

Introduction

After the Exodus event, Israel entered into a covenant relationship with God at Mt. Sinai (Exodus and Leviticus). From there they set out on an epic road trip that turned into a disaster. It was filled with one rebellion story after another resulting in the exodus generation disqualifying themselves from entering the Promised Land (the book of Numbers). A journey that should have taken roughly two weeks, took 40 years. The book of Deuteronomy carries this narrative forward and is a collection of Moses' final words to the next generation of Israelites right before they enter the Promised Land. In essence, the book is like Moses' locker room speech akin to speeches coaches give to their teams before they go out on the field. The book of Deuteronomy is a call to covenant faithfulness, to remember all that Yahweh has done for Israel, and to show future generations how to pursue lives that exude justice and righteousness. In this short paper, I will briefly explore the section known as the "Shema" (Deut. 6:4-5) and the surrounding verses (Deut. 5:32-6:9). Almost since these words rolled off of Moses' lips, for thousands of years, Jewish people have prayed the "Shema" daily. It is a prayer that calls God's people to respond to his provision and love with extraordinary faithfulness and devotion to him.

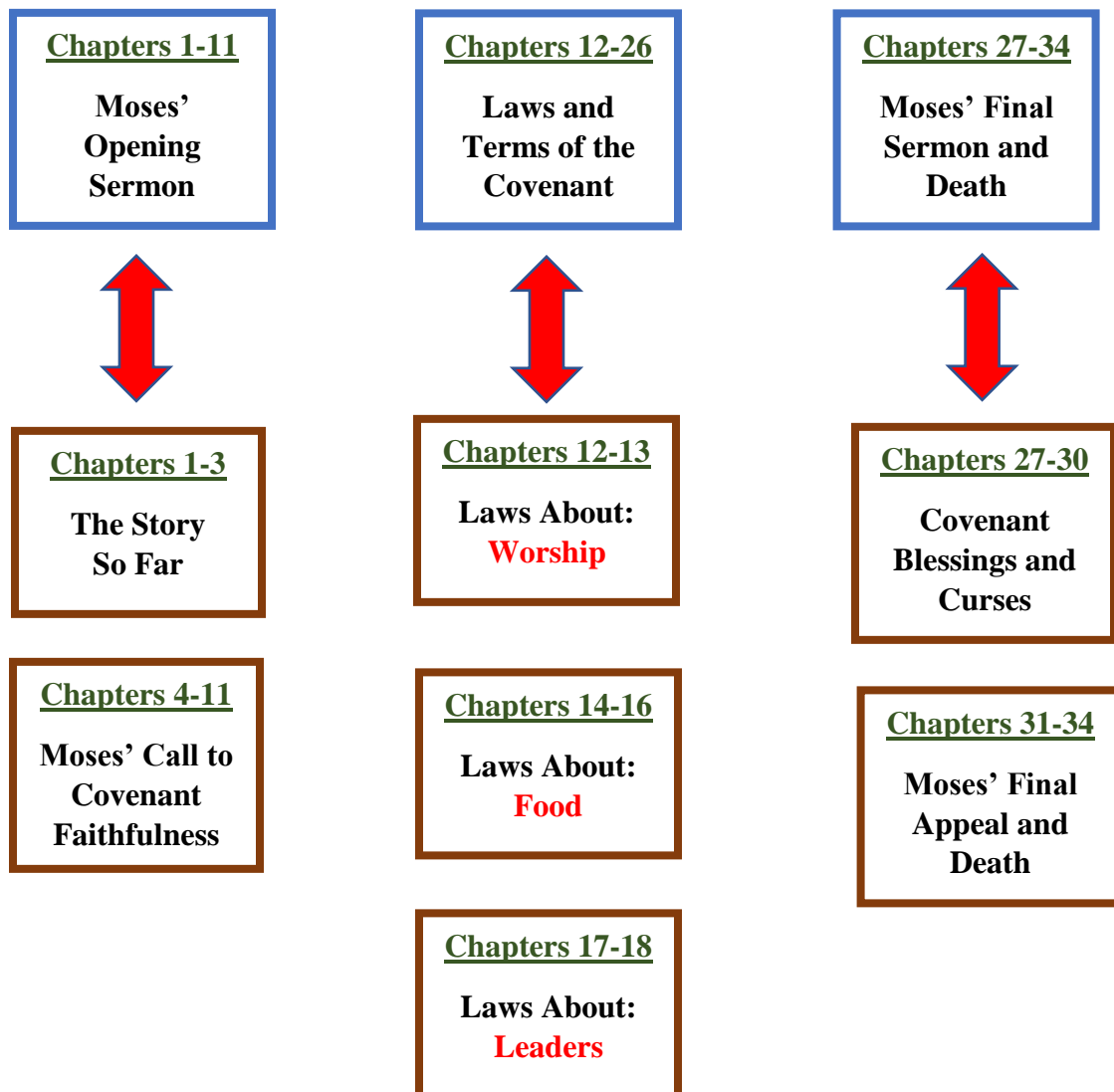
The book of Deuteronomy falls under the genre of historical narrative, and within that classification, it is even better described as being sermonic in nature. Much of it is prose discourse. Historical narrative is not as concerned with giving us the details we may want, or expect because the authors have an agenda. They are far more concerned with how God revealed himself in history, than anything else. Being selective and purposeful, they focus on God and anticipate the Messiah. Historical narrative in essence is a sermon in story form that serves to inform and to instruct (DeRouchie, 33). They are real and truthful events that actually took place, not religious myths. As evangelicals this is one of our convictions when it comes to the authority of Scripture. Jason DeRouchie comments helpfully regarding this genre type,

