

THE SHEMA':
THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD AS
THE GROUND FOR THE FAITHFULNESS OF MAN:
AN EXEGETICAL EXPOSITION OF DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

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ASSIGNMENT:

Conduct an exegetical study of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 with the goal of elucidating elements in the text which contribute to the theology of Christian education.

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INTRODUCTION

The translation and meaning of the Shema' in Deut. 6:4-9¹ has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The major issue is the meaning of ehad (אֶחָד, translated “one” in the NASB) in verse 4. As such, I will devote a major portion of this paper to the delineation of the meaning of אֶחָד. In this paper I will also attempt to elucidate from this passage principles pertinent to the theology of Christian education. It is the exegetical thesis of this paper that (1) the meaning of “one” in verse 4 is best understood as indicating “the quality of loyalty or faithfulness” of the nature of God (YHWH), (2) this loyalty of God becomes the ground for the whole-being loyalty response of man to God (verse 5), and (3) this total loyalty response of man is made possible by one’s total embracement of God’s words in every part of one’s daily life, both private and public.

As such, it is the application thesis of this paper that a theology of Christian education needs to include in its content (1) the faithfulness/loyalty of YHWH toward man as the ground and impetus for the faithfulness/loyalty (“love”) of man toward YHWH, (2) an emphasis that the appropriate faithful/loyal (including an affective dimension of love) response of men to the faithful/loyal YHWH involves *all* of one’s being (all of one’s heart, being, and strength), and (3) this loyalty response of men is to be achieved by men having his commands on their hearts, incisively teaching them to their children, talking about them in and allowing them to guide every aspect of their daily lives, both private and public.

¹ The term “Shema’ ” (שמע) is the first word in Deut 6:4: “hear”. It is recited twice a day by modern Jews. Although Deut. 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41 are also considered part of the Shema’ (as indicated by Jerry Lee, “The Shema”, *Biblical Illustrator* (1988):70, and R. W. L. Moberly, *Toward an Interpretation of the Shema*”, in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Child*, edited by Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 125, n. 2), I will in this paper use it as referring solely to Deut. 6:4-9.

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF DEUTERONOMY 6

Several scholars have recognized that the rhetorical device of “chiasm” is very much a part of Hebrew as well as Ugaritic and Akkadian literature². As a result, several have attempted to elucidate different chiasmic structures involving Deuteronomy 6.

Duane L. Christenson³, for example, argues for the following chiasm⁴:

- A. The Great Commandment: Love God (6:4-9)
- B. Remember to fear Yahweh for he is a jealous God (6:10-15)
- C. Be careful to keep the commandments (6:16-19)
- D. Tell your children of the Exodus from Egypt (6:20-22)
- C’. God will preserve us if we keep his commandments (6:23-25)
- B’. “Destroy your enemies” for you are a holy people (7:1-10)
- A’. Summary: Keep the commandment (7:11)

This structure is not totally satisfying, however. First of all, this makes the telling of one’s children about the Exodus the center of the chiasm. One is tempted then to ask how 6:7 (also speaking of teaching children) fits into this structure. Secondly, there does not seem to be a cogent reason as to why Christenson sees the chiasm beginning with verse 4. Hall has cogently argued through rhetorical analysis of noun and verb repetitions that 6:1-3 “fits with the rest of Deuteronomy 6”⁵, and should not be isolated from it.

Lofink⁶ also attempts to see a chiasmic structure here. He does an analysis centered around only the verbs used in 5:27-6:3. He concludes with the following structure⁷:

- A. עשה, שמע, שמע (5:27)
- B. שמר, ירא (5:29)
- C. למד, עשה (5:31)

² Gary Hall, “Rhetorical Criticism, Chiasm, and Theme in Deuteronomy”, *Stone-Campbell Journal* 1(1998):85-88.

³ *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 136-137.

⁴ *Deuteronomy*, 138.

⁵ Hall, 93-94.

⁶ Norbert Lofink, *Das Hauptgebot: Eine Untersuchung literarischer Einleitungsfragen zu Dtn 5-11* (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1963), 67-68, referenced in Christenson, *Deuteronomy*, 134, and Hall, 92-93.

⁷ From Hall, 93.

- X. שמר, עשה, סור, הלך (5:32f)
 C'. למד, עשה (6:1)
 B'. ירא, שמר (6:2)
 A'. שמע, שמר, עשה (6:3)

Lofink's structure is also suspect since it only includes an analysis of the verbs and leaves out the nouns. As with the above, Hall has justly criticized Lofink's separation of 6:1-3 from 6:4ff. In addition Hall's rhetorical analysis shows that 5:27 is a continuance of 5:22-26. The question that needs to be answered by Lofink is "Why does he begin his chiasm with verse 27?" There seems to be no good reason for the boundaries of his chiasm.

Hall, in his own analysis, goes on to suggest that 6:4-9 is in some way connected with 6:1-3 and that 6:4-9 "contrasts with and expands on what precedes it and presents a fundamental statement about the nature of God and Israel's required response"⁸. He goes on to say that 6:10-25 is merely a commentary on 6:4-9. Verses 10-25 are seen as encouraging Israel to do the following:

- (A) not forgetting God after he has presented her with the promised land (6:10-15), (B) not testing God but, rather, obeying all his commands so she may occupy the promised land, (6:16-19), and (C) instructing the children, 6:20-25. Section (C) incorporates key ideas from sections A and B as well as from the transition section, 6:1-3. It also reiterates the basic command in 6:4-9⁹.

Although Hall's criticisms of Lofink and Christenson are valid, he does seem to stop short in his own analysis of seeing what seems to be a thematic emphasis and chiastic structure of the entire chapter. In addition he seems to propose disjunctive chiasms in chapters 6, 7, and 8 without a common thread tying them all together. While there is nothing wrong with seeing chiasms scattered throughout the book, if one can see chiasms which support a common theme and embrace a broader section of Scripture, that

⁸ Hall, 95.

