

***Mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6: A Model of Pedagogical Authority and Its Relevance to Authoritative Parenting**

Autor:
Valentino Wariki

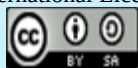
Afiliation
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi
Bethel Indonesia

Email:
valentino.wariki@sttbi.ac.id

Dates:
Submitted: 09/02/2026
Revised: 21/02/2026
Accepted: 03/07/2026

DOI :
<https://doi.org/10.5354/7/492t9z40>

Licensee: Real Kiddos.
This work is licensed
under a Creative
Commons Attribution-
Share Alike 4.0
International License



Abstract

This article aims to analyze God's *mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6 as a construction of pedagogical authority in the formation of faith across generations. This study addresses a gap in previous scholarship that tends to interpret *mitsvah* in a predominantly legalistic manner and has not sufficiently integrated it with pedagogical perspectives and developmental psychology. Employing a qualitative approach with a hermeneutical-exegetical method, this research conducts literary, lexical, and theological analyses of the textual structure, key terms, and patterns of faith transmission in Deuteronomy 6. The findings indicate that God's *mitsvah* embodies both strong normative demands and high relational involvement, expressed through concrete obedience, sustained commitment, and intentional instruction of children. These results demonstrate that *mitsvah* functions as a formative pedagogical authority rather than merely a regulatory command. The novelty of this study lies in its reinterpretation of *mitsvah* as a relational pedagogical framework and its dialogical integration with the theory of authoritative parenting proposed by Diana Baumrind, highlighting the correspondence between the dimensions of demand and responsiveness in the biblical text and in developmental psychology. This study contributes theoretically to biblical theology and faith education, while also offering practical implications for family-based faith formation in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: *mitsvah*, Deuteronomy 6, pedagogical authority, authoritative parenting

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis *mitsvah* Allah dalam Ulangan 6 sebagai konstruksi otoritas pedagogis dalam pembentukan iman lintas generasi. Kajian ini berangkat dari kesenjangan dalam studi sebelumnya yang cenderung memahami *mitsvah* secara legalistik dan belum mengintegrasikannya secara memadai dengan perspektif pedagogis dan psikologi perkembangan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode hermeneutika-eksegesis melalui analisis literer, leksikal, dan teologis terhadap struktur teks, istilah kunci, serta pola transmisi iman dalam Ulangan 6. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *mitsvah* Allah mengandung dimensi tuntutan normatif yang tinggi sekaligus keterlibatan relasional yang intens, yang diwujudkan melalui praktik ketaatan, pemeliharaan berkelanjutan, dan pengajaran yang disengaja kepada anak-anak. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa *mitsvah* berfungsi sebagai otoritas pedagogis yang bersifat formatif, bukan sekadar regulatif. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada reinterpretasi *mitsvah* sebagai kerangka pedagogis relasional serta integrasinya secara dialogis dengan teori pola asuh otoritatif Diana Baumrind, yang memperlihatkan kesepadanan antara dimensi tuntutan dan responsivitas dalam teks biblia dan konsep psikologi perkembangan. Sehingga, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis bagi kajian teologi biblia dan pendidikan iman, sekaligus menawarkan implikasi praktis bagi pengasuhan keluarga dalam konteks kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *mitsvah*, Ulangan 6, otoritas pedagogis, pola asuh otoritatif

INTRODUCTION

Literarily and canonically, Deuteronomy 6 belongs to the group of texts classified as covenantal statutes or legislative law within the Torah tradition (Woods, 2011). However, unlike the technically oriented casuistic law collections, this chapter is composed in a strong and repetitive imperative style, indicating the urgency of the

message intended to be instilled. The structure and language of Deuteronomy 6 also reflect the character of the book of Deuteronomy as a whole, namely, as a rearticulation and actualization of the Sinai law, not merely a repetition, but an interpretation and expansion of the Mosaic law within the context of Israel's life as they prepared to enter the promised land.

Significantly, the form of divine communication in this pericope does not end with the relationship between God and Moses or between God and Israel as the first generation, but explicitly extends beyond generational boundaries through the transmission of the mitsvah. This is evident from the repeated references to children and descendants throughout the chapter (vv. 2, 7, 20, and 21), which indicate that God's mitsvah was from the beginning intended to be transmitted continuously. Particularly in verses 20–21, God explicitly commands that the explanation of His mitsvah, statutes, and ordinances be conveyed to the children, not merely as a list of obligations, but as an understanding that shapes the consciousness of faith. Thus, Deuteronomy 6 presents God's mitsvah not only as a communal norm regulating the life of the covenant people, but also as an intergenerational pedagogical content that must be taught, interpreted, and internalized within the context of family relationships.

This emphasis shows that God not only desired personal obedience from Moses and the generation of Israel in His own time, but also explicitly placed pedagogical responsibility in the hands of parents. The generation that received the law was required to become an agent of faith transmission, teaching, interpreting, and embodying God's law within the context of family relationships. In other words, God's law was not intended to endure merely through institutions, but through pedagogical relationships within the household.