We cannot deny the reality of an event that the biblical authors believed to be historical and still say we affirm Scripture's authority. Moreover, we must recognize that the Bible is not like any other book, for it alone is special revelation. Thus, the level to which we affirm its claims is the level to which we submit ourselves to God himself. (35).

The way the book is structured (see graphic below), it has three very recognizable movements, each with their own sub-sections. The passage under consideration here (Deut. 5:32-6:9) is part of the first major movement of the book (Deut. 1-11) which records Moses' opening sermon to the wilderness generation as they stood poised to go into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy chapter 1:5 says, "Moses undertook to explain this (the) law". In the first three chapters Moses retells Israel's story so

far recounting their history, and in chapters four through eleven, he calls the new generation to covenant faithfulness. Deuteronomy is Moses' passionate exposition on the Torah. In his view, the law represents God's covenant plan to bring blessing to all of the nations. Yahweh desires people who will be faithful covenant partners, those who will listen to him and trust him. In chapter four we learn that Israel's obedience to the laws of the Torah is a part of them being a kingdom of priests to the nations (Mackie, 2). The laws are said to be, "...your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations" (Deut. 4:6). God wants to shape Israel into a new type of human community, and the laws represent God's righteousness and wisdom. In obeying them Israel will reflect the character of their God and so fulfill their priestly duty to bring blessing to the nations (Exod. 19:4-6; Gen. 12:1-3).

Structure



Chapters 19-26

Laws About: Life in the Promised Land

In chapters 5:1-6:3 Moses reminds the Israelites of the relationship they enjoy with the Lord, and how it is intimately tied to and revolves around the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20) given at Mt. Sinai. Moses urges the people to live faithfully in accordance with all that Yahweh requires and expects of them, “both the commandments God has already given and the ones he is about to give through Moses” (Grisanti, 532). The covenant the Lord made with Israel at Saini matters as much for this generation as it did for the past generation. Those camped on the plains of Moab are under its yoke as well. Christopher Wright suggests that this section links the earlier recollection of past events at Sinai, and the actual exhortation and teaching of the law to the present generation that is launched at Deuteronomy 6:4 (92). It is debated, however, among scholars, just where to place 5:32-6:3, particularly 6:1. Does it begin a new section, or does it belong with the previous verses? It is fairly clear that it functions as a transition between Moses, previous exhortation, and as preamble to his second address (Deut.6:4–11:32). Therefore, it looks both forwards, and backwards (Grisanti, 552-553). In Hebrew, chapter six begins with “And this is the command ...” suggesting that it is a continuation of the previous verses. As Wright helpfully explains, “The sequence of meaning is: “God gave me all this command (5:31) ... So you be careful to do it (5:32f.) ... And this is it (6:1ff.) ...!” (92-93). Michael Grisanti mentions in the *Expositor Bible Commentary* that, “The MT reading/paragraph divisions (perashoth) do not indicate a break until 6:4” (552). Further, Norbert Lohfink, recognizes a chiastic structure to the end of Moses’ first exhortation and the beginning of his second:

