

## Hearing vs Doing

the natural outcome of listening should be response. (to “hear” is to take action)

Tverberg, Lois. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (p. 35). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

### Wise Hebrew Words;

The reason that shema has such a breadth of meaning is because Hebrew is a “word-poor” language. Biblical Hebrew includes only about 8,000 words, far fewer than the 400,000 or more we have in English.<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically, the richness of Hebrew comes from its poverty. Because this ancient language has so few words, each one is like an overstuffed suitcase, bulging with extra meanings that it must carry in order for the language to fully describe reality. Unpacking each word is a delightful exercise in seeing how the ancient authors organized ideas, sometimes grouping concepts together in very different ways than we do. Many verbs in Hebrew that we think of as only mental activities often encompass their expected physical result. For instance, to “remember” can mean “to act on someone’s behalf.” In Genesis 8:1 it says that “God remembered Noah ... and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.” But God didn’t just wake up one morning and suddenly recall that an ark was out bobbing around somewhere. He “remembered” Noah by coming to his rescue. And to “know” another person is to have a relationship with them, to care about them, even to be intimate with them. When Adam “knew” Eve, she conceived Cain (Genesis 4:1).

Tverberg, Lois. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (pp. 36-37). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

The question, “Don’t you hear His Word?” in Candoshi means “Don’t you believe-obey His Word?” In their way of thinking, if you “hear” you believe what you hear, and if you believe, you obey. These are not separate ideas as in English. She and other Bible translators share the same observation. They often struggle to find words for mental activities we see as all-important, but simply don’t exist in indigenous languages where thought is tied to its expected outcome.<sup>8</sup>

Tverberg, Lois. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (pp. 37-38). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

The logic of Hebrew (and other languages) realizes that an action should result from what is in our minds. If you “remember” someone, you will act on their behalf. If you “hear” someone, you will obey their words. If you “know” someone, you will have a close relationship with them. Hebrew realizes that the longest twelve inches that your faith has to move is from your head to your heart. And once your faith makes that move, it naturally comes out through your hands and feet.

Tverberg, Lois. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (p. 38). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Ahavah can also mean “to act lovingly toward” or “to be loyal to.” You see this in ancient treaties, when an enemy king who signed a covenant would pledge to “love” the king with whom he was

making peace. This meant that the enemy king would act loyally, not that he would have warm thoughts about what a great guy the other king was every time he came to mind. This nuance of ahavah solves another puzzle. How could God order people to “love” him in the sense of having a certain emotional response toward him? Actually, he didn’t. When the Israelites were commanded to love God as part of their covenant, we can read it as not so much about passionate feelings as much as an utter commitment to loyalty toward God, the one they obeyed.

Tverberg, Lois. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (pp. 44-45). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

This full-bodied definition of the word “love” also teaches us that loving others must include action, not just mental feelings. We cannot fully obey God’s command to love our neighbors by just thinking nice things about them. To love them encompasses getting up off our chair and showing them God’s love by helping them in any way that we can.

Tverberg, Lois. *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus* (p. 45). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.