

Deuteronomy 6:1-5
The Lord Our God, the Lord is One
October 4, 2020

“Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, ² that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³ Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

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

In these are found words that are familiar to people who may not have ever read the Bible. Or, they may have such an impact on the world in which we live, or the theology that we espouse, that they stand alone as marvels of wonder and delight.

In our sermon today, we will have such a verse. It is considered by many Jews as the centerpiece of their morning and their evening prayer services. It was cited by Jesus in the New Testament, and it was given to reveal exactly the opposite of what many people find in it. Adam Clarke explains this for the Jews who have rejected Jesus Christ –

“When this passage occurs in the Sabbath readings in the synagogue, the whole congregation repeat the last word אֶחָד *achad* for several minutes together with the loudest vociferations: this I suppose they do to vent a little of their spleen against the Christians, for they suppose the latter hold three Gods, because of their doctrine of the Trinity.” Adam Clarke

Text Verse: “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:

‘Whom shall I send,

And who will go for Us?’” Isaiah 6:8

In his words, Isaiah says, *va'eshma eth qol Adonai* – “And I heard the voice of Adonai.” That means, he heard the voice of the Lord, Yehovah. The words of Yehovah then said, *omer eth mi eshlakh u-mi yelek lanu* – “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us.”

Unless one gets what Moses is saying in today’s passage, the words of Isaiah, and indeed many of the words of Scripture, make absolutely no sense at all. But in our evaluation of the word today, we will work to make sense out of these things, and to put a right sense of reason into our theology – a God-centered reason.

In doing so, so much of what is otherwise argued and debated over will fall into its proper place. Of course, one must actually accept that the evaluation is correct, and that what Moses is saying is as we will consider it. To this day, what I will tell you is rejected by the unbelieving Jews.

But it is they who have been exiled for two thousand years, and it is they who have suffered for their unbelief. For supposed Christian denominations to follow suit in their thinking is suicidal. Let us think clearly, let us reason things out from the greater panorama of Scripture, and may our conclusions be honoring of the Lord God who has so meticulously revealed Himself to us in Scripture.

May it be so, and may it be to His glory. Marvelous wonders are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Be Careful to Observe It (verses 1-3)

The opening words of Chapter 6 follow exactly in accord with those of the previous chapter. The people had heard the voice of the Lord, they had seen the terrifying display that accompanied it, and they had heard the words of law – the Ten Commandments.

The entire display was so great and terrifying that they asked for Moses to hear the words of the Lord, and to then convey His words to them. In response, we read the following –

“Go and say to them, ‘Return to your tents.’³¹ But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I am giving them to possess.” Deuteronomy 5:30, 31

While there, we saw that the translation was incorrect. It said, *kal ha'mitsvah v'ha'khukim v'ha'mishpatim* – “all the command (it is singular) and all the statutes and all the judgments.” The law is a codified body of law which is to be dutifully obeyed. It is a single command which is then defined by the statutes and judgments of which it is comprised.

Chapter 6 now opens with the same thought, but this time it is, almost, correctly translated...

“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments

The word “commandment” is singular, and the words “statutes” and “judgments” are plural. They are also prefixed by definite articles. There is the duty of the law, meaning the commandment, and then there are the statutes and the judgments which define that law, and which comprise it.

What may have happened in this translation is that a different set of translators was assigned to the previous chapter, or a different translator within a committee did one chapter and another did the next. Otherwise, it is hard to guess why they would translate the same words, separated by only three verses, differently.

However it came about, it is a great lesson for us once again. If we hang our hat on a single translation, we will inevitably come to erroneous conclusions about things.

It is one thing to read the word in a general form as we do each day, and it is another to do an in-depth study and rely solely on whatever translation we happen to have at the time. For example, the KJV got both of these verses wrong. Thus, an error in thinking concerning our theology can be the only result. For now, Moses continues the thought with...

¹(con't) which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you,

These words, again, follow from verse 5:31. As we just cited, the Lord said, “stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them.”