A hear ... do (5:27);

B fear ... keep (5:29);

C teach ... do (5:31);

D keep ... do ... turn aside ... walk (5:32–33);

C' learn ... do (6:1);

B' fear ... keep (6:2);

A' hear ... keep ... do (6:3). {67}

However, one breaks up this section, one thing is clear: the laws and rules that Moses is about to delineate to Israel are nearly identical to the ones given at Mt. Sinai. It seems to me that though intimately connected to previous verses, 5:32-6:3 forms a new subsection at the same time as 5:31 ends Moses recollection of the past historical event of the giving of the law. Thus, Moses' exhortation begins with 5:32. This section then (5:32-6:3) functions as both a beautiful transition section, and as an introduction to the call to unreserved covenant love and faithfulness to Yahweh in the next subsection in which we will spend the majority of our time (Deut. 6:4-9). These six verses introduce the theme of covenant commitment, and the rest of chapter six through eight essentially answers the question, "What does it mean to be totally committed to Yahweh?" (Block, 192). As Daniel Block points out, the Shema is the thesis statement of this section (6:4-8:20) and everything that follows flows out of understanding this profound text (Block, 180). It seems to me that 6:10 begins a new section, as verses ten through twelve are one long sentence in Hebrew in which Moses begins explaining the tests of their allegiance and devotion to God that Israel will inevitably face one day once in the Promised Land. This is the context in which our passage is situated.

Before continuing it will be helpful at this point to provide a working translation as well as a content and message outline for our passage. What follows is my own personal translation of Deuteronomy 5:32-6:9:

And you shall be careful to do as Yahweh your God commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or left.³³ You shall walk in all the way Yahweh your God has commanded you; so that you may live, and go well for you, and prolong your days in the land that you will possess. ¹And this is the commandment, the rules, and the regulations that Yahweh your God commanded me to teach you to do in the land that you are crossing to take possession, ² so that you may fear Yahweh your God, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments that I commanded you, you and your son, and your son's son all the days of your life, and so that your days may be long. ³ And listen Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well for you, and that you may multiply greatly as Yahweh the God of your fathers has spoken, in a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁴ Listen Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone. ⁵ And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your life, and with all your strength. ⁶ And these words that I commanded you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ And you shall recite them to your children and talk about them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the road, and when you lie down, and when you get up. ⁸ And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and as an emblem between your eyes ⁹ And you shall write them on the doorframes of your house and on your gates.

Main Idea: Moses calls Israel to exercise faithfulness to the covenant through the acts of listening and loving Yahweh exclusively.

Content Outline

- I. Moses Exhortation (Deut. 5:32-6:3)
 - a. Moses' Command to the People (v.32-33)
 - b. Moses' Defense of the Law (6:1-3)
- II. Moses Calls Israel to Covenant Faithfulness (6:4-9)
 - a. Give Love and Allegiance to Yahweh alone (v.4-5)
 - b. How this Allegiance is to Impact Daily Life (v.6-9)

Message Outline

- I. Moses' Motivational Pep-talk (Deut. 5:32-6:3)
 - a. Do What You Already Know (v.32-33)
 - b. Rationale for the Giving of the Law (6:1-3)
 - i. That Israel may Fear Yahweh (v.1-2)
 - ii. Experience Blessing (v.3)
- II. A Call to Covenant Love (6:4-9)
 - a. The Focus and Essence of Allegiance (v.4-5)
 - i. One God, Yahweh (v.4)
 - ii. What Exclusive commitment looks like (v.5)
 - b. Unreserved Commitment is to Permeate All of Life (v.6-9)
 - i. In the life of the Individual (v.6)
 - ii. In the life of their Children and the Generations to Come (v.7-9)

Commentary

Moses Exhortation (Deut. 5:32-6:3)

