

## Sunday, September 12, 2021 | The Shema

Week 2 | Deuteronomy 6:1-9 | "Love God With Your Heart."

### Announcements:

- Sunday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, we'll be having communion and then approving our yearly budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

"The Shema" is a four-week sermon series that'll help us understand one of the most well-known Bible passages in all of the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The goal of this series is to teach you what it means to truly love God holistically—with our heart, soul, and strength.

Last week, we covered big picture stuff in the realm of background and context. Moses is the one talking here in our passage, and he's trying to convince the children of Israel that they should listen and obey the instructions he's about to give them. This is why this passage is simply referred to as "the Shema," as that's the Hebrew word for hear. He wanted to understand two things: 1.) that God is one, and 2.) that they ought to love Him. And just as God's love for them had been expressed in loving actions, they too ought to show their love for Him in obedience. A love that is without action is like a melody with no instrument to play it. It may look good on paper, but it will never be conveyed to the heart.

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Okay, that all sounds great. But how, exactly, are we supposed to love God? To answer that, let's reread our passage.

**READ:** Deuteronomy 6:4-6 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

So, Moses said that the children of Israel were to love the Lord with three things: their heart, their soul, and, lastly, their might. Now, at first glance, "heart" and "soul" seem to be referring to the same thing, i.e., something having to do with our mental state. However, there appears to be a distinction in this passage and in how these words are used elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Deut. 4:9, 29).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as we'll see next week, the soul has very little to do with who we are on

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<sup>1</sup> Christensen, Duane L., *Deuteronomy 1-21:9*, Second Edition, The Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 6-A, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2001), p. 143.

the inside and **everything** to do with who we are on the outside. Meaning, the “heart” houses our internal identity, and it is with the heart that we are to love God.

Here’s what I mean...

“Heart,” in Hebrew, can be either “*levav*” or “*lev*,” these two words show up in the OT a whopping 845x’s! Now, ancient civilizations had various theories about the heart, and the Israelites were no different. In a practical sense, they understood that the heart was a literal organ located in the chest and necessary for life (cf. Ex. 28:29-30; 2 Sam. 18:14; 2 Ki. 9:24; Ps. 37:15; Hos. 13:8). Interestingly, one of the earliest known accounts of a heart attack comes in 1 Sam. 25:37, where we’re told that a man’s “heart died within him, and he became as a stone.”<sup>2</sup> But unlike today, their concept of what the heart does, aside from its clear physical function, is unique. For a Hebrew, the heart was a muscle and the “seat of the will.”<sup>3</sup> Meaning, one’s intellect, reasoning, and wisdom were understood to occur in the heart, not the mind (cf. Ps. 37:4). And, of course, passion, emotion, and feeling are also the by-products of the heart.

So, what does that all mean? When the Bible speaks about the heart, it is talking about the mind. My Greek professor would point to his head every time he read the term “heart” in Scripture to engrain this idea into his students. Now, when you hear this, you may think, “Oh, I get that. You’re telling me I should love God with my analytical side?” But that is only partially true. While the mind is the seat of our intellect, do not forget, it is also the laboratory of our emotions.<sup>4</sup>

Now, this might sound familiar because, in psychology, this is what is known as the “lateralization of brain function.”<sup>5</sup>  This idea postulates that each hemisphere serves a different function: the right is more creative and feelings-based; whereas, the left is more logical and fact-based. Now, to be clear, that is an oversimplification. In fact, some cognitive functions have been known to switch hemispheres. However, generally speaking, each person does have a leaning toward one of those two sides. Thus, it's common to hear some people say “I’m right-brained” to indicate their proclivity towards art and music, whereas

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<sup>2</sup> General Editors, “Word Studies: Lev/Heart,” August 31, 2017, *The Bible Project*, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/lev-heart/>, [accessed, September 9, 2021].

<sup>3</sup> McConville, J.G., *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, Volume 5, Editors, David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, (Downers Grove, ILL; InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 142

<sup>4</sup> Tigay, Jeffery H., *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary, (Philadelphia, PA; The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia contributors, “Lateralization of brain function,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lateralization\\_of\\_brain\\_function&oldid=1043584899](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lateralization_of_brain_function&oldid=1043584899), [accessed, September 12, 2021].

others might say "I'm left-brained" to show their bent towards research and academia. Interestingly, this is seen practically in counseling couples where one person is more easily persuaded by facts while the other is more easily influenced by feelings.

