

DEUTERONOMY

Lesson 8 - Chapter 6

Although we've already spoken of it a bit, the focus of Deuteronomy chapter 6 centers on verses 4-9 and especially verses 4 and 5. Verses 4 and 5 are considered so important to the faith of Yehoveh worship that it has been given a separate title: the **Shema**.

The **Shema** goes by another name as well: **Hear O Israel**. So fundamental to the basis of the entire Torah (and to Christian principles) is the Shema that we're going to examine it closely today. And for those who say (mistakenly) that Jesus Christ came to distance Himself and His followers from the Torah (despite His forceful statement of Matthew 5:17-19 to the contrary), listen to this passage from the Gospel of Mark (also present in the other Synoptic Gospels), Mark 12: 28 – 30: ^{NAS} **Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;³⁰ and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'**

Now, listen to Deuteronomy 6:4,5: ^{NAS} **Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!"⁵ "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

Yeshua was of course quoting the Shema; He was quoting the Torah. But to listen to most Evangelical church leaders today one would think everything Jesus did was to essentially say, "throw away everything you ever knew, I'm going to give you brand new laws and commands that replace all that came before". Further notice that Jesus also doesn't drop "Israel" from this statement, nor does He replace it with "church". It occurs to me that usually when we're asked what the greatest command is, we have been well trained enough to know it; so we immediately respond with "love the Lord with all you heart, mind, and strength". Since we are but quoting Messiah, why is it that we intentionally MISQUOTE Him? Why do we start quoting halfway through that statement? Why do we simply drop the "Hear O Israel the Lord is our God, the Lord is One" that precedes it? Therefore, gentile Christians, if we're going to say that there are commands that are for Israel, and that these are separate from commands that are for "the Church", then along with disposing of the 10 Commandments (which were given to Israel as part of the Law) intellectual honesty compels us to also throw out this Torah command from Jesus to love God AS the God of Israel.

Just so I'm not misunderstood: I am stating emphatically that there are NOT separate commands and gospels for Israel versus for the Church and that of course the 10 Commandments and the Shema are for the Church just as they are for Israel. I am also stating that it is heartbreaking and infuriating that for so many centuries institutional Christianity has chosen to falsely declare the abolishment of Torah, supposedly to be replaced with Jesus' establishment of a whole new religion completely apart from the Hebrew faith; a religion by, of, and for gentiles. We have been led down (and have EASILY accepted) a crooked path; and the fruit of that acceptance is the enactment of a whole series of false doctrines that have led to the Crusades, the Inquisition, the re-establishment of Secular Humanism and the Holocaust. And now in our time our beloved church has become powerless, self-absorbed, and prosperity-oriented all the while it ignores the impact of the prophetic rebirth of Israel and the return of Jerusalem to the control of the Hebrews. We have seen the Christian institution move towards outsourced ministry, a watered down but diversely tolerant gospel, a Jesus who is separate from the Father, a denial of sin and evil, and the observance of paganized holidays while ignoring those that the Lord Himself has declared holy.

The *Shema* ought to be a wake-up call to God's people; all of God's people.

Let's read together this inscrutably deep 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, which exposes the molten core of Torah, the Shema, that powers God's Word just as the molten core of our planet powers the earth's vital processes.

READ DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 6 all

During chapters 1 through 5 Moses has been building up to this point: a restatement (perhaps even a reintroduction) of the Laws and commands given to Israel by Yehoveh from Mt. Sinai. I can not emphasize enough that the REASON for Moses repeating these regulations that have already been given to Israel some 40 years earlier, is that they are being presented to an entire new generation of Hebrews who had obviously NOT been taught these laws by their parents, the first generation of the Exodus (all dead and buried in the desert sand). Further, he is giving it to the group that is about to do what their parents refused to do: conquer the Land of Canaan. These people are but days from entering into a long-term battle (a Holy War) that will cost thousands of them their lives.

Moses affirms that what he is about to teach them is exactly what the Lord told him to give to Israel the first time: nothing more and nothing less, and that these laws and rulings are to be scrupulously followed when they enter the Promised Land. The reason Israel needs to follow the Torah is so that things will go well with Israel and that all the blessings that the Lord has ready for them will be realized. The last half of verse 3 brings two thoughts to together: first, what is being prepared for them in Canaan is far more than mere survival, it is abundant life;

that is the meaning of the phrase, “a land flowing with milk and honey”. Second, Israel is reminded that what is about to happen (the inheritance of a land of their own) is the fulfillment of the promise (the Abrahamic covenant) given to “their fathers”, meaning the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Notice that the covenant established on Mt. Sinai 40 years earlier did NOT abolish and replace the covenant given to Abraham 600 years before Israel left Egypt. Rather this covenant of Moses is for another purpose; it is to set down rules and standards for living the redeemed life that will be enjoyed inside the land that was promised in the first covenant.

