













pedagogy. The chapter begins by introducing what follows as “this is the commandment” (6:1), with the entire section of Deut 6–11 encompassing the scope of “this commandment” as an explication of the first of the Ten Commandments propounded in Deut 5:6–7: “I am Yhwh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt... you shall have no other gods before me” (Olson 2005: 49). The first nine verses of Deut 6 elaborate on the commandment, and describe the *habitus* by which this commandment can be practiced and transmitted to future generations. The second part of the chapter, verses 10–25, describe the giftedness of Israel’s life before Yhwh as the motivation for obedience to the commandment.

Moses begins introducing the commandment (וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה) as the content that Yhwh has commanded Moses to teach (לְלַמֵּד) to Israel (6:1). This “commandment” is then expanded to the rituals and judgments (הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים) as a link that frames the laws of Deuteronomy 12–26 as an exposition of this commandment (Olson 2005: 50; Otto 2012: 790). The aim of this teaching is to enable present and future generations of Israelites who enter the land to fear Yhwh “by keeping all his statutes and his commandments... all the days of your life, that your days may be long” (v. 2). If Israel obeys carefully, “it will go well with them and they will multiply greatly” in accordance with the promises of Yhwh (v.3 ). In these opening verses of Deut 6, Moses thus sets up the basic premise of Deuteronomic education: a total way of life of obedience to the commandments of Yhwh that is encapsulated in the fear of Yhwh. The ability of this way of life of obedience to the commandments to yield a coherent life and account for reality can be confirmed through experience: obedience leads to life before Yhwh—and as Moses will later explain in more detail—disobedience leads to death away from Yhwh. These criteria of verification are developed throughout the book of Deuteronomy, culminating in the blessings and curses of Deut 27–28. At the end of his speeches of Deuteronomy, Moses is thus able to declare that he has “set before Israel life and good, death and evil,” thus delineating the contours of the life-giving tradition, as a precursor for the coming generation to choose this life with conviction (Deut 30:15–20).

With this groundwork established in 6:1–3, Moses explicates the content of this teaching with a positive statement of the first commandment with the *Shema*: “Hear O Israel, Yhwh our God, Yhwh (is) one/Yhwh alone” (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד). The meaning of the Hebrew text of the *Shema* is ambiguous on a grammatical level.<sup>2</sup> The two main options for translation

are, “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone”, and “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” The first translation asserts that the relationship between Israel and God is to be exclusive and unique. The Lord is the only deity for Israel. The second translation articulates a theology of the nature of Yhwh as “one,” as a statement of monotheism in some sense. Following the work of Walter Moberly, the parallels of Deut 6:4 to Song of Songs 6:9 suggest the former reading (Moberly 2013: 7–40). According to Song 6:9, the poet praises his beloved with the following words: “my dove, my perfect one, is the only one (אֶחָדָה); the darling (אֶחָדָה) of her mother” (RSV). The sense of אֶחָדָה here is “one and only” or “unique,” as an individual who is unlike any other. Based on this parallel, Moberly concludes that the meaning of אֶחָדָה in Song 6:9, in a context where the term is related to the logic of devotion, is the key to understanding the meaning of אֶחָדָה in Deut 6:4 as also related to love and devotion. By this reading, Deut 6:4 would be understood as saying that “Yhwh our God” is “the one and only” deity worthy of Israel’s unreserved love. Within this covenantal context of Deuteronomy, the love of Yhwh thus establishes ethics as a matter of personal relationship of love and affection for the deity (Levenson 2016: 60–62), as Yhwh is a divine person who pursues and demands loving and committed relationship from his beloved people, Israel. Knowledge of Yhwh is thus intrinsically connected to the moral, social, and ethical commandments which Yhwh reveals (O’Dowd 2009: 42).

Verse 5 proceeds to call forth and describe a holistic response to the theology that v.4 articulates, urging Israel to love Yhwh with all their heart, soul, and strength. The heart (לֵבָב) is associated with thought and emotion, as the place of internal thought-processes; the soul (נֶפֶשׁ) is the life force, vitality, vigor, energy, self-hood, or inner forcefulness of a person; the combination of these terms with “strength” (קֵוֶה) calls for a love of Yhwh with one’s whole life, to mobilize all the capacities of the self and to do so to the highest possible degree (Levenson 2016: 69–72). This kind of love includes actions that express one’s orientation toward another. Deuteronomy’s concern is for a thoroughgoing internalization and appropriation of obedient action toward Yhwh so that action and intention fully cohere, as do practice and thought. This is a love that engages the entire person in decisive, passionate, and intense fidelity and obedience to Yhwh. Thus, the *telos* of Deuteronomical education is shaping the desires of the heart (Culp 2009: 125), rooted in a Hebraic knowledge that is participatory. Theological knowledge is intended to lead to a life lived in



