

## Deuteronomy Shema Israel

We are on to the book of Deuteronomy. Or as I said when I was a kid, "**Deuteronomy.**" If you are visiting, we are reading through the Bible chronologically. We began January 1 using these bibles that break down readings to about 15 minutes per day. If you are new, we want to encourage you to join us. You should have received a flier that says, "**jump right in**" which encourages you to start where we are. Don't try to go to the beginning and catch up. Each Sunday the sermon comes from the **previous weeks reading.**

Watch this video from the Bible Project to get a quick overview of the first part of Deuteronomy.

The section we are focusing on is what the video referred to as the **Shema Israel.** This might be the **heart** of the Old Testament. If you aren't very familiar with the Bible, the Old Testament is the **pre-Jesus** part of the Bible. It mainly consists of the **covenant relationship between God, or Yahweh, and the descendants** of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which became the **nation of Israel.** The Old Testament covers centuries of time with lots of **history; kings, both good and bad, prophets speaking God's word to his people, freedom, and slavery. It has everything.** To state that this **Shema Israel is the heart of the Old Testament is big talk.** Let's get into it and **see if you agree.**

**Moses is giving God's laws to his people.** He has given them that **quick history lesson** of how things went in **wandering the desert** and then brings it all down to **some very important words that frame the law God is giving them.**

"These are the commands, decrees, and regulations that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you. You must **obey** them in the land you are about to enter and occupy, <sup>2</sup> and you and your children and grandchildren must **fear the Lord** your God as long as you live. If you **obey** all his decrees and commands, you will enjoy a long life. <sup>3</sup> Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to **obey.** Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Now we come to the part that is called the Shema Israel. <sup>4</sup> "Listen (Shema), O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. <sup>5</sup> And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. <sup>6</sup> And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. <sup>7</sup> Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them to

your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:1-9

You may remember hearing this recently in a different part of our Sunday morning worship? This is the verse that I read to Joel and Shelly when they were dedicating Billy to the Lord.

**Shema is the heart of how Israel can keep their side of the covenant** that God has made with them. If they focus on these words, they **will not need to wonder if they are keeping their side** of the covenant. If they keep to these words as their guide, they really don't need to worry too much about **breaking the other laws**. **Shema will also get to the root of the relationship and the people's motives for keeping the law.**

All these years later orthodox Jews still pray **twice a day**.

What is the covenant promise God made?

1. I will be your God and you will be my people.
2. I will make you a great nation.
3. I will give you the land of Canaan as your holy land.
4. I will bless all people/nations through you.

Let's look at the 7-9 a little closer. <sup>7</sup> Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:7-9

The emphasis is on **keeping these very important truths about their covenant relationship with God**. They need to be read over and over and they need to be taught to the next generation.

**We aren't taking the words literally** that talk about keeping these words on your forehead and hands. Here is how **much later some Jews** did take this literally. They bind them to their forehead and hand. These are called **phylacteries**. Here's what they look like. (Pic of phylacteries)

**Can someone give an example of how we try to do this here at Eagle Ridge?** Look behind you in Beaverton and to your right in Midland. It's what we believe a disciple is. But there's another one that is **posted, or at least should be**, around the building and is always at the welcome center.

See if this sounds familiar. The Gospel is...

The point is we need to be reminded. **Each generation must be reminded and challenged to be more faithful.**

**Amazingly the people who saw what God did to Egypt** in bringing them out of bondage were the ones who forgot that God would keep his covenant promises to

them. They needed to be reminded, but more importantly they needed to be faithful to fulfill their end of the covenant.

**We are no different**, we need to be reminded about who God is and that we need to obey him and have **no other allegiances**. But **we have our flesh**, those desires that cause us to be selfish and the world, which has ways of providing substitutes for God. Then we have confused our allegiances.

**We are prone to forget the most foundational things**. We can come to church, even read the bible, and completely miss the point; therefore, this Shema might be to a nation of people, but what it means is just as authoritative for us. It's God telling us how to be with him. **It's completely portable to our time**. And yes, it points toward and connects with the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus.

How do we get off track and miss the point? **Cheap gospel**...we boiled it down to asking Jesus to forgive our sins and raising our hands. **It's simply a transaction and doesn't demand** that anybody actually live like Jesus. **Consumerism** in the church instead of koinonia, **fellowship sharing all things in common, living life together**.

**What is this next generation going to do to avoid what happened to the parents and grandparents who didn't get to enter the promised land?** That's what Moses is driving at.

