

Deuteronomy 6:1-9  
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“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you [Moses’ teaching was ultimately God’s revelation], that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it [i.e., live out God’s Word],<sup>2</sup> so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God [fear/respect Him], to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life [obedient parents would influence their children to respect and obey God], and that your days may be prolonged [God will reward them for their obedience].<sup>3</sup> “O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do *it*, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly [God’s purpose was to bless], just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, *in* a land flowing with milk and honey.<sup>4</sup> “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one [אֱחָד *echad* – one, unique]!<sup>5</sup> “You shall love [אָהַב *aheb* – love = commit to God] the LORD your God with all your heart [לֵבָב *lebab* – heart, inner person, will, mind] and with all your soul [נַפְשִׁי *nephesh* – life, passion, appetite, personal desires] and with all your might [מְעוֹד *meod* – strength, force, abundance, physical resources].<sup>6</sup> “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart [לֵבָב *lebab* – inner person, mind].<sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently [שָׁנַן *shanan* – to engrave/chisel on stone – piel verb stem – to repeat, to say again and again] to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way [in and out of the home] and when you lie down and when you rise up [at all times; cf., Pro 6:20-23].<sup>8</sup> “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand [picture of activity] and they shall be as frontals on your forehead [influencing perspective].<sup>9</sup> “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house [places of residence] and on your gates [i.e., city gates, where elders met to discuss social and legal matters].

**Summary:**

The main point of this pericope is that Israel was to commit themselves to the Lord, learn His Word, live it, and communicate it to future generations so that God’s blessing would continue. Moses opens this section, saying, “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it” (Deut 6:1). The commandment, statutes, and judgments refer to all of the divine commands that follow in Deuteronomy. These commands did not originate with Moses, but with God, who “commanded” Moses “to teach” them to Israel. The purpose of the teaching was that Israel “might do them in the land” where they were going to live. The result was, “so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged” (Deut 6:2). The adults were to walk properly before the Lord so

that their children might learn to do the same. If they would comply, their days in the land would “be prolonged.” Moses further states, “O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 6:3). Again, Moses desired Israel’s best, so he exhorted them to be careful to learn and obey God’s Word. The benefit was that it would “be well” with them and they would “multiply greatly” as God had promised. And this would occur “in a land flowing with milk and honey.” Warren Wiersbe comments, “At least six times in this book, Moses called Canaan ‘a land of milk and honey’ (v. 3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20), a phrase that describes the richness and fruitfulness of the land. Milk was a staple food and honey a luxury, so ‘a land of milk and honey’ would provide all that the people needed.”<sup>1</sup>

Moses then provides Israel’s pledge of allegiance, saying, “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deut 6:4). This section opens with the Hebrew verb שמע *shama*, which connotes listening so as to obey. And who is the LORD? The answer is, “The LORD is our God,” which meant He is the God of Israel, their treasured possession. And, unlike the Gentile nations, which had many gods, Israel’s “LORD is one.” The Hebrew numeral, אחד *echad*, here refers to God’s uniqueness as the only God who is (cf. Isa 45:5-6). Jack Deere comments:

This verse has been called the *Shema*, from the Hebrew word translated **Hear**. The statement in this verse is the basic confession of faith in Judaism. The verse means that **the LORD** (Yahweh) is totally unique. He alone is **God**. The Israelites could therefore have a sense of security that was totally impossible for their polytheistic neighbors. The “gods” of the ancient Near East rarely were thought of as acting in harmony. Each god was unpredictable and morally capricious. So a pagan worshiper could never be sure that his loyalty to one god would serve to protect him from the capricious wrath of another. The monotheistic doctrine of the Israelites lifted them out of this insecurity since they had to deal with only one God, who dealt with them by a revealed consistent righteous standard. This confession of monotheism does not preclude the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. “God” is plural ( *’ēlōhîm*), possibly implying the Trinity, and **one** ( *’ehād*) may suggest a unity of the Persons in the Godhead (cf. Gen. 2:24, where the same word for “one” is used of Adam and Eve).<sup>2</sup>

Moses then states, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). The word *love* translates the Hebrew verb

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1999), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 274.