conformity with Yhwh's order of reality (O'Dowd 2009: 3). The commandments to "love" (v. 4) and "fear" (cf. v. 2, 13) Yhwh entail covenantal loyalty that requires obedience to the commandments, but also inculcates emotional commitment to a relationship of affection and reverence for Yhwh that encompasses all of life (Arnold 2011: 561–562). The laws of Deuteronomy 12–26 delineate the all-encompassing nature of Israel's response to the experience of Yhwh, which extends the definition of the will of Yhwh to every area of life that is covered by the array of instructional legislation of these chapters.

This love for Yhwh is taught through a program of education outlined in vv.6–9. Educating the next generation is to take place in a family setting where the teaching is memorized (v. 6), as parents teach children about their history with Yhwh and how to walk in the ways of Yhwh and love of Yhwh in daily life (Culp 2009: 117–130). The descriptions of speaking the tradition and reciting it while sitting, walking, laying down, and rising, and of placing physical representations of the teaching on gates, doorposts, and foreheads, mark the instruction as permeating chronological, spatial, and social boundaries (vv. 7–9).<sup>3</sup> These bodily practices prescribe a pedagogy that enculturates the student into an integrated practice of the faith in every area of life, as the *Shema* advocates all-encompassing devotion to Yhwh (O'Dowd 2009: 46). This pedagogy begins in the home, with the parents as the initial conveyers of the tradition as the embodiment of the present personal authority of the tradition. In the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Deuteronomy calls Israel into the vocation of a "Nation of Educators," where the teacher is the greatest hero (Sacks 2019: 99). Moses of course is the teacher *par excellence*, but the responsibility of pedagogy begins in the family and extends to the various leadership roles of society such as the priests, Levites, and elders (Deut 31:9–13; Olson 2005: 44–45), as well as to the prophet "like Moses" who will be the medium through which Yhwh will guide Israel into fulfilling its covenant obligations to Yhwh in future contexts (Deut 18:18–22). The continuation of the words of Yhwh through prophecy will provide guidance for applying and showing the continuing relevance of the instructions of Yhwh in future situations (Tigay 2003: 176; O'Dowd 2005: 72). Finally, at the end of Deuteronomy, the wisdom of Moses as the teacher of Israel is transmitted to Joshua through a "spirit of wisdom" that Moses imparts to him (34:9). As a result, the authority of Joshua is recognized by all Israel, who obey him as the authoritative purveyor of the tradition and do according to all the commandments of

Yhwh. Thus, in the absence of Moses, the voice of Yhwh will continue to instruct Israel through prophetic revelation as well as the spirit of wisdom that now rests upon Joshua. Other authoritative guides in the community, such as parents, priests, and elders, will continue to provide the content of the tradition through teaching. Their authoritative modeling of the tradition and wisdom from a lifetime of verification will offer guidelines to the students on the application of the tradition to ensure that Israel enters the promised land and experiences the blessings that Yhwh has promised (6:2–3), thus walking the next generation of Israelites through a process of verification to experience the truth of the tradition that is being passed on.

### Deuteronomy 6:10-19

Verses 10–19 proceed to anchor the significance of the bodily pedagogy of the *Shema* in the larger framework of the tradition by locating the practices of transmission within the context of Israel's covenant relationship with Yhwh. These verses imagine the future that awaits this educated Israel by recalling the giftedness of their existence: Israel is reminded of the gift of the land (vv.10–15) and Yhwh's provision for them in the wilderness (vv. 16–19; Olson 2005: 52). Again, this section establishes criteria for verification of the tradition: Israel can know through experience the reality of their covenant with Yhwh by discerning and receiving the life-giving provision of Yhwh (vv. 10–11), while turning away from Yhwh results in destruction. The commandment in v.13 to fear and serve Yhwh, and to swear only by Yhwh—as a verbalized expression of covenant commitment (Otto 2012: 815)—communicate exclusive loyalty to Yhwh, before verse 14 warns of a prominent theme repeated throughout the pedagogy of Deuteronomy: the danger of Israel failing to honor Yhwh by “going after other gods—gods of the peoples who are around you.” The language of “going after/walking after” (הֵלֵךְ אַחֲרָיִךְ) is from the realm of marriage relationships, thus framing the act of religious apostasy as marital infidelity (Otto 2012: 815). Moses presumes—despite commands to annihilate the inhabitants of the promised land Israel is about to enter (cf. Deut 7:1–5)<sup>4</sup>—that Israel will undergo a sustained encounter with Canaanite ideologies upon their entry into the land. This encounter will apply immense pressure to Israel's understanding of her theological traditions and test the convictions of future generations in the veracity and beneficence of those traditions. Thus, Deuteronomic education must prepare Israel to evaluate the merits of competing traditions in light of the theological and ethical

