

The Shema and the Pattern of Human Endeavors

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MAIN VERSES

[Deuteronomy 6:4](#) • [Mark 12](#) • [Leviticus 19:18](#) • [Genesis 2](#) • [Genesis 3](#) • [1 Kings 3](#) • [Exodus 19](#) • [Exodus 24](#) • [Exodus 32](#) • [Genesis 12](#) • [Deuteronomy 30](#) • [Isaiah 1](#) • [Jeremiah 31](#) • [Ezekiel 36](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

The Pattern of Human Endeavors

Many of you are familiar with the concept of the Shema, but we're going to revisit that and take a look at the pattern that the narrative of the Bible lays out for us regarding listening, hearing, and obeying, or the lack thereof throughout the biblical story.

But before we do that, story time. So, a couple of months ago in April, earlier in the year, my mother moved to Rock Hill. This is a good thing. She bought a house, and it's right around the corner, which is amazing. When you buy a house, there are little things that you need to do. You need to install a light here or patch this thing here, paint this. Well, her mailbox that was sold to her in the house was a little wonky. It had one of those stakes in it. It was not a good, nice-looking mailbox. So upon her request, we need to replace the mailbox. I said, okay. I'm pretty savvy when it comes to electrical and sheetrock and stuff. But I know with a mailbox, you've got to dig the hole out. You've got to get a big 4x4 post, and get concrete. Mix it up and pour it in the hole. And I'm not Lorenzo. I don't know concrete. It's just not my thing.

But I saw something in Home Depot, and it was a solution for someone like me. It was this foam thing—expansion post hole—secure concrete foam. It came in a bag. You mix it up, you rip the bag open, you pour it in the hole, and the foam expands and secures the post. You don't

mess with concrete. You just throw the bag away when you're done. I will replace your mailbox, mother. Go to Home Depot, we get the post, we get the mailbox. I get this foam bag.

The Instructions

Now the foam bag has instructions on it, right? But men, we all know the instructions are always wrong, right? I mean, let's be honest. They're always wrong. I know what I'm doing. So I glance at the instructions. It's fine. Glance at them. What do I see? Something about there's a barrier. There's a barrier in the bag that you have to pop and then two solutions mixed together and you have to make sure that it's mixed together really well. And then something about it becoming warm to the touch, and then just chop off a corner and pour it in the hole. Got this.

And I mix it, mix well. I remember seeing that in the instructions. And I've got this little edge of the house. I'm mixing it back and forth in the bag. This is mixed. And it begins to get warm. And I'm getting tickled because I'm over here like, man, like science. Like chemicals getting warm. Something's happening. Mom comes outside. "Hey, Mom, feel how warm it is." I give it to her. She's like, "Yeah." I'm like, "Why are you giving me this?" "Because it's science and it's cool and I'm Bob the Builder and look at me go." And I take the bag. And as soon as I take the bag back from her, I notice something about the bag. It's expanding. I'm no longer able to bend the bag. It's blowing up. And I think to myself, perhaps I should turn it over and reread the directions.

That is the moment where I turned it over. It's like a big pillow now, tight. And I turn it over and I see this: "Caution!" Big red. This just appeared. I've been mixing this sucker for at least 75-80 seconds. That moment I realized—fight or flight—I was in the movie where the bomb: three, two... I've got to cut a cord. What's going to happen? My mom's here. Everything's here. I'm going to die. Here we go. I've got to protect my mom. So I lay the bag down on the ground. We have a box cutter. And in my mind, I'm thinking, I can just puncture the corner and the air will come out, right?

So I punctured the corner. There is no air inside this bag. But I'll tell you what was inside of it. Foam, anyone ever used Great Stuff that real sticky, like gooey, oozy, slimy? That was inside the bag and it came out all over my face, hair, on my glasses. It was dripping off my glasses, all over my arms, and I'm just sitting here like, "Man, you're the hero. You just protected your mom." But let's not waste it, so I pour it in—dripping, can't see—pour it in the hole. And that mailbox is sturdy. Went inside getting paint thinner, just anything to try to dump it in, just trying to get it off.

"If I had listened to the instructions... Oh Matt, that's the tie-in to Shema, really?"