Based on these textual indicators, the pattern of legal transmission in Deuteronomy 6 may be clearly identified: God communicated the mitsvah to Moses, Moses to the people of Israel, and the people of Israel to their children. This pattern emphasizes that obedience to God's law cannot be separated from the process of faith formation within the family. The author of Deuteronomy presents the command in verse 7 to teach the word repeatedly in the course of daily life, as establishing parents as the primary educators of their children's faith (Ganahl, 1994).

This text not only requires parents to communicate the law verbally, but also

Copyright © 2026: Real Kiddos (Online)

underscores the importance of exemplary living. God does not merely provide normative instructions; He frames the process of faith education as a relational practice integrated into every aspect of life. Deuteronomy 6 may therefore be understood as an expression of the primary responsibility of parents particularly fathers in the context of ancient Israel to introduce faith to their children consistently (Anderson, 2000). Garrison likewise argues that Deuteronomy 6:4–9 constitutes a strong biblical foundation for understanding faith-based parenting, in which spiritual education is inseparable from everyday life (Garrison, 2016).

Deuteronomy 6 speaks not only about obedience to God's law, but also about how that law functions as a pedagogical authority that shapes the faith, character, and identity of God's people across generations. In this light, God's mitzvah in Deuteronomy 6 may be interpreted as reflecting a form of authority that is not legalistic, but rather an authority that guides and forms through love. This perspective opens a constructive dialogue with the concept of authoritative parenting, which in developmental psychology is understood as a parenting style that combines clear expectations with relational warmth and is oriented toward the internalization of values. Furthermore, this reading of Deuteronomy 6 moves beyond models of Christian education that merely emphasize the systematic integration of theology and curriculum. Such models are often criticized for being overly structured and for leaving insufficient room for transformative pedagogical imagination (Setianto et al., 2026). Deuteronomy 6 instead demonstrates that faith education must not stop at the reproduction of doctrine or theological status, but must become a lived praxis that forms learners within the concrete realities of everyday life.

This approach makes it possible to read Deuteronomy 6 not merely as a normative legal text, but as a pedagogical text that illustrates how Sacred Scripture shapes the faith, knowledge, and lived praxis of God's people. Such a reading is consistent with the understanding that the integration of Sacred Scripture in education does not end with the addition of religious content or the achievement of cognitive outcomes alone, but aims at the formation of a reflective faith that is actualized in real life (Wariki, 2026). Therefore, God's mitzvah in this chapter does not function as a repressive instrument of control, but as a means of faith formation that is internalized through teaching, exemplary living, loving relationships, and

intergenerational narrative transmission. Deuteronomy 6 presents a model of pedagogical authority that demands obedience while simultaneously providing space for understanding, dialogue, and the transmission of the meaning of faith within the family.

Building on this reading, this article aims to explore God's mitsvah in Deuteronomy 6 as a reflection of pedagogical authority that is consistent with the principles of authoritative parenting. Through a dialogue between biblical exegesis and authoritative parenting theory, this study seeks to demonstrate that the tension between authority and love, which often emerges in faith-education practices, is not inherently antagonistic. On the contrary, Deuteronomy 6 shows that authority rooted in love and covenantal relationship becomes the primary foundation for the formation of mature and enduring faith. Through this approach, the article is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the fields of biblical theology and faith education, while also offering a reflective framework relevant to contemporary practices of parenting and family discipleship within the context of Christian faith.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a hermeneutical-exegetical method combined with an interdisciplinary dialogue between biblical theology and developmental psychology. This approach is chosen because Deuteronomy 6 contains not only historical and theological meaning, but also represents a pedagogical structure that can be analyzed in light of contemporary parenting theory. Accordingly, Deuteronomy 6 is understood as a theological-pedagogical discourse that opens space for interdisciplinary reflection, rather than merely as a normative legal document situated in an ancient context.

The exegetical analysis is conducted through literary, lexical, syntactical, and theological investigation of Deuteronomy 6, with particular attention given to key terms such as mitsvah, lāmad, šāmar, and 'āsâ, as well as to the imperative structure and the pattern of intergenerational faith transmission (Brown, 2017). This study also takes into account the canonical context of the book of Deuteronomy as a rearticulation of the Sinai law, together with the socio-religious background of Israel as it prepared to enter the promised land. The meaning of the text is therefore

understood not only within its historical horizon, but also within its internal dynamics, which emphasize internalization, exemplary living, and the transmission of faith within the family context.

In bridging the hermeneutical gap between the ancient text and the contemporary context, this study employs a reflective hermeneutical approach by bringing the exegetical findings into dialogue with the parenting typology developed by Diana Baumrind (Baumrind, 1978). In particular, the study uses Baumrind's four parenting categories, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, as a comparative framework for identifying the configuration of the relationship between demandingness and responsiveness in Deuteronomy 6. The authoritative parenting model is used as the primary analytical lens because its combination of high expectations and relational involvement reflects the pedagogical pattern identified in the text, particularly regarding obedience, teaching, and the transmission of faith.