truth she has experienced from her relationship with Yhwh. These encounters with alternative traditions are foreseen with statements about Israel's future engagements in the land, articulated especially with conditional *וְ*-clauses anticipating Israel's entrance into the land and the situations they will face (seen here in Deut 6:7, 10, 20, and elsewhere in the "when you enter the land" statements such as Deut 4:19, 25, 30; 7:1–2; 8:12–13; 11:19, 29, 31; 12:10, 20, 25, 28–29; 25:18; 26:1; 27:3–4, 12; 30:1, 10). These statements set up an expectation for Israel to be able to discern the applicability of the tradition and verify it with conviction in future contexts. Especially Deuteronomy 4, as a sustained meditation on the tradition of Israel's creation theology integrated with her experience of Yhwh at Horeb, establishes parameters for Israel to undermine the intellectual foundations of idolatries she may encounter.<sup>5</sup> The close connections between the exclusive claims of the *Shema* and the warnings of apostasy in Deut 13 further highlight the way that Deut 6 functions as a hermeneutical key for critiquing and rejecting alternative theological and ethical traditions (Otto 2012: 828).

To enter the land and fully actualize Israel's potential freedom thus entails risk, and it is only in the responsible exercise of this freedom that each generation of Israelites realizes their individual freedom and reaches maturity as the people whom Yhwh has liberated from Egypt. Diligently observing the laws—thus doing what is right and good in the sight of Yhwh—results in life and prosperity for Israel (vv. 17–18). The imagery establishes a vision of the good of the tradition, from which perspective competing traditions can be evaluated. As this theological overview of the tradition asserts, Yhwh, who dwells "in the midst of Israel," is an impassioned deity (v. 15).<sup>6</sup> Contrary to common views on the theology of transcendence in Deuteronomy according to which Yhwh is only present in a "spiritual sense" in the sanctuary through his "name" (Tigay 2003: xiii), Deuteronomical theology that describes Yhwh dwelling "in the midst" of Israel (cf. Deut 7:21; 23:14), or Israel living "before Yhwh" (לְפָנֵי יְהוָה cf. v.25) is immensely personal. This personal presence of Yhwh is impending upon Israel at every turn in the book. As J. Gary Millar argues, "The presence of Yahweh at the sanctuary is real and actual... The primary motive for going to the [chosen] place is not simply conformity in worship, but to meet with Yahweh himself. It is this reality that lies at the heart of the covenantal relationship. 'Rejoicing before Yahweh' is much more than enjoying the produce of the land—it is revelling in the relationship with the Giver of the land."<sup>7</sup>

### Deuteronomy 6:20-25

As the outline for pedagogy continues, v. 20 anticipates that future generations will inquire about the meaning of the tradition of instruction or doctrines,<sup>8</sup> rituals, and judgments (וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הַעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים) passed down. The response that the authority gives yields a liturgical commemoration of the key events of the tradition (Culp 2005: 126–129): deliverance from Egypt that the parents had seen with their eyes (vv. 21–22), the giving of the land of promise to confirm Yhwh’s oath to Israel’s ancestors (v. 23), and the interpretation of the meaning of the covenant and laws as intended “for our good always, that he (Yhwh) might preserve us alive,” with obedience motivated by the “fear of Yhwh our God” (v. 24). The parents thus recount the way that they were initiated into the tradition: their experiences with Yhwh were followed by instruction and interpretation of the significance of these experiences, which resulted in a life of commitment to Yhwh as defined by covenant (Hinkle 2016: 70). This pattern of how Yhwh instructed the first generation of Israelites is to be replicated as the model education: the parents are to model the covenant faithfulness of Yhwh, which faithfulness the children are to experience in and through the community. The parents are then to offer instruction on the religious and ethical significance of the tradition and discernment regarding the continuing experience of Yhwh for the children to critique and verify.