Moses' exhortation in Deuteronomy 5:32-6:3 can be divided into three parts: 5:32-33; 6:1-2; 6:3. Daniel Block describes these divisions simply and clearly, "The first highlights Yahweh as the source of the commands; the second, Moses as the teacher of the commands; and the third, the people as learners and doers of the commands" (177). Moses' simple straight forward command in chapter 5:32-33 moves quickly and smoothly into metaphorical explanation of what following Yahweh should be like, "...you shall not turn aside to the right or left. You shall walk in all the ways Yahweh your God has commanded you...". This is a common expression in Deuteronomy and other historical books (Deut. 17:11, 20; 28:14; Jos. 1:7; 23:6; 2 Kings 22:2). Moses is comparing Yahweh's commands to a road that Israel is to walk down. He then warns them not to be diverted by turning off, "to the right or to the left". In verse 33 he gives the reasoning for such a command, that life would go well for Israel in the promised land. Christopher Wright adds, "Since it has now been established that Moses is God's authorized spokesman, then the people's obedience to what he tells them is effectively obedience to God, and any deviation to the right or to the left will be a rejection of the way of the Lord" (93).

Chapter 6:1 begins Moses' second charge with, "And this is the commandment, the rules, and the regulations..." suggesting that it is linked to the previous verses, because of the conjunction "and". Therefore, it seems to me that Wright's observation is correct when he states, "The sequence of

meaning is: ‘God gave me all this command (5:31) ... So you be careful to do it (5:32f.) ... And this is it (6:1ff.) ...!’” (Wright, 92-93). Moses’ second charge focuses on what Yahweh has commanded him to teach the people (Block, 177). Now, don’t miss what Moses’ goal is in verse two. It is not a superficial or head knowledge of what to do, but rather, “a permanent fear of God that will inspire them and their descendants to obedience and yield the desired result of long life” (Block, 177). Moses proclaims to Israel the rationale for the giving of the law: that they might fear Yahweh. If they do then they will reap covenantal blessings (long and abundant tenure in the Promised Land) {Grisanti, 552}. The proper human disposition before Yahweh is fear, a reverence for him. This alone will produce worship and obedience (Block, 179). Where there is no fear there is no obedience, and no sense of obligation to worship the creator of the universe. The mere fact that Israel must be reminded of this fact showcases the depravity man.

This section as a whole (5:32-6:3) functions as a motivational speech of sorts. Five times we read “so that” or “that” in this passage. As Wright asserts, “The stakes were high. The rewards were great” (93). The rewards were known, the commands made clear, now it was a matter of the heart and obedience. This being said, obedience is never expressed as a means to gain blessing. Verse three reads, “And listen Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well for you, and that you may multiply greatly as Yahweh the God of your fathers has spoken, in a land flowing with milk and honey.” The blessings in the land are connected to Yahweh’s faithfulness to his promises made to Israel’s forefathers. God’s blessings were a gift of grace, but to be given and enjoyed through obedience, “a constant biblical pattern in both Testaments” (Wright, 93).

A Call to Covenant Love (6:4-9)

These six verses introduce the theme of covenant commitment, and the rest of chapter six through eight essentially answers the question, “What does it mean to be totally committed to Yahweh?” (Block, 192). As Daniel Block points out, the Shema is the thesis statement of this section (6:4-8:20) and everything that follows flows out of understanding this profound text (Block, 180). Almost since these words rolled off of Moses’ lips, for thousands of years, Jewish people have prayed the “Shema” daily. It is a prayer that calls God’s people to respond to his provision and love with extraordinary faithfulness and devotion to him. Verses four and five form the “Shema” proper, and though short, these two verses are power pack.

In Hebrew they read, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

5 וְאַהֲבָתְךָ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

That is, “Listen Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone. And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your life, and with all your strength” (my translation). The word for “listen or hear” is the word שָׁמַע (Shema). It is where this ancient command and prayer derives its name. It is usually connected with the ears like in Proverbs 20:12 for example, “The *hearing* ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.” However, it is used in other ways besides just the function of physical hearing. It can also mean, “Pay attention to” or “Focus on”, it can also mean responding to what you hear (Mackie, Lecture). In the Hebrew language there is no separate word for obey; listening and doing are two sides of the same coin in Hebrew (Mackie,2). Psalm 27:7 reads, “*Hear*, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!” This is Hebrew poetry, which is filled with synonymous parallelism. שָׁמַע (shema) is synonymous with the word “answer” אָנַחְנִי (‘nh). Therefore, in asking God to “listen/hear” the composer of this psalm is simultaneously asking God to act, to do something. In Exodus 19:5 God asks his people to “listen closely” equating listening to the same thing as keeping the covenant. Thus, he is asking them to listen *and* obey (Mackie, 2). שָׁמַע (shema) then, refers both to “hearing” and “responding” to what one hears, and this looks like obedience and covenant faithfulness to Yahweh. Christopher Wright comments, “They (Israel) were not merely spectators at a divine ‘show,’ but the recipients of divine revelation in words. They were to hear the truth and to respond to it” (95).