This dialogue is not intended to reduce the biblical text to modern psychological categories, but rather to establish an analogical and mutually enriching relationship between the two disciplines. The method adopted is therefore integrative and non-reductionistic. The hermeneutical-exegetical approach ensures that the interpretation remains grounded in the text and its canonical context, while the integration of Baumrind's typology enables a more contextual and applicable articulation of the findings. Through this method, the study argues that God's mitsvah in Deuteronomy 6 can be understood as a form of pedagogical authority that integrates normative demands with formative relational engagement, and that this model remains relevant for contemporary parenting and family faith formation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

God's Mitsvah as Supreme Authority

In the Jewish interpretive tradition, God's mitsvah in Deuteronomy 6 is understood not merely as a legal command, but as a guide for living in relationship with God. The Midrash Sifrei, as discussed in the work of Shai Held, reads the relationship between Deuteronomy 6:5 and 6 in a pedagogical manner: the command to love the LORD with all one's heart, soul, and strength constitutes the mitsvah as the ultimate goal, while the command that the words of the Torah be kept in the heart

explains the concrete means by which that mitsvah is lived out (Held, 2017). The mitsvah of loving God does not stand as an abstract demand, but is actualized through the internalization of the Torah. Torah study is understood as the primary means of knowing God and walking in His ways. Consequently, the effort to know God through the mitsvah cannot be separated from character transformation; love for God is always manifested in a way of life that increasingly reflects God's own love and goodness.

This understanding adds significant depth to the use of the term לָמַד (lāmad) in the imperative context of Deuteronomy 6:1. Lexically, lāmad means “to teach” or “to cause someone to learn” (Strong, 1999). Its occurrence here signals a normative commission that binds both Moses and the people of Israel to learn and to teach the Torah as an expression of obedience to God's mitsvah. The study of the Torah is therefore not presented as a methodological option, but as an obligation grounded in divine authority, enabling the covenant people to embody the mitsvah of loving God in a tangible way. The pedagogical dimension (lāmad) and the authoritative dimension (mitsvah) are thus united within a single divine mandate: through the ongoing learning of the Torah, the heart is formed, the will is directed, and love for God is expressed in daily life and transmitted across generations.

Obedience to God's commands is not merely a matter of verbal confession, but must be embodied in the practice of life. If the people of Israel failed to observe these laws, the covenantal consequences, including the loss of their right to the land, could be activated. Thus, God's mitsvah in Deuteronomy 6 functions as the supreme authority governing not only religious matters, but also the communal and historical survival of the covenant people.

Accordingly, mitsvah cannot be understood as an isolated moral rule, but as a binding divine authority that shapes, directs, and orders the life of the community. This authority is pedagogical because it is communicated through an intensive process of teaching, and it is comprehensive because it determines Israel's relationship with God, the land, and their future. Therefore, Deuteronomy 6 presents God's mitsvah as the center of faith formation and obedience, as well as the foundation for the transmission of the community's values and identity across generations.

In verse 2, God provides the theological reason why the Israelite generation in the time of Moses was to observe the mitsvah He had given. Obedience to God's commands is not understood as an end in itself, but is directed toward the formation of a continuing disposition of faith, so that Israel together with their children and descendants might continue to hold fast to His commandments and thus experience the continuation of long life. God's expectation does not terminate in the temporary obedience of the first generation, but rests on their ability to become living examples for subsequent generations as they settled in the promised land. This emphasis is reinforced by the use of the verb שָׁמַר (*šāmar*), meaning "to keep," "to guard," or "to observe faithfully." The term points to an active and continual obedience to the mitsvah. Such obedience is understood as the prerequisite for God's blessing of long life, which in ancient Israelite tradition was regarded as one of the most significant forms of outward grace namely, the preservation of life and the stability of the community's existence in the promised land.

The reaffirmation of God's expectation is further demonstrated in verse 3, which states that obedience to God's commands affects not only the continuation of life, but also the growth and expansion of the people of Israel. The imperative call "Hear!" (שְׁמַע, *šāma'*) signals the urgency of Israel's response to the will of God. The promise that Israel would become a great nation reiterates and reaffirms God's covenant promise to Abraham, their ancestor. The intensity of this promise is emphasized through the use of the verb רָבָה (*rābâ*), "to increase" or "to multiply," strengthened by the adverb מְאֹד (*me'ōd*), "greatly" or "exceedingly." Israel's numerical growth and well-being are explicitly linked to their faithfulness in hearing and obeying God's commands.

This passage reaffirms at least two principal promises: the promise of the land and the promise of becoming a great nation. Yet these promises are not presented as automatic entitlements, but as consequences contingent upon obedience. The expression describing a land flowing with milk and honey functions as a periphrasis for the land of Canaan, signifying the potential for prosperity and abundance of life. However, that potential could be realized only if the people of Israel remained steadfast in adhering to God's commands.

This sequence of verses underscores that God's mitsvah functions as the

supreme authority governing Israel's relationship with God, their survival, and their future in the promised land. The mitsvah is not merely a moral or religious standard; it serves as a divine authority that determines the direction of the community's life both corporately and across generations. Obedience to the mitsvah becomes the decisive factor in whether Israel may live, flourish, and endure as God's covenant people in His presence.

