  - These words are to be taught to your children
  - These words shall be talked about in your daily conversations
  - These words are to be bound on your hand and forehead
- All of this to be a constant reminder that Jehovah is the only God in existence and able to provide, protect and prosper you.

The SHEMA reminds us to love the Lord with ALL our:

- Heart – center of the will and emotions – seat of thinking/feeling
  - Soul (nephesh) – center of personality, choice & decisions – life, mind, self
  - Might (strength) – center of actions that are seen by the world – mind, rational element
- The whole self given to God

Placed directly after the ten commandments, the SHEMA was intended to be a daily act or exercise (morning and evening, Deuteronomy 6:7) to help remind the Israelites (and us!) to “do” (Deuteronomy 6:1) them in their daily life.

2. Just like us today, the environment the Israelites lived in had strong influences of an ungodly worldview. Likewise, we must continuously remind and reinforce our minds that God is one and that He loves us eternally which warrants our love and obedience in return. Think of the SHEMA as filling up your spiritual gas tank to get you through the day of reflecting His glory in your life.

3. Jesus was approached and asked by lawyers what the single most important command was. His reply in all three synoptic Gospel references is the same, the SHEMA. He adds to it, however, to love their neighbors as they love themselves (Leviticus 19:18, 34).

Note: Matthew substitutes “mind” for strength. Mark inserts “mind” before strength while Luke adds “mind” after the original triad. None of the Gospel writers quotes the Shema verbatim as stated in Deuteronomy 6. However, they all maintain the intent of the SHEMA.

4. Reference the words of Jesus speaking to Philip in John 14:7-15. Just as works flow from faith, obedience flows from love. As fleshly beings we all tend to do what we love with joy. We tend to be hesitant in doing things we don't love. Obeying the commandments of God are evidence of our love for God, but it's only through Christ are we able to love the way God expects, the way of agape.

An analogy of this concept of love and obedience is shown below:

Gas → Car → Movement (action)

Faith → Us → Action

Faith is fuel for action!

5. All of these benefits were given to a specific people at a specific time. Blessings in the form of prosperity, long life or abundant children are all in the hands of God. These benefits mentioned in Deuteronomy 6 were directed towards the Israelites during their wandering in the desert and subsequently in their conquering of the Promised Land. Although they are good to know, it would be wrong to apply them to our lives today. However, keeping God's Law is paramount to Him blessing His called out ones.

**Keeping the Law makes one fear the Lord (vs 2):** Proverbs 9:10 states that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Ecclesiastes 12:13 sums up that fearing God and keeping His commandments are the key to abundant life. Tie these verses in with 2 Corinthians 5:9, which is our aim, to please God.

**Keeping the Law results in long life (vs 2):** The prolongment of life was promised to Moses and the Israelites in Moses' day. A prolonged life is promised by Moses in Deuteronomy 5:33, to Solomon in 1 Kings 3:14, and in general in Proverbs 10:27. God is the giver and taker of life. Our lives are in His hands. When walking in obedience to God's commandments He promises to bless us, whether it is monetarily, familial or with long life. He is true to His word.

**Keeping the Law is a prerequisite for prosperity (vs 3):** Deuteronomy 29:9, 30:8, 9, 15-16, Joshua 1:8 and many other Scriptures support this claim of prosperity from God's hand. It is imperative to note that this prosperity was promised to a specific people at a specific time. Simply noted, God is the provider of prosperity. Throughout the Bible God desires to bless His creation when they are obedient to Him and follow His commandments.

**Keeping the Law results in the blessing of many children (vs 3):** Deuteronomy 28:2-4 and other Scriptures support this claim. David claims that many children are the blessing from God (Psalm 127:3-5).

6. All the surrounding cultures worshipped a plethora of gods, generally tied to some important aspect in their lives. Monotheism was unique to Judaism. The triune nature of God is evident throughout the Old Testament (Genesis 1:1, 26) and New Testament (Matthew 28:19-20 where "name" is singular describing three natures). It is also supported in the Didache (7.1-4) and Justin's *Apology* (1.61). The uniqueness of God is expressed in the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me."

7. Phylacteries are boxes worn on the forehead or upper arm filled with Scripture. The intent is to keep Scripture close to our heart and our mind. Modern Jews still practice wearing phylacteries. Some phylacteries are placed above the door in a residential entrance. Anyone entering and leaving touches it with their finger and then kisses their finger in observance of the Law commanded here. The idea or concept of a phylactery is to keep God's Word near and dear to our conscious. We cannot do the will of the Father without the mind of Christ.

8. Obviously the SHEMA was still quoted by devout and common Jews in Jesus' day. The SHEMA is demonstrated through our love for God and people. We cannot love God and not love people (James 2:14-26). Love, true love, was demonstrated by the Good Samaritan in his caring for the man that was robbed. Love God, love people, it's not that difficult!

The 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment is to "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself." One cannot love their neighbor if they don't love God first.

9. The Ten Commandments was given to the Israelites as a display of God's requirement for holiness from His people. They were laws intended to be lived out by His people that would make them a holy nation. They were a path to holy living.

Not one of the Israelites (or us!) could live up to the requirements the Ten Commandments warranted. In a way they were given to man as a mirror to reflect man's sinful condition before a holy and just God. The Ten Commandments should make us realize our depravity before God. In addition, they should spur us to repent of

our wickedness, seek His forgiveness and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, live a life that is pleasing to God. The Ten Commandments are a reminder of two things: 1) the holiness of God and 2) the depravity of man.

### **Additional Questions:**

1. Although the SHEMA was not given to us directly, we should make a habit of repeating it in our daily communion with God. By doing so it will remind us of our God and His eternal love for us.
2. The fruits of the Spirit that come from obeying God are mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.
3. Quoting the SHEMA with your children before going to bed demonstrates to your children your love for God and assists them in coming to faith in Jesus. If they know Jesus they should repeat the SHEMA at least once a day to remind them of their relationship with God.