The sense of the first two words is very clear, but what remains, seems strange to us doesn’t it? The Hebrew literally reads, “Yahweh one” (LHB). Daniel Block asserts that this sentence construction is, “unparalleled in the entire Old Testament, so any interpretation, including our own, should be deemed provisional” (181). Mike Grisanti adds in agreement,

Scholars have often debated whether v. 4 teaches the singularity (one as opposed to many) or unity (internal consistency) of Yahweh or his uniqueness (incomparability) or exclusivity (the only one for Israel). A key interpretive problem is the unparalleled nature of this line in Hebrew. (555).

The first line could be interpreted either as a sentence, “Yahweh is our God,” or appositionally, “Yahweh our God”. It seems to me given the next verse the former is the preferred translation. Perhaps the more critical word in verse four though is אֶחָד (‘ehād). Typically, אֶחָד is translated as a cardinal number (the number “one”), but in roughly a half dozen instances, the word functions as an equivalent to לְבַדּוֹ, (lebaddô), meaning “unique, only, or alone” (Josh. 22:20; 2 Sam. 7:23 ;1 Chron. 17:21 and

29:1; Job 23:13, and 31:15; Song 6:9; Zech. 14:9.) {BDB}. It seems to me that in the immediate context the latter translation, “Yahweh alone”, is preferable (the NAB, NRSV, and NLT translate it this way), but certainly not the only way to translate this word, or widely agreed upon by Bible translators and commenters alike. The ESV, NASB, and NIV (top tier English translations), all translate יהוה as “one”. Therefore, verse four could potentially read, “The LORD our God is one LORD; or The LORD is our God, the LORD is one; or The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (NETB). This being said, I hold that given the context, the purpose of this statement is less about answering the question, “How many is God?”, or proving God is a trinity, but rather, “Who is the God of Israel?” (Block, 182). To this question the Israelites were to remind themselves as they were about to enter the land of the Canaanites with their many gods, “Our God is Yahweh, Yahweh alone!” In doing this, Israel was declaring sole allegiance and devotion to Yahweh. It was essentially a commitment to keep the covenant. I appreciate how Daniel Block states it, “It (the Shema) consists of those who claim this utterance as a verbal badge of identity and who demonstrate this identity with uncompromising covenant commitment, a subject to which Moses now turns” (182).

Verse five reads, “And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your life, and with all your strength” (my translation). Christopher Wright introduces this verse well,

In verse 5, the affirmation about Yahweh is followed by the claim upon Israel’s total allegiance. The two halves of the Shema thus mirror the opening of the Decalogue, with the declaratory preface followed by the exclusive claims of the first two commandments (5:6–10). (98)

This verse records explicitly what Moses means by exclusive allegiance to Yahweh. It is packed with some very important words that need some dissecting. The word used here for love is אהב (‘āhavah). It has a very broad meaning, but it basically refers to affection or care one shows to another, sometimes physical affection, but there are other words in Hebrew used much more prevalently for affection and sexual love than אהב (‘āhavah) {BDB}. In Deuteronomy 7:7-8 Moses tells the people,

It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God doesn’t love because of what we do, he loves because he loves. It is generated out of his own character. The prophet Jeremiah would later say of God’s love that it is an eternal fact of the

universe (Jer. 31:5). Tim Mackie adds, “It’s (love) one of the strongest things he (Yahweh) feels, but it is not merely a feeling, but also an action. It is something he chooses to do (Deut. 4). It’s not a sentiment but something he actually does” (Mackie, Lecture). Deuteronomy 10 tells us our love is to be expressed in actions like our God’s was and if we don’t do it, then we show we don’t actually love, we just say that we do, but we don’t mean it. In the Hebrew Bible, one shows their love by loving those around them well. People are to love others like god loves them, and because he loved them first (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18; 1 Jn. 4:19). In covenantal settings love, “...seeks the well-being and the pleasure of one’s covenant partner, often without regard for oneself ...It is a wholehearted and full-bodied love (Block, 182, 201).

