

## What Are the Most Cited, Recited, and Misunderstood Verses in Deuteronomy?

An Old Testament KnoWhy<sup>1</sup> relating to the reading assignment for Gospel Doctrine Lesson 17: “Beware Lest Thou Forget” (Deuteronomy 6; 8; 11; 32) (JBOTL17A)



Figure 1. “Shema‘ Yisrael” (“Hear, [O] Israel”) at the Knesset Menorah in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>

*Question:* What are the most cited, recited, and misunderstood verses in Deuteronomy?

*Summary:* Without any doubt Deuteronomy 6:4-5 best fits this description:

4. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:
5. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

The wording of Deuteronomy 6:5 is echoed frequently in the Old<sup>3</sup> and New<sup>4</sup> Testaments, the Book of Mormon,<sup>5</sup> and the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>6</sup> It is recited twice daily by observant Jews.<sup>7</sup> And, sadly, commentaries on this and related scriptural verses rarely explore in any depth the long history of Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew terms that lie behind the key English words: “one,” “heart,” “soul,” “might.”<sup>8</sup> A solid understanding of what Jesus Christ called the “first and great commandment”<sup>9</sup> will illuminate the meaning of the law of consecration, “the last and hardest requirement made of men in this life.”<sup>10</sup>

## The Know

A careful examination of the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:5 and its sister verses elsewhere in scripture will reveal that they are essentially a statement of the law of consecration, the crowning law of the ordinances.<sup>11</sup> Verses 4-9 are known in Jewish tradition as the first paragraph of the *Shema* (after the first word שמע, *shéma*, “hear”). The *Shema* is “recited twice daily by all pious Jews and written on their doorposts and phylacteries. ... It draws out the implications of the first commandment in Exodus 20:2-3.”<sup>12</sup> Jesus called it the “first *and great* commandment”<sup>13</sup> “which, together with the requirement to love one’s neighbor,<sup>14</sup> epitomizes the Mosaic law.”<sup>15</sup>

Below, we study the key terms in Deuteronomy 6:5 — and in its prologue in verse 4 — one by one. But first, we will take a brief look at the context in which these two verses appear.



Figure 2. Moses delivering his “valedictory address”<sup>16</sup>

### What Is the Book of Deuteronomy?

Robert Alter describes the book of Deuteronomy as presenting “Moses’ valedictory address, which he delivers across the Jordan from the promised land just before his death, as the people assembled before him are poised to cross the river into the land. It comprises a series of speeches, discourses, or, as some scholars actually call them, sermons.”<sup>17</sup> Its prose is majestic and powerful, making it the “most sustained deployment of rhetoric in the Bible.”<sup>18</sup>

But it is more than an account of Moses’ restatement of the basic law as we have it today in the book of Exodus. As the name of the book implies, Deuteronomy<sup>19</sup> outlines a “second law” (Greek *deuteros* “second” + *nomos* “law”) that extends and varies somewhat from the record of the revelation at Sinai.

The idea of Deuteronomy as a second law is reinforced in chapter 6 verse 1, which makes the transition from the historical past to the historical present: “Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it.” On the surface level, this key verse may be seen as presenting what will follow as a simple restatement of the instructions at Sinai that were summarized in chapters 1-5. However, subsequent chapters of Deuteronomy present distinctive changes and elaborations of the law as recorded in Exodus. These changes and elaborations support the argument that Deuteronomy presents a somewhat “new vision of law and religion,”<sup>20</sup> even including some changes to the wording of the Ten Commandments themselves. In Jewish tradition, these elaborations were not novelties, but rather part of the revelation Moses had originally received at Sinai but had not heretofore committed to writing.

The early rabbinic movement (ca. 70-300 CE) took the idea that Moses received additional revelation that had not been recorded in Exodus further to justify their “doctrine of Oral Torah as a tradition that originate[d] in revelation at Mount Sinai.”<sup>21</sup> Latter-day Saints, of course, also believe that not everything that was revealed at Sinai is contained in the Bible. Specifically, the “the ordinances” of His “holy order”<sup>22</sup> — in other words, “the Holy [i.e., Melchizedek] Priesthood”<sup>23</sup> — that were written on the first set of tablets were taken away from Israel as a people and only the “law of carnal commandments”<sup>24</sup> remained.