The Lord spoke out the commandment, and Moses was instructed to then, *lamad*, or teach the people out of that spoken command. Moses is to be the one to goad the people, prodding them along in order that they may learn to be obedient to the Lord. And the purpose is so...

¹(con't) that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess,

Again, the words follow after verse 5:31, with a noticeable difference. There, it said, “that they may observe *them* in the land which I am giving them to possess.” Moses changes the words slightly because he is not going into Canaan with them.

The Lord said, “which I am giving them to possess.” Moses now says, “which you are, *overim*, or ‘crossing over’ to possess.” It is referring to *ha'yarden*, or the Jordan, which means “the Descender,” and which pictures the coming of Christ.

Moses is not crossing over anything. As I have highlighted a couple times, the verb *overim*, or “cross over,” is identical in spelling to the noun *ivrim*, or Hebrew, which means “Passer Over.”

There is, seemingly, a subtle pun and an implied theological lesson for us in the words. The Passer Overs will be crossing over, but the law is not a Passer Over. If not by the law, then it must be by faith. This takes us back to Abraham, the first person noted as a Hebrew. Of him, the book of Hebrews says –

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” Hebrews 11:8-10

The same theme keeps repeating. The inheritance is not of law, but rather it comes by faith. Moses’ inclusion of the words *atem overim shammah*, or “you are crossing over there,” open up the passage, and they solidify the same theological message that carries throughout all of Scripture – the just shall live by their faith.

The typology is so clear. With the coming of Christ, those who are to enter heaven must do so apart from the law (pictured by Moses). They must come by faith. Deeds of the law are excluded.

For Israel, however, this does not negate that they are given law, and they must live out their lives under the law in order to instruct the people of the world concerning its need for God’s grace. And so, Moses continues...

² that you may fear the LORD your God,

The words of verse 1 were in the plural – you all who are a part of the whole. The words now transition to the singular – you, Israel, as a people who are the whole.

The teaching of the commandment and the statutes and judgments serves two purposes. The first is a proper relationship with God – *l’maan tira eth Yehovah elohekha* – “to the end purpose *that* you may fear Yehovah your God.” This was the explicit reason given by the Lord in Deuteronomy 4 –

“Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and *that* they may teach their children.” Deuteronomy 4:10

This was repeated towards the end of Chapter 5 as well. Moses repeats it here, noting that this is the first and main purpose of the giving of the law. And that fear of the Lord is demonstrated in obedience. As he next says...

² (con’t) to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you,

If a father lays out a list of things for his children to do, and they don’t do any of them, or if they do only some of them (the fun stuff), or if they do a shoddy job of the things they do, then there is obviously no fear of dad, and there is no respect for dad.

But if he is a good father, the things he assigned were intended to be for the good of the family, to help them to learn respect, diligence, and to be industrious. Further, they are to keep the family mutually working towards a good goal, and for the productive, happy, and healthy living of the children who are given the instruction.

These, and reasons like them, are also the intents of the law. First and foremost, they were to excite in the people the fear of the Lord, but they were also intended for those of subsequent generations as well. As Moses says, it is for...

² (con’t) you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life,

The children of the father that doesn’t pass on the value of money will – within a single generation – squander the wealth of those who came before them. The father that doesn’t pass on conservative values to his children will have sniveling children who are incapable of handling the responsibilities of life.

Cherished traditions, honor, respect, diligence in work, and on and on – all of these must be trained into one’s children and into the grandchildren after them. When this doesn’t happen, the values set before the people in times past will be lost. And so will fear of the Lord. But this is quickly what Israel failed to do –

“So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. ⁸ Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died *when he was* one hundred and ten years old. ⁹ And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰ When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.” Judges 2:7-10

The people failed to heed the words of Moses, and the following generations departed from the fear of the Lord. What would be the outcome? Before we see, we need to understand the second purpose for the teaching of the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which follows logically and inevitably from the first...