Internalization of the Mitsvah through the Shema Israel

The Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 occupies an exceptionally central position within this pericope and indeed within the Torah as a whole. The Masoretic scribal tradition highlights the special significance of this verse through the enlargement of the final letter of the last word יְהוָה ('ehād, "one"), a visual marker apparently intended to draw the reader's attention to the theological core of the statement (Gill, 2012). Deuteronomy 6:4 may therefore be understood as the principal message, even the theological epicenter, affirming Israel's confession of the oneness of YHWH. In this regard, Moshe Weinfeld proposes four possible translations of the verse, each seeking to capture the relationship between YHWH, Israel, and His oneness (Weinfeld, 1991). Among these options, Weinfeld regards the translation "YHWH our God is one YHWH" as the most appropriate, and this rendering has been widely adopted by many modern translations (Weinfeld, 1991). This translation affirms not only Israel's monotheism, but also the exclusive covenant relationship between YHWH and His people.

However, the Shema does not remain merely a theological declaration of faith. The subsequent verses (Deut. 6:5-9) demonstrate that this confession must be preserved and embodied through concrete practices of daily life: speaking of it when walking, lying down, and rising up; binding it as a sign on the hand and the forehead; and writing it on the doorposts of the house and on the gates. These highly practical instructions indicate that loving God first requires remembering Him continually. The wisdom of the Shema lies precisely in its awareness of the fragility of human psychology and memory; without repetition, signs, and reminders embedded within the rhythms of life, human beings are prone to forget God (Kanitz, 2020). Therefore, the commands to bind, fasten, and write function as pedagogical strategies designed

Copyright © 2026: Real Kiddos (Online)

to ensure that the confession of YHWH's oneness is not merely recited, but internalized in every dimension of the community's life.

The Shema is immediately followed by God's command to love Him in verse 5. The call of the Shema echoes a demand for wholehearted love from the people of Israel—a heart that is focused on and centered exclusively on Him as God. The concept of the heart constitutes the core of ancient Near Eastern theological anthropology (Carpenter, 2009). In a hymn to Aten, the Pharaoh declares, "You are in my heart, and there is no one else who knows you." According to Egyptian tradition, the heart was understood as the divine presence dwelling within a human being. The heart itself was regarded as residing in its temple, and a devout Egyptian worshiper was said to keep Amun within his heart.

In the Hittite language and tradition, a vassal and his lord were expected to love one another as they loved themselves. A love that endured even unto death, the highest form of loyalty, was expected from the vassal toward the king. Furthermore, a vassal was to hate his lord's enemies, and the lord was likewise expected to hate the enemies of his vassal (Carpenter, 2009). The relationship between king and vassal was therefore conceived as one of profound personal attachment. More broadly, ancient Near Eastern traditions shared a common pattern of an exceptionally close relationship between ruler and subordinate.

Against this background, Israel was to submit exclusively to YHWH within the framework of the covenant, and to serve Him with the totality of their being and with the intensity of covenantal love (Kline, 1963). If this represents the relational climax that God desired from Israel, then the supreme manifestation of God's perfect love is revealed in Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself through death on the cross (Wariki et al., 2025). From the very beginning, God's relationship with Israel was therefore not merely legal-formal through the Mosaic law, but fundamentally relational—a covenant bond rooted in God's love and faithfulness.

The understanding of the heart (לֵב/לִב) in the world of the Old Testament and the ancient Near East provides an important conceptual foundation for interpreting Deuteronomy 6:6–7. In this context, the heart is not understood merely as the center of emotions, but as the center of cognition, reasoning, volition, and decision-making (Carpenter, 2009). Therefore, the command that the words of God (הַדְּבָרִים),

haddēbārīm) are to be “upon your heart” (עַל-לִבְכֶּךָ, *‘al-levāvekha*), as stated in verse 6, points to a comprehensive internalization of God’s will, rather than merely verbal memorization or external conformity.

The connection between verse 6 and verse 7 becomes clear when understood within this paradigm. What must first dwell in the hearts of Moses’ generation is then to be transmitted through intentional and repeated instruction to their children (Schipper, 2021). In other words, the pedagogical process in Deuteronomy 6 moves from inner internalization to relational transmission. For Richard D. Nelson, obedience to the mitsvah refers to the concrete expression of piety, namely, a piety embodied in the practices of everyday life (Nelson, 2004). This understanding corresponds with Botterweck’s paradigm through the terminology דָּבָר (*dābār*), which refers not to a particular portion of instruction, but to the entire Mosaic law as the totality of God’s will, transmitted and lived out as the covenant community’s way of life (Botterweck, 1978).

The instruction to teach this *dābār* when sitting at home, when walking along the road, when lying down, and when rising up underscores that faith education is holistic and contextual. Instruction is not confined to a particular place or time, but is integrated into the rhythms of everyday life. In light of the ancient understanding of the heart as the center of thought and action, this pattern indicates that the primary purpose of such repeated instruction is to shape the inner orientation of children, so that God’s law is not merely known intellectually, but becomes an internal principle that directs the way they think, speak, and act.

The urgency of the *haddēbārīm* is further emphasized in verses 8 and 9, where the Israelites are commanded to apply them in their daily lives. The command to bind them as a sign on their hands and to make them symbols on their foreheads, followed by the requirement to write them on the doorposts of their houses and on their gates, demonstrates how essential and inseparable the Mosaic law was to be from the life of Israel. The instruction to write them on the doorposts and gates was intended to remind Israel whenever they went out and came in, so that they would be careful to observe them. Doorposts and city gates represented places of honor and significance in ancient Israelite society (Hammer, 1986). Thus, the *haddēbārīm* occupied a position of special honor in the life of Israel, not merely because they

were recognized as the law of Moses, but because the haddēbārîm were understood to be the very word of the Most High God.