The second part of verse five describes the intensity of the love God demands from his people, “with all your heart and with all your life and with all your strength.” Grisanti comments, “Moses does not mention these three nouns primarily as attributes of human personality, but to demonstrate the far-reaching nature of this demanded commitment” (556). Although some interpret verse five as a Greek psychological/philosophical statement reflecting a tripartite anthropology, this concept is foreign to the Bible (Block, 183). As Daniel Block asserts, “this is intended as an emphatic reinforcement of the absolute and singular devotion to Yahweh called for by verse four” (183). Christopher Wright adds, “The wholeness, or oneness, of Yahweh (v. 4) is to be met with a response involving the wholeness of the human person (v. 5)” (98). The words, “heart and soul” appear all over Deuteronomy (here, 4:29; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10), but what do they mean? For the Jew the heart, לֵב “lev” was like our concept of what a human brain is. Israelites had no concept of a brain, or even a word for it, “they imagined that all intellectual things take place in the heart: knowledge, understanding, wisdom, discernment, etc.” (Mackie, Lecture). The heart functions in a lot of ways in the Old Testament. The heart is where you think and feel, where you make choices, and it’s a physical thing, a muscle, an organ. According to the proverbs it defines us as being moral agents as the heart is the center of all parts of our existence (Prov. 4:23). So, in the “Shema”, God’s people are called daily to devote to him their whole body and mind, feelings and desires, their future and their failures (Mackie, Lecture). Christopher Wright adds, “The heart (lēbāb) in Hebrew was not so much the seat of emotions and feelings—as it is in English metaphors—as the seat of the intellect, will, and intention. You think in your heart, and your heart shapes your character, choices, and decisions” (98).

What is meant by the word, נֶפֶשׁ (Nephesh), “soul” (or how I have chosen to translate it, “life”)? This word occurs over 700 times in the Old Testament (BDB). Our English word “soul” comes

with lots of baggage from Greek philosophy that is unhelpful for deriving its meaning in this context. The idea that it's the immaterial part of a person that is contained and trapped inside a person to be released at death, is foreign to the Bible. נֶפֶשׁ (Nephesh) literally means throat, but that's not the only meaning. It refers to the whole person (Num. 31:19), and both humans and animals are called נֶפֶשׁ חַיִּים, that is, "living beings or creatures" (Gen. 1:21;2:7). In the Bible, people don't have a soul they are souls, they are living breathing physical beings. נֶפֶשׁ (Nephesh) refers to the entire human as a living organism. Therefore, to love Yahweh with all your נֶפֶשׁ (Nephesh) is to devote your entire existence to the creator God who made you (Mackie, Lecture). Christopher Wright further adds, "To love God, then, with all your heart and with all your soul, means with your whole self, including your rationality, mental capacity, moral choices and will, inner feelings and desires, and the deepest roots of your life" (99). If these two words weren't profound enough, the Shema adds a third, remarkable item to the duo: מְאֹד.

מְאֹד (me'ōd), is typically translated "strength, or might" (see, ESV, NASB, NIV). It occurs about 300 times in the Hebrew Bible (BDB), however, as Tim Mackie notes this is, "One of the only places in the Bible where it is translated "strength". Most commonly it means "very" or "much". In Hebrew it is an adverb, which means it intensifies and adds to other words (see Gen. 1:31; 7:18; 4:5, 1 Sam. 10). For example, Genesis 1:31 says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was *very* good." That it is was מְאֹד (me'ōd) טוֹב ("tov" *good*). Therefore, to love God with all your מְאֹד (me'ōd) is to love him with "all your very-muchness" (Wright, 99). מְאֹד (me'ōd) then can be said to be a total devotion of every capacity one has to honor and love God. Moses commands covenant commitment rooted in the heart, but extending to every level of one's being. In summary Mike Grisanti writes,

These three phrases do not express three precise modes of expressing love or refer to three distinct spheres of life. They combine together to serve as an intense affirmation of absolute commitment. In summary, vv. 4 and 5 make a statement about God as well as demanding absolute commitment to God. (556).