So here, standing on the foothills of Moab, Moses gives the original version of the Sermon on the Mount that the Messiah will emulate 1300 years later. Thus Moses is not simply going to reiterate the Law, rather he is going to expound upon it and do what he can to make clear the underlying principles (the spirit) behind these timeless commands.

No, I wasn't speaking figuratively or making hyperbole when I compared Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount to what we're reading in Deuteronomy; the similarities are quite keen and as time goes on I think you'll see that this is the case. Yeshua was merely drawing on the pattern laid down by his predecessor Moses. Notice that Moses has already (one chapter earlier, in chapter 5) begun recounting the Law; in fact his address to the people really began back in chapter 1. So, already well into the re-giving of the Laws he pauses to lay down the all-encompassing principle around which all the Law rests; and this principle is the one with the title of “**Shema**”. Why do this? Why pause and inject this spiritual principle at this point? If this is something that everything that Moses has already taught stands upon, why wait to give it in the middle of his sermon instead of at the very beginning? Simple: Moses did NOT want the people to mistakenly see the Laws he had already given in the context that it certainly COULD sound like they are, as merely a set of strict legal rulings being held over their heads by an all-powerful heavenly ruler. In that era every society had a legal code that a king held as immutable, and at the same time these kings had no obligation or interest in explaining to the people the reasoning for the laws because all too often those laws were but self-serving to the benefit of the royalty. The implication is that these are the laws, and you don't need to know why, just do them or else. But that was not the case with the Lord's Torah.

Since Moses had already revisited several laws (the 10 Commandments) with the new generation and many more rulings were yet to follow, God (through Moses) says, “hold on a second, My people, because I don't want you to get the wrong idea. HERE is the context within which you are to understand and carry out ALL of My laws”. Then Moses goes on to explain (in what eventually came to be called the Shema) that Israel's love of the Lord is the necessary context for **doing** the Law. It is The Law that establishes the terms of the relationship between Yehoveh and Israel. The source of Israel's obedience to Yehoveh was not to spring from barren and merciless legalism; rather it was to go forth from a response of love. Now please hear this: the Lord says that **obedience** to Him IS the response of love as He defines it. That to LOVE Him is to be OBEDIENT to Him.

Today the Western Church says that (generally speaking) obedience and love are somewhere between being entirely different things and perhaps are even mutually exclusive to some degree or another. In fact it is usually implied that love is preferable to obedience as concerns our relationship with Yehoveh. However in the Holy Scriptures God says one is the evidence of the other. God says that obedience to Him is the act of loving Him, and that loving Him is embodied in our obedience to Him; as much as we might like to, we cannot disconnect obedience from love as involves our allegiance to, and relationship with, God.

You see it is only since Greco-Roman times that the concept of love moved away from being primarily an action and instead became primarily an emotion, a sensation of inner warmth. The Biblical Hebrews would never have recognized the modern secular and Christian viewpoint of love as being a warm, fuzzy feeling of compassion or affection towards another. I went to the Webster's New World Dictionary and in the 9 different definitions they gave for the word love, every one of them spoke of emotion and ONLY emotion. Here are some examples: tender feelings, affection, sexual passion, a feeling of brotherhood, and a strong liking. But to the Hebrew (and to the Lord) love demands an outward response, an action, or it was not love. The Lord says, 'don't say you love Me and then turn around and deny My commandments; because I say if you deny My commandments then you do NOT love Me'.

Let's turn our attention for a moment to the more familiar (to Christians) Sermon on the Mount of the New Testament. Matthew 5 begins this pivotal teaching that is at the core of the Christian faith. It begins by explaining that Jesus stations Himself on a hilltop whereupon He begins to teach. And the first few of His glorious teachings are what Christendom has titled the Beatitudes. Yeshua opens this sermon by listing several positive statements of heavenly fact that have (of course) ALWAYS been so, but were (of late) being repressed by the religious leadership. These heavenly facts had become so lost in a morass of men's rulings and philosophies that they had all but been forgotten. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, says Yeshua, for they shall see the Kingdom of Heaven; blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Several more of these crucial heavenly facts are listed and then He says, "blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me".

