

Deuteronomy - Introduction & Background

Title

The Hebrew title of the book is derived from the Hebrew words *'elleh haddebarim* ("these are the words") and *debarim* ("words") taken from the book's opening verse (1:1). The LXX title *to Deuteronomion touto* ("second law") is derived from a mistranslation of Deuteronomy 17:18, which says "copy of the Law" rather than the "second Law." Both the Latin Vulgate title as well as the English title "Deuteronomy" are derived from the LXX mistranslation. However, "Although the title of the book rests on a mistranslation in the Septuagint, it is nevertheless a fortuitous error since Deuteronomy contains a second version of the law delivered on Mount Sinai as recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers." Thus, the title seems appropriate considering the book's content.

Authorship

Various lines of evidence point to Moses as the author of the book. First, Deuteronomy contains roughly forty references indicating that Moses is the book's author (Deut 1:5,6,9; 4:44; 5:1; 27:1; 29:1-2; 31:1,9,22,24; 30; 33:1,36). Second, the rest of the OT frequently claims Moses as the book's author (Joshua 1:7-8; Judges 1:20; 3:4; 1 Kings 2:3; 8:53; 2 Kings 14:6; 18:6; 2 Chr 25:4; Ezra 3:2; Neh 1:7; Ps 103:7; Dan 9:11; Mal 4:4). Third, while Christ generically referred to Moses as the author of the entire Pentateuch (John 5:46-47), He specifically referred to Moses as the author of Deuteronomy (Matt 19:7; Mark 7:10; 10:3-5).

Fourth, NT figures and writers routinely referred to Moses as the book's author (Matt 22:24; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37-38; Rom 10:19; 1 Chr 9:9; Heb 10:28).

Fifth, the book was written during the time of Moses since its genre is representative of a 15th–13th century treaty form. Sixth, the book fits the time of Moses. "Canaan is viewed from the outside; the Canaanite religion is seen as a future menace; it assumes the hearers remember Egypt and the wilderness; Israel is described as living in tents; and there is no evidence of a divided kingdom." Seventh, the historical and geographical details mentioned in the book seem to demand an eyewitness thus qualifying Moses as a likely candidate.

Eighth, Samaritan, Jewish, and Christian tradition presumes Mosaic authorship. Thompson observes, "In Judaism and in early Christianity the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch was generally held. Ben Sira in Ecclesiasticus 24:23 affirms this. So does Philo and Josephus." This assumption of Mosaic authorship was universally held until the 19th century.

Despite the persuasiveness of these arguments, many still object to Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy on various grounds. First, it is argued that because the preamble (1:1-5), the record of Moses' death (34), and various other sections (2:10-12,20-23; 3:13b-14) were obviously written by someone other than Moses, then the book as a whole was also written by someone other than Moses. However, these additions notwithstanding, Moses could still have been responsible for composing the bulk of the book.

Second, some argue that the book of the Law that was discovered in 2 Kings 22 was the Book of Deuteronomy. Apparently it was written by a pious forger and then hidden in the temple for the purpose of being discovered so as to effectuate Josiah's reforms. Critics of Mosaic authorship use this scenario to argue that someone other than Moses wrote Deuteronomy in the 7th century. However, there is no way to tell that the book discovered in Josiah's day was Deuteronomy. Also, it is more likely that the discovered book represents the entire Pentateuch that was neglected during the idolatrous and immediately preceding kingships of Manasseh and Amon. Neglect of legal codes was common in the ancient Near East. Furthermore, not only is the notion of a pious fraud an oxymoron, but also such a practice was unknown in the ancient Near East.

Third, some understand the reference to the central sanctuary (12:1-14) to be a polemic against the high places and a promotion of Jerusalem as the central place of worship. Since the high places were unknown in the Mosaic period, Deuteronomy could not have been written during that time. However, how could this reference be taken as a promotion of Jerusalem when the name of that city appears nowhere in Deuteronomy? In addition, why does 27:1-8 advocate that an altar be built upon Ebal rather than Jerusalem? Fourth, some contend that Deuteronomy could not have been written during the time of Moses since it contains prophecies of dispersion and regathering that happened much later in Israel's history (4:25-31; 28:20-68; 29:22-28; 30:1-10; 32:23-43). However, this objection represents nothing more than an anti-supernatural bias against predictive prophecy.

Date

The book was probably written in 1405 BC. This date becomes apparent upon considering several lines of evidence. First, the book was written at the end of the wilderness wanderings on the eve of the Canaan conquest (4:44-49; 34:1-4). These events transpired at least forty years after the Exodus from Egypt (Num 14:33-34; Deut 2:7, 14; Josh 5:6). Second, the book was written just before Moses' death, which occurred when he reached the age of 120 (Deut 31:2). Because Moses spent forty years in Egypt (Acts 7:23), forty years in Midian (Ex 7:7), and led the nation for an additional forty years in the wilderness (Acts 7:36), his death occurred roughly forty years after the Exodus.