⁹ Hall, 95.

very fact would seem to me to be a better unifying structure in the rhetoric of Deuteronomy. Therefore I propose a chiasmic structure for Deut. 4-11 (see Appendix I at the end of this paper) that has a common dual theme of the faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of man¹⁰. Because of the focus of this paper I will present here only the following chiasmic structure that I see for Deuteronomy 6. It is as follows:

A¹¹. Deut. 5:33-6:2a. Keep the commands (קִּוּי) and statutes (חֻקֵּי) (***you be faithful***) so it may go well (יָטֵב) with you (5:33, 6:1-2), possession of land yet to be accomplished (land you “shall possess” (יָרֵשׁ) (5:33; 6:1). Your days prolonged (אָרְךָ), you, your son, your grandson (6:2). Fear (יִרָא) the LORD. Hear the commands and do them and it will be well (יָטֵב) with you and you may multiply greatly (6:3a) (***YHWH is faithful to take care of you***)

B. Deut. 6:3b. Just as the God of your fathers (אֱלֹהֵי) promised (וְיָרַד) (***YHWH is faithful***) in a land (אֶרֶץ) of milk and honey

C. Deut 6:4-9: God, People,

Nature of God:

The LORD is one (אֶחָד)

Instructions to the People:

Be faithful: Love (אָהַב) God with all heart, all soul, and all strength

Keep his commands on your heart

Teach your children

D. Deut 6:10-11. You will be satisfied, great and splendid cities you did not build, houses full of all good things, cisterns you did not dig, vineyards, olive trees you did not plant, etc. (cf., land of milk and honey, vs. 3 and “good” land in vs. 18), land (אֶרֶץ) God swore (שָׁבַע) to your fathers (אֲבוֹתַי) (***YHWH is faithful***)

E. Deut. 6:12-18a: God, Instructions to the people

Nature of God: God is jealous (15)

God is among you (in your midst, 15)

God is just and will reveal his anger (15)

¹⁰ It should be noted that this common dual theme is not the only theme in the centers of the chiasms (as the centers of the chiasms sometimes revolve around several points concerning the nature of God and instructions to people) but that it does seem to be the common theme in each one and thus perhaps the major theme in the entire discourse.

¹¹ See Appendix I. There I have a double number notation which indicates that I am proposing an overlap in the chiasm where this section or part of it goes with both the chiasmic structure that precedes and that which follows. It constitutes shared verses belonging to each chiasm. This interlocks the chiasm. Hence 4:40-5:33 are closely tied and interlocked with 6:1-25 through the verses 5:33-6:2a).

**YHWH is faithful: He brought
you up out of slavery in Egypt (12)
Instructions to People: Watch and do not forget
the LORD, fear (love), worship, and
swear (שבע) (you be faithful) by the
name of the LORD (13-14)
Do not follow any other gods (14)
Do not test the LORD
Diligently keep his commandments
(17)
Do what is right and good in the sight
of the LORD (18)**

D'. Deut. 6:18b-19: that it may be well (יטב) with you, and you may “possess the good (טוב) Land (ארץ)”, which the LORD swore (שבע) to give to your forefathers (אב), as the Lord has spoken (כאשר דבר) (YHWH is faithful).

C'. Deut. 6:20-23a: Nature of God, Instructions to the people
Nature of God:

God is mighty: He did great and distressing signs and wonders against Egypt

YHWH is faithful: He brought us from Egypt out of slavery

God is purposeful: to free us from slavery into this land

Instructions to the People:

Be Faithful: Teach your sons about God’s might, faithfulness, and purpose.

B'. Deut. 6:23b: **YHWH’s faithfulness** (“to give us the land (ארץ) which He had sworn (שבע) to our fathers” (אב), 23b)

A' Deut. 6:24-25: Obey the LORD’s commands (דק), fear (ירא) the LORD for our (children and parents in context) good (טוב) always and our survival (**YHWH’s faithfulness** implied: He will take care of them), keep all the commands, it will be our righteousness, just as he commanded us (you be faithful)

In this chiasmic proposal¹², one does not fall into the trap of looking only at verbs as Lofink does, nor does one fail to include 6:1-3 with the rest of chapter 6 as Christenson does, nor does one have disjunctive chiasms without a common theme to unite them as

¹² For a skeleton view of the chiasmic structure of Deut. 6, see Appendix II.

Hall seems to do. With this proposed chiasm one looks at both nouns and verbs, includes 6:1-3 with the rest of chapter 6, and sees a common theme, i.e., faithfulness¹³.

This faithfulness includes both the faithfulness of God and faithfulness expected of men. *God's faithfulness* is seen in the terms **יָטַב** (“be well”, A and A’) and **שָׁבַע** (“swear”), in D and D’, and in B and B’ with the corresponding words **דָּבַר** (“promise”) and **שָׁבַע** (“swear”). The faithfulness of God is also seen in the theme of his swearing to bring the people into the land (**אֶרֶץ**, B and B’, and D and D’) and his past deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt at the center of the chiasm (E, as well as C’, and I think, as we shall see later, implied in C).

The *faithfulness or faithful response of man* is seen in the concepts of obeying the commandments (**קָרָא**) and fearing (**יָרָא**) God in A and A’, and the concepts of teaching your children in C and C’. It is also seen at the center of the chiasm, E, which shows very strongly the need for the Israelites to be loyal to God. This center highlights the concepts of “fear, (**יָרָא**), ”, “keep the commands (**קָרָא**),” and “swear (**שָׁבַע**) by His name”. There is a stark comparison, it seems, between God’s oath and promise in B/B’, D/D’ and the use of the same word/concept *but* applied to men in the chiastic center E. The center of focus seems to be that the Israelites are to be faithful to the LORD because He is and has been faithful to them. Although the center of the chiasm (E) seems to emphasize the faithfulness of man to God, it does not leave out the LORD’s faithfulness as he is both “in their midst” and the one who delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

¹³ Other synonyms that could be used would be “integrity” or “loyalty”.

The dual theme of God's faithfulness and the expected faithfulness of the Israelites are found at the center of each of the chiasms I have found in chapters 4-11¹⁴. It is found in 4:31 where (1) God will not forget the covenant which He swore to the fathers, and (2) man is to seek the Lord with all his heart and soul (4:29). It is found in 5:6 and 10 where (1) God brought the people out of slavery in Egypt and shows loving kindness to all who love him and keep his commands, (2) and man is to obey the Ten Commandments. It is shown in 7:9-11 where (1) God is explicitly stated as "faithful", the one who keeps his covenant and gives loving kindness to those who love him and keep his commands, and (2) man is to keep the commandments. It is shown in 8:3-4 where (1) God was shown faithful in clothing and feeding the Israelites in the wilderness, and (2) man is to trust God and live by the words that proceed out of the God's mouth. It is found in 10:11-11:21 where (1) God commands the Israelites to proceed to go in and possess the land he swore to give to their forefathers, and (2) the Israelites are to love God with all their hearts and soul and to obey his commands.

At each of the centers of these chiasms are statements about the nature of God and instructions to the Israelites in their relationship with him. Although this information about God's nature and the content of the instructions to the Israelites often contains more than merely the concept of "faithfulness", it seems that only the concept of "faithfulness" is a part of *each* chiastic center. Hence this concept of faithfulness, which is seen in *both* instructions to the Israelites toward God and God's actions toward them, provides what one might call the skeleton framework¹⁵ for the entire discourse of chapters 4 through 11.

¹⁴ See Appendix I.

¹⁵ See Appendix II for the skeletal framework of Deuteronomy 6.

When seen in context of the whole of Deuteronomy, it seems that the writer is attempting to impress upon the people God's faithfulness and their appropriate response of faithfulness or loyalty to Him. Coupling this with the heavy emphasis in Deuteronomy on God's faithfulness to bring the Israelites into the promised land¹⁶, this section of Deuteronomy would then be seen as written to the second generation Israelites in the wilderness with the goal of giving them courage and reason to trust God in His promise to indeed successfully (faithfully) give them the land He promised to their forefathers as long as they are faithful to obey Him. As will be seen, this chiasmic structure and the theme it presents will be of help in understanding and elucidating the meaning and purpose of the Shema.

THE LOYALTY OF YHWH AS THE GROUND
FOR THE LOYALTY OF MAN TOWARD YHWH (DEUT. 6:4-5)

“Hear, Israel: YHWH our God, YHWH is one. So you shall love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your being and with all your strength.”¹⁷
(Deut. 6:4-5).

There have been several suggested translations of Deut. 6:4. They include the following:

1. The Lord is our God, the Lord alone
2. The Lord is our God, one Lord
3. The Lord our God, the Lord is one
4. The Lord is our God, the Lord is one
5. Our one God is Yahweh, Yahweh¹⁸

As R. W. L. Moberly has pointed out¹⁹, there are basically two main differences in these translations. The first is whether in the first phrase *YHWH* (Lord) should be subject and

¹⁶ Note that emphasis in Deut 4-11 in the Appendix I chiasms as well as the many verses in Deut. that speak of this, including 3:28; 4:38; 5:31, 33; 6:1, 10, 18, 23; 7:1; 8:1, 7-10; 9:4, 6, 23; 10:11; 11:8-11, etc.

¹⁷This translation is from Moberly, *Toward an Interpretation of the Shema*, 125.

¹⁸ From S. Dean McBride, Jr., “The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5”, *Interpretation* 27(1973): 292.

elohenu (our God) predicate. The second is whether *ehad* (one) can be rendered “alone”.

As for the first point, Hebrew idiom in Deuteronomy excludes the use of *elohim* predicatively when juxtaposed to *YHWH*. Moberly states with respect to its use in Deuteronomy (other than Deut 6:4 which is under consideration):

In all these 312 instances in which *yhwh* and *elohim* are juxtaposed, the two words are always in apposition. *Elohim* is always used descriptively, i.e., “Yahweh our/your God”, and never predicatively, i.e., “Yahweh is our/your God” . . . In Deut. vi 4, therefore, *yhwh elohenu* must be rendered “Yahweh or God”, not “Yahweh is our God”²⁰.

As for the second point, there is no lexical precedent for the meaning of *ehad* being “alone”²¹. This effectively eliminates 1, 2, 4, and 5 above. This means that the phrase must be making a statement about *YHWH*, (his nature or character) not a statement about the relationship between Yahweh and Israel and should be translated, “Here Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one”.

This being the case, the question still remains as to what אֱחָד (“one”) means here. Chiasitic structural and immediate contextual considerations combined with lexical

¹⁹“‘YHWEH is One’: The Translation of the Shema”, in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, edited by J. A. Emerton (Leiden, Brill, 1990), 210.

²⁰ Moberly, “YHWEH is One”, 213. This is also supported by a look at those uses in Deuteronomy (in John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, 101-103) hereafter known as HECOT). P. P. Jenson, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (hereafter known as NIDOTE), sv. “אֱחָד” agrees and states, “The syntax of the verbless sentence is disputed, but analogy with other uses of “the LORD our God” in Deut suggests that the traditional syntax should be retained (“The LORD our God, the LORD (is) One).”

