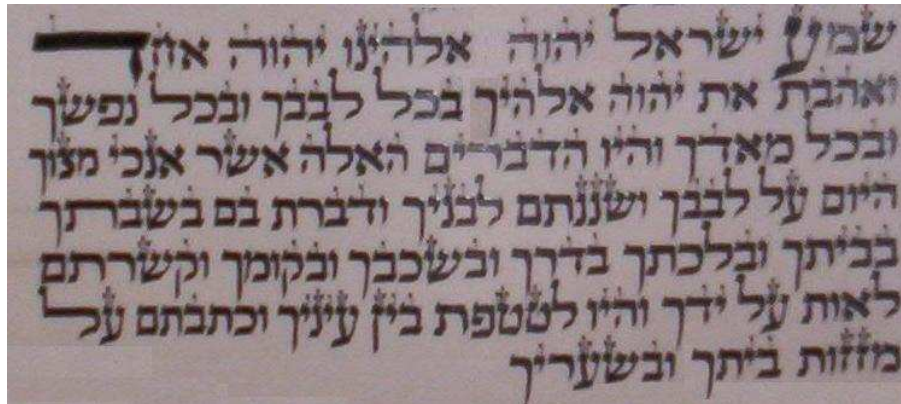


## Top 10 Ideas: Class 3

Saturday, January 23, 2010  
10:00 PM

# שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

Deuteronomy 6:4



Albert Einstein:

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Talmud Berachot 61b

As Akiva was dying he recited Shema, and when he came to the last word, "Ehad" ("One") he prolonged the word until his soul left him. A voice came forth from heaven and said: "Fortunate are you, Rabbi Akiva, that your spirit has left you at "Ehad".

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

The Shema can be said as a prayer or a declaration of faith, and it is said as such by Jews all over the world. But if the words are said very slowly, and if a person perceives himself mentally, the Shema can be an extremely powerful meditation. Indeed, the Torah itself prescribes that the Shema be said twice daily, and it seems highly probable that this was originally prescribed as a short daily meditation for all Israel. . .

The technique consists in saying the words very slowly, in a manner very similar to that of using the Amidah for a meditation. In the Amidah. . . The prescribed rate was approximately one word every seven seconds. The Shema can be said even more slowly. You can dwell on each word for as long as fifteen or twenty seconds, or with experience, even longer. During the silences between words, let the meaning of each word penetrate your innermost being. . . It is easier to use the Shema as a meditation than the Amidah, since the main portion of the Shema consists of only six words, which are easy to memorize. Before you can use these words as a meditation, you must know them well and by heart. You should be seated while saying the Shema and keep your eyes closed. Strive to be perfectly still, with no body motion whatsoever.