The structure of Deuteronomy follows the outlines of general patterns that were used to describe covenants between a ruler and his subjects (often referred to as suzerain-vassal treaties). Other ancient Near Eastern treaties, such as the one between Hattusilis and Ramesses II in the years following their standoff at the famous battle of Kadesh (ca. 1280 BCE), also provide instructive models. The Sinai covenant in Exodus 19-24 and the covenant in Joshua 24 follow a similar pattern.<sup>25</sup>

Chapters 1-5 review the history of Israel’s wanderings and the basic stipulations of Israel’s covenant at Sinai. Then, having prepared Israel’s hearts by reminding them of “how merciful the Lord hath been ... even down until the [present] time,”<sup>26</sup> chapters 6-11 exhort them to fulfill with zeal the “requirement of loyalty to God.”<sup>27</sup> In this manner, chapters 6-11 form a sort of preface to the detailed laws of purity and unity that follow in chapters 12-26. Specifically, Deuteronomy 6:4-25 is best seen as “a sermon on the first commandment of the Decalogue [Ten Commandments], incorporating direct allusions to it.”<sup>28</sup>

### **How Did Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Become So Prominent in Jewish Tradition?**

Although Deuteronomy 6:4-9 later became part of a famous Jewish prayer, there is nothing in their original setting that sets these verses apart as being of special importance:<sup>29</sup>

Nor do any of the biblical passages that incorporate liturgical prayer refer to it;<sup>30</sup> its formal recitation is not attested until late in the Second Temple period. The centrality of this text is likely the result of early rabbinic interpretation of the

requirement to “recite [these words] ... when you lie down and when you get up.”<sup>31</sup> This interpretation led to recitation of the *Shema* twice daily, in the morning and at night. A similar injunction to “recite ... these My words” is found at 11:18-19. Because of the double reference to “these words,” the prayer was formally defined as including both paragraphs.<sup>32</sup> A third paragraph was also added:<sup>33</sup> the requirement to wear a garment whose fringes (*tzitzit*) provide a further context for reflection upon Torah and fulfilling its precepts.

In addition to the significance of the repeated appearances of the basic themes of Deuteronomy 6:5 in the Old Testament,<sup>34</sup> Christians find importance in the prominence the verse was given in the teachings of Jesus Christ Himself. The Lord had called it the “first and great commandment.”<sup>35</sup> Further adding to its importance for the Latter-day Saints are the frequent echoes of the ideas of this verse in the Book of Mormon<sup>36</sup> and the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 3. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 transliterated in Hebrew with English translation<sup>38</sup>

## Toward a Better Understanding of Deuteronomy 6:4-5

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:  
And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and  
with all thy might.*

**“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.”** We find the first of many common misunderstandings of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 within the King James translation of the phrase “The Lord our God is one Lord.”

Many people regard the phrase as an obvious argument for monotheism — that there is only one God, no more. This argument has been used to counter Christians who accept the divinity of both the Father and the Son, to deflect the claims of Muslims who assert that “There is no god but Allah,”<sup>39</sup> and against Latter-day Saints who believe (along with many early Christians<sup>40</sup>) that men and women can become “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”<sup>41</sup> in the full and literal sense of the words.

However, the *Jewish Study Bible* (JSB) warns readers against interpreting Deuteronomy 6:4 “as an assertion of monotheism, a view that is anachronistic.<sup>42</sup> In the context of ancient Israelite religion, it served as a public proclamation of exclusive loyalty to YHVH [i.e., Jehovah] as the sole Lord of Israel.”<sup>43</sup> Thus their better English rendering of the phrase as: “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.”<sup>44</sup>

One reason for the frequent misunderstanding of the phrase is its ambiguity in Hebrew. The JSB explains:<sup>45</sup>

Each of the two interpretations is theoretically possible because, in Hebrew, it is possible to form a sentence by simply joining a subject and a predicate, without specifying the verb “to be.” The Hebrew here [“the Lord, our God, the Lord, one.”] thus allows either “YHVH, our God, YHVH is one” or “YHVH is our God, YHVH alone.” The first, older translation, which makes a statement about the unity and the indivisibility of God, does not do full justice to this text (though it makes sense in a later Jewish context as a polemic against Christianity). The verse makes not a quantitative argument (about the number of deities) but a qualitative one, about the nature of the relationship between God and Israel.<sup>46</sup>