Yep, that's the tie-in. If I had just listened and obeyed the instructions, I could have avoided all kinds of calamity. I still have it caked on my glasses at home. Hands were sticky for like a week. So yeah, that's my story—after the incident, which we will refer to it as. And that's the stuff that came out. And you can see it's all over. Here's a bit. Yeah, so there's the scene. Those aren't flowers. So this silhouette is where I was. So it came up and hit me and just sprayed out everywhere. There's the box cutter. There's what made it into the... Right? So you see it.

Listen and Obey

Listening and obeying instructions are very important. And it's fascinating because one of the most well-known creeds in Judaism and even in Christianity is known as the Shema. And most of us are familiar with this. We read it at the end of services every single week. Most of us likely say it every single day with our children multiple times a day in the morning and the evening. And it's a pretty simple thing. It stems from verses primarily found in [Deuteronomy 6](#), primarily [Deuteronomy 6.4](#).

And you should be familiar with it. Everyone knows: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all of your might."

And the reason why this section of Scripture is known as the Shema is because the first word there, hear, is the Hebrew word Shema. It means to listen attentively, to hear, to be engaged, but it's also to obey. Many times in Scripture, the word obey is translated from Shema. "Listen and obey, you people of God"—that's what [Deuteronomy 6, 4](#) is. What are we going to listen to? What are we here to obey? Love the Lord your God with all of your being. Yahweh is your God. Yahweh is one. Love Him with everything you have.

Yeshua's Teaching

And Yeshua speaks about this. He speaks about this specific verse in Mark chapter 12, which, again, familiar story. We have Yeshua sitting there, and one of the teachers of the law comes, and they heard him debating something. Notice that, noticing that Jesus had not given him a good answer, and he asked him, "Good sir, of all of the commandments—of all the 613 or 611, there's a debate—of all of the commandments, what's the most important?"

Yeshua doesn't skip a beat. "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and with all your mind, and with all of your strength.'" And then he follows it up: "The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' And then that last verse: there is no commandment greater than these."

So here Yeshua sums up the entire law of God in two commandments: "Love the Lord your God," found in [Deuteronomy 6, 4](#), and "love your neighbor as yourself," found in [Leviticus 19, 18](#). This is the incident in [Mark 12](#) that formulates what many Christian scholars refer to as the Jesus Creed. I think that's so powerful. This was the creed of the early church. This was the foundation, what they lived by: "Listen, you people that constitute the followers of the God of Israel. Listen and follow these words. In everything you do, in every situation you find yourself in, every breath that you take, love the Lord your God. Love God, and in every situation and everything that you do, in every breath that you take, love your neighbor as yourself."

And then he says something pretty potent: "There's nothing else in the Torah more important than this."

As followers of Yeshua, this too is our creed. This is our Yeshua creed. This is the creed of our life taught to us by the Master himself. The moment we make something else in the Bible more important than this, we disobey our King.

It Begins With Shema

But it all begins not with the action of loving. It doesn't begin with happy pursuits, emotion—"I'm going to love." No, it begins with Shema. It begins with Shemata Yahweh: Have you listened to the Lord?

Listening to the voice of the Lord is a motif pattern that we see throughout the biblical story. And it keeps occurring over and over and over again. And the questions that the biblical authors want to ask us is this: Will you, will you listen to the voice of the Lord? Will you read the stories about how humanity has not listened to the voice of the Lord? And will you? Will you listen to the voice of the Lord or will you do it your way? Listen to someone else's voice?

[1 Kings 3](#), verse 9. You can turn with me there if you have your scriptures or you can turn on your Bible.

The Solomon Prayer

This is a very famous prayer given by King Solomon. King Solomon has a dream beginning in verse 5. In this dream, he's petitioning God for something. It's very telling. It says this: King Solomon speaking, "So give your servant a heart that listens to judge your people, to discern between good and evil, for who is able to judge this great people of yours? So give your servant a heart that shema."