Mitsvah as Protective Authority

God delivers a series of warnings that emphasize the function of the mitsvah as a protective authority, namely, one that safeguards the covenant community from distortions of faith that arise precisely in the midst of abundance. This warning is found in Deuteronomy 6:10–13 and is primarily concerned with the danger of forgetting the LORD when the people of Israel begin to enjoy the abundant provision of the promised land. Such abundance has the potential to obscure Israel's covenantal memory of the true source of the blessings they receive. Consequently, the warning functions to preserve the people's awareness so that they may continue to direct their hearts and lives toward YHWH as the giver of every good gift. This abundance is portrayed as the result of God's anticipatory provision—houses, wells, and vineyards already prepared for their use—which recalls God's goodness in creation and His faithfulness to the covenant oath sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Woods, 2011). The warning is deliberately contrasted with the concrete evidence of God's goodness, highlighted through two key verbs in verse 10: *בָּרַךְ* (*bô'*, "to bring") and *נָתַן* (*nātan*, "to give"). These verbs emphasize that Israel's presence in Canaan is entirely the result of God's gracious initiative and action. Accordingly, the mitsvah functions protectively by preserving the community's memory of faith, so that Israel does not obscure or forget the true origin of the blessings they have received.

The second warning concerns God's jealousy if Israel turns to other gods. The Hebrew term used for "jealous" is *קַנָּא* (*qannā'*), an adjective that refers to God's own character (Clines, 2011b). The use of this term indicates that God's jealousy is not merely emotional, but is rooted in covenant faithfulness. God regards the worship of other gods as a form of rivalry that threatens the covenant relationship, especially in light of His total involvement in delivering Israel from Egypt and bringing them into the promised land. In this sense, the mitsvah functions as a guardian of relational fidelity, protecting Israel from the fragility of faith and from religious syncretism.

The third warning refers to the prohibition against testing God, recalling the incident at Massah as an example of Israel's failure of faith. This warning is not

merely a historical reference, but a pedagogical warning against an attitude that doubts God's presence and provision. The key term נָסָא (nāsâ, "to test") serves as the interpretive center of this verse, emphasizing that testing God constitutes an expression of distrust in the way God works. The event at Massah reveals Israel's tendency to accuse God of testing or even abandoning them, when in fact God was accompanying them. Through this prohibition, the mitsvah functions protectively by preserving the orientation of faith, so that the people do not evaluate God's presence merely on the basis of their immediate circumstances.

Taken together, the three warnings in verses 10–13 demonstrate that God's mitsvah is not intended as an oppressive restriction, but as an authority that protects the covenant community from forgetfulness, deviation, and unbelief. The mitsvah serves to preserve the memory of God's goodness, maintain covenantal faithfulness, and guide the people to continue trusting God amid the changing circumstances of life. The authority of the mitsvah is therefore protective in nature, because it is directed toward the integrity of the covenant relationship and the preservation of the community's faith.

Mitsvah as a Reflection of God's Pedagogical Authority

Deuteronomy 6 is built upon Israel's monotheistic confession, namely, the affirmation that YHWH is the one and only God who must be loved with all the heart (Kanitz, 2020). From this confession of faith, God's *mitsvah* derives its meaning, not merely as a legal command, but as a pedagogical means that shapes the way of life of the covenant community within its exclusive relationship with God. The *mitsvah* guides Israel to translate their love for God into a concrete and enduring praxis of life.

This pedagogical emphasis is clearly evident in verse 17 through the phrase שָׁמֹר תִּשְׁמְרֶנּוּ (šāmōr tišmerûn), which demands intentional and continual faithfulness to God's *mitsvah*. The repetition of the root šāmar emphasizes that the obedience being required is not a momentary response, but a sustained disposition of life that must be continually maintained. Faithfulness to the *mitsvah* is understood as an active commitment that must be preserved and transmitted as part of Israel's covenantal witness.

Furthermore, verse 18 emphasizes that obedience to the *mitsvah* must be

Copyright © 2026: Real Kiddos (Online)

expressed through concrete ethical actions, namely, doing what is right and good in the sight of the LORD. Obedience is not reduced to formal compliance, but is understood as a process of character formation that aligns human life with God's will. The *mitsvah* shapes human nature so that people may live in righteousness and goodness as an expression of their love for God.

The pedagogical dimension of the *mitsvah* reaches its fulfillment in the intergenerational transmission of faith. Deuteronomy 6 emphasizes that the *mitsvah* and the story of God's covenantal faithfulness—particularly His act of deliverance from Egypt, must be taught to children as the foundation of obedience. By remembering and recounting God's saving acts, the community is led to understand that the *mitsvah* is rooted in God's own faithfulness. The ultimate goal is not merely the attainment of human flourishing, but a life that is rightly ordered before God, as the covenant people embody the *mitsvah* as a way of life centered on the one true God.

