

Module: Prayer / Teaching Sh'ma

Applicable to:

- A classroom /youth group teaching
- Or abbreviated as the opening prayer for a meeting/gathering

Preparation:

- Have the text of Deut 6:4-7 and the two songs (below) available to each participant, whether via a whiteboard, data projector or print material.
- Be ready to teach and play the song.

Teaching:

Sh'ma (Deut 6:4-7)

Today we are going to learn about — and sing — a very special part of Scripture. It's a bible passage from that is very important to both Christians and Jews.

- We Christians hear it read in our churches every year.
- It is central to Jewish worship, prayed at least twice a day by observant Jews.
- Jesus — who was himself a Jew — held up this bible passage as a key text when he was asked: 'Which is the greatest of the commandments?'

Any ideas which bible passage this might be? One more clue:

- It comes from one of the first five books of the Old Testament; the Jews call these first five books of the bible the Torah ('word of God').

We find this important bible passage in the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6.

When the Jewish people pray it today, they do so in Hebrew:

'Sh'ma Yisrael! Adonai Elohenu, Adonai Echud'

Which translates:

'Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One.'

And it goes on...

'And you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today, take them to heart. Teach them to your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.' (Deut 6:4-7)

There is nothing wimpy about this scripture. *Love the Lord your God*, with a passion! The original Hebrew of this text suggests a love so powerful that it completely overtakes a person, like a love-sick lover! In other words: Be crazy about God, because God is crazy about you! This is a passage to be engraved on our hearts every day, as it was for Jesus. No wonder Jesus was able to do what he did, he really believed this scripture! And how he lived it.

Let's enjoy this Word of God now, in song. Let's really take it into our hearts. We will sing it in two ways: first in a more reflective style, and then in a different way.

Songs:

I. “Sh’ma”

Sh’ma Yisrael, Sh’ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.
Sh’ma Yisrael, Sh’ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

Verse 1. (Cantor)

Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and all your soul and all your might.
And teach your children to love the Lord. For all generations, Sh’ma Yisrael.

All:

Sh’ma Yisrael, Sh’ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.
Sh’ma Yisrael, Sh’ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

Verse 2. (Cantor)

Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and all your soul and all your might.
All day, every night, when you sleep when you wake, surrender your heart, Hear O
Israel.

All:

Sh’ma Yisrael, Sh’ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.
Sh’ma Yisrael, Sh’ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

Affirm their efforts. As we strive to love God and love one another, we can pray this scripture deeply in our hearts and with our voices.
And there is another way we can pray that same scripture. Perhaps you know it already. It goes like this...

II. “Love the Lord!” (Upbeat; Antioch style with quirky actions) Supply music.

Testimony / Sharing

- What was it like for you singing these songs?
- What did you enjoy about it? What was it like singing in Hebrew?
- Did it help you think more about the bible passage?
- Were you already familiar with this passage from Deuteronomy? What meaning did it hold for you... then, and now?
- Did it surprise you to know that it is so important to both Jews and Christians? Why might it be so important to both?
- Did it surprise you to think of Jesus praying this bible passage as a Jew?
- What else did you learn from this scripture-in-music experience?
- Do you think you could teach it to somebody else?

Presenter should first share their responses to some of the above questions.