So, when Moses says to love God with our heart, he's saying two things:

**i. Love God with Your Rational Heart**

Examples of the **rational heart**: Gen. 17:17; 24:45; Ex. 7:22; 25:2; 35:5, 29, 35; 36:2; Deut. 4:39; 8:5; 29:4; 1 Sam. 1:13; 2 Sam. 13:33; 1 Ki. 3:9, 12; 4:29; 10:24; Neh. 7:5; Esth. 6:6; Job 17:11; 37:24; 38:36; Psa. 10:6; 14:1; 19:14; 27:8; 119:11, 32, 34, 80; Prov. 2:2, 10; 3:5; 6:18; 12:23; 14:33; 16:1; 22:17; 23:12; Eccl. 1:13, 16-17; Isa. 32:4; 44:19; Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 23:17; Dan. 4:16; 7:28; 10:12. (50 examples)

**READ: 1 Chronicles 12:38 (ESV)**

All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with a whole heart to make David king over all Israel. Likewise, all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king.

**ii. Love God with Your Emotional Heart**

Examples of the **emotional heart**: Gen. 42:28; 45:26; Ex. 4:14; Lev. 19:17; 26:16; Num. 32:7, 9; Deut. 1:28; 28:45-47, 65, 67; Josh 14:8; 18:20; Ru. 3:7; 1 Sam. 1:8; 4:13; 28:5; 1 Ki. 8:66; 21:7; 2 Chron. 7:10; Esth. 1:10; 5:9; Job 29:13; 37:1; Psa. 4:7; 16:9; 27:3; 51:17; 55:4; 69:20; 102:4; 119:111; Prov. 6:25; 12:25; 13:12; 15:13; 24:17; 25:20; Eccl. 2:10, 20, 23; Isa. 19:1, 21:4; Jer. 4:19; 15:16; Jer. 51:46; Nah. 2:10; Zech. 10:7. (50 examples)

**READ: Joshua 5:1 (ESV)**

As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

Interestingly, in several places in Scripture, these two concepts contrast one another.

**READ: Genesis 6:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

**READ:** Proverbs 23:15 (ESV)

My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.

We not only internalize ideas, but we express those ideas from the heart/head. Thus, when God says that we ought to love Him with our heart, He is telling us to love Him with both our mental examinations and our emotional expressions. God wants us to have a heartfelt response to Him.<sup>6</sup>

**So, what's the takeaway?**

To love God with your heart means marshaling a unified inner monologue in wholehearted adoration for the one true God. That is, you will love Him with both your analytical self and emotional self, with both your left brain and your right brain. Should your feelings run away with you, the rational side of your mind kicks in and brings you back to God. Likewise, should your intellect work against your faith, the passionate side of your mind kicks in and brings you back to God.

**READ:** 1 Samuel 13:13-14 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. <sup>14</sup> But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

Saul compromised his relationship with God to secure the heart of the people. Though he wasn't the high priest, he performed sacrifices as a means to keep the children of Israel from retreating in the face of battle. Basically, Saul turned worship into war propaganda. He used Israel's faith to keep them in place. When Samuel, the high priest, called him out for it, Saul didn't repent; he made excuses. Thus, in a little over two years, Saul lost the monarchy in Israel. Why? Because he was more concerned placating the heart of his people than he was with pleasing the heart of his God.

David, who would eventually replace Saul, was a man after God's own heart. The comparison between the two is most clearly seen when, like Saul, David made a mistake. And not just a

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<sup>6</sup> McConville (2002), p. 142.

little mistake, one that comprised of adultery, conspiracy, and murder. When David was finally called out, do we find him making excuses like Saul? No. His heart broke.

**READ:** Psalm 51:16-17 (ESV)

<sup>16</sup>For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

When we are loving God with one heart, our rational and emotional intertwined, it means we are in our right mind, clothed, and sitting at the feet of Jesus (Mr. 5:15). In meeting Jesus, we are transformed by the renewal of our minds through the Son of God, enabling us to discern what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). This earthly plain no longer holds our minds captive, but our hearts are set on those things which are above (Col. 3:2). We now live in a day and age where the laws of God haven't been written on stone tablets but on the hearts of men (Heb. 8:10).

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## Video Description

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TEXT: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

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To love God with your heart means marshaling a unified inner monologue in wholehearted adoration for the one true God. That is, you will love Him with both your analytical self and emotional self, with both your left brain and your right brain. Should your feelings run away with you, the rational side of your mind kicks in and brings you back to God. Likewise, should your intellect work against your faith, the passionate side of your mind kicks in and brings you back to God.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: