

August 9, 2025

Reflection

Non-Negotiable Love

“I love you, Mom.” This random expression of love from my ten-year-old son fills my heart. Then a moment later, “But I love you second best. I love God more.” I smile and give him a hug, wondering if I could honestly say the same.

This wasn’t a one-off conversation. A version of it happens regularly between us and has for years. Somehow, he has internalized a phrase of the Shema, a twice daily prayer recited by Jewish people, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5). It’s a call to love God fully. It is non-negotiable.

Have I taken these words to heart? Drilled them into my children? Put them on my wrist, forehead, or doorpost? No. I pray with Scripture and feel like I always fall short.

In this reading, Moses is instructing the Israelites just before they enter the Promised Land. It’s a bit of a locker room pep talk to his team. He is painting the picture of what is to come in the new land, speaking of unearned gifts, and reminding them to stay close to God when they arrive and encounter new cultures. They must live in response to God’s love and saving hand.

My son will be entering a new land in a few short weeks, too. That foreign land is called middle school. Like Moses, I will remind him of who he is and of all that God has done—and urge him not to forget God’s deep love for him.

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