²¹ A. D. H. Mayes (*Deuteronomy*. New Century Bible Series (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1979), 176, referenced in Moberly, “YHWH is One”, 212), has suggested that the meaning of “alone” is supported in Is. 51:2; Ezek. 33:24; 37:22; Zech. 14:9; and I Chron. 29:1. None of these however necessitate the translation “alone” but can simply entail the idea of singularity. In addition, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (*A Hebrew and English Lexicon for the Old Testament* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1976), 25-26) do not give “alone” as a definition for *ehad*. Moberly (“YAHWEH is one”, 212-213) has very cogently argued also that *ehad*, in these five above instances, probably “retains its basic meaning of numerical singularity”. Nor is S. Dean McBride, Jr., (“The Yoke of the Kingdom”, 292-297) and his argument for “alone” withstanding. McBride argues for this translation more from a broad theological (historical, political, and religious) perspective and the dubious Hebrew idiom perspective which takes *elohenu* as subject (which has already shown above as surely fallacious) than a Deuteronomy 6 contextual perspective.

considerations can give information to lead us to what I believe is a cogent answer. Verse 5 reads “So²² you shall love (אהב) YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your being and with all your strength”. The term “love” (אהב) here has definite meaning of loyalty or faithfulness. Of this term and its use in Deuteronomy, William L. Moran states,

Above all, it is a love which must be expressed in loyalty, in service, and in unqualified obedience to the demands of the Law. For to love God is, in answer to a unique claim (6:4), to be loyal to him (11:1,22; 30:20), to walk in his ways (10:12; 11:22; 19:9), to keep his commandments (10:12; 11:1,22; 19:9), to do them (11:22; 19:9), to heed them or his voice (11:13; 30:16), to serve him (10:12; 11:1,13). It is in brief, a love defined by and pledged in the covenant—a covenant love²³.

It must be noted also that covenantal love, a love of loyalty and faithfulness, is not without an affective element. Jacqueline E. Lapsley has persuasively argued that love in Deuteronomy has “an affective dimension”^{24,25}. Hence the meaning here has to do with

²² The Hebrew ו (waw) in Deuteronomy captures “the nuance of a common deuteronomic idiom, that *waw* consecutive with the second person perfect expresses a linkage of thought that draws out an implication for what Israel must understand and do from what has just been said (e.g., Deut. 7:9, 11; 8:5, 6; 10:19)” and thus can be translated “so” here (Moberly, “Toward an Interpretation”, 126, n. 4). This is based on P. Jouon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* Subsidia Biblica 14 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991), paragraph 119e.

²³ “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy”, *CBQ* 25(1963):78.

²⁴ “Feeling Our Way: Love for God in Deuteronomy”, *CBQ* 65(2003):350-69. Especially noteworthy is the use of אהב (affectionate love, always with an affective dimension) in parallel with אהב in Deut. 7:7-8 denoting God’s love for Israel (Lapsley, 360). Lapsley also bases her conclusion on previous studies of emotion in ancient Israel, studies that show the word for hate (שנא) (love’s opposite) involves emotions in the Biblical texts, the sociocultural background of love, and the call for Israel to love emotionally because of the prior cause of God’s love (e.g., Deut. 10:18-19). Patrick D. Miller (“The Most Important Word: The Yoke of the Kingdom”, *Illif Review* 41(1984):27) would tend to include, although less strongly, this affective dimension saying, “In this context . . . love does not connote primarily affective dimensions . . . It does assume a personal intimate, trusting relation . . . it is not dependent entirely on a feeling of gratitude for its creation”. This is contra S. Dean McBride, Jr. (“The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4-5”, *Interpretation* 27(1973):298) who argues that “Love of God is not presented as a worthy emotion which the faithful should strive to attain”. All three of these however definitely include the *loyalty* dimension of love which brings contextual support for ehad in verse connoting “loyalty” of God. There has been some debate that love that involves emotions cannot be commanded (e.g., Rebecca Abts Wright, “The Impossible Commandment”, *Anglican Theological Review* 83(2001): 579-80). That this love can be commanded does not negate the emotional side of it as there would seem to be no reason why motions cannot be changed by the owner of those emotions. The exclusion of emotions in this term by

sincere “affective” loyalty or faithfulness to God. One is to love God with all one’s heart, being, and strength²⁶. This loyalty is to be unconditional and consist in one’s total or “full devotion”,²⁷ as these three words indicate. Connecting this term with the translation of “so” (waw, see note 22 above), the text seems to be saying something about the loyalty/faithfulness of man to God. “So” indicates a resultant conclusion based on a prior statement. In this context, then, “one” in verse 4 would seem to be speaking about loyalty/faithfulness also. “The LORD is one” could then be a statement about the loyalty/faithfulness of God, something that the context and chiasmic structure of Deut. 6 supports very well. The facts that the (1) chiasmic structure center is about loyalty (including God’s loyalty), (2) the corresponding section C’ also speaks about loyalty, and (3) every other division of the chiasm is speaking of God’s loyalty is compelling contextual and chiasmic support for “one” taking on the meaning of loyalty or faithfulness. If it does not carry this connotation, C would be the only part of the chiasm that does not point to God’s loyalty/faithfulness. But one might ask, “Does ehad have a sufficient semantic range to carry this meaning?” J. Gerald Janzen has cogently argued for the meaning of “divine integrity”, “loyalty”, or “faithfulness” for ehad in the sense of

some seems to be based on the modern misconception that emotions cannot be changed by man or God. Lapsley, 365, critiques this well stating, “The objections that feelings cannot be commanded relies on the modern notions not only that feelings exist within the private world of the individual, but also that they are uncontrollable”, something that is foreign to the Torah. In addition, since נפש (being/soul) in verse 5 includes the meanings of “desire, appetite” or “longing” (Seebass, *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, sv. “נפש”), one sees here contextually that emotions are indeed commanded! One is to be loyal (“love”) with one’s emotions as well as the rest of his/her being.

²⁶ These three words, לבב (heart/mind), נפש (being/soul), and מאד (strength) each combined with כל (all) indicate not the modern psychological evaluation (Kalland, 64), but a total allegiance of one’s being, “the absolute singularity of personal devotion to God” (B.K.W. and W. C. K., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. “נפש”, and s.v. “מאד”).