This initial question by the children about the meaning of the tradition is addressed to the parents in the second person: “what is the meaning of the things that Yhwh commanded you?” (v. 20). The response of the parents links the children with the ancestral traditions and promises of Yhwh as part of the community, including them in the community by using the common plural pronoun “our ancestors” (v. 23). This move integrates the children into the communal identity as part of the “us” whom Yhwh has saved, and to whom Yhwh has given commandments and promises (v. 24). The description of the events of the tradition, which integrates the theology of the oneness/uniqueness of Yhwh that is espoused in the *Shema* with concrete historical experiences from Israel’s relationship with Yhwh, affects a response of gratitude, motivates obedience, and teaches Israel to own and identify with the foundational events of the tradition and their significance. The chapter concludes in v. 25 with a reminder: the obedience of Israel—characterized as righteousness (צְדָקָה)—results in a coherent life to be lived out before the commanding presence of “Yhwh our God” (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ). Thus, the chapter concludes by setting up the possibility of verification. If

Israel receives and obeys the tradition that Moses is passing on from Yhwh, they will encounter life before Yhwh as a back-and-forth relationship with Yhwh by which Israel can have, what Eckart Otto calls, a “dynamic experience”<sup>9</sup> of this relationship (Otto 2012: 825–826).

## Conclusion

We have seen in the pedagogy of Deut 6 that the pressing reality of the oneness of Yhwh for Israel becomes the totalizing explanatory hypothesis within the context of which Israel is to live out its life and vocation in the promised land. In the words of Bill Arnold, the paraenetic preaching of Deuteronomy, as seen for example in Deut 6, is the “first place [in the Hebrew Bible] we find an effort to articulate a theoretical and comprehensive understanding of what it means for humans to live in relationship with God” (Arnold 2011: 567). Passing on this theoretical and comprehensive understanding of relationship with Yhwh to future generations in a manner that leads to experience and conviction is at the core of Deuteronomy’s program of instruction. Reading Deuteronomy in light of the pedagogical theory of Luigi Giussani, we can thus see in Deuteronomy the interplay between the features of education into tradition as a hypothesis about the total meaning of reality, while the authoritative guide and community lead the student through a process of verification that results in the student attaining conviction in the ability of the tradition to account for reality. In each section of Deut 6, the character of Yhwh as the total hypothesis of reality that demands ultimate obedience is articulated. Yhwh, who is the one and only deity worthy of Israel’s love and respect as the *Shema* articulates (v. 4–5), lives in the midst of Israel as a personal presence that demands ultimate alliance (v. 15). Israel must in turn obey the commandments to live out a life of flourishing in the promised land before Yhwh (v. 25). Concomitant to this ultimate reality, Israel is to live in accordance with “what is right in the eyes of Yhwh” (v.18), not out of coercion, but as a reasoned and loving response to the nature of Yhwh who invites Israel into a covenant relationship in which obedience is for their good (v. 24).

In this process of education, Moses is at pains to set up guidelines for the potential confirmation of the veracity of this tradition—the character of Yhwh, the promises and faithfulness of Yhwh, and the goodness of the instruction of Yhwh—as knowledge that can be verified. The chapter is

interspersed with indications that establish the possibility of the verification of the tradition as an education into the meaning of reality. The pedagogy of the *Shema* invites the student to critique, inquire about, and examine the value and applicability of the tradition to every realm of life, while forming the student in a way of life grounded in the tradition, within a community in which the reality of Yhwh is regularly encountered. Giussani's model of education thus has highlighted how Christian educators today may look to Deuteronomy as offering a proven methodology of religious pedagogy in anchoring students in the reality of the tradition and in facilitating experience in the tradition as a total way of life lived before the presence of God as the total meaning of reality.

## End Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Robson 2016: 214–215, for grammatical discussion of the various interpretive options. The key question is the relationship between the two clauses: יהוה אלהינו can be taken in apposition to יהוה אחד, or the two phrases can be taken as nominal clauses, or יהוה אלהינו as a *casus pendens*; cf. Otto, *Deuteronomium 4:44–11:32*: 794, for further discussion.

<sup>3</sup> Culp 2009: 124. On the inclusion also of women in this pedagogical program, see Otto 2012: 806.

<sup>4</sup> See Moberly 2013: 41–74 for the implications of the language of *herem* in Deut 7:1–5 as a metaphor for total obedience that assumes the continuing presence of Canaanites in the land whose ideologies Israel must reject.

<sup>5</sup> See especially O'Dowd 2005: 39–42 for a discussion of the significance of Deuteronomy 4 for pedagogy in Israelite monotheism.

<sup>6</sup> For this translation of קָוָה, see Tigay 2003: 65, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Millar 2000: 103. See Deut 1:45; 4:10; 6:25; 9:18, 25; 10:8; 12:7, 12, 18; 14:23, 26; 15:20; 16:11; 18:7; 19:17; 24:4, 13; 26:5, 10, 13; 27:7; 29:9, 14 for the phrase יהוה לפני.

<sup>8</sup> On עֲדָת as doctrines, see Culp 2005: 127.

<sup>9</sup> Otto, *Deuteronomium* 4:44–11:32: 825–826.

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