He moves on and tells the people: "You are the salt of the earth; you are a light to the world". Then suddenly, while He is deep into His sermon, Jesus the Mediator, the 2nd Moses (if you would) abruptly pauses to make an important interjection. Just as Moses momentarily suspended his sermon so as to make sure his listeners were not taking what He was saying in the wrong context (as we all are tempted to do), Jesus essentially says, "hold on a second because I don't want you to get the wrong idea. HERE is the context within which you are to understand what I'm teaching you". And then Yeshua says (starting in verse 17): ^{CJB} **Matthew 5:17 "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and**

teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

After making this dramatic and sweeping statement so that every hearer could not possibly walk away thinking He has thrown Moses' Law away for a new Law, or that He has not declared that Moses is no longer relevant, Messiah continues with His sermon. And in Matthew 5:21 He begins, "you have heard that the ancients were told...", and then lists several basic tenets of the Law. Within each one of those tenets Jesus expounds on their meaning. Why? Because just as mindless physical ritual had replaced spirit filled obedience based on the love of God, so had men's philosophies thoroughly corrupted the meaning and purpose of God's commandments.

And wouldn't you just know it: despite our Messiah's warning, just as the Israelite society had slowly forgotten their love of Yehoveh and severed away the grace and mercy that was the vital underpinning of the Law, so have Jesus' followers slowly forgotten our love of Him and severed away obedience from our walk and worship. We have done the exact thing He told us NOT to do. We have adopted the exact context of His ministry that He told us NOT to accept. Just as so much of Israel turned to a mechanical following of Laws as their expression of faith, so has so much of the church turned to a display of emotions and a mechanical following of Church liturgy as our expressions of faith; both ways often devoid of the one ingredient necessary for either to have any meaning or relevance: love of the Lord as evidenced by our obedience.

Deuteronomy 6: 4 says, "Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is echad (the Lord is one)". In Hebrew "hear" is **shema**. It does NOT mean passive listening such as playing a CD and quietly enjoying the music. Nor does it mean to read the Gospels or the Psalms as a source of information or knowledge. **Shema** is an instruction to take action. **Shema** means to hear and obey, to listen to God's instruction and do it! Next it says that, "YHWH is our God, and YHWH is one". There are some minor differences among the Jewish sages over exactly what "YHWH is one" is supposed to indicate to us.

Some Rabbis believe that this statement is merely another way to make clear this revolutionary notion that there is but ONE God in all existence. Others believe that this is speaking of God's self-unity, a nature of oneness; that is, that he is not like the other gods of that era that tended to sort of divide themselves and to be associated with various locations and shrines. Still others say that this is an expression of the proper relationship between YHWH and Israel; that YHWH is Israel's ONLY god and that they are not to look to the others. Well, in my opinion, this is the weakness of the academic discipline called Literary Criticism that tends to tear every sentence apart and then to scientifically determine how we should take it. Faith and spirituality

are left out; and since the Bible is a document BASED on faith and spirituality the point can be lost.

As I look at the words, “**YHWH eloheinu YHWH echad**”, (Yehoveh is our God, Yehoveh one) I see an enormous God-principle that expresses a universal **spiritual** reality; therefore it requires several human expressions to even approximate its essence. In other words if, for example, we traveled to an alien planet in a far away Galaxy and the inhabitants there asked us where we came from we would say, ‘it’s place called earth’. They might then say, what is earth? We would respond with a whole list of earth’s attributes: it’s round, it revolves around a star, the climate is temperate, it is mostly water but there is also a lot of dry land, and so forth. Now if this happened to be an alien literary critic we were talking to he might respond, “well which one IS it? Is it round, or does it have a lot of water, or is the climate temperate?” That’s sort of how Literary Critics operate; there’s not a lot of room for complex and multifaceted meanings for any given statement. Of course our reply to our alien literary critic would probably be that our planet is ALL of these things and more, but there doesn’t seem to be anything in that alien world to use as an illustration. Well, that’s the nature of “**YHWH eloheinu, YHWH echad**”; to analyze what that means and all the characteristics it entails, cannot be simplified by forming this into a doctrine of one characteristic OR the other, and nothing in our limited 4-dimensional physical world, or finite human mind, can be used to illustrate the vast spiritual reality that this principle embodies.