² (con’t) and that your days may be prolonged.

A fear of the Lord leads inevitably to prosperity, especially that of life – both quality of life and length of life. When Israel failed to do as instructed and the subsequent generations didn’t know the Lord, the result was –

“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹² and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. ¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. ¹⁵ Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.” Judges 2:11-15

Both the quality of life, and the length of the lives of many were affected through what occurred. The days of the people were not prolonged. The choice was set before Israel, and each generation had to decide how they would carry the charge set before them. For now, Moses continues...

³ Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you.

The words remain in the singular. Moses is speaking to Israel as he would to a single person. “You, Israel, are to be careful to observe.” And there are reasons for this. The first being, “that it may be well with you.”

The implication, obviously, is that if they failed to observe, it would not go well with them. And that is what we saw, right out of the gate of their history. For the first generation after Joshua, things didn’t go well with them.

Obviously, this doesn’t mean everyone. There were certainly those who prospered, even while the nation was being plundered and despoiled. While some were cut down in battle, others lived long lives, never facing danger. But as a people, they faced the judgment of the Lord for having forgotten the fear of the Lord.

Moses next adds on another benefit of carefully observing the charge set before them...

³ (con’t) and that you may multiply greatly

For just this clause alone, the words return to the plural – *v’asher tirbun meod* – “and which you (all) may multiply greatly.” It only makes sense that he would change to the plural here. He is speaking to Israel as a whole, but Israel is made up of people.

And so, to entice them to careful observance of the command, he says, “Israel, do these things so that it will go well with you.” And then one can imagine him sweeping his arm across the congregation and saying, “And so that each and every one of you may multiply greatly.”

He is calling for national blessing in order to stir up national unity, but he also calls for individual blessing in order to stir up self-worth within the nation which will, in turn, further stir up national unity. Any great leader will do the same. He will focus on the whole while focusing on the individual within the whole.

³ (con't) as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—

The words of this clause, and the next, are debated by scholars. Are these words referring to what was just said – meaning long life and days being prolonged – or are they referring to the next clause, meaning “a land flowing with milk and honey. Both could be possible. The Lord has already said this to the people –

“You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.” Deuteronomy 4:40

And, the Lord has already said this to the people –

“So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” Exodus 3:8

So, it could go either way. Much of the reason for the confusion is the wording of the next clause...

³ (con't) ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

eretz zavat khalav u-debash – “land flowing with milk and honey.” There is no preposition, such as “in,” even though many translations toss it in there. The NKJV adds in a long hyphen as a pause – “as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’”

Others add in commas to make it read, “because Yahweh, the God of your Fathers, has promised you a land flowing with milk and honey” (Holman).

With the varying views, it is obvious that what is said is complicated, and I don’t like complicated. And so, I would suggest to you that the entire thought of verses 2 and 3 is parenthetical and it should read as follows –

“Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess,

² — that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³ Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you —

‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

This highlights the two main purposes for observing the commandment – fearing the Lord and the expected blessings upon the people – to be contained within the thought of verse 1, exactly where it should be. It then ties “the land which you are crossing over to possess” directly in with “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

In this, the thought flows properly, and there is no need to finagle the Hebrew by adding in words or thoughts not in the original. And yes, the Hebrew can bear this translation. It is completely supportable.

So, the next time you come to this passage in your reading, remember that everything in verses 2 and 3 is probably parenthetical, right up to the last clause where it resumes the narrative. That is my best analysis of this for you on this otherwise difficult section.

As far as the term, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” this is the first of six times it will be seen in Deuteronomy, more than any other book in Scripture. As this is the first use of it here, and because it is such a commonly used term in Scripture, it would be good to review its meaning.

A land flowing with milk and honey implies richness and fertility. Milk comes from cows and so it means abundant pasture lands. Honey comes from bees which pollinate flowers and so it implies all sorts of fruit trees, herbs, and flowers.

