

# Spiritual Senses #4: Hearing

## Deuteronomy 6 v 1-9

### Context:

As we continue our journey through the season of Lent, exploring the five spiritual senses, we turn today to the sense of *hearing*. Without doubt the most famous biblical text about hearing comes in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, which is one of the five books of Moses that make up the Torah. Deuteronomy contains the words of Moses spoken to Israel as they stood on the east bank of the Jordan River, ready to cross over into the Promised Land. It is forty years since Israel left Egypt in the exodus, but due to the stubborn sinfulness of the people, they have spent a generation wandering in the wilderness, doing nothing and going nowhere. A new generation has now grown up who were either children at the time of the exodus or were born in the wilderness period. So, God wants to remind them of his gracious hand in saving them from a life of slavery and of his instructions for their lives as His people once they are in the land of Canaan. So, let's explore what it means to 'Hear' and see how this ancient command applies to our lives as Christians today.

### Observation:

1. What does Moses refer to in v 1?
2. What reasons does Moses give for reminding the people of God's commands in v 2?
3. What instructions does Moses give in v 3 and why?
4. What command does Moses repeat in v 4 and what specifically were the people to heed?
5. What further command does Moses give in v 5?
6. How were the people to demonstrate their commitment to God's commands in v 6-9?

### Meaning:

1. Why do you think it was important for this new generation to hear the commands of the Lord before crossing into the Promised Land (v 1) – what were some of the dangers/risks/temptations ahead of them in the Land and what might they have learned from the recent history of their parents' and grandparents' generation?
2. Moses reminds the people at the end of v 2 and in v 3 that the primary reason God gives his people commands is for their *own* good. How does this contrast with the way people often view God's commands and how might this apply to us as Christians today – can you give some examples?
3. Religious Jews all over the world recite a special prayer called the 'Shema' twice each day, morning and evening. The prayer is based on the words in v 4, as 'Shema' is Hebrew for 'Hear'. What is the primary thing they and we are to 'hear' according to v 4 and what does this mean in practice? [NOTE: This verse is best translated: 'The

LORD is our God, the LORD is one', where LORD is the personal name for God as revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3].

4. In the Hebrew mindset, 'to hear' is an active rather than a passive verb, meaning to *listen* and to *do*. What is at the heart of this command to hear – to what were they to listen and do, according to v 5?
5. Read James 1 v 19-25 and discuss how this passage links closely to the Shema.
6. In what ways do the instructions in v 6-9 indicate a whole-life approach to living in relationship with God?
7. Why is it so important to instruct children in the way of the Lord (v 7) and how might we put this command into practice today?
8. What do you think was the symbolism in the strange instructions in v 8-9 and how might we apply this as Christians today?

### Application:

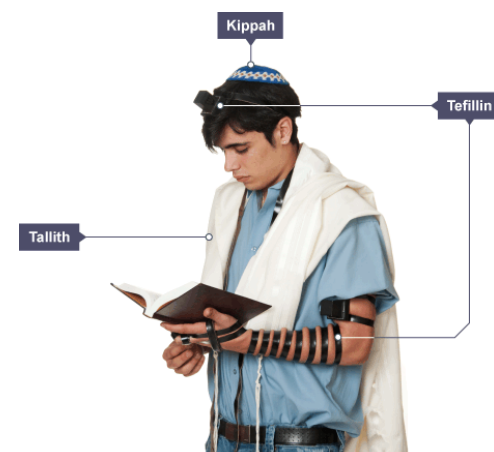
1. Jesus was very familiar with the Shema. Read Matthew 22 v 34-40 and discuss Jesus' answer to the question he was asked and why he added a second command to the Shema?
2. As evangelical Christians we make a big deal of the biblical truth that we are saved by grace through faith and not by our own deeds (see Ephesians 2 v 1-10). So, how might we embrace the biblical truth of the Shema without slipping into a 'salvation by works' mentality?

### Pray:

- Pray for God's grace to hear him clearly – to listen and to do what he says.
- Pray for the next generation to know Jesus and to walk faithfully with him.



A Mezuzah – a cylinder containing the Shema and fixed to the doorpost of a house (Deuteronomy 6 v 9)



The Tefillin – two boxes containing the Shema, one of the forehead and one on the bicep, and 7 straps around the arm representing the 7 days of the week and the 7 characteristics of God (Deuteronomy 6 v 8)