At the very least we can say it means that the Lord God is the only god that exists, He is the ONLY object of worship that is permitted for His Believers, He is completely unified as there are not various “pieces” of Him that can be separated into “persons”, and He is OUR God in the sense that He has established a mutual relationship between Himself and all who submit to Him in love. Further we know His formal name, YHWH, and we know from the first 2 words of the **shema Israel** (Hear O Israel) that this statement of His being and nature was directed **to** Israel and by definition all that would JOIN themselves to Israel. There is more contained in this short statement and the Rabbis have contemplated this at great length; and well beyond what the Rabbis have concluded there is more to those 4 simple words that our limited human minds will never be able to comprehend about this cosmic principle.

But also notice something that cannot be coincidence: this central confession of faith consists of but 4 words, just as YHWH’s name consists of but 4 letters.

Let’s move on and look at the beginning of the 2nd part of the **Shema**, which is “you shall love the Lord your God”. Or more literally, you shall love YHWH your elohim. Here is an excellent context to again examine the word **love** because if one decides that love is primarily an emotion or a state of mind then we find that here the Lord is commanding an emotion (YOU SHALL love). Here’s the problem: of all the things that a man can do, conjuring up an emotion if we don’t actually feel it, is a difficult task at best (except perhaps for movie actors and those among us who hold the deepest sensitivities). We can often outwardly MIMIC an emotion; we

can pretend, even bringing ourselves to real tears. But can any man be ordered to HAVE an emotion? Can a man order another man to FEEL a certain way? What do we do when we are horribly sad and then a dear friend or Pastor exhorts us to “be joyful”? Let’s say a husband doesn’t want to deal with his wife’s depressed state and suggests she “cheer up”. As much as she might want to (even if only to please her husband) usually she can’t, but some get awfully good at faking it. The point is, good luck in commanding an emotion (believe me, I’ve tried!). So is God commanding us to have an emotion of love towards Him?

Now when it comes to commanding a physical action that is a different issue. God CAN command us to avoid worshipping other gods, and we certainly have the capacity to obey that. God CAN command us to celebrate a physical Biblical Feast, and we can physically do it. In fact we can disagree inwardly with the Lord on these things, we can even feel indifferent about them, and STILL obey the commandments. However true love of God DOES involve more than physical action. Love is a state of mind as well as a physical response. In fact I would say that the type of love that is godly also includes a state of our spirit. Is there an emotional component to love? Certainly there is. However I would say that the emotion of love OUGHT to be the final result of all the other factors being in place first. But of all the components that comprise godly Biblical love, emotion is certainly NOT the chief one or the guiding one.

Because there is no more important aspect of our relationship to the Creator than to love Him, allow me to offer another way to look at this **command** to love God: love is the opposite of hate. Often in the Scriptures we are told to hate things that God hates. Again, due to our Western mindsets, we see hatred in the same way as we see love....as primarily involving our emotions. In fact as Rabbi Baruch taught in his study of Ezekiel, the Biblical meaning of hate is closer to what in English is the word “reject”; or in a higher essence (especially as it concerns our relationship with God), to demonstrate unfaithfulness. To hate God is to reject God and thus to be unfaithful to Him. To hate His Torah is to reject His Torah and to be unfaithful to its laws and commands. Conversely to LOVE God is to accept Him and display faithfulness. Of course more than mere acceptance or an outward display of loyalty is involved (total submission is the highest essence of this acceptance). Yet is it not the common call of the evangelist that a non-Believer needs to “accept” Jesus Christ? And in a general sense Christians know what “accepting” Yeshua means. The Bible defines this type of acceptance as submission and obedience, which is the evidence of “love” that the Lord is looking for.