Mitsvah as a Guide toward the Center of Life

It is not surprising that several English Bible translations assign Deuteronomy 6 the title "The Great Commandment." This designation accurately captures the theological intention of the chapter, namely that from the beginning of its composition, the structure and central idea of Deuteronomy 6 are directed toward a fundamental question: how should the people of Israel live with God? Living with God presupposes the existence of divine standards to which humanity must respond and which must be internalized. Therefore, God, as the absolute Person, is affirmed as the center of Israel's life, while the covenant community is called to align every aspect of their existence with His will (Wariki, 2023).

This alignment of life is expressed through obedience to the instruments of God's law, which in this text are articulated through the terms *šāvâ*, *ḥōq*, *mišpāṭ*, and *mitsvah*. These four terms function as normative frameworks that demonstrate the extent to which Israel lives faithfully before God. However, the obedience envisioned does not end with individual observance alone. God also requires that these commands be transmitted to children, so that obedience becomes part of the process of intergenerational faith transmission. This corresponds with the understanding of

ancient Israelite society, which viewed the Torah as Yahweh's law given not merely for one generation, but for the covenant community and its descendants (Rugwiji, 2020).

The *mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6 functions not merely as an ethical norm or religious law, but as a theological guide that directs the people toward the center of life—God Himself. Through obedience, teaching, and the transmission of the law, Israel is formed to live within a theocentric covenant relationship, in which their entire existence and future are determined by faithfulness to God. This conclusion affirms that the *mitsvah* serves as a pedagogical means that orients the whole life of the covenant people toward God as the center and source of life.

Typology in Developmental Psychology: Baumrind's Theoretical Framework

In the field of developmental psychology, various parenting models have been proposed by scholars. Nevertheless, the parenting typology developed by Diana Baumrind represents one of the most widely used and frequently referenced approaches in empirical research. Baumrind classified parenting styles based on two primary dimensions: parental demandingness and parental responsiveness. The dimension of demandingness refers to the extent to which parents establish standards, rules, and discipline for their children, whereas responsiveness refers to the degree of parental warmth, involvement, and sensitivity toward children's needs and expressions.

In its initial development, Baumrind identified three major parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting (Baumrind, 1966). In her subsequent research, she added another category, namely neglectful or uninvolved parenting, resulting in the four parenting models that are widely recognized today (Baumrind, 1991). These four models emerged from Baumrind's longitudinal observations and empirical analyses conducted over many years regarding parent–child interactions.

Authoritative parenting is characterized by a high level of demandingness combined with a high level of responsiveness. Parents with this style establish clear and consistent behavioral standards, monitor their children's activities, and provide firm guidance. However, such firmness is not repressive; rather, it is accompanied by

Copyright © 2026: Real Kiddos (Online)

warmth, emotional support, and two-way communication (Louis, 2022). The discipline practiced is generally supportive and rational rather than punitive. Authoritative parents encourage children to develop into individuals who are independent, socially responsible, self-regulated, and cooperative (Baumrind, 1991). They value both autonomy and disciplined obedience, while involving children in dialogue by explaining the reasons behind established rules and providing opportunities for children to express their perspectives (Baumrind, 1966). The aim of this parenting style is to maintain parental authority without eliminating the child's autonomy (Fadlillah & Fauziah, 2022).

In contrast, authoritarian parenting is characterized by a high level of demandingness but a low level of responsiveness. Parents with this style place strong emphasis on obedience, order, and authority, requiring children to comply with commands with minimal explanation. Rules and behavioral standards are established rigidly and are often perceived as absolute, sometimes being motivated by external sources of authority, including religious or traditional authority (Baumrind, 1966). Authoritarian parents tend to restrict children's autonomy, discourage verbal dialogue, and expect children to accept commands as unquestionable truths. Baumrind emphasizes that not all parents who are directive or traditional should be categorized as authoritarian; therefore, this typology also serves as a corrective against generalizations that equate authoritativeness with authoritarianism (Baumrind, 1991).

Permissive parenting is characterized by high responsiveness but low demandingness. Parents with this style are generally tolerant, nontraditional, and provide children with broad opportunities for self-expression. They rarely enforce strict rules, tend to avoid confrontation, and do not strongly require mature behavior or a high level of responsibility from their children. Nevertheless, permissive parents typically demonstrate emotional warmth and acceptance toward their children's desires and impulses (Baumrind, 1966). Within this parenting style, parents function more as sources of support than as active agents in shaping behavior, resulting in relatively minimal external control and enforcement of behavioral standards. Children are given considerable freedom to regulate their own activities without strong encouragement to conform to externally established norms.

Meanwhile, neglectful parenting is characterized by both low demandingness and low responsiveness. Parents with this style tend not to be actively involved in their children's lives, provide limited monitoring of their development, and offer minimal emotional support or behavioral guidance. In many cases, this lack of involvement reflects a neglect of parenting responsibilities, which may ultimately produce negative consequences for children's development (Baumrind, 1991). This parenting style is considered the most problematic because it fails to provide both the structure and warmth necessary for children to develop optimally.

