

Sunday, September 26, 2021 | The Shema

Week 4 | Deuteronomy 6:4-5 | "Love God With Your Strength."

Announcements:

- Ladies' simulcast event next Saturday.
- Truck-or-treat will be on Saturday, October 23, from 5-7PM. Sign-up is in the back. There is also a bin to donate candy.
- Tonight, we'll be having communion and discussing our yearly budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Mitzi has a copy of our budget if you'd like to review it before this evening.
- Pray for Joe Coucci

"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.

In week 1, we covered big picture stuff in the realm of background and context. Moses wanted the Israelites to understand two things: 1.) that God is one, and 2.) that they were to love Him with their heart, soul, and might. Just as God's love for them had been expressed in loving actions, they too ought to show their love for Him in loving obedience.

In week 2, we broke down what it means to love God with our hearts. And, as you'll remember when the Bible speaks about the "heart," it is really talking about the mind. 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. It means marshaling a unified inner monologue in wholehearted adoration for the one true God.

Last week, we tried to wrap our heads around what it means to love God with our soul. To do that, we had to distinguish between what the term "soul" means culturally and biblically. Culturally, when "soul" is used, it almost always refers to some immaterial essence that controls the body. In other words, it is something to possess—i.e., you **have** a soul. And while, strictly speaking, that does completely go against how the Bible uses the term, there is a greater emphasis on the physicality of a soul in Scripture. From a biblical point of view, the "soul" is the material essence that makes up the body. In other words, we do not simply have a soul; we **are** a soul. Thus, to love God with our soul means marshaling a unified physical existence in wholehearted adoration for the one true God. He wants our **whole** life, **every** prospect, **every** aspect, and **every** facet to be **wholly** devoted to Him.

READ: Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Unlike the Hebrew terms *levav* (“heart”) and *nephesh* (“soul”), *me’ode* (“might”) is not a noun, but an adverb.

Now, if English isn’t your strong suit, like me, you might be thinking, “What’s a noun and what’s an adverb?” As the *School House Rock* taught us, a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing (i.e., Ben Hyrne, church, phone).¹ And, basically, an adverb can either modify a verb (i.e., “The man ran *quickly*.”), or it can modify an adjective (i.e., “The woman was *very* beautiful.”). It does more than that, but this explanation is sufficient to describe how adverbs relate to the Shema.

So, why the English lesson? Because when we talk about “heart” and “soul,” we’re talking about tangible things. We can visualize the heart and understand how we are to love God with our minds. We can visualize the soul and understand how we are to love God with our entire life. And while it would seem like Moses is telling the Israelites to love God with their “might”—i.e., their physical strength—in reality, the word is referring to something far broader than that. In fact, here in Deut. 6:5, **it isn’t even speaking about strength at all**. Had Moses wanted the Israelites to love God with all of their muscular ability, he would’ve used the word *ko’-akh* (cf. Ex. 15:6; Josh. 14:11; Judg. 16:6, 17, 30; 1 Sam. 28:20; 1 Chron. 29:2; Job 36:5; Psa. 33:16; Pro. 14:4; 20:29; Isa. 40:31; 44:12). **What’s more, *me’ode* is only translated this way *two* times in all OT: here in Deut. 6:5, and in 2 Ki. 23:25 where the Shema is being quoted.**

This is why out of the 299x’s *meh-ode’* shows up in the OT, it is ***not*** translated as “might” or “strength;” instead, it is translated as either as “much,” or “very,” or “greatly.” Put simply, it intensifies the meaning of other words.²

For instance, during the creation narrative, God pronounced what he had done as “good;” but then, on the seventh time, He not only called His creation “good,” but He said it was “*very* [*me’ode*] good” (cf. Gen. 1:31).

READ: Genesis 1:31 (ESV)

¹ School House Rock Live, “A Noun is a Person, Place, or Thing,” May 1, 2012, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zziQ0wciXMO>, [accessed, September 23, 2021].

² General Editors, “Meod/Strength,” February 15, 2018, *The Bible Project*, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/meod-strength/>, [accessed, September 23, 2021].

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very [*me'ode*] good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

When Cain killed Abel in Genesis 4, he wasn't just angry, but "very [*me'ode*] angry."

READ: Genesis 4:4-5 (ESV)

And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very [*me'ode*] angry, and his face fell.