²⁷ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, in the Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 3338-39. Earl. S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 64, states concerning this phrase, “It is . . . a gathering of terms to indicate the totality of a person’s commitment of self in the purest and noblest intentions of trust and obedience toward God.”

“internal undividedness of Yahweh”²⁸ here in Deut. 6:4 and in Job 23:13; 31:15; Dan. 2:9; Zech. 14:9; and Isa. 51:2.²⁹ P. P. Jenson adds that, “‘One’ is not a title or name of God, but an adjective of *quality*”³⁰ as used here in the Shema’. This unity/quality/loyalty concept can also be seen in the use of אֱלֹהִים in Gen. 3:22; 11:1-6; 27:44; 41:25-26; Ex. 12:49; 24:3; 26:4-10; Lev. 7:7; 24:22; Num. 15:15-16, etc.³¹ It is important here to note that in the above examples, the unity or quality of “one” is not determined by the term “one” itself but is defined by the context and the other words used with it³². Hence, the type of “oneness” here in verse 4 needs to be determined by the words used with it and the immediate context. As such, the oneness depicted here in the Shema would seem to include at the very minimum the oneness quality of loyalty or faithfulness³³. The ground or basis (even impetus) of man’s love (loyalty or faithfulness) toward God would then be the loyalty or faithfulness of God himself.

²⁸“An Echo of the Shema in Isaiah 51:1-3”, *JSOT* 43(1989):78.

²⁹ “On the Most Important Word in the Shema (Deuteronomy VI 4-5)”, *VT* 37(1987):280-300, “The Claim of the Shema”, *Encounter* (1998):243-57, “An Echo of the Shema in Isaiah 51:1-3”, *JSOT* 43(1989):69-82 and “Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One”, *Encounter* 48(1987): 53-60. He further buttresses this with his analysis of great crises in YHWH’s relation with Israel, including the sin involving the golden calf (Ex. 32) and the unbelief of the spies (Num. 14) in which each time Moses intercedes for the people to God with an appeal to *God’s faithfulness*. These and other points including a parallel with Deut 7:9 (where “one” is paralleled by the terms “the Faithful God” argued for by Janzen in “On the Most Important Word in the Shema”, 291-94), the chiasmic structure I see there in Deut. 7 (Appendix I), and the whole argument of God’s faithfulness in spite of the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in Deut. 9-11, all point toward Janzen’s concept of *ehud* taking on the meaning of “internal undividedness” with respect to Yahweh, i.e., his faithfulness.

³⁰ *NIDOTTE*, sv. “אֱלֹהִים”, emphasis mine. In addition, he states, “The correlation between the two halves of the sentence and the following verses suggests that this is not so much an abstract monotheism as a claim to Israel’s total obedience and the exclusion of any other”. The issue here seems to be loyalty and faithfulness rather than monotheism. Monotheism is not excluded but just not the main emphasis in the sentence and context.

³¹ There are many other instances one can find in *HECOT*, 54-60.

³² For example, the oneness with God in Gen. 3:22 would be defined by the terms “knowing good and evil”, and the meaning of “one” in the equal application of God’s law to the alien (Num. 15:15-16) is defined by the words used with it. It is “one” in the sense defined by surrounding terms.

³³ This would not mean that the term “one” could not include other aspects of the character of God such as “might” as its parallel in C’ may indicate, but that the major focus seems to be loyalty/faithfulness here in the immediate context.

BE IMMERSSED IN GOD'S WORDS

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut. 6:6-9)

The instructions given here to the Israelites indicate that total immersion in God's commands and his words is the appropriate response of their loyalty to him. These commands or words (דבר)³⁴ are to be on their hearts (which includes the whole spectrum of emotion, thought, and will)³⁵, impressed (a sharpening of clarification)³⁶ on their children³⁷, talked about (דבר)³⁸ in every aspect of their lives, it is to be practiced

³⁴ Contextually the terms “these words” refer to verses 4 and 5. However, since they are also used to introduce the Book of Deuteronomy in 1:1 and are used to summarize the Ten Commandments (5:22), there is no reason to limit their reference to these two verses, especially when qualified by the terms “I give you today” (cf. Deut. 4:8, 40; 5:1; 7:11; 8:1; 10:13; 11:8, 13, 27f, 32; 13:18:15:5, 15; 19:9; 27:1, 10; 28:1, 14f; 30:2, 8, 11, 16, so also S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, ICC Commentary Series (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902), 92, and Willoughby, *A Heartfelt Love*, 82).

³⁵ The Hebrew reads “heart” (singular). The dominant use of the term “לבב” in the OT (including verse 5 above) is in “reference to the center of human psychical and spiritual life, to the entire inner life of a person” (Alex Luc, *NIDOTTE*, s.v., “לב”) including “the whole spectrum of emotion”, one’s “thoughts”, and “will” (*TWOT*, s.v. “לבב”). Hence, here one encounters the necessity of man’s whole person being immersed in and directed by God’s commands.

³⁶ The meaning of this term is debated. If one takes the root to be שנה, the term means “to repeat” (*BDB*, 1040) then this verse would be a command to repeat or recite these words over and over again in every part of one’s life. If however the root is from שנה, the term means “to sharpen” (*BDB*, 1041f. *BDB* classifies the term used here under שנה translating it here as “teach the words incisively”). Charles Isbell, (“Deuteronomy’s Definition of Jewish Learning”, *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* 31(2003):109-116) has cogently argued that the root of this word is שנה not שנה and can be understood as the “task of ‘sharpening,’ of ‘clarification’” (115) so that the command here is to not only help the children know the commands but to make clear as to how one can “incorporate the truth that they express” within their own daily lives. This would go well with the concept of being loyal to God expressed in verses 5-6 which would include the totality of one’s inner and outer being. Weinfeld, (*Deuteronomy 1-11*, 333) notes that (with respect to the translation of Aquila) translating this following the שנה root is “not confusion of roots . . . but adherence to Jewish tradition”.

