

DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING THE SHEMA

Considerable difficulty in translating Deuteronomy 6:4 exists because there is no verb in the Hebrew text, which is not uncommon when the verb is "to be"; it is appropriate and expected that it be supplied in an English translation. However, in an inflected language, when the verb "to be" takes a predicate nominative, it will be a noun appearing in the nominative case, just like the subject. There are at least 3 nouns in this verse (Heb., *echad*, "one", can be either a 4th noun or an adjective), all occurring in the nominative case, and a form of the verb "to be" (i.e., "is") must be supplied--but with no clear indication of where in the text it should be inserted. Context must guide the determination of how to translate and understand this verse of Scripture. Possibilities include:

(1) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD. (KJV)

Assuming Deuteronomy 4:39 is the controlling context:

(2) Hear, O Israel: JEHOVAH [is] our God, JEHOVAH [is] one.

Assuming Deuteronomy 5:7-10 is the controlling context:

(3) **Hear, O Israel: JEHOVAH [is] our God, JEHOVAH alone.** ☒

All of these translations result in true statements supported by other scriptures, but (3) seems to best fit the context of Deuteronomy 5-6.

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