
Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

In Judaism, this verse is known as the “Shema,” after the Jewish word to hear. This verse is wildly infamous not only to Jews but to Christians and the pagan nations alike. For the pagan, this verse struck at the heart of their rejection of the Jews. This verse declares that there is only one God; and, in so doing, it rejects the plethora of gods that were worshiped by the nations surrounding Israel. This exclusiveness was not accepted by these nations; as a result, they were always persecuting the Jews.

For the Jew, this verse declared their distinction as a people group and was the very basis for their religious identity and their national heritage. The concepts in this verse separated the Jew from all the other tribes, nations, and tongues on the face of the earth. For an orthodox Jew, ***Deuteronomy 6:4*** also instantly brings him back to the very beginning of the Hebrew scriptures in ***Genesis 1:1***: “in the beginning God.”

For the Christian, both ***Deuteronomy 6:4*** and ***Genesis 1:1*** form the basis for our view of the trinity and provide an anomaly that the Jew has never been able to fully understand. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit: three unique and distinct beings that are yet one.

So where do we get this idea of there being an anomaly in the Jewish text. The Hebrew word translated “God” in both of these verses happens to be in the Hebrew plural, not the singular. It is so strange, but Moses chose to use the plural in referencing God in both of these passages! Why would he do that; after all, wasn’t He trying to separate and distinguish the Lord over all other so called gods? Why

the plurality? This is something that has always been a Jewish mystery and an unexplainable conundrum.

Here is another interesting aspect to the passage in *Deuteronomy*. The word translated “one” comes from the root word “to unify”. In other words, the Lord our Gods are unified. Yes, the Lord, singular, our Gods, plural, are unified – are one!

This means that the Jehovah, the Lord of the Jews, is comprised of more than one being; yet, all unified as one. This mystery then just thickens through the examination of certain passages in the Old Testament:

Proverbs 30:4-6

Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know! Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

The Lord, the creator of the earth, has a son? What, how is that even possible?

Psalm 2:7-8; 10-12

I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. ... Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the

Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

We studied this passage last week because its overwhelming references to the Messiah. The Hebrew literally says that in worshiping the Lord, we are to intensely give many kisses to the Son, so that the Son does not become angry and pour out His wrath. In other words, we are to worship the Son as we worship the Lord. If that is the case, how is it possible for us to reconcile this command to worship the Son with the following statement that God told Isaiah?

Isaiah 42:8

I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another,

If the Lord does not and will not share His glory with anyone else, why does He instruct us to worship and honor the Son? It is because the Son is not another; in other words, the Son is not of a different kind, but He is another of the same kind. The Son is of the same nature, the same construct, the same essence, and is of the same substance of the Father. Hence, they are one and we worship the Lord when we worship the Son. I

As a side note, ***1 Peter 1:7*** says that we will share in the glory of the Father and this is only possible because our New Creation is also made of the same nature, construct, essence and substance of the Godhead. Yes, and one day we will be united in *oneness* with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 7:14-15

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (God is with us).

A child, a human, will be born to a virgin and this miracle child – or this Son – will Himself be called God. This is supported and reinforced a little further on in Isaiah. In chapter 9, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah says:

Isaiah 9:6

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

How can this child, this Son, this mortal man, be called mighty God and eternal Father? The idea of this is preposterous and unfathomable. A being that is entirely man (born of a woman) yet at the same time entirely God? This can only be possible if the Son and the Father are unified – are one!

Jeremiah 23:5-6

Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'

Jeremiah says that God will raise up an heir to David and this man will be called Jehovah – the Lord. An heir to a man must be a man; yet, He is called Jehovah – in any other context this would be blasphemous.

Matthew 1:20-24

... behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, " Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

The mystery of *Deuteronomy 6:4*: "the Lord our Gods is one" has been unraveled. God has a Son; and this Son – who is Himself God and fully man – came to us so that we could behold the glory of His Father. We are to intensely kiss, honor, give homage, and worship this man Jesus, the Lord Jehovah!

John 1:18

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained Him.

This statement is incredible: “no man has seen God at any time” except the Son – the only begotten of God. John was not just taking up space or even being flowery and artistic by including this thought. No! He makes a point that would go to the very heart of the Jewish religious experience. John even repeats this statement in *1 John 4:12*.