**“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”** Although Deuteronomy 6:5 tells us to “love [Hebrew אָהַב, *’ahav*] the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,”<sup>47</sup> D&C 4 tells us that we are to *serve* God<sup>48</sup> with all our “heart, might, mind, and strength.” However, love and service were equated by Jesus when He said: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>49</sup>

The great Jewish biblical scholar Rashi similarly explained that to love God specifically means to “perform his ... commandments out of love.”<sup>50</sup> David L. Lieber agrees, explaining:<sup>51</sup>

Israel's duty to love God is inseparable from action and is regularly connected with the observance of His commandments.<sup>52</sup> In ancient Near Eastern political terminology, "love" refers to the loyalty of subjects, vassals and allies. One of the striking parallels between political treaties and the covenant between God and Israel is the requirement that vassals "love" the suzerain — i.e., act loyally to him — with all their heart. The command to love God accordingly may be understood as requiring one to act loyally toward Him, though an emotional response is also called for.

Thus, "the paradox of commanding a feeling<sup>53</sup> is resolved with the recognition that covenantal 'love' does not refer [primarily] to internal sentiment or to private emotion, but rather to loyalty of action toward both deity and neighbor."<sup>54</sup> In short, one who "loves the Lord God" will be "faithful and true in all things."<sup>55</sup>

**"with all thine heart."** The heart (לֵב, לֵבָב; *levav, lev*), "is often the equivalent of 'mind' in biblical language,"<sup>56</sup> the seat of intellect and understanding — though "it is also associated with feelings."<sup>57</sup> Thus, the phrase might be interpreted as equivalent to the English term "wholeheartedly."<sup>58</sup> The requirement is a sincere and total commitment of the mind and will that assents without reservation and eschews competing interests. Lieber further observes:<sup>59</sup>

The opposite of wholehearted love is not hatred but apathy — going through the motions with no passion, no real caring (whether one is describing one's attitude toward God or toward family members). As Aaron Zeitlin wrote:

Praise Me, says God, and I will know that you love Me.  
Curse Me, says God, and I will know that you love Me ...  
But if you look at the stars and yawn,  
If you don't praise and you don't curse,  
then I created you in vain, says God.

Jeremiah 29:13 expresses the same thought this way: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart*."<sup>60</sup>

**"with all thy soul."** The Old Testament "equated the "soul" (נֶפֶשׁ, *nefesh*) with the person himself. It is therefore best in most cases to translate [it] as 'being.'"<sup>61</sup>

Going further, the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi<sup>62</sup> and the *Mishnah* interpret the phrase in the context of Deuteronomy 6:5 as "even if he takes your soul."<sup>63</sup> Lieber renders this as "even at the cost of your life."<sup>64</sup>

Moshe Weinfeld compares the love and loyalty required by Deuteronomy 6:5 to the demands of devotion "from the Hittite period down to the Roman period," sometimes expressed by "giving the hand"<sup>65</sup> in a ceremony witnessed by a covenantal assembly containing divine witnesses.<sup>66</sup> Weinfeld finds "in the Hittite treaties that the subordinate party is obliged to serve the sovereign "with all the heart and soul" and even be prepared to die for him, a feature which occurs later in the Assyrian loyalty oath."<sup>67</sup> Similarly, in Greek and Roman loyalty oaths he finds "obligations to fight for life and

death. In the loyalty oath of the Paphlagonians to Caesar Augustus, we read that one is not to spare body or soul ... to stand up to any danger whatsoever.”<sup>68</sup>

Thus, according to the JSB, “this phrase, in rabbinic interpretation, meant that one should be willing to give one’s life for God. This interpretation led to the practice of reciting the Shema on one’s deathbed<sup>69</sup> or during acts of martyrdom, a custom that seems to have arisen among the Jews of the Rhineland in response to the massacres conducted against them during the call to the first Crusade in spring 1096 CE.”<sup>70</sup>

“**with all thy might.**” The Hebrew phrase (*b’khol m’odekha*) could be rendered as “exceedingly,” i.e., “comparable to the more common phrase for ‘very, very much’ (*bim’od m’od*), implying with all the power and means at one’s disposal.”<sup>71</sup> However, Jewish tradition typically renders this more specifically as “with all your possessions” or “with all your money.”<sup>72</sup> Note that the New Testament equivalent to “possessions” is *mammon*.<sup>73</sup>

Rashi gives the following explanation of why “with all your money” must be stated separately from the idea that a person must give even his life for God:<sup>74</sup> “There can be a person whose money is more precious to him than his body. This is why it says ‘with all your money.’”

**A covenant of consecration?** Taking the nuances of meaning discussed above into consideration, we might take the liberty of paraphrasing the gist of Deuteronomy 6:5 as follows:

And thou shalt be true and faithful in all things, keeping the commandments of the Lord thy God with thine undivided mind and will, with thy whole being and all thy possessions, even at the cost of thy life.

There is a modern resemblance in the spirit of this paraphrase to President Ezra Taft Benson’s definition of the law of consecration as being “that we consecrate our time, talents, strength, property, and money for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God on this earth and the establishment of Zion.”<sup>75</sup>



Figure 4. Bar Mitzvah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem<sup>76</sup>

### The Why

The powerful teachings of Deuteronomy have been perpetuated in memory for many centuries by observant Jews. Everett Fox observes:<sup>77</sup>

Here memory is the key: the experience of slavery in Egypt, Israel's trying behavior in the wilderness, and, above all, the constant rescuing grace of God. The idea that there should be constant reminders of the covenant became a staple of Jewish ritual practice, from the early education of children in the biblical text, to the *tefillin* ... worn in daily prayer, to the *mezuzah* (a small box containing passages from Deuteronomy) on the doorpost. All three are mentioned in [Deuteronomy 6:7-9].

These words need not only to be remembered generically and abstractly, but also taught diligently unto [the] children<sup>78</sup> in their full meaning, majesty, and power. Robert Alter translates the Hebrew verb *shinen* ("teach") as "rehearse," construing it "as a variant of *shanah*, "to repeat." Because the root of this verb "elsewhere means 'sharp,' ... the meaning here would be 'to teach incisively' or even 'to incise upon.' It may well be that the writer is punning on the two phonetically related verbal roots in order to suggest something like 'to rehearse with incisive effect.'<sup>79</sup>

The idea of incisive repetition is consistent with the further admonition: “thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>80</sup> According to Alter, “These two pairs of terms, each of which is what is technically called a merism, two opposing terms that also imply everything between them, obviously have the sense of wherever you are, whatever you do.”<sup>81</sup>

This injunction to speak and testify continually of God’s truth and goodness recalls Alma the Elder’s explanation of the baptismal covenant, which includes the promise that those who accept the Gospel will “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death.”<sup>82</sup>

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### **Further Study**

Two relevant KnoWhy’s from Book of Mormon Central include:

<https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/how-is-the-use-of-deuteronomy-in-the-book-of-mormon-evidence-for-its-authenticity>

<https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/how-can-the-book-of-mormon-help-saints-live-the-law-of-consecration>

For other scripture resources relating to this lesson, see The Interpreter Foundation Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Index (<http://interpreterfoundation.org/gospel-doctrine-resource-index/ot-gospel-doctrine-resource-index/>) and the Book of Mormon Central Old Testament KnoWhy list (<https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/tags/old-testament>).

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## Endnotes

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- 1 Used with permission of Book of Mormon Central. See <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/reference-knowhy>.
- 2 Public Domain.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Knesset\\_Menorah\\_SHEMA\\_Inscription.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Knesset_Menorah_SHEMA_Inscription.jpg) (accessed 21 December 2015).
- 3 Deuteronomy 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, 30:6; Joshua 22:5; 2 Kings 23:25. See also Deuteronomy 26:16, 30:2, 10; 1 Chronicles 22:19; 2 Chronicles 15:12.
- 4 Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27. See also Revelation 17:13.
- 5 2 Nephi 25:29; Alma 39:13. See also Mosiah 2:11; Mormon 3:12.
- 6 D&C 4:2, 59:5; 98:47. See also D&C 11:20; 33:7.
- 7 See J. Neusner, *Mishnah, Berakot* 1.1–3.6.
- 8 Different combinations of key terms relating to the theme of Deuteronomy 6:5 are mentioned in other places in scripture. For example, elsewhere in Deuteronomy the twofold formula of heart and soul is used (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 30:6). The fourfold formula in Section 4 of heart, might, mind, and strength is found only in the Doctrine and Covenants (cf. D&C 59:5; 98:47). Each of the three instances in the Book of Mormon varies. In 2 Nephi 25:29, we find might, mind, strength, and soul; in Alma 39:13, mind, might, and strength appear; and in Moroni 10:32 we read the same words in a different order: might, mind, and strength. Twice in the New Testament we read heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30). Luke gives us the fourfold formula of heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27).

