

Deuteronomy 6

Verses 4-9 of this chapter are known to Jews as the *Shema*, the Hebrew word for “hear” at the start. *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Orthodox Jews take literally the instruction to bind these commands on their hands and wear them as frontlets (decorative headpieces) between their eyes. Every day, if

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not more frequently, they will put on a *tefillin* or phylactery for prayer. It consists of two leather boxes, one for the forehead and one for the arm, with long leather straps to hold them in place. In the boxes are scrolls handwritten with Exodus 13:1-16, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

The Lord does not ask us to strap on leather boxes as part of our service to Him. What are we to put on instead? *... you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self ... Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ... And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts (Colossians 3:9-14).* This is our phylactery.

Questions:

1. Why do you think the Lord keeps repeating His command to teach our children, and children's children?
2. How can we reconcile verse 4 with the doctrine of the Trinity? What hints do we find in the Old Testament that there is more than one Person in the Godhead?
3. In Mark 12:29-30 Jesus cites verses 4 and 5 as the most important commandment. Why?

4. Is there anything we as Christians can do along the lines of verses 6-9?
5. Why does the Lord emphasize that the children of Israel did not build the cities they will conquer, etc? Is there an application to us?
6. In verse 12, what might make the people of Israel forgetful of the Lord?
7. Read verse 16. What happened at Massah? How did it test the Lord?
8. In verse 25 Moses says, “It will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God ...” What is righteousness for us?