Moses, building on the statement of Yahweh's identity and demand for total allegiance, turns to addressing how one is to live out these radical expectations in chapter 6:6-9. This section can be broken into two parts: the inward perspective (v. 6) and the generational perspective (vv. 7–9) that

characterizes a life transformed by fidelity to God (Grisanti, 557). The flow of argument of the Shema is linear and simple; it goes like this: understanding who Yahweh is (6:4) should lead to deep-seated devotion to him (6:5), which will lead to internal, heart transformation (6:6). Notice here that God did not command external conformity to his righteous requirements. Christopher Wright explains,

These verses powerfully dispel two misconceptions. The first misconception is that OT law was a matter of legalistic conformity to an external code. On the contrary, Deuteronomy 6:6 is part of a strong stream of OT teaching that calls for the internalizing of the law in the heart, i.e., at the center of a person's mind, will, and character (cf. 4:9; 10:16; 11:18; Jer. 4:4; 31:33; Ezek. 18:31; 36:26f.). (100)

Wright then goes on to explain that the second misconception is that this kind of obedience and faithfulness is for the religious elite (100). The application of the law described in this passage speaks to all people. It was to be the, “topic of ordinary conversation in ordinary homes in ordinary life, from breakfast to bedtime” (Wright, 100). Moses would later write encouraging the “ordinary” people in Deuteronomy 30:11-14 regarding the law,

For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 14 But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

Israelite faith was not to be defined by ritual acts (though not unimportant), but rather by a heart commitment to Yahweh from each individual member, from the least to the greatest.

The wholehearted devotion of the individual that we find in verse five is extended to the community in verses seven through nine. In verse nine, Moses demands that Israel teach their children and subsequent generations all of God's commands. He says, “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” (v.7). This is not to be a one-time discussion, but a repeated pattern in life so that one seizes the opportunities in all life's settings to teach their children to follow Yahweh. These expressions, “sit ... walk,” “lie down ... rise” are in an infinitive construct together, and are merisms. “Sit” and “walk” are opposites, “lie down” and “rise” are opposites. How one is to interpret this is to see them not simply as referring solely to the actions they specify, but also to everything between, “from A to Z” if you will (Grisanti, 557). They signify totality. This literary device is used in many places in Scripture. For example, Proverbs 6:20-22 reads,

- ²¹ Bind them on your *heart* always;
tie them around your *neck*.
- ²² When you *walk*, they will *lead* you;

when you *lie down*, they will *watch over* you;
and when you awake, they will talk with you.

God's people are to teach their children about him in all situations and at all times, continually as they live their ordinary day-to-day lives.

In addition to teaching Yahweh's expectations in every aspect of life (v. 7b), the people are to make his requirements an obvious part of their own entire lives (vv. 8–9) {Grisanti, 558}. Deuteronomy 6:8-9 reads, "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." What we see here is yet another expression of loving God in all areas and facets of life. The "them" refers to God's demands of his covenantal people. The "them" is a pronoun standing in for the expression, "And these *words*..." from verse six. Moses expresses the application of the law in a triad. It is for the, "...individual (your hands and your foreheads), the family (your houses), and society (your gates, the place of public business, courts, markets, etc.)" {Wright, 100}. A person then with God's expectations bound on "hands and head" (v.8) represents a person lives life under the authority of God and takes seriously applying his demand to all areas on life. Moses' purpose in stating these things the way he does with so much force and intensity is that he wants the Israelites to be sure that Yahweh's Word saturates their lives, that there is not a single part of their lives that is not filtered through and dedicated to Yahweh's expectations. Moses' demand may seem extreme, or culturally irrelevant to us, but that would be an interpretive mistake. I love how Christopher Wright states it,

Christian readers of 6:8–9 may be tempted to dismiss the Jewish use of tefillin (phylacteries) and mezuzot (scrolls inscribed with these verses, placed in cases, and fixed on doorposts) as unnecessary literalism (see additional note). However, the question is whether we are any more serious or successful in flavoring the whole of life with conscious attention to the law of God (v. 7, which is not at all "symbolic") as a personal, familial, and social strategy for living out our commitment to loving God totally. (100)

