

# The Shema Pt. 1

## Deut 6:1-9

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Aug. 25, 2024

### Chaos and Despair

If you have been watching the news for the last 6 months, including the election and the wars in Ukraine and Russia, if you have to pay way more now to buy normal things than you did last year, all this disruption can bring about a feeling of chaos and despair, at various levels or percentages. These feelings can also happen within our personal relationships and within ourselves as we try to hold things together inside. For example, I have both of these going on, yet I push them down as far as I can. I think it's prevalent in all of us.

Some of us have legitimate reasons to feel this way. The Israelites in the Old Testament were a small group of people who ended in Egypt and started growing. They were enslaved as they got bigger and bigger: their chaos was real and understandable.

Exodus 2:23-25

23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God **heard** their groaning and he **remembered** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was **concerned** about them.



If you read this as a new Christian and you believe God was all-knowing and all-present, you might ask why he didn't know or understand the plight of the Israelites. However, when you understand Scripture, you know that God must be relational. Relationships happen where you don't remember things and you sometimes need help to recall. What Moses is saying here is that God began to recall and **know** the people. The translator is saying God looked and saw these

people. The word means he **KNEW** them and was deeply concerned. He knew their plight. The important thing is that God has a relationship and is moved by what the people were going through. He therefore sent Moses into Egypt and there were plagues and they were let go. They wandered around for a long time. Then comes this passage that many people know called "The Shema." This aligns with the Villages motto of healing the City One person at a time" because it asks us to recall his movement among us as well.

Tim Keller said this:

Timothy Keller (1950-2023) on X: "The word "worship" is from Old English "worth-ship" --the ascribing of highest worth. Whatever you value or love the most---whatever is your greatest source of significance and security---you are worshipping in your heart.

Why did Israel have to wander in the desert for 40 years? I think they needed to get the Egyptians and their many gods out of them.

I've been reading a metaanalysis about the generations in the US (called *Generations* by Jean Twenge). It's kind of boring but it does give a huge picture of our country and it says that no matter how good of a parent you are, your children's generation will have a greater understanding of the world than you do. Your job is to build a structure for them to do that.

### **A Few Characteristics of Generations in the U.S.:**

**Silent Generation:** A strong sense of duty

**Boomer:** You approach the world in an entitled way: what will I get and how will I do this?

**Gen X:** Cynical and sarcastic about everything

**Millennial:** Over positive and think highly of yourself

**Gen Z:** highly anxious

This is useful because I realize that as a Gen X, I tend to be skeptical of everything .

I want us to process things from the E gods, from Hapi-Osiris:

#### **The gods we worship: From Hapi - Osiris**

- **Provision** (Natural Resources)
- **Health** (Physical Well-Being)
- **Power** (Authority and Control)
- **Order** (Stability in Life)
- **Wisdom** (Knowledge and Enlightenment)

What are your gods? How do you worship different things in your culture from your position?

Israel was in a place of many gods and they were very influenced by these gods. You see it in their 40 years of wanderings.

Has anyone experienced a vaccine gun?

The Shema is like a vaccine where you need repetitive boosters.



Deut 6:4 says: **“Hear, Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”**

What does “hear” mean? It doesn’t mean to merely hear physically. It means pay attention, actively engage, internalize, and obey. These are basically the things we want to teach our children: “Pay attention, look at me, listen to me, obey me!” This is a prayer over Israel as they head into a foreign land.

## Hear, Listen, Shema

1. paying attention
2. active engagement
3. internalization
4. obedience

There are so many things I could say about the Shema but I want to highlight how modern rabbis teach this:

# Chew on this!

What keeps us from chewing? This is important to know if we are going to inoculate ourselves with this verse.

**The LORD our GOD, the LORD is one.**

Jacob grabbed the heel of Esau and was renamed when he wrestled with God and prevailed. Israel is the name of honor, of looking up. The people know who you are and that you are NOT God: You are an honorable people who are not God.

**Listening well** is key: there is an order without chaos. Chaos happens when there is no order. Here is a quick diagnostic to help you know what you are listening to:

### **What do you daydream about?**

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2, NIV)*

### **What do you fear losing most?**

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21, NIV)*

### **Where do you run for comfort?**

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28, NIV)*

### **What are you willing to compromise for?**

*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? (Matthew 16:26, ESV)*

**Daydreaming** reveals what you really care about. This reveals your focus.

Also, what do you **fear losing** the most? When my grandfather died, my mom went away for a week. I was afraid that my mom wasn't coming back: what if she died? In my mind, I started a list of "what if's." It revealed what I'm afraid of losing. I believed I would not be OK if I lost something: where your treasure is, there is your heart.

The third question is, Where do you go for **comfort**? Scrolling your phone, the refrigerator? Jesus or ice cream? All the suffering you experience are things that God has authored to draw you into intimacy. All these things are invitations to walk closer to Jesus.

Lastly, what are you willing to **compromise** for? Am I willing to reshape the truth for something? I think we all have subtle compromises ... .What are you composing with? I can yell at them because I'm driving. If no one knows what I'm thinking, I'm OK. **See if you can notice how you answer some of these questions this week.**

Back to the Shema:

The Lord is **ONE**. You could say multiple things are one but they didn't use that word in this verse: instead they used ECHAD:

One = Echad

*God is one*

*God is unified*

***The word implies that God is indivisible and fully integrated—unlike the pantheon of gods in polytheistic religions, where each god might have limited powers, roles, or jurisdictions. In the Israelite faith, Yahweh is the complete and singular source of all power, creation, and moral authority.***

***God is reality***

Let me illustrate how Jewish rabbis talk about this. They tell a story: imagine that you are in a dream that you are dreaming. You meet a friend who asks you to do something and then you wake up. Are you still committed to this? Of course not. This is like the commitments you made to unreal gods in your past (in Egypt). The vaccine (Shema) invites them to chew on God being reality. Our

God is reality: everything else, everything you've thought is just a dream with no basis in reality. The Shema's invitation is repeated over and over.

It's beautiful because Jesus is the manifold reality of being fully God and fully man: Reality died for us and rose from the dead and invites us into something that we only taste in the Shema:

Anyone who loves me will "shema" me: listen and integrate what I say. God will make his home with them. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home with us. The Shema recenters us when we daydream and points us to real comfort and courage without compromising.

## John 14

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will **obey (shema)** my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

I have permission to tell this story: My son worked out with me and now works out with his sister who will tell him “don’t forget leg day.” This reminds me of a card game:



The Shema helps us do “leg day.” It reminds us what is important. Say it outloud and put “The Village” or your name into the blank.

The Shema - Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O \_\_\_\_: The Lord our God, the Lord is **one**.