In the last half of verse 5 we are told to embody this love of Yehoveh with “all of our heart, our soul, and our might”. In Hebrew the words are **levav** (heart), **nefesh** (soul), and **be-khol me’odekha** (might). Heart is absolutely a correct rendering of **levav**; it was indeed referring to the organ inside our chests that pumps blood. However the problem of understanding just what the Hebrews’ meaning of the term **levav** is (as it applies to what function the heart performs BEYOND only pumping blood), is critical to our reading of the entire Word of God. That is when we’re instructed to store away something in our hearts, or to not have hate for our brother in our hearts, what does that mean? In Western Culture (and in the church) we speak of the heart as the seat of our emotions and our morality, even our character. That is NOT

what the Hebrews thought or meant when they spoke the word “heart”, and therefore we must learn to think of it as they meant it. The Hebrews knew of the heart as the seat of intellect and conscious thought; the place of our memory and where actions are contemplated and decisions are made. Let me stress that what I just told you is not conjecture. Any competent Bible Scholar will agree with that because it’s but well documented historic fact. It was at a much later date (the late Hellenistic Period to the Medieval time) that the function of the brain was finally understood to be where the intellect and all thought processes reside. So to the heart was transferred the function of emotion, desire, and passion to be in line with Greek thought on the matter. But this redefining of the function of the heart did not occur until centuries Bible was closed up and completed.

The point is that while translating the word *lev* or *levav* to “heart” (the heart organ) is technically correct, the FUNCTION it intends to communicate to us is NOT how we have typically been taught. Whether OT or NT, when we see the word “heart” in the Bible we should simply scratch it out and insert “brain” or “mind”.

OK. So we’ve discussed what is meant by, “with all our heart” and learned that in modern English we should take it to mean, “with all of our mind”. The 2nd part of this statement (with all of our soul) is not so straightforward because the Hebrew word being used, **Nefesh**, is a little more difficult and so it has been translated a number of ways. Most often it is translated as soul, at other times it is translated as “being”(I’ve even seen it written as “essence”). None of these are necessarily wrong or better than the others. The problem lies in the rather hazy nature of the word **nefesh**. **Nefesh** carries with it a host of meanings and I think that (as when we discussed the phrase, “Yehoveh is our God, Yehoveh is one”) it’s not that there is ONE preeminent or perfect definition; rather it’s that all that I’m about to tell you (and more) goes into its makeup. The Rabbis say that **nefesh** entails life, our life essence, breath, the mysterious breath of life that God breathed into His created creatures to make them alive, the self, that unique quality that makes us at once human and yet also in God’s image, the soul, and at times can even refer to our deepest inmost thoughts.

The final part of that statement, usually translated as “with all your might”, is **be-khol me-odekha**. This a rare phrase in the Bible but the Rabbis say it is approximately equal to the more usual **bi-me’od me’od**, which means “very, very much”. The idea is that we are to put forth exceedingly great effort and conscious thought into loving God (once again dispensing with the modern notion that love is primarily a “feeling” even though feeling is certainly a legitimate, though lesser, element of love), and that loving Him is what the Lord expects from us.

Interestingly Deuteronomy is the FIRST book of the Torah to actually speak of loving God. Previous books spoke in terms of awe and reverence and fear. Let me be clear: this in NO way means that Moses is now saying “forget awe and reverence and no longer fear God; instead replace that with love”. Rather the idea is that awe and reverence is to be in the CONTEXT of

Lesson 8 - Deuteronomy 6

love; or as with the correct Biblical definition of what love is, awe and reverence is to be in the CONTEXT of acceptance, loyalty, and submission to the Lord.

Now, get ready to have another long-standing doctrine get challenged; verse 6 says this:

^{NAS} **Deuteronomy 6:6** *"And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart;*

The words God is commanding are just another way of saying, "His laws", right? And WHERE does this verse say these laws of God are to be written? On our heart! Oh my; the Laws of Moses are to be written on the Israelites' hearts? I thought it was only a NT manifestation that the Torah was to be written on our hearts. Isn't that what we've always been taught? Isn't it a basic Christian axiom that the reason we must abandon the Torah is because it was a mechanical legal code, written on cold hard stone tablets, and that it was a way to work (and thereby merit) our way to heaven? And that in the NT we switch to a different system of NEW rules and commands from Messiah, and these are written on our hearts (rather than on stone), and by grace through faith we can have heaven opened up to us. Amazing what truth emerges when we actually READ the Torah and not just make assumptions about it.

But just as with the NT, recognize that what this means in modern English is that the Torah, God's commands (Yeshua's commands) are to be held in our MINDS. Therefore they can be known, contemplated, mulled over and acted upon rather than just "felt". The law codes of the United States and other nations are separate from us; they change, more are added, some are dropped altogether. Our job (in secular society) is just to keep track of them. In fact we outsource that problem to attorneys for the most part. But the essence of the notion that God's laws are to be written on our hearts (our minds) is that His laws are to become part of our very being and fiber, not something separate from us.

Let's stop here for today.