And more, for Israel the term “a land flowing with milk and honey” will also possess a spiritual connotation. For them, it doesn’t just speak of the physical abundance but also of spiritual abundance because of the Lord, and because they are the Lord’s people, through whom the word of God comes.

The word of God is said to be sweeter than honey. It is also equated with milk which nourishes. Thus, this is a reference to that as well. The land would literally flow with milk and honey for sustaining Israel’s physical lives. It would also flow with milk and honey for sustaining their spiritual lives.

It is a certainty that if the promise of the Lord’s word concerning the abundance of the land is true, so should the abundance of His blessing upon them for adhering to His word – summed up in the very commandment, statutes and judgments which He is referring to right now – also be true. With this understood, we now turn to one of the most important verses in all of Scripture to consider...

*I am the Lord Your God, and I am One
There is none other than Me
But the thinking is not flawed to say I have a Son
And together with the Spirit, we are One but We are Three*

*I was there before the world came to be
And I am here now, right now, with you as well
And I shall be ever-present for all eternity
The never-ending story is the one that I tell*

*And so, you shall love the Lord your God
Love Me with all your heart and soul and might
With every step you take and on every path you trod
In Me you shall rejoice, and in Me you shall delight*

II. Sh’ma Yisrael (verses 4, 5)

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

shema Yisrael Yehovah elohenu Yehovah ekhad – “Hear Israel! Yehovah our God; Yehovah One!” Deuteronomy 6:4 is simply known as the Shema, or “Hear.” In this, the last letter of the first word, *ayin*, and the last letter of the last word, *dalet*, are written by scribes considerably larger than the surrounding text, thus they form the Hebrew word *ed* – witness.

Thus, the Shema is considered as a witness to Israel, testifying to something. Israel is to thus pay heed to what is said, learning from its instruction, and applying its truths to their national character.

The verse can be translated four distinct ways, but the two main ideas of any of these translations comes down to either 1) the unity of Yehovah; one being, or 2) the fact that Yehovah is Israel’s only God. The latter has already been established numerous times, including in the First Commandment – “I am Yehovah your God” which is followed by “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

It has also been established in Deuteronomy 4 that no image of the Lord should be made to represent Him because the people saw no form when He spoke to them from the mountain.

For these, and other reasons, this is certainly not referring to the fact that Yehovah is Israel's only God – an already established fact – but that Yehovah is one being. Of this, Albert Barnes rightly states –

“This weighty text contains far more than a mere declaration of the unity of God as against polytheism; or of the sole authority of the revelation that He had made to Israel as against other pretended manifestations of His will and attributes. It asserts that the Lord God of Israel is absolutely God, and none other. He, and He alone, is Jehovah (Yahweh) the absolute, uncaused God; the One who had, by His election of them, made Himself known to Israel.”

Matthew Poole succinctly then states it, “One in essence, and the only object of our worship.” The statement proclaims the unity of Yehovah, and this is necessary, but it is also problematic, isn't it, because Yehovah has already been revealed in various, otherwise contradictory ways, unless the words are taken properly.

Of the Shema, scholars give their thoughts along various lines, but many of them will – in one way or another – comment in accord with what Charles Ellicott says here –

“‘We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.’ But this truth, though visible in the Old Testament by the light of the New, was not explicitly revealed until it came forth in history, when the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and both sent the Holy Spirit to represent Him in the Church.” Charles Ellicott

Ellicott (and others) say that even though the Trinity is visible in the Old Testament, it is not explicitly revealed. This is true, but the argument is always made against the Jewish belief that there is one absolute God, meaning a monad.

In this, the analysis is faulty because Yehovah is clearly identified as a physical presence in the Garden of Eden. He is also identified as a physical being, a Man, in Genesis 18:1, 2. Moses has already shown that there is more to Yehovah than meets the eye.

This will continue to be true again in Joshua 5:15; Judges 6:15, 16; Judges 13; Isaiah 6; Zechariah 12:10, and elsewhere. Though the set “Trinity” could not be deduced from the Old Testament, a plurality within the Godhead could. Only a presuppositional bias against this premise would result in the denial of such.