³⁷ The term “בן” “son” definitely is spoken to parents (as is seen from the terms “home” “lie down” and “get up”), but the responsibility of the whole of Israel corporately teaching all of their “children” surely cannot be ruled out especially if the term “gates” is a public term (see below).

³⁸ This indicates a definite verbalization (perhaps explanations of practical application) of the commands of God in every area of life.

daily (“when they lie down and when they get up”³⁹), tied figuratively as symbols to their bodies⁴⁰, and written symbolically on the doorframes of their private houses and publicly within their city gates⁴¹. Verses 6-9 then taken together follow up and give some practical methods for his people to achieve total loyalty and faithfulness to him (contextually, a practical application of verses 4-5). The people and their children were to obey God by having his commands on their hearts, guiding every aspect of their daily lives both privately and publicly, in their speech and their walk.

³⁹ This is part of the “general Semitic idiom of using antonymic pairs in order to signify totality” (Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 177). Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy 1-11*, 333) states, “the meaning is obviously ‘always’”.

⁴⁰ This concept of tying “them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads” has been taken both literally and figuratively (so Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 177), literally only (so S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 93, so later Jews from Hasmonian times on ward who interpreted these terms as literal as wearing phylacteries, Kolland, *Deuteronomy*, 66)), and figuratively only (so, Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, 66; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 341-42; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Vols. Vol. 1: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 324). I have taken the concept figuratively (but cannot rule out the possibility of a literal dimension) because, according to Willoughby (84-85), the parallel passages in Exodus 13:9, 16 and Deuteronomy 11:18 “show traces of a wisdom literature formula and influence” (cf. Prov. 1:9, 3:3; 6:21; 7:3, Mayes, 177, agrees and states the term “bind” has parallels in Wisdom literature although he believes this verse should be taken literally in view of his literal understanding of verse 9) and as such should be understood figuratively as it is in Proverbs when referring to the “words” of God.

⁴¹ The term “gates” (שַׁעַר) is used 373 times in the OT (*HECOT*, 1632-34) but seems never to be used for the door of a personal dwelling (so also, Edesio Sanchez, “When a Word Makes All the Difference-Deuteronomy 6,4-9”, *The Bible Translator*” 46(1995):242). Kalland’s statement (p. 66) that the term is used in Proverbs 14:19b for a private residence is not totally convincing as it may be figurative for the concept of “presence” in 14:19b, however it must be noted that *BDB*, 1045, does designate Prov. 14:19 and possibly Ju. 18:16 as a referring to a personal residence). As such the probable meaning here is the city gate (so also Joshua Derby, “. . . Upon the Doorposts . . .”, *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 27(1999):43, and Mayes, 178, and Richard S. Hess (*NIDOTTE*, s.v. “שַׁעַר”) who says, “The absence of other references that connect *sa’ar*, gate, with a private dwelling argues in favor of the city gate as the location of inscriptions referred to in Deut.”). The city gate was where the “elders of the city conducted public affairs and sat in judgment” (Derby, 43). Hence the meaning here would be for parents (and others) to have the commands of God as the standard for all the public affairs and judgments for the city. I favor the command here to be understood figuratively (so also Willoughby, 84, Keil and Delitzsch, 324, contra Derby, 43, and S. R. Driver, 93) and not necessarily to be taken literally (the term “gate” can and is used figuratively in the sense of “towns” in Deuteronomy 5:14 and 12:12, 15, 17, 21 and 22 other times (*BDB*, 1045)) as this would make the whole of verses 8-9 consistent in interpretation and would further highlight the main point of verses 6-9 as instruction to have God’s commands as the standard for every aspect of the people’s lives both private and public.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to show that the main focus of the Shema' in Deut. 6:4-9 centers on the concept of loyalty, both the loyalty of God to man and the necessary loyalty response of man to God. The chiasmic structural and immediate contextual considerations of Deut. 6 combined with lexical considerations gave impetus to the understanding of "one" in verse 4 as the oneness quality of "loyalty or faithfulness". "Love" in verse 5 with its meaning of "loyalty" not only points to the meaning of "one" in verse 4 as being focused on the "loyalty" nature of God, but, by taking the conjunction *waw* (verse 5) to mean "so" and the extent of the loyal love (verse 5) as encompassing the whole of man's being (heart, being, and strength), the loyalty of God (verse 4) becomes the ground for the loyalty response of the Israelites toward him. Verses 6-9 follow up on verses 4-5 as practical instructions as to how men can achieve the total loyalty toward God commanded in verse 5.

With respect to Christian education, its content needs to include (1) the concept of the faithfulness/loyalty of YHWH toward man as the ground and impetus for the faithfulness/loyalty ("love") of man toward YHWH, (2) an emphasis that the appropriate faithful/loyal response (i.e., a "love" response, which includes an affective dimension) of men to the faithful/loyal YHWH involves *all* of one's being (all of one's heart, being, and strength), and (3) this loyalty response is to be achieved by the people having his commands on their hearts (which includes whole spectrum of emotion, thought, and will), incisively teaching them (an intense sharpening of clarification for application to one's daily life) to their children, and talking about them and allowing them to guide every aspect of their daily lives, both in speech and walk, and in private and in public.

APPENDIX I:

A Proposed Chiastic Structure for Deuteronomy 4-11⁴²

(Chiastic centers in **bold** with their theme of faithfulness are in *italics*)

A1. Deut. 4:1-24. Keep God's commands so you may live and go in to possess the land the Lord is giving you.

