

# Sh'ma & V'ahavta

The Sh'ma (Deuteronomy 6:4) is the central declaration of faith for a Jew. It declares the oneness of God: the Eternal who is above and beyond our reach and comprehension is nevertheless our personal God, close to our hearts and minds. In declaring the Sh'ma, we join the thousands of Jews throughout history who have stood for the idea of monotheism, belief in one God, even if it meant their lives. Traditionally, two letters of the Sh'ma, the *ayin* (ע) and the *dalet* (ד), are printed larger than the rest, for together they make the word *eid* (עד), which means "witness." When we say the Sh'ma, we are God's witnesses in this world and messengers that God desires unity for all humankind: oneness in peace, justice, and compassion. The line that follows speaks of the coming of God's rule, and it is said in a softer voice, for such a time is a hope that has not been realized.

The V'ahavta in Reform prayer books consists of Deuteronomy 6:5-9 and Numbers 15:40-41. It speaks of God's love for us and how we show that love in return: by teaching God's Torah to our children and keeping it as a reminder constantly in front of us. In this way, we remember the kind of human beings that we ought to be.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד!

*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*  
Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד!

*Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va-ed.*  
Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ: וְהָיוּ  
הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לִבְבְּךָ: וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבִנְיָךְ  
וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ:  
וְקִשְׂרָתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוּזוֹת  
בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

*V'ahavta et Adonai Elohecha, b'chol l'avcha uv'chol nafsh'cha uv'chol m'odecha. V'hayu had'varim ha-eileh asher anochi m'tzavcha hayom al l'avvecha. V'shinantam l'vanecha v'dibarta bam b'shivt'cha b'veitecha uv'lecht'cha vaderech uv'shochb'cha uv'kumecha. Ukshartam l'ot al yadecha v'hayu l'totafot bein einecha. Uch'tavtam al m'zuzot beitecha uvisharecha.*

לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: אֲנִי  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים  
אֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (אֱמֶת)

*L'maan tizk'ru, vaasitem et kol mitzvotai vih'yitem k'doshim l'Eloheichem. Ani Adonai  
Eloheichem, asher hotzeiti et-chem mei-eretz Mitzrayim lih'yot lachem l'Elohim  
ani Adonai Eloheichem. (Emet)*

You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Thus you shall remember to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I am Adonai, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am Adonai your God. (Truth)