

SERMON RECAP FROM JULY 6, 2025

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9

“Listen”

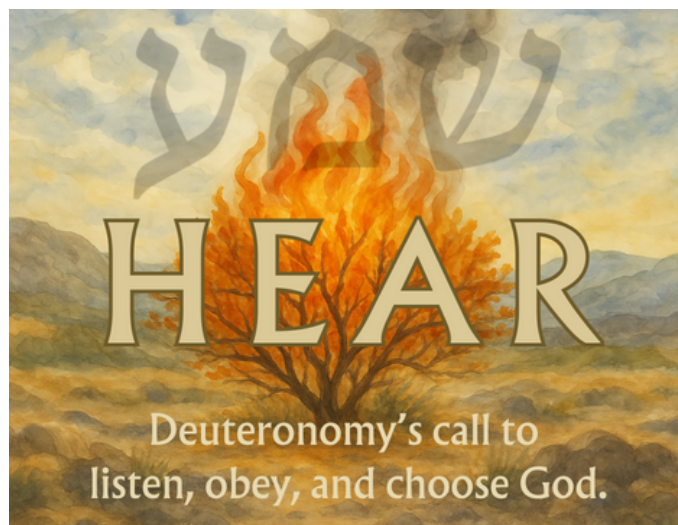
Sermon by Robb McCoy

The Book of Deuteronomy is the fifth book of our Bible and the final book of the Torah (or the Five Books of Moses). The word means literally “Second Law.” The context of the story is that Moses and the people have made it to the brink of the Promised Land. They have escaped Egypt. They have received the Law on Mt. Sinai. They lost faith in God when they first tried to enter the land and have since wandered for 40 years. They have been given manna from heaven and water from rocks. They have overcome enemies and attackers, and now they are at the Jordan River, ready to fulfill the promise that God made to Abraham centuries before. So Moses gathers them to remind them of the story, re-state the laws, and give them a final warning.

These are the three parts of the Book of Deuteronomy. The first speech of Moses includes reminders of what the people have been through and how God has been with them through it all. Immediately after sharing the Ten Commandments, Moses then shares what Jesus later called “The Greatest Commandment.” Deuteronomy 6:4-5 becomes the two-part charge that forms the foundation of Judaism, and in turn, Christianity.

Put simply, “Yahweh is God, the only God, and it is your job to love God.” As the people entered the promised land, they needed this reminder that their God was the one that brought them out of slavery. Their God provided for them. Their God gave them victory. They were about to enter a land where people worshiped many gods. There would be a lot of temptation to hedge their bets, dabble in other temples, try other rituals, and appease their neighbors. To survive as a people however, they would have to remember who and who’s they were.

God was God, and there are a lot of ways to understand this. There were many ways that people tried to tap into the divine, but on one level, there are really only two ways of understanding God: angry or loving. God is an angry God, demanding perfection and justice, ready to hand out punishment to all who transgress, or God is a loving God, ready to forgive, patient for us to grow and be nurtured, providing for our needs and eager to save.



Much can be extrapolated from one of these understandings of God, and there are elements of both within our Bible. It is not fair to say that the Old Testament God is angry and the New Testament God is loving. We can however, lean into one side or the other with our faith, our theology, our church culture, and our denominational structures.

The angry God gets things done. It keeps people in line, but people who believe in an angry God are less trustworthy of others, and can be exploited into groupthink that gets exploitive or violent. Motivated by fear, the angry God is not enough to really change the world.

Moses understood this. This is why “Love God” becomes the thing to repeat over and over. “Hear, O People... Love” must be repeated because the fearful and the skeptical makes plenty of noise among the other gods of the land.

Love must be repeated, hung on the wall, tied to your hand, marked on your forehead even. Love is not easy and love can be fragile when “stronger” gods like greed and violence are so readily available. Love must be repeated. Love must be shared. For love to survive it must be the story on our lips, the prayers in our hearts, the thoughts in our minds, and the guide to our hands and feet.

Hear, o people, “Love.” Hear love, and we have a chance to survive amidst the noise of other gods shouting anger and division.