Explaining how the New Testament variants of the phrase differ in wording while retaining the same essential meaning, Matthew France writes (R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 845-846):

The quotation [in Matthew 6:37] follows the LXX version for the first two clauses, but the use of *dianoia*, "thinking," in place of LXX *dynamis*, "strength," is surprising. The LXX rendering is the normal understanding of Hebrew *me'od*, though it can also mean "abundance," and the targums translate it by *mammon*, "possessions" ... In Mark 12:30 both *danoia* and *ischys*, "strength," are used, resulting in four clauses instead of the three of Deuteronomy 6:5. The existence of variant versions of a text in constant liturgical use is not surprising (cf. versions of the Lord's Prayer today), but "thinking" looks more like a variant of either "heart" or "soul" than of "strength." It is therefore possible that Matthew took Mark's expanded version (the *four* clauses of which we have no parallel in contemporary literature except here in Luke) and, realizing that the original had only three clauses, removed the last rather than one of

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the more nearly synonymous first three. The resultant list has a rather more “internal” feel as compared with the more practical implications of loving God with one’s strength or possessions. But the main point remains clear, that one is to love God with all that one is and has.

9 Matthew 22:38.

10 H. W. Nibley, Foundation, p. 168.

11 President Ezra Taft Benson observed that all the covenants made up to this point are preparatory, explaining that: “Until one abides by the laws of obedience, sacrifice, the gospel, and chastity, he cannot abide the law of consecration, which is the law pertaining to the celestial kingdom” (E. T. Benson, *Teachings 1988*, p. 121). See also D&C 78:7.

12 R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 845. See Deuteronomy 6:8-9.

13 Matthew 22:38, emphasis mine.

14 Leviticus 19:18.

15 H. W. Attridge *et al.*, HarperCollins Study Bible, Kindle edition, Locations 16589-16597.

16 <https://www.jw.org/en/publications/magazines/watchtower-study-june-2016/jehovah-our-god-is-one-jehovah/> (accessed April 28, 2018)

17 R. Alter, *Five Books*, Kindle Edition, Locations 17518-17520.

18 *Ibid.*, Kindle Edition, Locations 17518-17520.

19 “From Late Latin *Deuteronomium*, from Greek *Deuteronómion*, literally ‘second law,’ from *deuteros* ‘second’ + *nomos* ‘law.’ ... A mistranslation of Hebrew *mishneh hattorah hazzoth* “a copy of this law” [Deut. 17:18]. ... The title was translated literally into Old English as *æfteræ*, literally ‘after-law’” (D. Harper, Dictionary, s.v. Deuteronomy). The name of the book in the Hebrew Bible is “These are the words,” after the first two words in the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 1:1.

20 A. Berlin *et al.*, *Jewish*, p. 428.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 428.

22 JST Exodus 34: 1.

23 D&C 84:25.

24 D&C 84:27.

25 E. E. Carpenter, *Numbers* (Zondervan).

26 Moroni 10:3.

27 A. Berlin *et al.*, *Jewish*, p. 428.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 428. Further arguing for the sermon-like style of this and similar passages in Deuteronomy, E. Fox, *Books of Moses* notes: “Vv. 5–9 have an oral, liturgical ring to them, with the tenfold repetition of the sound *ekha* (“your”). A good many sections of Deuteronomy in fact utilize this style, providing the book, despite its emphasis on the phenomenon of writing, with a distinctive sound.”

29 A. Berlin *et al.*, *Jewish*, p. 428.

30 See Ezra 3:10-11; Nehemiah 9; 1 Chronicles 16:7-36; 2 Chronicles 5:11-14; 7:3.

31 Deuteronomy 6 :7.

32 Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21.

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33 Numbers 15:37-41.

34 Deuteronomy 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, 30:6; Joshua 22:5. See also Deuteronomy 26:16, 30:2, 10; 1 Chronicles 22:19; 2 Chronicles 15:12.

35 Matthew 22:38. See also Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; Revelation 17:13.

36 2 Nephi 25:29; Alma 39:13. See also Mosiah 2:11; Mormon 3:12.