**But what about us?** How we are trying to correct this mess in the America where churches are closing, and young people are fleeing.

**First, those of you who represent that second generation entering the promised land**. If you are 40, raise your hand. You can then take the next steps without waiting for us to die out. You can listen to what God is teaching you and help us move into a new revival in this country.

**On the precipice of the promised land, Moses says this...** "Listen, O Israel!" **Deuteronomy 6:4a**

For this part I am quoting the Bible Project video. I couldn't say it any better. **Listen + Respond = Obey**

As you heard in the video the word **Shema does not simply mean being able to hear**. It's the difference between hearing and listening. But even the word listening doesn't do Shema justice. To hear, to lean in and listen and to stop there, it's not Shema. **When God is speaking, a response is implied**. We must set aside our will and desires if it is in fact different from God's and then we must trust and obey.

There was a young man who came to **help my wife, Robin, bake cookies**. Things were going along very well until they came to the time to mix and prepare the oatmeal cookies. A little side note, I have never met or experienced an oatmeal cookie like my mom's, which is now the recipe Robin uses. **It's in between crunchy and chewy** and it has **powdered sugar sprinkled** on the top while they're still warm creating a lovely icing.

**Now to the point** of the story. Robin took the mixture and created a ball the size that she wanted and then put it on the cookie sheet. **The young man heard and even listened to what she was saying, but he kept on making the cookies much bigger**. He **just wanted bigger cookies** so the simple way to have bigger cookies is to start with the bigger piece of the mixture. **Robin kept looking over and correcting him**, telling him over and over that they were too big. **What this young man didn't know, that the more experienced Baker knew**, is that they don't turn out right if the mixture in the ball is too big. They just don't bake right, therefore, they just don't taste right.

**Robin wasn't saying Shema** as the young man created gargantuan cookies. **To say Shema, or listen, meant to trust and respond obediently**. Because the result is a delicious oatmeal cookie.

**What God said to the Israelites, after telling them to listen, was not complicated**. They couldn't say in their defense, well it was something that we just couldn't understand.

**He's not even asking them to do this to perfection**. That's why he has **all these sacrifices in place and rituals**. Yes, when they fail miserably, not simply by missing the mark, but by **rebelling against God, there will be punishment**; but even then, **God does not turn back on his promise** to Israel.

**Are you willing to Shema when God talks to you?** I'm not talking about **subtle areas of Gray**, but **clear-cut biblical standards** and, even greater than that, **the standard of love**.

**If you're saying I don't know when God is speaking**, if that is the case for you, let me ask you a couple of questions. **First, are you listening and reading his word the Bible?** Are you in a **relational environment where God's people can speak** into your life? **Do you avoid quiet at all costs?** But the biggest question I have for you is, are you willing to listen, respond, and obey? **If you go to the places where God consistently speaks, which I have listed in the previous questions, and you say speak Holy Spirit, I am listening, and you mean it, God is going to speak**. Maybe he's not wasting his breath because you have no intentions of **listening** to anything that you don't initially agree with.

These words may sound harsh, please understand I don't mean them that way. My heart is that you can hear God speak. You can sense his presence. Here's what I mean when I say, hear God. You feel a draw or a desire for something that you know, that sounds like Jesus. You get a sense of peace when reading or hearing something. You get an answer to a question that you've had. You get confidence in how God loves you. This is all God speaking or communicating with you, his beloved.

Shema, means to listen, respond, and then obey

But what is behind listening and obeying, particularly if it is to last. Let's start with Jesus and then go back to Abraham. <sup>15</sup> "If you love me, obey my commandments. John 14:15 When love is behind the listening and obeying, then we really have something sustainable.

Now back to Moses. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:5 They must love Yahweh, the Lord, because of his love for them and all that he has done for them. Then there are three qualifiers, or ways that describe how they are to love, the parameters of their love.

Like before, I am quoting The Bible Project video wording. Emotion + decision = Devotion

They feel positive emotions toward the God that has chosen them and rescued them. Think about how you felt when you were a kid and they picked you for kickball or some other game. Or you received a party invitation. You felt something. Now, if someone rescued you from a bad scary situation. Someone who found you when you were lost. How did you feel at that moment? These emotions are going to be there, it's not something we have to try to make happen. But that's not enough for covenant Love.

The emotions must be followed by some kind of decision or commitment. How will I relate to this person who stepped in between me and a bully? Something happened and now there needs to be a bond, an enduring connection with this person. That bond, or connection, is what becomes devotion.

