

Shema!

By Steve & Carol Ryerson

Sh'ma, Yisra'el! ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI echad [Hear, Isra'el! ADONAI our God, ADONAI is one]; ~ Deuteronomy 6:4

“Billy, haven’t I told you before not to pull your sister’s hair?”

“Yes, Mom.”

“Why did you do it?”

“I don’t know.”

“Don’t you do that again! Do you hear me?”

As he impatiently shuffles his feet, Billy answers disgustedly, “Yes, I hear you”

Do you hear me? Do you hear me? How often have we asked our children that question? Of course, their response is always that they have heard. What else would they say when you are angry with them and they are trying to get out of a very uncomfortable situation? They may not believe they were in the wrong, or they may not really be paying attention to what you are saying. It is just going in one ear and out the other, so to speak, so they can get back to what they were doing before.

Have you thought about the times God may be trying to tell us something? Do we act like our own children, maybe thinking in our hearts, “I hear you! I hear you! Now let me get back to what I was doing. I’m really very busy, God.”

We see in the verse above that the Hebrew word, *Shema* is translated “hear.” Although it is not the only Hebrew word that is translated “hear” in the Old Testament, a quick perusal of a concordance will reveal that it is the most frequently used word. So what exactly does *Shema* mean?

Yes, it does mean “to hear,” but the meaning goes far deeper than that. Included in the definition is the implication of paying attention and obeying. This is not a flippant “hearing” so that I can get back to what I really want to do and forget the discomfort of the present situation.

As we continue on, with the above familiar passage, we see more of what God is telling us to hear:

and you are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart, all your being and all your resources. These words which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart; and you are to teach them carefully to your children. You are to talk about them when you sit at home, when you are traveling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ~ Deuteronomy 6:5-7

The instructions continue on ~ those which God is telling Israel to hear and obey. For the

sake of space, we will not continue quoting this extensive passage. Let's suffice it to say that God is telling us all to pay attention and obey. This applies to all who call themselves disciples of our Mighty God. We are to love Him with everything within us (that means action) and to have His commands in our hearts (that means we have the inward desire to please Him). It is only when we have assimilated these commands into our own being that we can then pass them on to our children ~ every moment that we are with them.

Sh'mu'el said, [to Saul]

*“Does ADONAI take as much pleasure
in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as in obeying what ADONAI says?
Surely obeying is better than sacrifice,
and heeding orders than the fat of rams.*

*“For rebellion is like the sin of sorcery,
stubbornness like the crime of idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of ADONAI,
he too has rejected you as king.” ~I Samuel 15:22-23 (CJB)*

Going back to the beginning of I Samuel 15, we see that Samuel had told Saul to go kill the Amalekites. God's order was to kill everyone and everything. Nothing was to be spared. Yet when Saul returned, he brought the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to God. They also spared Agag the Amalekite king.

*“He took Agag the king of 'Amalek alive; but he completely destroyed the people, putting them to the sword. However, Sha'ul and the people spared Agag, along with the best of the sheep and cattle, and even the second best, also the lambs, and everything that was good ~ they weren't inclined to destroy these things. But everything that was worthless or weak they completely destroyed.”
~ I Samuel 15:8-9 (CJB)*

King Saul took his men out to war to obey what God had told them to do. But in the thick of the battle, they had a better idea. “God wants sacrifice, so certainly He would be pleased with the best, and second best, of these animals. Certainly it would be good to bring the Amalekite king back to Samuel as a trophy of the work which they had accomplished, wouldn't it?” Of course they obeyed, taking into consideration how they thought it best to interpret God's command.

When Saul returned to Samuel, he told the prophet, “*May ADONAI bless you! I have done what ADONAI ordered.*” (I Samuel 15:13b) God had already told Samuel about the disobedience and so he confronted Saul with it in this familiar passage. Realizing he had been caught, he began to rationalize what he had done and shift the blame.

“I did too pay attention to what ADONAI said, and I carried out the mission on which ADONAI sent me. I brought back Agag the king of 'Amalek, and I completely destroyed 'Amalek. But the people took some of the spoil, the best of the sheep and cattle set aside for destruction, to sacrifice to

ADONAI your God in Gilgal.”

~ I Samuel 15:20-21

Despite the fact that Saul was claiming to have paid attention and obeyed, He did not. He did it his own way rather than God’s way. He was wanting to do some blameshifting ~ saying that *he* obeyed, but the people did not. Saul was forgetting that he was over the people. It was his responsibility to see that the people.

In the same way, sometimes parents want to forget that it is their responsibility to train their children. They will stand before God for that training. They will not be able to tell God, “I did what you said, but my children were so strong-willed, they just did what they wanted.”

Saul’s protests that he had obeyed Samuel’s well-known words in verses 22 and 23 which we quoted above.

In verse 22, the word “obey” is *Shema*. Listen! Pay Attention! Obey! Not the way we think would be best, but what God says!

As with the word “hear,” there are several Hebrew words which are translated “obey” in the Old Testament, but *Shema* is the most common.

God is speaking to us today *Shema!*

Saul was rejected as king of Israel because he tried to obey his own way.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

~ I Peter 2:9

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

II Corinthians 6:16-7:1

This glorious Church is also told to be separate from the world, to obey, and to cleanse our spirit and flesh from the filthiness of the world ~ the world’s way of doing things, the thoughts that are in the minds of the world.

God had no pity on Saul, but rejected him from being king. Can we expect God to do any less with us? Can we expect to allow His commands to consistently go in one ear and out the other, and yet have Him receive us as part of His Bride? Can we be disobedient ourselves, and yet expect that our children will grow up obeying us, and God?

We need to seriously consider all that God is speaking to us ~ through His Word and through our time with Him in prayer ~ and obey it! Nothing else will do. Nothing else will bring us peace with Him. Nothing else will take us into eternity with Him.

Shema!