37 D&C 4:2, 59:5; 98:47. See also D&C 11:20; 33:7.

38 <http://thewordinhebrew.com/product/shema-prayer-hebrew-poster/> (accessed April 28, 2018)

39 Variants of the phrase appear many times in the Qur'an.

40 See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 10-12.

41 Romans 8:17.

42 Armin Lange and Esther Eshel comment as follows on the history of the change in interpretation (A. Lange *et al.*, *The Lord Is One*):

At some point Jews began to understand the *Shema' Yisrael* as a monotheistic statement, that is, not only referencing their sole deity but the only deity existing in the universe—the ruler of the world, not just of Israel.

Scholars differ as to when this change occurred. Some scholars, such as André Lemaire, believe [the change in interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4 to emphasize monotheism] occurred during the Babylonian exile. We think the change occurred later, during the Second Temple period (around the second century BCE). The first hints of such a monotheistic reading can be found in the Septuagint and in the Nash Papyrus. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Torah. The Nash Papyrus was produced in the second century B.C.E. and contains the Ten Commandments and the *Shema' Yisrael*. In both texts the Hebrew word that originally meant “alone” gains the numeral meaning “one.” Both texts understand Deuteronomy 6:4 as saying there is only one God. ...

The Halbturn amulet [from the 3rd century CE] marks an early pinnacle of this monotheistic interpretation of the *Shema' Yisrael* in Deuteronomy 6:4. The Halbturn amulet reads the last clause of the *Shema' Yisrael* as ΑΔΩΝ Α “the Lord is 1.” That is, it replaces the Hebrew word *יחא*, which meant originally “alone,” with “one” (a Greek Α). The letter in ancient Greek represents the numeral 1.

With respect to the timing of the change in interpretation, it is noteworthy that in Matthew 22:37 and Luke 10:27, Jesus cites verse 5 of Deuteronomy 6 without mentioning verse 4, reflecting contemporary Jewish usage of these verses to exhort obedience rather than to express the nature of God (see, e.g., Luke 10:27). An exception is Mark 12:29-30, where Jesus quotes both verses 4 and 5, but the emphasis of application of these verses is once again on obedience.

43 A. Berlin *et al.*, *Jewish*, p. 428.

44 *Ibid.*, Deuteronomy 6 :4. Compare similar translations in the NAB, NRSV, and NLT.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 428.

46 The JSB continues:

Almost certainly, the original force of the verse, as the medieval Jewish exegetes ... recognized, was to demand that Israel show exclusive loyalty to our God, YHVH —

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but not thereby to deny the existence of other gods. In this way, it assumes the same perspective as the first commandment of the Decalogue, which, by prohibiting the worship of other gods, presupposes their existence (see 5.7 n.). Once true monotheism became more normative in the Second Temple period, this earlier perspective became unintelligible. Second Temple readers and translators of the *Shema* were thus forced to read this and similar passages in a way that made them consistent with monotheism (see Deuteronomy 32:8 n.; cf. 4:15-31 n.; 5.9 n.). That process of reinterpretation is already evident in the LXX's translation (3rd c. BCE): "the Lord is one." As the basis for most subsequent translations, that reading is the source for the common understanding of the verse.

*Alone:* The traditional translation preserves the usual meaning of Hebrew *'eḥad*, "one," which may have contributed to interpreting the *Shema* as a declaration of monotheism. But what it might mean to say that God is "one" is unclear, since that is not the same as affirming that there is only one God. (Isaiah 44:6; 45:5-7, 14, 18, 21; 46:9). Nor is it likely that the verse intends to clarify that there is only one YHVH, as opposed to many YHVH, since it was recognized that different manifestations of a divinity could derive from a single god (Exodus 6:3). NJPS thus is probably correct to understand *'eḥad* to mean "alone," i.e., "exclusively." This understanding receives support in the prophet Zechariah's interpretation of this verse: "In that day there shall be one Lord with one name" (Zechariah 14:9).

The NET Bible further notes: "Support for this view comes from parallel texts such as Deuteronomy 7:9 and 10:17, as well as the use of "one" in Songs of Solomon 6:8-9, where the star-struck lover declares that his beloved is unique (literally, "one," that is, "one of a kind") when compared to all other women."

47 Emphasis mine. For additional parallels that stress love rather than service, see, e.g., Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 30:6; Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-35; Luke 10:25-29; D&C 59:5. 2 Nephi 25:29 uses similar words to enjoin his listeners to "*worship him* [Christ, the Holy One of Israel] with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul" (emphasis added). Alma told his wayward son Corianton that he must "*turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength*" (Alma 39:13, emphasis added; cf. 2 Kings 23:25).