God's Mitsvah as the Axis of Theocentric Life and Pedagogical Authority

The theological core of Deuteronomy 6 lies in God's *mitsvah* as the center and guide of the covenant community's life. From the beginning of the chapter, the *mitsvah* is not presented as an additional regulation, but as the supreme commandment that guides Israel to love the LORD their God. By placing God as the center of life for Israel and their descendants, the *mitsvah* functions as an axis that unifies the entire range of faith commitments and life practices. The command to love the LORD with all one's heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:4–5) constitutes the core of this chapter, which is subsequently expressed concretely through the terminology of *mitsvah* and through the human response articulated by the verbs 'āsâ and šāmar. Taken together, these terms demonstrate that God's *mitsvah* contains both a clear demand and the expectation of a complete human response.

God's *mitsvah* is not merely a verbal command, but a way of life that directs Israel to embody love for God in tangible ways. According to Deuteronomy 6, loving God is not an abstract inner experience, but a mode of existence expressed through actions, practices, and the formation of human character. Therefore, the *mitsvah* is intended to shape an existential reality in which the entire life of Israel, both individually and communally, is ordered according to a relationship with God as its center.

The verb 'āsâ emphasizes that the *mitsvah* requires concrete implementation. Within the context of the Old Testament, 'āsâ consistently refers to an active response to God's will, whether expressed through obedience or disobedience (Clines, 2011a). In Deuteronomy 6, 'āsâ indicates that love for God must be

embodied through the practice of the *mitsvah* in everyday life. However, momentary acts of obedience are insufficient. Therefore, *‘āsā* is complemented by the verb *šāmar*, which refers to the act of continually keeping, guarding, and preserving. If *‘āsā* describes the initial act of obedience, then *šāmar* ensures that God’s *mitsvah* is maintained, cultivated, and lived out consistently throughout one’s life.

The emphasis on the *mitsvah* is not limited to the generation of Moses alone. Deuteronomy 6 explicitly extends the scope of the *mitsvah* to the children and descendants of Israel. God’s *mitsvah* must be proclaimed, taught, and explained to subsequent generations. Thus, God’s *mitsvah* functions as intergenerational pedagogical content, shaping faith not only through personal obedience, but also through a process of teaching and transmission within the family context.

This pattern demonstrates that God’s *mitsvah* encompasses both firm demands and high relational involvement. God does not reduce the demands of the *mitsvah* when the command is directed toward children; rather, the same *mitsvah*, including the message of monotheism, divine warnings, covenantal promises, and theocentric orientation, is consistently applied to both parents and children. The commands to fear the LORD throughout life (v. 2), to teach the *mitsvah* repeatedly (v. 7), and to ensure that children understand its meaning (vv. 20–21) indicate that the *mitsvah* functions as a formative and guiding pedagogical authority, rather than as oppressive control. From the perspective of developmental psychology, this configuration of equally high demandingness and responsiveness corresponds with the characteristics of authoritative parenting.

The entire movement of the *mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6 points toward a relational goal whose culmination is a life wholly centered on God and expressed through complete love toward Him. When this vision could not be consistently realized by sinful humanity, the New Testament reveals the fulfillment of God’s love through the incarnation and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The incarnation does not abolish the *mitsvah*, but rather fulfills its deepest intention, namely, the restoration of the relationship between God and humanity. In this light, God’s restored people are called to embody the *mitsvah* once again as a way of life rooted in love and to transmit it as a pedagogical authority within families and communities of faith.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that God's *mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6 cannot be understood merely as a legal command, but rather as a pedagogical authority that shapes the orientation of faith, character, and the identity of the covenant community across generations. Literarily and canonically, this chapter presents the *mitsvah* as the axis of theocentric life, in which Israel's entire existence is directed toward God as its center. Obedience to the *mitsvah* does not function as an autonomous end in itself, but as a means of forming a living covenant relationship in which faith is expressed through concrete and enduring love.

The exegetical findings reveal that the *mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6 is consistently associated with the processes of faith internalization and transmission. Through the use of key verbs such as *lāmad*, *šāmar*, and *‘āsā*, the text emphasizes that the obedience desired by God is active, intentional, and consistent. The *mitsvah* must be learned, preserved, and practiced as a way of life, rather than merely memorized or formally observed. The emphasis on transmission to children demonstrates that, from the beginning, God's law was designed to be lived out through pedagogical relationships within the family, so that the generation receiving the *mitsvah* would become agents of faith formation for subsequent generations.

The Shema Israel (Deut. 6:4–9) further deepens this pedagogical dimension by emphasizing that the confession of faith in the oneness of YHWH must be internalized within the entire rhythm of daily life. The instructions to speak, bind, and write God's words reveal a theological awareness of the limitations of human memory and the necessity of concrete pedagogical strategies. Within the anthropological framework of the Old Testament, the placement of God's word upon the heart signifies the formation of the center of human cognition and will, so that the *mitsvah* functions as an internal principle directing the way God's people think, speak, and act.

When read in dialogue with Diana Baumrind's theory of authoritative parenting, God's *mitsvah* in Deuteronomy 6 reveals a significant structural correspondence. Divine authority is expressed through clear and consistent demands, while simultaneously being accompanied by intensive relational involvement in the process of teaching and transmitting faith. The *mitsvah* does not

Copyright © 2026: Real Kiddos (Online)

function as an instrument of oppressive control, but as a pedagogical means that guides and forms. The entire chapter directs the covenant community toward a comprehensive relational goal, namely, a life wholly centered on God and expressed through love that is embodied and transmitted, a vision that remains relevant for theological reflection and contemporary practices of faith-based parenting.

