

Now Hear This

In this week's reading, we come to a passage in Deuteronomy that is among the most recognizable in all of Scripture.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV) reads:

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. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You 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. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Now, many of you may immediately recognize the words of verse 5. This is the scripture that Jesus quotes when the Pharisees ask, "Which is the greatest commandment?" (Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28) Less commonly known is the fact that this passage is referred to as The Shema. Why is it known by such an unusual name? The simple answer is that the first word in the passage is *shema* in Hebrew, which we translate as "hear" in English.

However, the word *shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4 has a much

deeper meaning than to just audibly hear with one's ears. The word *shema* can also mean to heed, obey, or understand. The context of this passage implies that the imperative to hear is actually a call to action. This pattern of implicit obedience occurs throughout Deuteronomy and the Torah. In this specific case, the word *shema* is presented as a catalyst for obedience of the command to, "Love the Lord your God with your all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

The verbs that occur later in the passage help to reinforce this call to action. In the subsequent verses, we are commanded to keep these words (v. 6), recite these words (v. 7), bind these words (v. 8), and write these words (v. 9). Each one of these actions is precipitated by the call to hear that is found in the very first word of the passage. A person who hears these words is expected to obey them with their actions.

Put simply: **If obedience does not result in action, then the command to hear was not heeded.**

The deep meaning of the word *shema* establishes the foundation of how to apply this scripture to our own lives. Just like the people of Israel, we too are called to love the Lord with our entire being. This passage invites us to ponder what obedience really means. As Christ followers, it can be easy for us to simply rely on memorizing scriptures and facts for our spiritual growth. However, this passage and many others clearly show us that intellectual knowledge is not the end goal.

To truly hear the words of the Lord is to put them into practice. We are to love the Lord and our neighbors by taking tangible actions. This reality should always be in the forefront of our minds when we read God's Word.

~ *Matt Kooi*

March 11th Readings

NUMBERS 34:1-36:13

March 12th Readings

DEUTERONOMY 1:1-3:20

March 13th Readings

DEUTERONOMY 3:21-5:33

March 14th Readings

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9:29

March 15th Readings

DEUTERONOMY 10:1-12:32

March 16th Readings

DEUTERONOMY 13:1-16:17

March 17th Readings

DEUTERONOMY 16:18-21:9