Keep God's statutes and commands (צוה, חק) (1-2)

You held fast to the Lord and are alive (4)

God is near to the nation (גוי) (7)

What nation (גוי) is like this one because of God (6-8)

Do not let what your eyes have seen depart from your heart (לבב) (9)

Teach (ידע) your children what your eyes have seen (9)

Nature of God revealed through eyes and ears: no form (make no graven image) (9-24)

Children (בן) (9-10)

Voice of God out of midst of fire (אש) (12)

Egypt (20)

A people for his own possession, as today (כיום הזה), land of inheritance (20-21)

B1. Deut. 4:25-31. The Nature of God. Instructions to People

Nature of God: Just, acting corruptly and making idols will cause

God's judgment, i.e., perishing from the land (25-28)

Compassionate (29-31)

***Faithful:* He will not forget the covenant which He swore to your fathers (31)**

Instructions to People:

***Be faithful:* Seek the LORD and search for Him with all your heart and all your soul, listen to His voice**

A1'. Deut. 4:32-40. Keep the commands so it may go well with you and you may live in the land

Keep the commands and statutes (צוה, חק) (40)

Keep the commands so you may live long (40)

God's presence is with you as a nation (גוי) (37-38)

What nation (גוי) is like you because of God (32-34)

Nature of God revealed through eyes and ears: no other God (32-35)

Know (ידע) that the Lord is God, acknowledge (ידע) and take to

⁴² The chiastic structure here is based on common words found in the NASB and the Hebrew text **in combination with** common concepts and themes.

heart (לֵב) that the LORD is God (35, 39)
 Children (בְּנֵי) (40)
 Voice of Lord out of midst of fire (שָׁמַיִם) (33, 36)
 Egypt (34)
 Land of inheritance, as it is today (כְּיוֹם הַזֶּה) (38)

A2. Deut. 4: 40-49. Keep the commands so it may go well (טֵב) with you and your days prolonged (אָרְךָ), (overlap of one verse from above), you and your children (40), (שָׂרָף) possession of land already accomplished (41-49)

B2. Deut. 5:1-5. God's commands given to Moses to speak to the people because of the people's fear (פֶּחַח, 5:5) of face to face encounter with God (Moses stood between the LORD and the people (5))

C2. Deut 5:6-21. The Nature of God, Instructions to the People

Nature of God: Faithful deliverer, jealous God, just, showing loving kindness.

God is faithful: He is the one who brought you up out of Egypt (6, 15)

God is a jealous God,

God is to be your only God (9)

God is a God of justice (9)

God shows loving kindness to those who obey him (10)

God is mighty (15)

Instructions to the People:

Be faithful: Love God and keep his commands

People are to keep the 10 commandments ("you shall not . . .")

People are to love God (9-10)

Children to obey parents. This will prolong days and make it go well with them in the land the Lord gives them (16)

B2'. Deut. 5:22-32. God's commands given to Moses to teach the people because of the people's fear (פֶּחַח, 5:29) of face to face encounter with God ("stand here by Me that I may speak to you all the commandments . . . which you shall teach them" vs. 31)

A2'3⁴³. Deut. 5:33-6:2a Keep the commands (דְּבָרִים) and statutes (חֻקֵּי) (**you be faithful**) so it may go well (טֵב) with you (5:33, 6:1-2), possession of land yet to be accomplished (land you "shall possess" (שָׂרָף) (5:33; 6:1). Your days prolonged (אָרְךָ), you, your son, your grandson (6:2). Fear (פֶּחַח) the LORD. Hear the

⁴³ This double number notation indicates that I am proposing an overlap in the chiasm where this section or part of it goes with both the chiastic structure that precedes and that which follows. It constitutes shared verse belonging to each chiasm. This interlocks the chiasm. Hence 4:40-5:33 are closely tied with 6:1-25.

commands and do them and it will be well (יָטֵב) with you and you may multiply greatly (6:3a) (***God is faithful to take care of you***)

B3. Deut. 6:3b. Just as the God of your fathers (אֱלֹהֵי) promised (דִּבֶּר) (***God is faithful***) in a land (אֶרֶץ) of milk and honey

C3. Deut 6:4-9: God, People,

Nature of God:

The LORD is One

Instructions to the People:

Be faithful: Love (אָהַב) God with all heart, all soul, and all strength

Keep his commands on your heart

Teach your children

D3. Deut 6:10-11. You will be satisfied, great and splendid cities you did not build, houses full of all good things, cisterns you did not dig, vineyards, olive trees you did not plant, etc. (cf., land of milk and honey, vs. 3 and “good” land in vs. 18), land (אֶרֶץ) God swore (שָׁבַע) to your fathers (אֱלֹהֵי) (***God is faithful***)

E3. Deut. 6:12-18a: God, Instructions to the people

Nature of God: God is jealous (15)

God is among you (in your midst, 15)

God is just and will reveal his anger (15)

God is faithful: He brought

you up out of slavery in Egypt (12)

Instructions to People: Watch and do not forget

the Lord, fear (love), worship, and

swear (שָׁבַע) (*you be faithful*) by the

name of the LORD (13-14)

Do not follow any other gods (14)

Do not test the LORD

Diligently keep his commandments

(17)

Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD (18)

D3'. Deut. 6:18b-19: that it may be well (יָטֵב) with you, and you may “possess the good (טוֹב) Land (אֶרֶץ)”, which the LORD swore (שָׁבַע) to give to your forefathers (אֲבוֹתַי), as the Lord has spoken (כִּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר) (***God's faithfulness***).

C3'. Deut. 6:20-23a: Nature of God, Instructions to the people

Nature of God:

God is mighty: He did great and

Distressing signs and wonders against

Egypt

God is faithful: He brought us from Egypt

out of slavery
God is purposeful: to free us from
slavery into this land

Instructions to the People:

Be Faithful: Teach your sons about God’s
might, faithfulness, and purpose.