Here we have one of the most famous prayers in the biblical story—Solomon praying to God for wisdom. It's a neat chapter because right after this prayer goes out, God responds and says, "You didn't pray for riches. You didn't pray for a long life. You didn't pray for a new car or a palace. You didn't pray for a big war machine. You prayed for wisdom. So I'm going to give you some of the riches and the long life. I'm going to give you all the good stuff as well. But because you prayed wisely, I love that." And then he wakes up and realizes that it's some sort of a dream, but it comes to fruition. And the very next section, he gets to use this newly inspired divine wisdom because two women come to his court.

These two ladies come in with one baby. They're arguing over whose baby it is because apparently both of them had been co-sleeping, but one of the ladies rolled over and killed her child in the middle of the night. The accusation is that she swapped the kids, claiming that the living child was hers and not the other's. It's a big dispute. They go before King Solomon. He now gets to demonstrate this divine wisdom that he's been given. So what does he do? He doesn't ask them details about the child. He doesn't ask them, "Hey, is there a birthmark, something?" He gets a sword. He declares the baby to be cut in half. There's that Old Testament we so enjoy, right?

He declares that the child should be cut in half and that a piece of the child shall be given to each mother. In my mind when I was preparing this message, I didn't realize it would sound so brutal when I actually spoke it, but that's the story. "Cut the child in half and each of you will get a piece, and then everyone will be happy." One woman steps forward: "Do not harm the child. You could give it to the other woman. I will leave. Just please don't harm the child." The other woman steps forward: "It's fine. Cut it. Cut the kid in half. That way nobody's happy."

Then Solomon makes the declaration: "The woman who did not want the child to be harmed is the mother. And even if she isn't, she should be." So the child goes with her. And that's the divine wisdom. Yeah, so that's the story.

But he doesn't just pray for wisdom in his prayer. Look at how he identifies the part of him that needs to change: "Give me a heart that listens. Give me a heart that seeks you. Give me a heart

that knows your voice. Give me a heart that obeys so that I can rule the way that you want me to rule."

The Theme of Good and Evil

That theme appears somewhere else in the Bible, and you guys know where. And then he wants to discern between what two things? Good and evil. Tov and Ra. Remember, the Bible is a unified story. The authors—I'll tell you a secret about reading the Bible—the authors are in on it. If the Bible is a unified story, and we see a phrase that seems familiar, it likely should be. So where else in the biblical narrative do we see this phrase, good and evil, tossed around? Anybody? Adam and Eve, [Genesis 2](#) and 3.

"Verse 8: And the Lord planted a garden in Eden. Familiar with this? In the east, there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

There we go. Tov and Ra.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, verse 16, saying, You shall surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die."

So God planted some trees. God made humans. God tells the humans something. There's a dialogue that takes place in that garden, and it's important. The author of Genesis is very intentional about the dialogue that takes place in chapters 2 and 3, where something is spoken and also where dialogue doesn't take place.

God speaks, and when God speaks, man is supposed to do what? Listen. But something happens. We see in the very next chapter, someone else begins to speak. Chapter 3, now the serpent speaks.

The Serpent's Invitation

"Verse 1: And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and

they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together upon themselves to clothe themselves, made themselves apron."

I love that.

God speaks to man. Then the serpent speaks to the woman. Notice throughout the entire garden story, the man never speaks to the woman in the text. The author never highlights a conversation that they have. It's assumed, of course. But isn't that interesting? Bible geek moment. I just found that interesting.

God speaks to man, serpent speaks to the woman. The serpent was the most subtle creature. The word there is arum—the most subtle or crafty. It's not necessarily a bad trait. Crafty, wise. So arum, he's the most crafty arum beast of the field. And he goes and he basically imparts this invitation to Eve that she can too be wise. She can have wisdom. She can be like God. She can be crafty arum as well.

But at the end of the story, notice in verse 7, when their eyes were open, they knew they were naked. It's a wordplay going on here. I really geek out when it comes to wordplays in the Bible and poetry. I love it. There's a ton of poetry in [Genesis 1](#) through 3. The word here that the author uses for naked is arum. So in man's pursuit to become arum, they ended up becoming arum—crafty yet naked. It's a wordplay. I thought that was neat because it shows intention in the biblical story.

Reading the Bible with Intention

When we read the Bible in English, we miss how intentional and the effort and the time and the intelligence that was put into writing the biblical narrative. The Holy Spirit could have just inspired them to write a story, all right? But they were prompted to do more than that. And oftentimes we miss little wordplays like that. Like, "Oh, that's clever."

