

A four week study on the keywords of  
“**The Shema**” (pronounced: Sha-ma)

A Jewish prayer that has been prayed every morning and evening for thousands of years.

#### **Part 4- Strength (Me’od)**

Sunday, March 11th, 2018

#### **Deuteronomy 6:1-7 (NIV)**

“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.**

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

English- (Hebrew)

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Hear- (Shema)

—> Listen AND Obey

LORD- (Yahweh)

—> God’s name is HOLY

Love- (Ahavah)

—> Feelings AND Action

Heart- (Levav/Lev)

—> Thought + Physical + Emotion + Choice

Soul- (Nephesh)

—> Living, Breathing, Physical Being

Strength- (Me’od)

—> Very or Much

“Koakh”- most commonly used word for “strength” in Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

“Me’od” appears almost 300 times in the OT and the Shema is one of the only times that it’s translated as “strength.”

“Me’od” is an adverb- a word coming alongside another to augment its meaning- muchness, force, abundance (Strong’s Concordance)

In the Creation account, God uses the word “good”(tov) six times to describe the earth and then, after creating man, He uses the term “Me’od-tov” or VERY good! (**Genesis 1:31**)

**Genesis 7:18-** The floodwaters in the account of Noah and the ark become “Me’od powerful” or, EXTREMELY powerful!

**Genesis 4:5-** Cain was Me’od angry at his brother, Abel.

**1 Samuel 11:15-** Saul was Me'od happy when he became the king of Israel.

If an author wanted to increase a words force to total capacity, they would write Me'od twice and back to back like so: "me'od me'od"

So in **Genesis 30:43** Jacob was "Me'od me'od wealthy" because of his flocks, camels, donkeys, servants, etc.

When the Israelite spies were sent to investigate the promised land they came back with the report that it was "Me'od me'od good." (**Numbers 14:7**)

So again, it most often does not reflect strength in terms of muscle power but instead, refers more to "very or much."

Back to the Shema- people are called to love God with all their HEART (will & affections), SOUL (whole life & physical bodies) and their "Me'od" or, their MUCHNESS. So this last thing we are to love God with us not a "thing" at all. Instead, it is EVERYTHING. Every opportunity, possibility and capacity is to be given to God in order to honor him and love others- so that we might become fully devoted followers of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It's interesting to note that when Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, they translated the word "Me'od" as "Dunamis" which means POWER or STRENGTH. However, in the ancient Aramaic translations, the word is translated to mean WEALTH. Money is a concrete thing that opens up many opportunities to love God by the giving away of our resources.

And when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment to follow was, He quoted the Shema and unpacked the word "Me'od" by using two different words- mind and power. (**Mark 12:30**) Both are human capacities that can be used to love God in an infinite amount of ways.

So what is the correct interpretation of the word "Me'od?" Is it strength or wealth or mind??? Again, like last week, that's not the best question to ask. The reality is that the word Me'od doesn't limit the amount of ways a person can love and obey God. So the point is that in EVERYTHING, every thought we conceive, every ability we possess, every opportunity we are given and every aspiration we can dream of- in everything and at all times, we are able and should choose to love God by obeying Him and to love others by serving them.

"Me'od" means: we are to love God with all of our "muchness."