B3’. Deut. 6:23b: ***God’s faithfulness*** (“to give us the land (אֶרֶץ)
which He had sworn (שָׁבַע) to our fathers” (אֱלֹהִים), 23b)

A3’ Deut. 6:24-25: Obey the LORD’s commands (חֻקֵּי), fear (יִרָא) the LORD for our
(children and parents in context) good (טוֹב) always and our survival (***God’s
faithfulness*** implied: He will take care of them), keep all the commands, it will be
our righteousness, just as he commanded us (***you be faithful***)

A4. Deut. 7:1-2a. God will clear away (נִשְׁלֵ) the nations (גוֹיִם), you shall defeat and
destroy them

B4. Deut. 7:2b-8. The LORD chose you to be a people for his
possession out of all the peoples of the earth, He loved you and kept
his oath (שָׁבַע) to your forefathers (אֱבוֹתָיִךְ) (He is faithful).

C4. Deut. 7:9-11. The Nature of the LORD

Faithful—keeps his covenant and
loving kindness to a thousandth
generation of those who love
him and keep his commands
Just—repays those who hate Him

Instructions to the People:

**Know that the LORD your God,
He is God**

**Love God (implied) and keep the
commands (*Be Faithful*)**

B4’. Deut 7:12-15. The LORD will keep with you his covenant and
loving kindness, (you are a special people for He will bless you
“above all peoples”) which He swore (שָׁבַע) (He is faithful) to your
forefathers (אֱבוֹתָיִךְ),

A4’. Deut. 7:16-26. God will clear away (נִשְׁלֵ) the nations (גוֹיִם), you shall consume all
peoples, you shall destroy them.

A5. Deut. 8:1. Keep the commands (מִצְוֹתַי) you may live and multiply, go in and possess
the land (אֶרֶץ) the LORD swore to give

B5. Deut. 8:2. God wants to know (יָדַע) what is in your heart (לִבְבְּךָ), if
you will keep his commands or not. He tests and humbles you.

C5. Deut. 8:3-4. Nature of God

God is faithful:

God fed you in the wilderness with
manna
God kept your clothing from
wearing out
Your feet did not swell

Instructions to the People:

Be Faithful:

Understand that man does not live
by bread alone, but by everything
that proceeds from the mouth of
God. Trust God for sustenance.

B5' Deut. 8:5. Know (יָדַעַ) in your heart (לִבְבִי) that God was
disciplining you as a son

A5'. Deut. 8:6-10. Keep the commands (בְּצִוּוֹתַי) God is bringing you into a land (אֶרֶץ) where you will eat food without scarcity and not lack anything, a good land (אֶרֶץ) he “has given you”

A6. Deut. 8:11-13. Don't forget (שָׁכַח) the LORD by not keeping His commands in your plenty

B6. Deut. 8:14a. then your heart becomes proud and you forget (שָׁכַח) the LORD

C6. Deut. 8:14b-16. Nature of God

God is faithful:

He brought you out of slavery in
Egypt

He kept you safe from serpents
and scorpions

He brought you water out of a
rock

He fed you manna

He is out to do “good for you in the
end”

Instruction to the People:

Be humble (*be faithful*)

B6'. Deut. 8:17. Proud heart (implied) and forgetfulness (implied) toward God

A6'. Deut. 8:18-20. Remember (זָכַר) the LORD (keep his commands), listen to the voice of the LORD, if ever you forget (שָׁכַח) you will perish

A7. Deut. 9:1-10:11. People about to cross the Jordan to dispossess (שָׂרַף) the nations “greater and mightier than you” (9:1) ***The LORD is faithful***, the land will be possessed in spite of the people's unfaithfulness. The LORD works to confirm his oath which he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (9:5; 10:10).

B7. Deut. 10:11-11:21. The Nature of God:

Faithful: Proceed, go in and possess the land I swore to their fathers to give them (10:11; 11:21)

To God belongs heaven, and earth

God chose to set his affection on the forefathers and to love them

God chose their descendants above all Peoples

God is God of gods and Lord of lords

He is great and mighty and awesome

He is just: no partiality or bribes, takes care of widows and orphans

He loves the alien

Instructions to the People:

Love God with all heart and soul (10:12; 11:1,13)

Keep his commands (10:13; 11:1, 8, 13,22)

Circumcise your hearts and stiffen neck no more (10:16).

Love the alien (10:19)

You be faithful: You shall swear by his name (10:20)

Teach these things to your sons (11:18-20)

Love the Lord, walk in all his ways, Hold fast to him (22)

A7'. Deut. 11:22-32. If you keep his commands, the Lord will drive out the nations and you will dispossess (שָׁרַף) nations greater and mightier than you (11:23) **(God is faithful)**. The people to cross the Jordan and possess the land which the Lord is giving them “you shall possess it and live in it” (11:31) **(God is faithful)**.

APPENDIX II:
THE SKELETAL CHIASTIC FRAMEWORK OF DEUTERONOMY 6
AROUND THE THEME OF “FAITHFULNESS”

A 5:33-6:2a: *You be faithful* (חַק, חִקָּה, אִרָּא), *YHWH is faithful* (יָטִב)

B. 6:3b: *YHWH is faithful* (דַּבַּר)

C. Deut 6:4-9: *YHWH is faithful* (אֱהָדָר), *you be faithful* (אֱהָדַב),
teach your children

D. Deut. 6:10-11: *YHWH is faithful* (שָׁבַע)

E. Deut. 6:12-18a: *YHWH is faithful*: **He brought
you up out of Egypt.**
You be faithful (שָׁבַע)

D' Deut. 6:18b-19: *YHWH is faithful* (שָׁבַע, כִּאֲשֶׁר דַּבַּר, טוֹב, יָטִב)

C' *YHWH is faithful*: **He brought us from Egypt out of slavery**
You be faithful: **Teach your sons**

B' Deut. 6:23b: *YHWH is faithful* (שָׁבַע)

A' Deut. 6:24-25: *You be faithful* (חַק, אִרָּא), *YHWH is Faithful* (טוֹב)

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