They made themselves aprons. God speaks to man, and the serpent speaks to the woman. And we know what happens. God comes in the cool of the day, and then a string of about three paragraphs of poetry breaks out in [Genesis 3](#). "And to Adam he said, God... The accusation is because you have listened to the voice of the woman, you have eaten of the tree which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it."

"Cursed be the ground because of you, and pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it will bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field."

So you see the pattern. God was supposed to listen to who? But instead he didn't listen—he listened to someone else. He did not shema. God speaks to Adam, serpent speaks to Eve. Woman listens to the serpent, man listens to the woman, even though there's actually no textual exchange there. Failure to listen to God's voice always leads to exile from God, exile from the garden, exile from his presence, leading to death.

Exile and the Call to Shema

And we know what happens in verse 24: "So he banished the human spirit. And at the east of the Garden of Eden, he stationed the cherubim with the flaming sword, which turned every direction to guard the way of the tree of life."

Very interesting imagery there. This is the theme that launches the rest of the story in your Bible right here. God, wanting to give wisdom, wanting to give discernment, wants to mature human beings so that they can do what he charged them to do—to rule creation alongside him, to be his image bearers, rule over the beasts of the field, feel the earth, have dominion over the earth he created through his wisdom that he's imparting in them.

God seeks for you to have authority and allow him to rule creation through you. That's what being an image bearer is, right? In order to do that, we must be willing to listen, to hear, to shema, right? We say it every week at the end of services: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." The story starts out with God telling mankind to shema.

And sometimes we like to take this—I see this a lot, unfortunately. Sometimes we love to take the story of Adam and Eve and make the whole story in the text be about how men are like gods and women, y'all were deceived and you tripped up all humanity and it's all your fault. No one's ever heard someone try to push a commentary like that, like it's a gender thing. Just me. Okay, just a couple people. It's the woman's fault because they ate the fruit first. And if that's you today, please stop. Please stop, because that was not the author's intention. We could heap coals under the man in the story. He didn't guard. He didn't protect. He didn't do his job. Therefore, he's not even qualified to be the... Never mind. We don't have to look to the Bible to see that this is far from some type of intention of the author.

Created in His Image

In [Genesis 1-27](#), God creates Adam in his image. Both male and female, he creates them. That's what it says. Why? Why does it say that? [Genesis 1-27](#) says God created mankind in his image, both male and female. Yeah, the Hebrew word for mankind is Adam. It's Adam. It's intentional.

It's very intentional that the man in the story in [Genesis 3](#) is Adam. It's trying to give you a bigger story than what you just see in the text. There's something bigger there that's supposed to be more applicable to you than simply a little story that happened a long time ago. The author's trying to tell you of a little story that happened a long time ago between a man and a woman that surpasses and transcends time and overlaps all of humanity even into your lives today.

Listen to God's Voice

In the story, the woman is tempted and deceived, but Adam, the man, is called out for turning his back on God. God is wanting mankind to shema and listen to his voice. And if we choose to see an intentional flow of the story there, not just of something that happened in the past, but something that may be happening now, we can see our own lives reflected in the story. How many of us are called to be loyal to God, invited into God's realm to be given wisdom by God, but instead we want to define it for ourselves. We want to define what the knowing of good and evil is for ourselves. We listen to another voice, and it separates us from God.

Adam, allow me to teach you, God says. Allow me to give you discernment. Allow me to give you wisdom. Do not take it upon yourself to do these things, to define good and evil apart from God, apart from me. Do not define it for yourself. Do not eat of the tree of knowing good and evil. Adam does not listen to God. He listens to another voice. And the theme does not stop there in the garden. The garden story repeats itself, as we'll see next month when we start the new series. It repeats itself through the entire biblical story. The same story happening over and over and over again.

The Pattern Repeats

I heard one scholar, a Christian scholar that I look up to, and he said something profound. He said that the story of the garden didn't just happen. It's something that continued to happen. And I love that. How many of us are called to submit to the voice of the Lord, but have turned to listen to another voice and exile ourselves from God's presence? How many of us are in need of a Savior? [Genesis 12.1](#). Following the story of Genesis to Noah. Noah gets off a ship. There's new creation. He plants a garden. He eats from the garden. He exposes his nakedness. We see the same story and the same patterns going.