אָהֵב *ahab*, which speaks of an act of the will in which Israelites were to commit themselves to the Lord wholeheartedly. Concerning the word *love*, Daniel Block writes:

Speaking biblically “love” is not merely an emotion, a pleasant disposition toward another person, but covenant commitment demonstrated in actions that seek the interest of the next person...Just as in marriage true love is demonstrated not merely or even primarily by roses and verbal utterances of “I love you,” but in actions that seek the well-being and delight of one’s spouse.<sup>3</sup>

Warren Wiersbe adds:

In the life of the believer, love is an act of the will: we choose to relate to God and to other persons in a loving way no matter how we may feel. Christian love simply means that we treat others the way God treats us. In His love, God is kind and forgiving toward us, so we seek to be kind and forgiving toward others (Eph. 4:32). God wills the very best for us, so we desire the very best for others, even if it demands sacrifice on our part.<sup>4</sup>

Moses provided the extent to which they were to love God, “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” The word *heart* translates the Hebrew word לֵבָב *lebab* which refers to the *inner person, will, or intellect*. This means love starts in the mind with right understanding and includes the will. The word *soul* translates the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*, which refers to one’s *life, passions, or personal desires*. Setting our desires upon God means we structure our lives in such a way to give Him and His Word priority. And the word *might* translates the Hebrew word מְאֹד *meod*, which refers to one’s *strength, force, abundance, or physical resources*. Concerning the Hebrew word מְאֹד *meod*, Daniel Block states, “Here its meaning is best captured by a word like ‘resources,’ which includes physical strength, but also economic or social strength, and it may extend to the physical things an Israelite owned: tools, livestock, a house, and the like.”<sup>5</sup> Our might not only includes personal effort, but also the abundance of our effort, which includes our personal resources. Earl Kalland is correct when he states, “The exhortation to love ‘with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength’ is not a study in faculty psychology. It is rather a gathering of terms to indicate the totality of a person’s

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 189–190.

<sup>4</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Equipped*, “Be” Commentary Series, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*, 184.

commitment of self in the purest and noblest intentions of trust and obedience toward God.”<sup>6</sup>

Moses’ instruction starts with the individual adults, in which he states, “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart” (Deut 6:6). Here, each Israelite had the personal responsibility of learning God’s Word. By doing this, they could fulfill the next command, which states, “You shall teach them diligently to your sons” (Deut 6:7a). The phrase, *teach them diligently*, translates the Hebrew verb *שָׁנַן* *shanan*, which means *to engrave or chisel on stone*. The verb is in the Piel stem, which makes it intensive (i.e., *teach diligently*). Here, the tongue of the parents is likened to a chisel they keep applying to their children’s minds in order to engrave God’s Word into their thinking (cf. Pro 6:20-23). Where and when was this activity of training to take place? Moses says, you “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 up” (Deut 6:7b). *Sitting* suggests times of rest, and *walking* speaks of activity. When you *lie down* suggests evening time, and when you *rise up* suggests the morning hours. These form a double merism which encompass of all of life. In this way, Deuteronomy is aimed at subsequent generations, that they might learn God’s will and faithfully transmit it to their children, who will pass it along to their children, and so on.

In the final verses of this pericope, Moses states, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 6:8-9). Some Israelites took this literally and made phylacteries which they wore on their hands and foreheads (Matt 23:5), as well as mezuzahs they placed on doorposts, all of which contained Scripture. Here, the meaning is symbolic, where God’s commands were to be wrapped up in their daily activities (hand), always to be in the forefront of their thinking (forehead), guarding their homes (doorposts of your house), and influencing the activities of the leaders who met to discuss social and legal matters at the entrance of the city (gates).

As Christians, we know God desires to bless those with whom He is in a covenant relationship, but inheritance blessing is dependent on learning and living God’s Word carefully, which is an indicator that we have placed Him first in our lives above all others. Parents who love their children will naturally want the best for them; therefore, they will diligently teach their children how to have the best life with God, and this they will do in all places, activities, and times of the day. This way, God’s Word will govern all their activities, thoughts, and places of gathering.

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<sup>6</sup> Earl S. Kalland, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 64.