The implication of what John is saying is so fantastic? Think about it; every person in the Jewish Tanakh (our Old Testament), who had a visible encounter with God and saw all the glory, majesty, clouds, fire, thunder, light and so on, in reality had an encounter with a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. That’s right; Job, Abraham, Jacob, Sarah, Moses, the Children of Israel, Gideon, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and all the others saw the glory of the pre-existent Son. In fact, Paul makes it clear that no one has seen or can see God the Father except for Jesus who dwells in His unapproachable light. We merely get a glimpse of the glory of the Father through the Son.

1 Timothy 6:13-16

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time — He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in *unapproachable* light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

This is supported by what God told Moses in *Exodus 33:20*, "He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" So unbeknownst to the Jews, their entire history is riddled with people who had amazing encounters with the Son and through Him – through the Son – they have seen the glory of the Father.

This brings us to John's amazing declaration about the only begotten God.

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1:14-15

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Based on the scriptures we looked at in the Old Testament, it should be clear to all that John makes a direct and specific reference to Jesus, the Son of God who pre-existed all creation with God – as God. John states that Jesus became flesh, a human being, as the only begotten from the Father. Clearly this is the connection that John wants every reader to make. For us Christians, this is easy – it just all makes sense and seems to fit. But wait, what about the Jew, how would they understand this?

In this passage, John is conveying an intensely sublime message to His Jewish brethren – which is why He chose the "Word" as a metaphor for Jesus and why He

mirrored *Genesis 1:1* with the phrase: “in the beginning.” But to understand this message, we have to understand a bit about how the Jewish Rabbis would probably interpret *Genesis 1:1*. To start, you must understand that a Rabbi would place the highest respect, honor, and authority on the Torah. To the Jew it is the very breathe of God and the sum of His communication to man; it is the Word of God.

The word "Torah" can mean different things in different contexts. In its most limited sense, "Torah" refers to the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. But the word "Torah" can also be used to refer to the entire Jewish bible (the written Torah or the Tanakh, which we call the Old Testament), or in its broadest sense, to the whole body of Jewish law and teachings.

We will work through an interpretation of *Psalms 9:2* as an example of their interpretive thought. In *Psalms 9:2* we find the words: “*I will be glad and exult in thee.*” A rabbi would notice that the Hebrew consonants which spell “in thee” have a numerical value of 22. And because there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, he goes on to interpret the phrase as if it might mean, *I will be glad and rejoice in that which is written in an alphabet of 22 letters*, that is, in the Torah.

In the same way, a Rabbi sees in the phrase “In the beginning” a similar reference to the Torah. Many Rabbis interpret the word “in” as meaning “for the sake of.” And so the phrase would be understood as: “for the sake of the beginning God created.” Created what? They then look to *Proverbs 8:22* for the answer.

Proverbs 8:22

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.

The phrase “at the beginning” or “in the beginning” does not refer to a moment in time when it all started; rather, it refers to what was pre-existent before all that we know was created. The Rabbi would then conclude that in the beginning – or the pre-existence of all things – was the Word, hence all that has been created was created for the sake of the Torah – the Word of God.

John communicating to the Jew makes it clear that Christianity is in absolute agreement with Jewish theology and is not some aberration; rather, it holds to the very core truths to which all Jews hold. Everything has come to be, and all things have been created, for the purpose of the full expression of God’s Word which goes forth among men which is the living Son, the man Jesus Christ.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The only begotten of God became tangible, visible, touchable; He became human. He is the image, or the full expression, of the invisible God and though Him all men could behold the Father.

Colossians 1:13-18

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and

invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Let's step back to the first phrase in Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The word translated "and" is the Hebrew letter "vav". The property of this letter is that of connection and in this context it serves to join the things of eternity (heaven) with all that is created (earth).

There are many unique aspects to this word "and." First of all, the "vav" is the 5th word in this opening sentence which according to Biblical numerology is the number of grace and redemption.

For example, Israel came out of Egypt 5 in rank (Exodus 13:18); David picked up 5-smooth stones to fight Goliath and bring redemption to the nation of Israel (1 Samuel 17:40). The Holy Anointing Oil was pure and composed of 5-parts (Exodus 30:23-25). Jesus was pierced 5-times (His hands, His feet, and His side). Pentecost (pente is the Greek number 5) is the day that God sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples in visible power, signs and wonders.

The implication is that it is the "Grace" of God that allows this connection between the divine and all that is created.