48 Cf., e.g., Deuteronomy 10:12-13; D&C 59:5.

49 John 14:15.

50 Rashi, *Deuteronomy Commentary*, p. 71.

51 D. L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim*, p. 1025.

52 See Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 11:1, 13; 19:9; 30:16.

53 As in Leviticus 19:17-18.

54 A. Berlin *et al.*, *Jewish*, p. 428.

55 D&C 124:13. Cf. Jeremiah 42:5; Revelation 3:14; 19:11; D&C 69:1. The pair of adjectives "true" and "faithful" are applied in scripture not only to the Lord and to righteous individuals but also with reference to God's word. See Revelation 21:5; 22:6; 2 Nephi 31:15; D&C 1:37; 66:11; 68:34; 71:11.

56 E. Fox, *Books of Moses*.

57 R. Alter, *Five Books*, Kindle Edition, Location 18392.

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58 Sometimes Jewish interpreters interpret this as involving a dedication of both the good and the evil inclinations of the heart. James Kugel explains (J. L. Kugel, *How to Read*, p. 342):

To the ancient interpreters' way of thinking, the human heart is divided between two inclinations, the one to good and the other to evil. It is not enough, therefore, to love God with one's good inclination, since that will leave it still at war with the evil inclination; rather, one must work to convert the evil inclination to love God as well.

59 D. L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim*, p. 1025.

60 Emphasis added.

61 NET Bible, NET Bible, Deuteronomy 6:5 n. R. Alter, Five Books comments: "The Hebrew *nefesh* means 'life-breath' or 'essential self.' The traditional translation of 'soul,' preserved in many recent versions, is misleading because it suggests a body-soul split alien to biblical thinking."

According to E. Fox, Books of Moses: "Hebrew *nefesh* carries a host of meanings: 'life' or 'life-essence,' 'breath,' 'self,' and 'appetite,' to mention a few. The traditional English 'soul,' while stirring in these passages, gives the impression of something contrasted to the body—not an idea that appears in the Hebrew Bible. It should be mentioned that the couplet 'heart and being,' which occurs a number of times in Deuteronomy, might also indicate 'mind and emotions.'"

62 Rashi, *Deuteronomy Commentary*, p. 71.

63 J. Neusner, Mishnah, Berakhot 9:5, p. 14. "According to Mizrahi, this means that a person should be willing to give his life for the sanctification of the Name of God when the situation calls for it. According to Eimek HaNetziv, it means that a person must feel love of God even if his life is being taken for His sake."

64 D. L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim*, p. 1025. See, for example, "the account of Akiva's death by torture at the hands of the Romans (*Babylonian Talmud* Ber. 61b; see also Y. i. Chaviv, *Ein Yaakov*, pp. 59-60; H. N. Bialik et al., *Legends*, 2:1:177, p. 238)."

65 M. Weinfeld, Common Heritage, p. 181. Thanks to David Calabro for alerting me to this reference.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 182.

69 H. Sperling *et al.*, Zohar, Terumah 141.

70 A. Berlin *et al.*, Jewish, p. 428, referencing Ivan G. Marcus, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, p. 200. The JSB also notes: "There is also a narrative of Rabbi Akiva (2nd century CE) reciting the evening *Shema* while being martyred by the Romans (Ber. 61a)."

Y. Liebes, Studies in Jewish Myth, p., 157 n. 44 draws attention to parallels with the Muslim statement "There is no God but Allah and Muhammed is his prophet," noting first that it is "an article of faith recited daily by Muslims, equivalent to the recital of the *Shema* in Judaism." He goes on to say:

However, it is also the statement made by martyrs, just as the *Shema* has been since Rabbi Akiva's death. In Arabic, this is related to a linguistic double meaning: This statement is called the *shahada*, that is, a testimony, implying a testimony of faith, but a martyr's death is also called *shahada*, namely, the death of a *shahid*, who is not