The practical implications of these findings suggest that Christian parents and educators need to develop parenting approaches that integrate clarity of values with relational closeness. First, parents are called to embody faith values as part of the rhythms of everyday life, not merely through formal instruction, but through consistent conversations, practices, and exemplary living. Second, faith discipline should be implemented within a dialogical framework, in which children are not only expected to obey but are also invited to understand the meaning behind the values being taught. Third, faith instruction should be narrative and contextual, connecting theological teaching with concrete experiences of life, just as Deuteronomy 6 connects the law with God's acts of salvation.

Furthermore, educators within the contexts of the church and family should view themselves not merely as transmitters of doctrine, but as facilitators of faith internalization. This requires a balance between structure (rules, practices, and discipline) and relationship (warmth, empathy, and two-way communication). Within this framework, the *mitsvah* can be lived as a pedagogical authority that forms character, rather than merely as a means of controlling behavior. Therefore, parenting and faith-education practices rooted in this principle have the potential to cultivate generations who are not only externally obedient, but who also possess a mature and reflective faith grounded in a living relationship with God.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. W. (2000). *Parental Influence Factors Affecting Christian Faith Maturity of Children through Adolescence* [Augsburg College]. <https://idun.augsburg.edu/etd/408>
- Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects Of Authoritative Parental Control On Child Behavior. *Society for Research in Child Development*, 37(4), 887–907.
- Baumrind, D. (1978). Reciprocal Rights and Responsibilities in Parent-Child

- Relations. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34(2), 179–196.
- Baumrind, D. (1991). The Influence of Parenting Style on Adolescent Competence and Substance Use. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11, 59–95.
- Botterweck, G. J. (1978). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. III* (G. J. Botterweck & H. Ringgren (eds.)). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Brown, W. P. (2017). *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Carpenter, E. E. (2009). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Deuteronomy* (J. H. Walton (ed.)). Zondervan.
- Clines, D. J. A. (2011a). *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, Vol. VI: Vol. VI* (D. J. A. Clines (ed.)). Sheffield Phoenix Press.
- Clines, D. J. A. (2011b). *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew Vol. VII: Vol. VII* (D. J. A. Clines (ed.)). Sheffield Phoenix Press.
- Fadlillah, M., & Fauziah, S. (2022). Analysis of Diana Baumrind's Parenting Style on Early Childhood Development. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14, 2127–2134. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i1.487>
- Ganahl, A. D. (1994). *Parenting: Does Research Support Biblical Principles A Review Of The Literature*.
- Garrison, J. R. (2016). *Marriage, Sexuality, And Christian Parental Instruction: A Descriptive Analysis Of Perspectives And Practices*. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- Gill, J. (2012). *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*.
- Hammer, R. (1986). *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (L. Nemoy (ed.)). Yale University Press.
- Held, R. S. (2017). *The Heart of Torah: Essays on the Weekly Torah Portion: Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* (Vol. 2). The Jewish Publication Society.
- Kanitz, L. A. (2020). *A Literary Shema: Annie Dillard's Judeo-Christian Vision and Voice*. Pickwick Publications.
- Kline, M. G. (1963). *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy-Studies and Commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Louis, J. P. (2022). The Young Parenting Inventory (YPI-R3), and the Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin Parenting Model: Finding Common Ground. *Children*, 9(2).

[https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/ children9020159](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/children9020159)

Nelson, R. D. (2004). *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press.

Rugwiji, T. T. (2020). The Law and Society in The Old Testament: Formulation and Implementation Of The Law in Ancient Israel. *Old Testament Essays*, 33(1), 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2020/v33n1a8>

Schipper, B. U. (2021). *The Hermeneutics of Torah: Proverbs 2, Deuteronomy, and the Composition of Proverbs 1–9* (T. C. Römer (ed.)). SBL Press. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday196711321>

Setianto, Y., Muryati Muryati, M., Wariki, V., & Manongga, J. S. (2026). Refiguring Christian pedagogy through Ruang Karso: A symbolic framework for formative praxis. *International Journal of Christianity and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20569971261440476>

Strong, J. (1999). *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*. Books For the Ages.

Wariki, V. (2023). Partikularitas pendidikan agama Kristen menjawab tantangan Posmodernisme Lyotard. *Kurios: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 9(3), 689–701.

Wariki, V. (2026). Fides Quaerens Intellectum dan Shalom: Integrasi Teks Suci dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Kristen. In *Warisan Iman dan Ilmu bagi Gereja: Teologi Perjanjian Lama dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen yang Mentransformasi*. 9786349681506.

Wariki, V., Setianto, Y., & Muryati, M. (2025). Distopia Yohanes 12: Narasi Katarsis Rasul Yohanes dalam Periode Konflik. *Phronesis: Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi*, 8.

Weinfeld, M. (1991). Deuteronomy 1-11. In W. F. Albright & D. N. Freedman (Eds.), *Bible* (Vol. 5). Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

Woods, E. J. (2011). *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Volume 5: Deuteronomy* (D. G. Firth & T. Longman III (eds.); Vol. 5). Inter-Varsity Press.