Synthesis

The book of Deuteronomy is a call to covenant faithfulness, to remember all that Yahweh has done for Israel, and to show future generations how to pursue lives that exude justice and righteousness. After the Exodus event, Israel entered into a covenant relationship with God at Mt. Sinai (Exodus and Leviticus). From there they set out on an epic road trip that turned into a disaster. It was filled with one rebellion story after another resulting in the exodus generation disqualifying themselves from entering the Promised Land (the book of Numbers). A journey that should have taken roughly two weeks, took 40 years. The book of Deuteronomy carries this narrative forward and is a collection of Moses' final words to the next generation of Israelites right before they enter the Promised Land

(occupied by the Canaanite). In essence, the book is like Moses' locker room speech akin to speeches coaches give to their teams before they go out on the field.

The purpose of this book is to spur on Yahweh's people to covenant faithfulness. Deuteronomy is a book about loving God, which is to be displayed in fidelity to him and his commandments and fueled by remembering his grace. The book begins and ends with Moses' passionate sermons (1-11; 27-34) calling Israel to not be like the former generation who rebelled and suffered the consequences (chs. 1-3), but to choose life and blessing (Deut. 28:1-14; 30:11-20). The path to life is paved by obedience and devotions to God (the Shema, Deut. 6:4-9). An obedient life, lived as a response to God's grace leads to covenant faithfulness, and life lived wisely, will usually result in being blessed, and blesses others as one reflects accurately the nature and character of Yahweh.

The way Deuteronomy is written, speaks volumes for its ability to be applied to our lives. All the speeches addressed to "You" in Deuteronomy is speaking of the Children of the Exodus generation (2nd generation), but not just to them. Moses starts talking to a continuous "you" meaning all future generations as well. Therefore, Deuteronomy becomes not just something said to people back then, it becomes the book of the Torah that speaks to all future generations who trust in Yahweh. Every generation is to see themselves as the generation at Mt. Sinai, and every generation is called to covenant faithfulness, and to hope in the future of a coming Messianic king.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we do receive the words of the prophet second only to Jesus Christ, but we receive something else very profound as well. The passionate pleas and desires of a shepherd for his flock. We get a glimpse into the heart of Moses for Israel, the heart of God for his children through Moses his mediator. Deuteronomy is a book about loving God and remembering his grace. God wants a relationship of love and covenant faithfulness, that flows out of his love lavished upon us. The laws are given so that we may know how to live wisely and operate in righteousness and justice accurately reflecting the nature and character of our God.

Social justice was not an abstract ideal in this book; it was taken very seriously as can be seen by the legislation that was put in place to protect the vulnerable in society (see especially Deut. 14-15). The desires to do this come from a heart that desires to live out the Shema. Those who have the power to do so are expected to be the ones who effect the change in society that should be taking place, and enforcing the laws already laid out. In Deuteronomy, God pleads the case for the needy and weak, and we as the church should be following his lead, entering into the lives of those in need and getting our hands dirty and be willing to have our hearts broken at times for the sake of the spread of the gospel.

To love God is to love your neighbor (who is everyone you encounter!), and to love your neighbor is to love God.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was in Mark 12:28-34 he said two things: love God and love your neighbor. The Shema, which Jesus quotes, is a confession and prayer to remind Israel of two things: (1) who God is (2) in light of who God is, how his people ought to respond. For Jesus, the most important command was actually two most important commands, meaning they are inseparable (see Lev. 19:18). We can't do one without the other. We might think we can, but in reality, we aren't worshiping the God of the Bible as he has commanded if we fall prey to this deception. The call of the Torah is bi-directional as it is both toward God and toward others. For Jesus, this is what it means to truly know God and to truly be human. It's interwoven so that in showing love for God by responding to his love (the Shema; Deut. 6:4-9), means I do so by loving my neighbor which is showing love for God in return. My love for God is most vividly and beautifully shown in my love and care for others, when its work is done under the umbrella of the grace with which I have received from Yahweh's overflowing fountain of goodness and mercy. Almost since the words of the Shema rolled off of Moses' lips, for thousands of years, Jewish people have prayed the "Shema" daily. It is a prayer that calls God's people to respond to his provision and love with extraordinary faithfulness and devotion to him. It should be our prayer and or creed as the church today as well.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:
וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

“Listen Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone. And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your life, and with all your strength.” (My Translation)

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