

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT
Doctor of Philosophy in Religion

Adventist International Institute
of Advanced Studies

Theological Seminary

TITLE: AN ANALYSIS OF DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5: MONOTHEISM IN
POLYTHEISTIC HINDU CONTEXT

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This study seeks to explicate exegetically and theologically the meaning of the *Shema* in Deut 6:4-5 and its function within the monotheistic religion of Israel. It further seeks to demonstrate the relevance of the *Shema* within a polytheistic context with the intent of creating a dialogue that would eventually lead to a transformative encounter in favour of biblical monotheism.

Chapters 1 and 2 survey the relevant literature that was written on the *Shema*. Interpretations of the *Shema* hold to the absolute unity within the divine and God's exclusive claim to loyalty and obedience from His adherents. It also includes the relevant literature on Hindu polytheism.

Chapter 3 exegetes Deut 6:4-5 taking a closer look at key elements within the pericope primarily on the meaning of שָׁמַע, “to hear”; אֶחָד, “one”; אָהַב, “to love”; יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, “the Lord our God”; and יְהוָה אֶחָד, “the Lord is one.” The appeal to love

God is made through an awareness of God's uniqueness and the relationship He seeks with humanity. Love and obedience occur only within the construct of a trusting relationship between God and those who commit to Him. In this sense, the *Shema* does not merely speak of God's oneness but of the response that God's oneness generates from His devotees—unity and obedience.

Chapter 4 looks at biblical monotheism from the Mosaic period to the New Testament and also extending up to the modern and postmodern era. Chapter 5 surveys Hindu polytheism as it pertains to India. The distinctive features of Hindu polytheism are assessed so as to elucidate similarities and differences with biblical monotheism. The chapter provides principles derived from biblical monotheism to better aid in building contextual bridges resulting in the inculturation of monotheistic values within the polytheistic Hindu context.

The last chapter of this study summarizes and concludes with the findings of the *Shema* and synthesizes the findings of the meeting points of Hinduism with biblical understanding of the common points.