Abraham's Test

Abraham, Father Abraham, right? He had many sons. So the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and from your father's house to the land I will show you." So the voice of the Lord said, "Leave your home, leave your family, your kindred, leave them. Get out of your father's house, all of that. Go to the land I'm going to show you, and I'll make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so you'll be a blessing. I will bless those who are with you, and him who dishonors you, I'm going to curse. And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed. Get away from your family and your father's house and go to this land."

Next verse. So Abram went as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. We miss that. We don't skip a beat when reading that. Yeah, of course Lot went with—like, Lot's dad died, like Abram probably took care of him. That's fine. And I'm not necessarily accusing Abram of not obeying God's voice, but I feel like this detail is placed here at this moment in time to prompt us. If we're reading a story, it should prompt us to go, "Uh-oh, this can't be good."

The Cost of Disobedience

And we know that Lot went with them and everything worked out great and there was peace and harmony. God appointed and called Abraham to go here. Lot wasn't. And by Abraham taking Lot along to a place where Lot wasn't called to go, a lot of trouble came. I mean, you got the thing with the sheep. You have Abraham getting involved with World War Zero and having to take out all those war generals because Lot was in the wrong place. Lot's wife ends up dying a horrible death. I mean, all these things happen because he went along on a journey that he was not called to go to.

We could preach a message on that. If God calls you to go somewhere, it's not your job to drag other people to places where they're not called to go, where God doesn't want them to go. We automatically see another pattern in the story. Listen and obey.

The Test of Israel

Exodus 19:4-6 says, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. How I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now then, if you will listen to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my possession among all the people. For all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

So the text here contains a hyperlink. It's flashing back to the garden text, if you saw it. If you listen to my voice, keep my covenant, then you will be my people. You will be a kingdom of priests in a holy nation, a kingdom, a royal class, rulers. You will be the rulers and also you will be priests. You will be the mediators between heaven and earth. You will be the image bearers on earth. If you listen, if you shema, it's the same charge that's given in the garden story. Once again, he's offering it to his people. Just the same charge.

These are the words you should speak to the sons of Israel. And then God proceeds to speak what? The Ten Words, the Ten Commandments. Torah is now spoken. Moses goes up on the mountain. All of Israel verbally committed to listening, to shema, to listen to the voice of God.

The Golden Calf

And then in chapter 32 of Exodus, Moses comes down from the mountain and what happens? Israel is worshipping a golden calf. [Exodus 24](#), they all came to the mountain to have a feast, right? They're going to sit down at the table with God. I mean, people eat, Moses eats, the elders eat, God eats, is what the text kind of infers, which kind of makes me think of Yeshua sitting down at the... Anyway, everybody's eating food, and it's a big celebration, right? It's a big celebration, and here in chapter 32, it's like the opposite. It's an ante, right? They're worshipping a golden calf and calling it Yahweh. It's highlighting Israel's complete and utter failure to shema, to listen to the voice of God.

The Choice We Keep Making

Israel has made the same choice as Adam and Eve in this story. Yeah, we'll listen to the voice of the Lord. We won't pursue our own desires. We won't pursue our own concept of what is good and what is right and what is bad and evil. Oh wait, a golden calf. Yeah, let's call it Yahweh. That sounds good. Let's worship that. That sounds good. It's the same choice that has permeated throughout all of human existence. How many of you can identify with that story, right? We look at the big picture of the biblical narrative, and it's totally relatable. Sometimes we look in the garden story, and we just see a big magic tree with fruit that glows, and you eat it, in my imagination, right? Big magic fruit, knowing good and evil, and there's, yeah, you eat it. Or we look at the Exodus story, and there's a big golden calf. It's the same pattern.

Your Pattern Today

What's the pattern today in your life? Sometimes we think of these things differently, as such foreign objects and just stories that happened long ago, but it's the same decisions that we're making that they made. Those moments when you say, "No, this is good and that's evil," apart from God's wisdom and discernment, apart from his plan to mold you into his image.