The words of this verse in no way deny the possibility of a unity within a plurality, and that is the point that Moses must make, and that he is – in fact – making. If he didn't, there would then be a contradiction in what he has already recorded within the Torah.

In order to allow for what he has already shown – such as Abraham meeting with the Man who is Yehovah, he carefully chose his words. The final word of the verse, *ekhad*, means one. But it is often used in the sense of one inclusive of many.

For example, Genesis 2:24, using the word *ekhad*, says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become (*l'basar ekhad*) **to one flesh.**”

Genesis 11:6 says that the people of the world are *am ekhad*, one people. They are many comprising one. A cluster of grapes is one, and yet it is comprised of many grapes. However, in Genesis 22, the word *yakhid* is used three times to describe Isaac – “your only son.” It signifies one and only one. It is used this way throughout the Old Testament to identify a singularity with no plurality.

As Moses used *ekhad*, it is painfully obvious that he was making a theological point to substantiate what he already knew. He had already written out the Genesis narrative and he knew that God identified Himself in the plural in Genesis 1:26. The Lord also appeared to Abraham, and yet Moses knew that no man could see the face of the Lord and live – as he was told in Exodus 33:20.

Therefore, Moses was fully aware that Yehovah is a plurality within a unity. Hence, he chose *ekhad* rather than *yakhid* to speak forth the Shema.

Further, we can know – with all certainty – that Moses’ words here refer to the unity of the Lord and not that He is Israel’s only God, because Jesus cites the Greek translation of the Shema in Mark 12:29, affirming that it is referring to the Oneness of the Lord.

The scribe who answered him confirms this as well, showing that this is the accepted meaning of the Shema –

“Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He.” Mark 14:32

The immense importance of a plurality within the unity of Yehovah will continue to be revealed to Israel, attempting to wake them up to the coming of Messiah. This is why when Christ came and they rejected Him, it was not a mere man, but Yehovah whom they rejected. This is evidenced, for example, in the words of Matthew 22 –

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*”

⁴³ He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

⁴⁴ ‘The LORD said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’?”

⁴⁵ If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” ⁴⁶ And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. Matthew 22:41-46

Jesus plainly asked them who the Messiah would be. They knew, from their own Scriptures, that He would be the son of David. But then Jesus clearly shows them that He would be Yehovah, because He then cites the 110th Psalm, a messianic psalm.

In David’s words, it says, “Yehovah said to Adonai. Sit at my right hand.” Adonai is simply a formal way of David referring to Yehovah. Thus, Yehovah was having a conversation with Yehovah, and yet David identifies them as different entities.

What we are seeing here in Deuteronomy 6 is Israel’s schooling in the nature of God which began in Genesis 1:1 with the creation by Elohim, which continued with the creation in Genesis 1:2 by the *Ruakh Elohim*, or Spirit of God, and which was then further elaborated on in Genesis 1:26 which said –

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’” Genesis 1:26

From there, it continued to be refined in Genesis 2 where Yehovah was introduced –

“This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. Genesis 2:4

Each step of the way through the biblical narrative, God is revealing Himself to us a little bit at a time. It is true that the Trinity is not explicitly revealed as such in the Old Testament, but the concept of a plurality within a unity is not only revealed, it is incontrovertible.

It is this statement known as the Shema which now resolves the numerous otherwise contradictory statements thus far revealed through Moses. It shows that they are not, in any way, to be taken as contradiction, but as statements of fact which need to be considered and evaluated in light of the God who inspired Moses to write them.

From this verse in Deuteronomy, Joshua will not be considered to be a blasphemer when he worships the man with the drawn sword in Joshua 5, even though he has been instructed just one chapter earlier here in Deuteronomy to have no other gods before Yehovah, nor was he to bow down to them nor serve them.

Otherwise, the life of Joshua, within the span of less than two months, would be a completely contradictory, faithless life – destined to be cast into the pit of hell for having rejected the words of the Lord through Moses.