Or, take for example that during the great flood, the Bible tells us that the waters "increased greatly [*me'ode*]" (cf. Gen. 7:18).

READ: Genesis 7:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.¹⁸ The waters prevailed and increased greatly [*me'ode*] on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

Meaning, the Shema could've easily been translated as, "Love the Lord your God with your heart, and with your soul, and with all your *veryness* or *muchness* [*me'ode*]." ³ It sounds weird, but I think you get the meaning. The point of this word is for us to ask, "What do I have much of? How do I avoid hoarding my muchness?" ⁴ We are to take our *me'ode*—our ability and assets—and use it to serve the Lord. To love God with our *me'ode* is to love him with our plenty but also with everything else we possess. ⁵

This is the most expansive term used in all of the Shema. It's a catchall word for anything not covered by the other two terms, "heart" and "soul." This ball-of-wax aspect of *me'ode* is best illustrated by its etymology. Literally, the root of *me'ode* comes from a verb that means to rake together. ⁶ Thus, when God says to love Him with our might, He's telling us to gather all of our abilities and all of our resources to serve Him. ⁷ wants us to accumulate our muchness and use

³ Currid, John D., *Deuteronomy, An EP Study Commentary*, (Darlington, England; Evangelical Press, 2006), p. 164.

⁴ Collins, Jon, "Strength," The Bible Project, <https://bibleproject.com/church-at-home/week24-strength/>, [accessed, September 23, 2021].

⁵ Tigay, Jeffery H., *Deuteronomy, The JPS Torah Commentary*, (Philadelphia, PA; The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p. 77, 358.

⁶ General Editors, "Strong's H181 – 'ûd," *Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h181/kjv/wlc/0-1/>, [accessed, September 23, 2021].

⁷ McConville, J.G., *Deuteronomy, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, Volume 5*, Editors, David W. Baker and Gordan J. Wenham, (Downers Grove, ILL; InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 142.

what we have to Love Him. God wants us to be **bold**, underline, and *italicize* our life for Him to use a Microsoft Word analogy.

This is why the verses that immediately follow the Shema speak about how loving God with our *me'ode* finds purchase in reality.

READ: Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)

⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Children were the literal embodiments of a person's *me'ode*. They are a resource that comes from the parent. And as a resource, they are meant to be gathered together and pointed in a direction that serves God. What's more, you're supposed to take these words, and they are to be ever-before you—i.e., written on your hands, on your eyes, on your front door, on your gates.

So, what's the takeaway?

To love God with our might means marshalling a unified inventory in wholehearted adoration for the one true God. God wants us to love him with our abilities and our assets. It is loving God with your heart, with your soul, and with so much more. It's taking the resources of life—our potentiality, our capacity, and our intensity—and devoting it all to God.

In addressing the different roles of the church, Peter says serve whatever gift you've been given. Why? So that you might bring glory to God.

READ: 1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

So, what's the takeaway?

To love God with our might means marshalling a unified inventory in wholehearted adoration for the one true God.

In whatever way you influence the Lord, you must love the Lord.

So, what's the series takeaway?

With each new term, the Shema moves from a distinguishable part of human existence to an indistinguishable part. God wants our obedience at every level, from the heart to the soul to our whole might. From the core of who we are to the very person we are, to our resources, God wants us to love Him in every area.

EXAMPLE: Ball/Jar/Yarn Illustration

To love God with your "heart," means you devote what you think to the Lord. (Ball)

To love God with your "soul," means you devote what you are to the Lord. (JAR)

To love God with your "might," means you devote what you have to the Lord. (YARN)

Video Description

The Shema | Week 4 | "Love God With Your Might."

TEXT: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

"Might" is the most expansive term used in all of the Shema. It's a catchall word for anything not covered by the other two terms, "heart" and "soul." This ball-of-wax aspect of *me'ode* is best illustrated by its etymology. Literally, the root of *me'ode* comes from a verb that means to rake together. Thus, when God says to love Him with our "might," He's telling us to gather all of our abilities and all of our resources to serve Him. He wants us to accumulate our "muchness" and use whatever we have to Love Him.

In other words, loving God with our might means marshalling a unified inventory in wholehearted adoration for the one true God. God wants us to love him with our abilities and assets. It is loving God with your heart, with your soul, and with so much more. It's taking the resources of life—our potentiality, our capacity, and our intensity—and devoting it all to God.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: