

a sermon:

From The Shema of DEUTERONOMY 6:4: HEAR, O ISRAEL!

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוָה אֶחָד

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I. AN OPENING PRAYER

“Almighty GOD, unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your HOLY SPIRIT, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your Holy Name, through [JESUS] CHRIST, our Lord.” AMEN. ¹

II. A SCRIPTURE – DEUTERONOMY 6:4 – THE SHEMA

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוָה אֶחָד²

SHEMA' YISRA'EL HASHEM [YEHVAH] 'ELOHEYNU HASHEM [YEHVAH]

'ECHAD ³ – In The Young's Literal Translation, “Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH our GOD is one JEHOVAH!” ⁴

III. A STORY

There was once a mighty prince in the ancient world who fell from the good graces of his earthly king. He was exiled from that earthly kingdom - a brutal, dark pagan land that venerated many false gods of cruelty and oppression - to become a mere shepherd. He wandered in a desolate wasteland for forty years. There he searched for peace, fulfillment and the very reason for his being.

It was there that The LORD GOD first spoke to this wandering nomad at the burning bush. It was in this man's desolation that The LORD lifted him up to give him peace, fulfillment and the reason for his being. It was now - after the refining fires of suffering, trials and hardship over many years - JEHOVAH showed Himself as The I Am That I Am in the burning bush that was not consumed and with a Voice from Above. It was here that The Creator - blessed is His Name! - showed this nomad that He alone is

¹ 1, The Genius of Chrysostom's Preaching, a prayer of St. Chrysostom.

² 2, MT, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

³ The practice of faithful orthodox Jews here is to not pronounce The “I AM” Name of The LORD in The Hebrew [YEHVAH], but to substitute “HASHEM,” whenever reading The

Scriptures and יהוה is encountered. This is done in reverence for The Name of The LORD, and so I shall follow that practice here in deference to our orthodox Jewish friends.

⁴ 3, YLT, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

GOD and there is no other!

For The LORD took this now humbled shepherd of animals and made him a shepherd of His chosen people. This man was admitted to the Kingdom of GOD and - returning to his former earthly home of pagan darkness to liberate GOD's chosen people out of bondage - he with GOD's help lead them towards The Promised Land.

Who were these chosen people of GOD? And who was this servant shepherd of GOD? The people were the ancient Israelites. And this servant of GOD was Moses, who was called the very friend of GOD and who beheld - as it were - the very face of The LORD on the holy mountain - and lived! It was to these ancient Israelites, through Moses the servant of GOD, that the inspired, GOD-breathed first five holy books of the Old Testament - the Torah, i.e. The Law - was revealed to mankind. And it is in DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9 that ancient Israel found its most profound statement of faith: "The Shema," which proclaims the Divine command to all men, "Hear, O Israel, The LORD our GOD is one LORD!"⁵

IV. INTRODUCTION

DEUTERONOMY 6:4 in The King James Version Bible reads, "Hear, O Israel, The LORD our GOD is one LORD."⁶ This verse from Deuteronomy is thus known to observant Jews as "The Shema," - "Hear, thou!" - which is the ancient Jewish confession of faith under the Old Covenant.⁷ But what does The Shema teach us? First, We are to love GOD and keep His Commandments. Second, our obedience to GOD's Word brings Divine blessing, while our disobedience brings Divine punishment. Third, We are to think of GOD's Commands constantly every day.⁸ Let us consider together more of DEUTERONOMY 6, from which The Shema is imbedded. Let us then explore each of these verses in some depth, and see what we may hear!

⁵ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

⁶ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

⁷ 5, Illustrated Dictionary of The Bible, a short description of The Shema.

⁸ 5, Illustrated Dictionary of The Bible, a short description of The Shema.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

4: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD:

5: And thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6: And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8: And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9: And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. ⁹

V. DEUTERONOMY 6:4

DEUTERONOMY 6:4 proclaims, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD:” ¹⁰ In other words, verse 4 commands us, “Hear these Words, you people of GOD - The LORD our GOD is one LORD!” For “The LORD... is totally unique.” And here we find a hint of the nature of our Maker: “ELOHIM [tells us that] GOD is plural..., implying The Trinity. Yet He is also “EHAD, [presenting to man] a unity of the Persons in the Godhead.”

And so there is no other, for “He alone is GOD!” The LORD is predictable & morally upright, so that men may know how to worship Him. For GOD relates to men via consistent moral religious standards. ¹¹ And thus we read in PSALM 25:8, “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way.” ¹²

VI. DEUTERONOMY 6:5

DEUTERONOMY 6:5 proclaims, “And thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” ¹³ In other words, verse 5 commands us, “You shall love The LORD GOD with all your heart, soul and might!” So all men are commanded “to choose... [GOD] for an intimate relationship and to obey His

⁹ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9.

¹⁰ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

¹¹ 6, The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament, DEUTERONOMY 6:4, p 274.

¹² 4, KJV, PSALM 25:8.

¹³ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:5.

Commands.” Further, our love for GOD is “to be wholehearted.” And this love which we are to have for The Creator - blessed is His Name! - is “to pervade every aspect of... our being and life!”¹⁴

So when our Lord JESUS CHRIST was asked which commands of The Law of GOD are the most important, He tells us that all The Law and the prophets are fulfilled by us when we love GOD and our neighbour. This is why we read in MATTHEW 22:37-39, “JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and Great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!”¹⁵

VII. DEUTERONOMY 6:6

DEUTERONOMY 6:6 states, “ And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:”¹⁶ In other words, in verse 6 GOD commands us to keep His Words in the very depths of our hearts! Why? Because the "past mercies of GOD... should prompt such [a] love" in us that we desire above all else to keep GOD's Word in our hearts! For if we truly love GOD, it will "reveal itself [in us] in reverent obedience to all [of] GOD's... Commands!"¹⁷

This is why the wisdom of PROVERBS 3:5-6 admonishes us, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths!”¹⁸ And so our Lord JESUS CHRIST speaks to us of the sure sign that we love HIM, for He says in JOHN 14:15, “If ye love me, keep My Commandments!”¹⁹

VIII. DEUTERONOMY 6:7

DEUTERONOMY 6:7 tells us, “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy

¹⁴ 6, The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament, DEUTERONOMY 6:5, p 274.

¹⁵ 4, KJV, MATTHEW 22:37-39.

¹⁶ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:6.

¹⁷ 7, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY 6:6, p 164.

¹⁸ 4, KJV, PROVERBS 3:5-6.

¹⁹ 4, KJV, JOHN 14:15.

children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”²⁰ In other words, verse 7 proclaims, “Teach GOD's Word diligently to your children & consider Them all the day long!” For GOD's Covenant with the Christian family "requires that children be brought up [diligently in The Word of GOD.]"

This also teaches us that consideration of The Holy Scriptures are to so pervade our lives that every aspect of our day should be filled with thoughts of GOD and His Commands to us. For "day and night the godly are to meditate on GOD's Law."²¹ Scripture teaches us that the duty of Christian parents are to bring up their children in the Christian Faith. So PROVERBS 22:6 states, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”²²

And when the Christian home is filled with GOD's love and His Word directs all activities, St. Paul assures us that the knowledge of The LORD will be passed on to our children. So EPHESIANS 3:17-19 reads, “That CHRIST may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of GOD!”²³

IX. DEUTERONOMY 6:8

DEUTERONOMY 6:8 states, “And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.”²⁴ In other words, verse 8 commands that “GOD's Word should be always before us, even on our hands & before our eyes, in all that we do!” For is there no part of the life of the righteous man saved in CHRIST over which GOD is not sovereign.

²⁰ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:7.

²¹ 7, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY 6:7, p 164.

²² 4, KJV, PROVERBS 22:6.

²³ 4, KJV, EPHESIANS 3:17-19.

And so the faithful Christian will delight in the study of The Holy Scriptures without ceasing all the days of his life! This is why it is written in PSALM 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in The Law of the LORD; and in His Law doth he meditate day and night.”²⁵

X. DEUTERONOMY 6:9

DEUTERONOMY 6:9 tells us, “And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”²⁶ In other words, verse 9 tells us, “Write GOD's Word even upon the very doorposts of our homes to remind us to constantly meditate on Them!” Now the pious Jew will wear tassels - "phylacteries worn on the person" as a constant reminder of GOD's Word. And he will place the very words of The Shema - "the mezuzah affixed over the doorpost" for the same reason!²⁷

So the faithful Christian will learn a lesson from the faithful Jew, in that he must daily meditation on Holy Scripture and seek to live out a life lived - not just as a hearer of GOD's Word, but also a doer! And so St. James tells us in JAMES 1:22, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves!”²⁸

Here our Lord JESUS CHRIST gives us our daily battle plan as Christians, which is embodied in The Great Commission. And so CHRIST commands us in MATTHEW 28:19-20, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”²⁹

²⁴ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:8.

²⁵ 4, KJV, PSALM 1:1-2.

²⁶ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:9.

²⁷ 7, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, DEUTERONOMY 6:9, p 164.

²⁸ 4, KJV, JAMES 1:22.

²⁹ 4, KJV, MATTHEW 28:19-20.

XI. IN SUMMARY

So in summary, let us seek the conviction of The Holy Spirit, that we might be convicted in our hearts to daily live out the commands of GOD. DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9 gives us a framework for daily pious living to do this very thing: 1) The LORD alone is GOD, and He is good and upright; 2) Love GOD and love our neighbour fully and completely; 3) Keep GOD's Words in our hearts, so that all our steps may be ordered by HIM; 4) Teach The Scriptures to your children and live out The Word of GOD in all that you do; 5) The Law of The LORD should be always before us; 6) GOD's Word should even mark our homes as a testimony to all men, the fulfillment of which is carrying out The Great Commission of our Lord JESUS CHRIST where ever He sends us in our daily lives!

XII. IN CLOSING

Recall our brief story of Moses and the ancient Israelites. GOD revealed Himself to Moses and anointed him to carry out His commission to lead the children of Israel out of bondage from the pagan darkness of Egypt towards The Promised Land of true knowledge of The One and Only GOD. How do these Scriptures speak to us today - now - in our daily lives? Have we heard and obeyed the call of our Lord to shine the light of Liberty in CHRIST JESUS to all we meet by living out a true and pious Christian life?

Ladies and gentlemen, let us allow ourselves to be challenged by these holy Words from The Shema in DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9? Are we giving GOD daily our prayers, our obedience and our humble thankfulness? Are we spending time in the daily study of His Holy Scriptures? Are our lives as the saints of GOD, purchased by The precious Body and Blood of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, showing forth both the love and truth which The Almighty calls us to live out? Are we in love and fellowship, not only with The Almighty, but also with one another? Are we reaching out to those in need, those who suffer, those who are afflicted – both within The Church and outside The Church?

What account shall we give before The Judgement Seat of CHRIST on our day of judgement? What one activity in our daily lives are most guided by The Word of GOD? What one burden in our daily lives cause us the most grief and sorrow? What one lesson from the Holy Scriptures can we employ to best lighten our heaviest burden at the Cross of CHRIST? What idols in our lives is the arm of The LORD calling us to put aside, that we may better worship and serve only Him?

Do we not hear the words of Moses echoing in our very souls echoing the Words of The Almighty in The Shema of DEUTERONOMY 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD?”³⁰ Therefore let us hear the call of The King of The Universe to our souls, that we might turn from iniquity, repent of our sins and come humbly before His throne to seek His Grace in our Lord JESUS CHRIST:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֶחָד
SHEMA' YISRA'EL HASHEM [YEHVAH] 'ELOHEYNU HASHEM [YEHVAH]
'ECHAD!³² In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost.
AMEN!

³⁰ 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

³¹ 2, MT, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

³² The practice of faithful orthodox Jews here is to not pronounce The “I AM” Name of The LORD in The Hebrew [YEHVAH], but to substitute “HASHEM,” whenever reading The Scriptures and יהוה is encountered. This is done in reverence for The Name of The LORD, and so I shall follow that practice here in deference to our orthodox Jewish friends.

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(see page 978 for definition of Shema)
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