Life and Death

[Deuteronomy 30:15-20](#). This is great. "See, I've set before you today life and death. Life and good, death and evil." There we go. There's that phrase popping up again. Tov and ra. "In that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may have life and multiply." Again, a little hyperlink back to the garden. Fill the earth. Be my image bearers. "That the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish."

You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to possess it. So the word "obey"—if you will not obey, verse 17—it's the word shema. It's interchangeable for listening and obeying. If you will not shema, verse 19: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by listening to his voice, and by holding fast to him. For this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land the Lord God swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them life."

Choose this day whom you will serve. Choose this day. Will you choose life? Will you shema, listen to the voice of the Lord? Or will you choose death, listening to some other voice? Defining good and evil, justice and righteousness on your own terms. Who are the two witnesses? Heaven and?

So I highlighted that this morning because the Bible really gets me excited. When I get excited and I tell my mom or my wife or my friends about it, only a few of them chuckle with me when I see neat stuff. And so I was talking to my friend over at Beit Shalom, Pastor Matt Knapper. He does a lot of study of Hebrew and has a lot of cool resources. We were talking about biblical poetry that's scattered throughout [Genesis 1, 2, 3](#), scattered throughout the prophets.

Heaven and Earth as Witnesses

So turn with me to Isaiah chapter 1. Isaiah's neat. Isaiah sat down and pondered how to make his message poetic. He could have just said, "Israel, you guys stink. You disobedient." No, he used word plays, complex poetic stances. Oh, it was great. So Isaiah chapter 1, right? And we already see this vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw during the reign of King Uzziah.

Verse 2. You guys ready? Verse 2. "Listen or hear, O heavens, and pay attention, earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have raised up children and brought them up to you, but they have rebelled against me." The ox knows its owner. And refers to Israel as an ox who doesn't know where he's going and a donkey who just loads their sin up on their back. Oh, sinful nation, people. So what he's doing is Isaiah is referring back to [Deuteronomy 2. 30](#) verse 19—"I call upon heaven and earth." Isaiah is calling back on the witnesses that were standing there at Sinai that day and saying, "Israel, your witnesses are condemning you because you've done exactly the opposite of what God asked you to do."

That's why I'm excited about Isaiah chapter 1. I'm excited because in verse 2. So how many of your Bibles say "Listen, O heavens"? Couple. How many of your Bibles say "Hear, O heavens"? Anybody else that says anything else? No, nothing else? So it's the word Shema. Shema. And what's the word for heaven in Hebrew? Shemaim. Shema Shemaim. He could have used another word, but he used Shema Shemaim. You know what? I think that's funny. Shema Shemaim.

Shema Shemaim: God's Intentional Design

It was intentional. Every word was intentional. And he has many other word plays. It's to get your attention. Shema Shemaim. It would be like me being a prophet of God and commanding the heavens to pour out rain. "Heave, heaven! Like..." I could have said, "Hey, heaven," or "Heaven, pour out," or "Heaven, recall. Shmashmime." I get a kick out of that. I think that's funny. We have such a bad habit when it comes to fostering anti-wisdom in our lives, don't we? Just me? Maybe?

When we have a desire and we feed it inside of our minds, do you guys ever stack the cards in your favor when it comes to doing the right things? Do we ever justify sin, but we do it as if it's not sin? "This isn't that bad because the way I see it, X, Y, Z." You stack the cards in your favor. We do it in our jobs. We do it with our families. We do it in our marriages. We do it in our daily lives. We justify sin by excusing it and by blurring the line between tov and ra, between good and evil.

"As long as I don't act on my desires"—this is a great example—"as long as I don't act on my desires for that man or that woman, then I'm not evil, right?" It could be worse. I could be going after a man and woman in lust physically, but because I'm not actually doing it, it's not that bad, right? No one has any idea what I'm talking about. No one else has ever done this in their lives, justified sin, right? Yeshua talks about this example at face value. He's like, "No, that's not how that works."

The Art of Rationalizing Sin

"How about as long as I don't steal a lot of stuff from the company I work for, it's not that bad. I just take a pen every day. I mean, who cares? Who does care? No one may care. But we justify it as not being evil because what would be really bad is hacking the QuickBooks file at the accountant's office and then getting money out of it. That would be evil. That wouldn't be the same as me stealing a stapler or a pen. Why would you want a pen? I don't know, but you see."

"How about as long as my destructive pursuits..." Gossip's always a big one. That's always a big one that I think everybody struggles with. Go ahead. Don't make any facial expressions because I know you all struggle with it. As long as I formulate my destructive pursuits through gossip as a prayer request. No one's ever done that? No, I think you're liars. "Y'all need to pray for so-and-so. Oh, why? Let me tell you why." Or you can justify it out of concern. I don't know. "You need to know about so-and-so because it may affect you." Then it's not gossip, right? Then it's okay. Then it's not raw. It's tove. If it's not raw, it must be tove.

Taking God's Place

When we eat of the tree of knowing good and evil and defining justice and righteousness and good and bad on our own terms, we take the place of God. And we say that our rule is above yours. That's the story that the entire biblical narrative is launched from. And it all starts from not listening. From not listening. Not listening to the voice of the Lord, refusing to shema to the voice of the Lord leads to death and exile from God. Happened to Adam and Eve. Happened to Israel. It's the pattern.

This is the portal through which Adam, all humanity, became trapped by the power of death. The refusal to Shema. And this is what instigates the necessity for a new covenant. A messianic king that will Shema, the Lord's decree, that will carry out justice and righteousness and that will rule as God's true image bearer. [Jeremiah 31](#) speaks of this: "I will create a new covenant. I will make a new covenant. Not like the covenant when I took your hand and brought you out of

Egypt and you broke." God's going to make a new covenant out of our desire to take hold of the fruit and to rule and reign his creation our way. Out of our sin and brokenness and refusal to listen to him, like a phoenix, he's going to formulate a new covenant that is not based on simply you listening. It's based on his love for you, despite you not listening.

A New Heart, a New Covenant

Ezekiel 36—a potent section of scripture—says, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart." This is a prophecy about God sending his spirit to take the heart of stone and replace it with a heart that beats for him, that beats for his reign, that listens. It's a fulfillment to Solomon's prayer that each of us should be crying out, "Give me a heart that's Shema," and we will become the people that we were always intended to be as his image bearers.

Guys, I don't know where you're at in your life today. Worship team, you guys, we can conclude. I don't know where you're at today in life. If you're standing beside the Lord in full attention or if you're partaking of the fruit of knowing good and evil and calling it Yahweh because that happened, feeling your own sense of wisdom that has your own bias stamped all over it, making decisions that you justify as coming from God but... In reality, God has been trying to get your attention that they're not from him for a long time.

Shema. Yahweh is your God. Yahweh is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your soul and your might. Pay attention to the instructions. Pay attention to the directions. Don't rush into something just to have it blow up in your face. Shema. That's the Jesus creed that our faith is based on, that our pursuit is based on. We follow a king that says these are the most important things that are in this book that we study that tell us about the character of our God.

The Shema: Israel's Greatest Commandment

Love God with everything. Listen to God with full attention. Love the other image bearers that he has created around you. This is the fulfillment of the Torah. There is no greater command in all of it except for this. So please stand as we conclude services with worship. We conclude services the same way that we enter into them. I don't know where you're at today. I don't know what you've been through this week. But maybe you're at a point in your life where you'd like to make a change or you'd like to give something up in prayer to God.

We have a prayer team on the sides of the sanctuary. I invite you to utilize this blessing that we have in the fellowship. If you would like someone to stand with you in your request before the

Father, he has blessed us with a prayer team that does just that.

Alvino Marquino, our Father, our King, Father. We thank you for this time together. We thank you for the spirit that you've given to us—your promised spirit, the spirit that raised Yeshua from the dead—now resides in us to raise us to life, Father. That it would give us a new heart, that we would listen to your voice, that we would follow your voice and not voices of others. Father, we thank you for this time together and we ask that your spirit within us would continue to work within us to rejuvenate our heart—one from stone to one that beats for you.

Connect With Us

In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen. Shalom, I'm Matthew Vanderels and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives.

If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us a message through our contact form on our website and let us know how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him. Don't forget to subscribe by clicking here. And if you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our website at www.foundingtruth.com or by clicking here.

We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to next time. Shalom.

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