John 1:16

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

Second, the vav is the 22nd letter; and, therefore, in the mind of a Rabbi (as we discussed earlier), this would allude to the power to connect and interrelate all of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Rabbis would again see this as a reference to the Torah. It is the Word of God, the grace of God, which connects all that is created to God.

Now, interestingly, not only does this statement regarding the Word go to the very heart of the Jew, but it also cleverly goes to the heart of Gentile living in a dominate Greek culture. The Greek term John uses for the “Word” is Logos.

Originating in classical Greek thought, the term Logos refers to both human reason (the rationality in the human mind) and a great universal intelligence (a mystery force that both governs and reveals itself to mankind through the cosmos (or through the divine). As a universal intelligence, Logos is in essence the source of all true knowledge.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus appears to be the first to have used the word Logos to refer to a rational divine intelligence, which today is sometimes referred to in scientific discourse as the "mind of God." And the early Greek philosophical tradition known as Stoicism, which held that every human participates in a universal and divinely ordained community, then used the Logos doctrine as a principle for human law and morality. The Stoics believed that to achieve freedom, happiness, and meaning one should attune one's life to the wisdom of God's will, which is manifest in this universal Logos.

So in this one phrase “In the beginning was the Word” John speaks volumes to not only his Jewish brethren, but also to the entire Greek community of his day. John was using human Logos to communicate to the Greeks that the divine Logos, the manifestation of the superior wisdom, is the man Jesus Christ who is Himself God.

So after John makes a powerful statement connecting the Torah – the breadth of the Word of God – to the Son, he then makes a similar comparison that would again go to the heart of the Jewish perspective about God, about the Word, and about all of creation.

John 1:4-5

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John again draws from the language of *Genesis 1* to make his point.

Genesis 1:3-5

Then (and) God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

Keep in mind, this light which was unleashed on creation is not to be understood as the light that comes from the Sun – for the Sun and the moon were not created until the 4th day (*Genesis 1:14-19*). Rather, this is the light that emanates from the Son of God. This is the same light that will give luminance to the new heaven, the new earth, and to the new Jerusalem, as described in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:23

And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light.

In Genesis we have the light breaking through the darkness connecting the life of God to the darkness and the formless void. First the light had to invade the darkness before any life could spring forth. Life itself was in the light – it was the connecting point merging the eternal infinite God with the nothingness and darkness of the earth. Of course, where there is a connection point we find another “vav” – “And God said: let there be light” Now, it also just so happens that this “vav” or the “and” is the 22nd word in the creation story which again ties it to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and in the mind of a Rabbi the very Torah itself. Hence, the very Word of God is the very Light that brings life to mankind.

So once again, John brilliantly draws from the depth of Jewish thought to communicate a loud message: like the formless void that was shrouded in darkness so is the heart of every man – without true light and without life – without Logos. This Word, this Son, is the Light and in Him alone is true life.

John 1:12-13

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan – this rebirth comes from God.

When the light is embraced by those in darkness, new life begins – a rebirth. This is not a cleansing of the old or even an embracing of the light by the darkness. Remember, the light shines through the darkness but the darkness can never embrace it. This is so important to understand; God has no relationship with your Old Man; none whatsoever! Rather, the Light begins anew the very act of creation. And the connection is made: everyone who accepts the Light and believes in the Light becomes a new creation – a child of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ

Unfortunately, John makes the point that those who live in darkness did not apprehend or take hold of the light and remain in darkness. Even those who you would think would have embraced the Light – His own people who had a deep history of experiencing the Light. Yet, they rejected the Light because they loved their darkness.

John 1:9-12

There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

You might say that it was not their fault, they did not know He was the Light. But God gave testimony to the Light and His pre-existence and they rejected it.

John 1:6-8

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

John 1:15-16

John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

This idea of testimony and witness to the Light will be very important throughout this gospel. According to *Deuteronomy 17:6* and *19:5*, no one could be convicted on the testimony of one witness alone. But there needed to be at least two or three witnesses. John is establishing at the very beginning of this book that identity of the first witness. We will find that the remaining two witnesses are the Father Himself and the Holy Spirit – 3 witnesses who according to the Torah provide incontrovertible proof of the claims asserted that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and Himself God.

In closing, let's look at the final verse in this montage.

John 1:17

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ

John just makes this statement to put the nail in the coffin so to speak. Yes, the Torah was given through Moses, but the connection between God and mankind was made through the Word, the Light, the Grace, the Logos, the Truth – God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Next week we will pick up in verse 19.

Let’s Pray