

The Shema Pt 2

Love The Lord Your God

Eric Cepin
9-8-24

My life is pretty great: I have a roof over my head, a car that drives, more than \$10 in my bank, and you guys like me for the most part. But even so, stuff happens. For example, two weeks ago, Sue and I went away to pray for a couple of days in Sierra Vista and when we were 10 miles out, our car stalled. We had to call a tow truck and find a mechanic in Sierra Vista who found it was our timing belt. Maybe the engine was shot: Should we get rid of the car? I started calling junk yards in Sierra Vista. It turns out no one wanted my car even for free. Jeff then said he would fix my car because he loves me. Then last Friday I had a phone call processing service that wanted to serve my wife legally. I called them back and it was a complex scam and I told them to forget it. I left that conversation very mad and then spent hours trying to research these people were.

The point is that when life is going well there is still bad stuff to deal with. On top of that, all through the gospels, like Luke 9 which tells us to take our cross, has risk-bearing as well. We live in a fallen world. Watching the news breeds anxiety. As we head into a new year at the Village, we decided to take a closer look at the Shema. This was given to the Israelites right before they went into the promised land. These words become a prayer to pray morning and evening. It helps us understand who God is:

The first word is HEAR: to chew on.

"Hear" – Listen with intent,
understand deeply, and act on it.

Chew on this!!

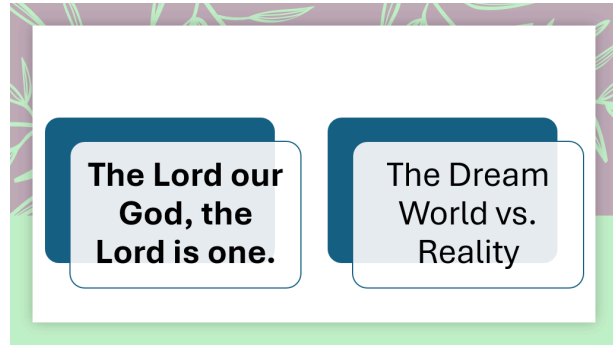


Deut 6:4 Hear,
O Israel: The
Lord our God,
the Lord is
one.

O Israel – Genesis 32:28 Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because ***you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.***”

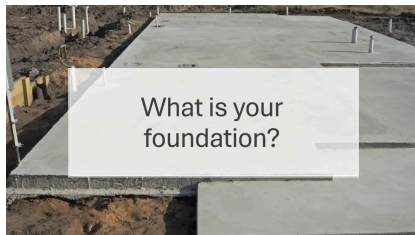
Jacob struggles with God and overcomes and is therefore named Israel. When we apply this name to a nation, it means they struggle with God and have intimacy with Him.

The Israelites liked to say to each other, “where are your eyes?” Chew on the reality that the Lord our God is **one** and is **reality**. Coming out of Egypt (which was full of various gods), they brought these gods with them. Part of the 40 years of wandering is getting rid of these gods. Moses is telling them they have **ONE GOD** who is **reality** instead of the dream-like gods who aren’t real and cannot do anything for them. This is important because being an ambassador for Christ (and healing one person at a time), you will face adversity. If you are just an independent (normal) person, it will wreck you to not have a good foundation. You have to know reality and who you are. This verse helps to orient us toward these two goals.



Our foundation is what God says and does and that is our reality. Our real identity is who God says we are: I am a priest, a holy name, loved: these are what I hold onto about who I am .

Here is good question to ponder.



I needed this when I was wasting time finding a junkyard and tracking down scammers on my time away last month. I have to get this right so I can control my need for rest.

Is my foundation something I have built that I hope will fix things for me?

This is a command we have probably heard before:

Deut 6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

As we think about this, let’s go back to the circumstances when it was first given: Israel was having to trust that God would save them from the giants they thought were ahead in the Promised Land.

Ahavah = Love



The Hebrew word is for “love” is Ahavah. It means I give, I give, I love. You give not for what you get. It’s not love as a fuzzy feeling. It’s a GIVING love and used in marriage and in

God's feelings for his people. It's also a love that climbs over barriers and is willing to move past judgment and step over wrongs.

Deut 7:7 The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the Lord **loved you** and *kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.* 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of **love** to a thousand generations of those who **love** him and **keep** his commandments.

This is not a teddy-bear kind of affection: This love was given because he was keeping the oath he gave to your ancestors.

Every time this word is used, God is telling **HOW** he loves them. "Love you, man!" is commonly heard around the Village. If I said this with no action, eventually I would want to know what the evidence was. Show me! God shows them. He kept the oath: Ahavah is a love of loyalty and allegiance. He was loyal to his word and rescued them. They, in turn, will show him their love back in the same way.

