Shema Israel: Pasuq 1. God exists. He is our God. And He is one.

Last week we explained the first word "Shema". Which in Hebrew means, **listening while paying attention** and **understanding** what you are told.

Elsewhere, I have shared with the readers a *derasha* on the second word: "Israel", and how it hints to the names of our three patriarchs and four matriarchs.
These two words are announcing that a very important message will be delivered to the members of the Nation of Israel.

"HaShem is our God, HaShem is one"

"HaShem", literally means "The Name" and it alludes to God. So, anytime you find "HaShem" **you could mentally replace it** for "The God of Israel".

Rabbenu Bahya Ebn Paquda (Span, XI century) in his book Chobot haLebabaot explains that **this verse includes three principle**s, the core beliefs of the Jewish faith.

1. HaShem **IS** our God…: The first thing you affirm when you say "the book is blue" is that the book "is" = exists. Similarly. The first message of "Shema Israel" is that HaShem exists.

2. HaShem is **OUR** God: Evidently, HaShem is the God of every human being. He is the Creator of heavens, earth and life. **What does it mean then OUR God?**"Our" God is saying more about US than about God. It means that **God established a special covenant, a unique relationship with us**, by choosing us and giving us His Tora. **He made us HIS People,** the "chosen people". Which implies that we have **more responsibilities** and we are expected to follow **higher moral standards** than gentiles.

3. HaShem is **ONE**: The unity of God is a cardinal principle. There are no gods or other forces outside God's control. **One example:** We don't believe in "Nature" as an independent force. God is the artifice of nature. He controls, runs and operates nature.