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only a witness but one who dies sanctifying God's name. Thus did the Greek word *martyr*, meaning witness, assume its modern meaning in Christianity, implying one whose death attests to his or her faith. See *First Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. *Shahada*. Similarly, the *Shema* is perceived as a testimony in several sources in rabbinical literature — see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshita*, Shabat, p. 263. This may be related to the tradition stating that the letter *ayin*, at the end of the word *shema*, and the letter *dalet*, at the end of the word *ehad* [One], which appear in the *Shema Israel* verse, should be capitalized because, when combined, they form the word *ed* [witness]. I found this tradition first mentioned in the commentary of the *Baal ha-Turim* to Deuteronomy 6:4 (the verse of the *Shema*): “*Ayin* and *dalet* capitalized make *ed* as it says (Isaiah 43:10): ‘You are my witness,’ and the Holy One, blessed be He, is also a witness to Israel, as is written (Malachi 3:5): ‘And I will be a swift witness.’” A similar idea is mentioned several times in the *Zohar*, such as 2:160b; however, in the *Zohar* it is always God who testifies for man. See also Moses de Leon, *Shekel ha-Kodesh* (London, 1911), pp. 100-101. It must be pointed out, however, that the Muslim *shahid* is different from either the Christian or the Jewish martyr, since he is killed fighting a holy war [*jihad*] against the infidels rather than as a passive victim.

71 D. L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim*, p. 1025.

72 E.g., J. Neusner, *Mishnah*, Berakhot 9:5, p. 14; Rashi, *Deuteronomy Commentary*, p. 71.

A. Berlin *et al.*, *Jewish*, p. 428 observes: “Hebrew *me'od* is elsewhere an adverb meaning ‘very’ or ‘exceedingly.’ It is used as a noun only here and in the Deuteronomistic description of King Josiah, which cites this verse (2 Kings 23:25). While the word’s basic meaning is ‘might’ or ‘strength,’ it was understood as ‘wealth’ or ‘property’ both at Qumran (CD 9.11; 12.10) and in early rabbinic literature (Targum Jonathan; Sifre). The two interpretations each call for full commitment to God, whether psychological or practical; both are preserved in the Mishnah (Berakhot 9:5).”

E. Fox, *Books of Moses* translates the term as “substance,” commenting “Or ‘excess’; others, ‘might,’ ‘capacity.’ There are other examples of biblical Hebrew words for ‘strength’ that also mean ‘wealth’ (e.g., *hayil* in Deuteronomy 33:11).”

Kugel (J. L. Kugel, *How to Read*, p. 342) gives yet another interpretation:

Rabbi Akiba, finding the phrase “with all your might” somewhat anticlimactic after “with all your soul,” suggested that it might be understood (because of the similar sound of the words meaning “your might” and “thankful”) as “for *all* things [I] thank You,” that is, that one ought to express gratitude to God no matter whether one’s portion is good or bad.

Further explaining the grammatical basis for this conjectural emendation, Kugel writes (*ibid.*, p. 732 n. 12):

The weakening of *aleph* to phonetic zero in late and post-biblical Hebrew is well attested; it turned *me'od* into *mod*. M. Bar Asher (2000) has suggested that this is the reason for the rise of adverbial *moda* (= *me'od*) in Qumran Hebrew. Given this reduction of *aleph*, R. Akiba’s reading of Deuteronomy 6:5 seems, more precisely, to have divided the verse in two: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart

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and all your soul; and in all things [say: “I] give thanks to You,” that is *ubakkol* [*‘ani*] *modekka*.

Compare D&C 59:7-8: “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”

73 See Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:9, 11, 13.

74 Rashi, Deuteronomy Commentary, p. 71.

75 E. T. Benson, *Teachings 1988*, p. 121; cf. G. B. Hinckley, *Teachings (1997)*, p. 147; H. B. Lee, *Teachings 1996*, p. 318.

76 Photograph by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, 25 May 2008, IMG\_2888.

77 E. Fox, Books of Moses.

78 Deuteronomy 6:7.

79 R. Alter, *Five Books*, Kindle Edition, Locations 18392-18400. Compare the idea of “reproving ... with sharpness,” i.e. speaking with a keen and direct severity of language (e.g., 2 Corinthians 13:10; 2 Nephi 1:26; Words of Mormon 1:17; Moroni 9:4; D&C 15:2; 16:2; D&C 121:43; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 5-6 December 1834, 2:177). On sharpness in rebuke as an attribute of Joseph Smith, see R. L. Bushman, *Character*, pp. 26-28.

80 Deuteronomy 6:7.

81 R. Alter, *Five Books*, Kindle Edition, Locations 18392-18400.

82 Mosiah 18:9.