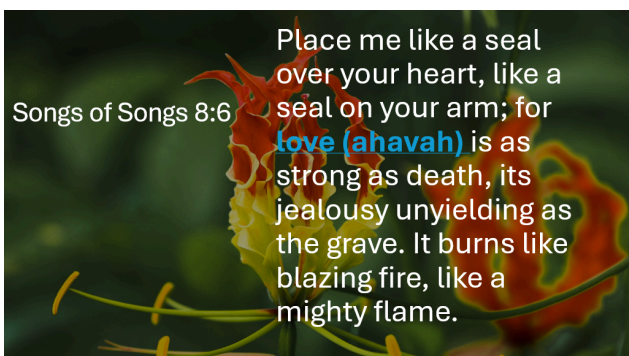
You see this all over the New testament: **Ahavah** is translated into **Agape**, as we see in John 3:16 We know he loves by his actions.

1 John 4.8

Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**



God is love: the very essence of God is action-oriented Love.



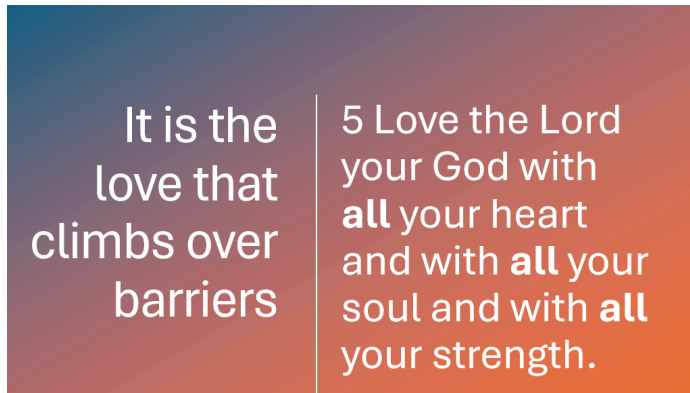
Songs of Songs 8:6

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for **love (ahavah)** is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

There is passion and unity in this love.

God is saying to stay anchored in reality

This love **climbs over barriers**: In fact, I think you and I have well constructed foundations that have nothing to do with reality. We don't understand who we are in the kingdom of God and this misunderstanding produces lots of anxiety. What are you standing on?

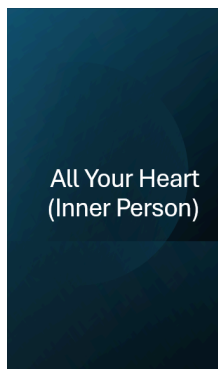


Some examples of these misunderstandings:

- Be a good person
- Be successful to be OK
- I need to set things right when I find out wrong things
 - Dissociation: I can remove myself from an anxious spot.
- I need to have fun.

God understands these things: That's why it says **ALL** our heart, soul, and strength. You can begin to process these by conjuring them one at a time:

The Greeks separated **heart** and **mind** and **emotions**. When I'm angry, I have new jumbled thoughts. This is not to say emotions are bad: they let us know what is going on. It would be bad to raise them to the top level of importance but they are most useful when we ask God to help us process them.



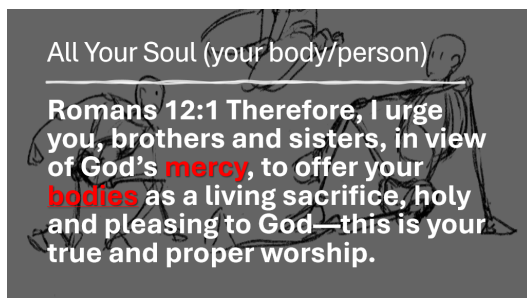
Psalm 139:23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.



24 See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

We must be ready to surrender these emotions to God and let Him begin to dissect through them.

This requires **time alone with God** to listen to what he says. Other, wiser people may need to come alongside and help us. The important thing is a **deliberate surrender to him**.



All my SOUL:

We are told in Romans 12 to worship by surrendering. What am I doing with my body? How does it serve the Kingdom of God? It's a good question that we don't often think about. Acts of service require strength.

The word for strength means “*all of your MUCHNESS*”: your identity and everything that you are. There is much debate over what this means and therefore it might seem complex.

All Your Strength (Muchness)

Loving God with all circumstances that occur, whether good or bad, and with all of one’s faculties, possessions, and gifts.

This is a way to make it more simple: How does a particular situation shape me to glorify God? It’s stepping back and asking the bigger questions about how something might move us toward God.

I like to understand this by defining it as the thing about me that makes me ME. Henry is not ME: he has a Henry-ness about him.

This is my strength in the Kingdom of God: the things you enjoy about me are my Eric-ness.

If you were an Israelite, you would pray the Shema day and night because it’s so easy to slip out of it.

As I was working on this sermon and thinking about Love climbing over barriers, I realized it was about the Shema, about sorting out my gods, knowing what my foundations are, and also

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

(Matthew 26:26-28 NIV)

climbing over barriers, even political ones. Recently, I found myself saying derogatory things about a certain political candidate. I felt God asking me to climb over barriers to love this candidate.

What foundation shape my life?



What foundation
shapes your life
today?

How can you
embody love that
climbs over barriers?

Asking these two questions are how we will end today. Does anyone have any response to these?