Devotion is defined as love, loyalty, and enthusiasm for someone or something. I am loyal to and have enthusiasm for this person.

Let me tell you about my aunt Inez, or as I called her, auntie I. She took care of me the better part of my first two years of life because my mom was too sick, having almost died in childbirth. That created a bond, a kind of devotion to her. I was loyal to her and enthusiastic about being around her. I didn't much like her husband because he didn't treat her right.

The term that is used for this is "Covenant Love." This is the kind of love that comes out of a real covenant between God and his people. It's the kind of love that will enable Israel to stick with their side of the covenant.

Are the people of Israel devoted to God? Are they loyal and enthusiastic about him? It depends on what part of the story we are reading. It will ebb and flow. Moses is going to tell them that at some point in their time in the promised land they will rebel against God, no longer obeying or loving him and that will cause God to punish them by allowing another nation to conquer them and remove them from Canaan.

Right now, in this season in your life, are you devoted to the Lord Jesus? Are you loyal to him? Are you enthusiastic about him? If you aren't then you are prone to any distraction and any resistance in life.

Moses is using words that describe a devotion moving inside to out, the whole person. I don't want to take a lot of time on this part because we can get too far into the weeds and miss the point. The point is that our love or devotion to God is without exception, without exclusion. Those descriptors of the love that Moses is talking about start in the center of a person and move outward, covering everything about us.

- Heart, seat of emotions and mind, seat of thought.
- Soul or life (NIV) = appetites/desires...
- strength = resources.

If Israel's love or devotion for God is in the seat of their emotions and in where their thoughts come from and rules their appetites and desires and, finally, their resources or strength, then what else is left? That's wall-to-wall love.

But even when Israel, or people like you and me, fail in our devotion Moses says this. <sup>29</sup> But from there you will search again for the Lord your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him. Deut. 4:29 Context is talking about being punished for going after other Gods. God just spoke to someone. Yes, you have lacked any devotion to me, you have become lukewarm. But if you seek me, I will not hide, because my devotion to you has no bounds.

What does listening and obeying God and being devoted to God demand? The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

"The Lord alone" = allegiance.

I bet some of you remember this. If you do, join in.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

**When we think of allegiance, that is the first thing that comes to my mind.** Here's another one we would recite at the beginning of VBS.

**When we baptize people, we use the words that describe their commitment to Jesus and we use the word "allegiance."** It's hard to misunderstand allegiance. **It means when push comes to shove, I will choose this one, everything else is a distant second place.**

**How can I demonstrate my allegiance today?** This is how Jesus said it. <sup>23</sup> **Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. Luke 9:23-24**

**See if you notice the similarity to what we just read from Moses and what Jesus is saying in Mark 12:30. **And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'** Mark 12:30**

**Jesus is quoting Shema Israel. He is saying that this applies to him. He is Yahweh, he is God, the one we must listen to, obey, love with devotion, and give our allegiance, no matter the cost.**

**Paul makes it even clearer. This isn't the least bit subtle. <sup>5</sup> There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. <sup>6</sup> But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6**

Jesus is Lord and we must Shema, listen and obey what he says through his word, his spirit, his word, the Bible, and his creation. We are to love Jesus with devotion, with all our person, with loyalty and enthusiasm. And we are to freely give our undivided allegiance to Jesus.

**Steps of Obedience:**

**Watch The Bible Project video on Deuteronomy.** Donate if you appreciate what they do.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/deuteronomy/>

**What in your life reminds you that Jesus wants and deserves your obedience, devotion, and your allegiance.** These people had the Shema. **What do we have?** Most Christians attend worship **between one and two times a month. Is**

**that a good way to remember? Probably not.** Reading through the Bible, particularly the OT, will be a reminder of the need for obedience, devotion and allegiance.

Give your pledge of allegiance to Jesus.

The Shema disciple of Jesus:

"Listen, Eagle Ridge! Jesus is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord Jesus your God with all your heart and mind, all your desires, and all your resources. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to all his commands. Repeat them again and again to your children and grandchildren. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. And remember that Jesus said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." (Deuteronomy 6:4-7 & Luke 9:23-24)

**Would it help you if you recited Shema twice a day as a reminder.** That's what I'm going to challenge you to do. You can do it when you **wake up and when you go to bed**, or you can do it at **lunch and then again at dinner**. Recite it as a family, whatever you like. **But reciting is just to remind us to live it.** But remember, if you have God's promise is if you seek him with all your heart which means repenting, trusting, and following, then he will not hide from you. That is because he loves you.