But through the simple use of a single word, *ekhad*, Moses has opened up the narrative of Scripture into one of wonder, amazement, and indeed anticipation concerning who the coming Messiah will be.

Instead of being stoned for blasphemy, David's words of the 110th Psalm will be pondered, contemplated, and meditated over for generations to come. And the incredible words of Zechariah 12:10 will not only make sense after they are fulfilled, they will perfectly fit with all that the other prophets testified to –

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” Zechariah 12:10

There is one God, and one God alone. There is no other God. And He is Yehovah, the God of Israel – uncaused, eternal, and unchanging. He was, and is, and is to come. And He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three persons in one Essence. Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one! ...

⁵You shall love the LORD your God

When Jesus cited the Shema to the people who confronted Him, He didn't just cite that and then begin to explain. Rather, citing the Shema was part of a greater discourse –

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”

²⁹ Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments *is*: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is* the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like *it, is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

³² So the scribe said to Him, “Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” Mark 12:28-34

This is the continued thought that Moses speaks out now, saying, *v'ahavta eth Yehovah elohekha* – “and you shall love Yehovah your God.” The words here, and throughout the verse, continue to be in the singular. Moses is speaking to Israel as a single entity. The heart of Israel is to love Yehovah their God.

What does it mean to love Yehovah? In the context of Moses' discourse – which is talking about observing His commandments – it means to obey His commandments.

One cannot say, “I love Yehovah,” and yet not obey His commandments. Because He is God, His words are a reflection of who He is. Unlike humans who lie for pretty much any reason, thus demonstrating a disconnect between their words and who they are, there is no disconnect between the Lord and His words.

A person may say, “I was once a navy seal,” and he could be a complete liar concerning that. We can dismiss his words, and not be unloving in the process. But when the Lord issues forth a word, it reflects His very being. Therefore, in rejecting what He commands is to reject who He is.

Unfortunately, this is taken to unintended extremes by cults all the time. For example, the Hebrew Roots movement will cite 1 John and apply those words to the law we are now looking at –

“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:10

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” 1 John 5:3

This is an error in theology. The Law of Moses is not what John is referring to. In fact, he never refers to the commands of Moses in his writings in such a manner. He is always referring to the New Covenant in Christ, and the words commanded by Him.

Though it is perfect, and though it perfectly reveals the intent of God, the Law of Moses is only a partial and an incomplete revelation of God. Jesus Christ is the final and full revelation which the Law of Moses only anticipated.

Thus, to love God is to keep His commandments, and to do so in the context of the times in which a person lives. This is why the psalmist was well-pleasing to God. In the 119th Psalm, the psalmist says again and again that he loves the Lord's commandments, His word, His precepts, His testimonies, and His law.

He loved the Lord because He loved what the Lord had revealed of Himself. There was no disconnect between the two. With this understood, Moses next says...

5 (con't) with all your heart,

b'kal l'vavekha – “with all your (singular) heart.” It is the collective heart of Israel. They were to love Yehovah with all of this heart. The heart is the seat of reasoning and understanding in the Bible. Israel was to consider the commandment of the Lord and to apply it to its life. It was to be an ongoing and active process.

If someone violated a commandment, he was to offer the appropriate sacrifice for it, in obedience to the command. If a person committed a capital offense, Israel was to execute the criminal in obedience to the command. If the nation transgressed as a whole, they were to follow the precepts of the law to make right the wrong that was done.

In 1 Samuel 21, David was faced with such an infraction which had been committed by his predecessor, King Saul. David took the appropriate action to remedy it. This is what it means to love the Lord with all your heart. It is to reason out what has been done to offend, and to then act in accord with the command to rectify it.

5 (con't) with all your soul,

u-b'kal naphsekha – “and with all your soul.” The soul is what animates the being. The soul of Israel then is that which animates Israel. It is the life, the breath, and the determination of the people. To love the Lord their God would mean that even unto death, they would be faithful to Him.

Though not of the covenant people, Job was such a soul, saying, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). Likewise, the psalmist spoke of the full confidence he had in the Lord, knowing that holding fast to him, even in the face of death, was a reward all by itself –

“Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.

⁴In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.

What can flesh do to me?” Psalm 56:3, 4

The soul of Israel was to love the Lord their God, holding nothing back. And then, finally, Moses instructs them...

*5 (fin) and with all your strength.

u-b'kal meodekha – “and with all your strength.” The word *meod* signifies muchness, force, or abundance. One could consider the word *vehemence*. It is holding nothing back as one sets his course. Thus, the strength of Israel was to be expended on the Lord God – solely, without holding back, and entirely.

This would not lastly, but firstly, include their wealth. When people work for a set goal, it is with the strength they have to obtain what they want. If it is a person's desire to increase in wealth, then it should also be the person's desire to use that wealth as a way of demonstrating his love for the Lord.

Unsurprisingly, Jesus uses this exact example to show the hearts of the people in Luke 21 –

“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, ² and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. ³ So He said, ‘Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; ⁴ for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.’” Luke 21:1-4

Our physical person is often completely tied up in the wealth we possess. This woman's next meal was to be her strength, and the money to buy that meal was indicative of where her love was directed. And so, giving up her meal, and thus her source of strength, she showed that she loved the Lord her God with all of it.

In the end, to love the Lord your God is not merely to make a profession with the lips, but to then put the total source of who one is – the heart, soul, and strength – behind that profession, yielding to the Lord all of it at all times.

As a point to close on today, it must be noted that when the Scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus with their question concerning the greatest commandment, He gave His response as we noted, citing the Shema and then to love the Lord and one's neighbor.

After that, in both Matthew and Mark, the next thing that is mentioned is Jesus then asking them whose Son the Christ would be. Everything in the gospels is placed in a particular manner to form a particular context.

It is when they answered that He would be the Son of David that Jesus then cited the 110th Psalm that we looked at. He did this for a reason. He was trying to call their attention to the fact that the Shema says there is one God, and yet there is a plurality within the Godhead that is allowed by the Shema – as testified to by David.

It is the central theme of Scripture, one which goes from the very first page of the Bible even to its very last – Jesus Christ is God. In fact, the very definition of antichrist, which will be our closing verse today, is to deny this fundamental tenet of Scripture. John defines it in both 1 John and 2 John as being such.

Therefore, when we are told that God is one, and that Jesus is God, that is to be accepted and acted upon. We are to receive Him as such, glorifying God the Father through our pronouncement. And then, we are to love Yehovah our God – meaning inclusive of the incarnate Word, Jesus – with all of our hearts, souls, and strength.

We are to obey the commandments of God in order to demonstrate that we truly love God. And John shows us where the beginning of that love is found. He says, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29).

To love God is to believe God and to do the work of God. And that work is to honor the Son whom God has sent. The passage today has shown us that there is no contradiction in the word. Rather, it is laid out, step by step and in a methodical manner, in order to reveal to us what God has been doing in the stream of time to bring us back to Himself.

Let us apply what we have learned, accept what God has revealed, and bring glory to God through the honoring of His Son. And, let us do so with all of our hearts, souls, and strength. May it be so.

Closing Verse: “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” 1 John 2:22, 23

Next Week: Deuteronomy 6:6-15 *And the crier cries out a resounding chord...* (Beware, Lest You Forget the Lord) (24th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord Our God, The Lord is One

“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes
-----and judgments

Which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you
That you may observe them in the land
Which you are crossing over to possess, so you are to do

That you may fear the LORD your God
To keep all His statutes and His commandments
-----which I command you
You and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life
And that your days may be prolonged too

Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it
That it may be well with you
And that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your
-----fathers has promised you—
A land flowing with milk, and honey too

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart
With all your soul, and with all your strength
You shall do this all your days, not just at the start

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...