Third, Deuteronomy was written in the seventy-day period in between the beginning of the events of the book and when Israel crossed the Jordan to enter Canaan. The former took place on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the Exodus from

Egypt (Deut 1:3) and the latter transpired on the tenth day of the first month of the forty-first year after the Exodus from Egypt (Josh 4:19). Because of the importance of the contents of this book for the second generation's conquest of Canaan, it must have been written before they set out of Canaan. All things considered, a date of 1405 BC for the composition of the book would not be far from wrong.

Scope

The Book of Deuteronomy covers the seventy day period in between the inauguration of the book's events, which began on the on the first day of the eleventh month of the 40th year after the Exodus from Egypt (Deut 1:3), and the crossing of the Jordan, which latter transpired on the tenth day of the first month of the forty first year after the Exodus from Egypt (Joshua 4:19). Deuteronomy is similar to the Book of Leviticus since both books do not represent any geographical movement on Israel's part. The context of the entire book transpired as the nation was encamped on the plains of Moab prior to entering Canaan (Deut 1:1, 5; 29:1; Joshua 1:2).

Place of Writing and Audience

The book was written on the plains of Moab east of Jordan across from Jericho (Num 36:13; Deut 1:1, 5; 29:1; Josh 1:2). The content of this book was important for the second generation's conquest of Canaan. Thus, not only did the recorded events transpire on the plains of Moab, but it also must have been written from this location before Israel set out to conquer Canaan. The audience consisted of the second generation that had emerged from the wilderness wanderings as they awaited the Canaan conquest while encamped at Moab.

Purposes

Moses seems to have had several purposes in mind when he composed Deuteronomy. First, Moses wrote so that the second generation would renew their commitment to the Sinai Covenant. Such covenant renewal was necessary so that this new generation would not repeat the mistakes of the first generation and thus avoid disinheritance. Such covenant renewal was necessary so that the second generation could enter Canaan, drive out the Canaanites, and experience prosperity and peace in the land. Thus, the book does not represent a new or second Law but rather a restating, recapitulation, or expansion of existing Law found in the Mosaic Covenant. Such a covenant renewal emphasis was common in the ancient Near East. Thus, Moses explains that his audience is to "'hear' (50x) and 'do,' 'keep,' 'observe' (177x) God's commands out of a heart of 'love'" (21x)." Second, Moses wrote to offer future guidance to the nation. This goal is evident in 17:14-23 where Moses addresses the nation's future kings. Third, Moses wrote to furnish a historical bridge linking Israel of the wilderness wanderings and Israel in Canaan. Fourth, Moses wrote in order to connect the giving of the Law at Sinai and how the Law is applied

in Canaan. The unique purpose for which Deuteronomy was written can be discerned by comparing it to the contributions from the other books of the Pentateuch. For example, Genesis was written to record Israel's birth. Exodus was written to record Israel's redemption from Egypt and the gift of the Mosaic Covenant. Leviticus was written to describe how the nation could experience ongoing practical sanctification so that they could enjoy the benefits of the Mosaic Covenant. Numbers was written to explain the nation's direction from Sinai to the plains of Moab and why only the second generation would enter Canaan. Deuteronomy was written to encourage the second generation toward covenant renewal so that they could successfully conquer Canaan and experience prosperity in the land.

Message

Deuteronomy was written in order to invoke covenant renewal on the part of the second generation so that they could enter Canaan, conquer the Canaanites, and experience prosperity and peace in the land. In order to accomplish this goal, Moses reviews God's past acts on Israel's behalf (1-4:4:40), instructs the second generation to honor the Mosaic Covenant (4:41-26:19), and explains what God will do for Israel (27-34). In this third category, Moses explains that God will bless or curse Israel based upon their obedience and disobedience (27-28), ultimately restore Israel (29-30), and will provide the nation with a new leader (31-34).

Structure

One way of structuring the book is by partitioning the various sections according to the segments exhibited in a 15th-13th BC century suzerain vassal Hittite treaty. Such an analysis yields the following six divisions: preamble (1:1-5), historical prologue surveying "the past relationship between the parties" (1:6-4:40), stipulations or covenant obligations (4:41-26:19), "storage and public reading instructions" (27:2-3; 31:9, 24, 26), covenant deity witnesses (31-32; 32:1), and curses and blessings showing how the suzerain will respond to the vassal's compliance with the treaty terms (27-30). The fact that Deuteronomy is found in this format reinforces its central purpose of invoking covenant renewal by reminding the second generation of the reality of the covenant. However, because Deuteronomy is sermonic, it seems better not to follow this organizational structure offered by form criticism but rather to divide the book according to its three major sermons. This analysis yields the following threefold division.

The first sermon, found in chapters 1-4, is retrospective and historical. It seeks to get Israel to remember what God has done for her by reciting God's saving acts on her behalf. The second sermon, found in chapters 5-26, is introspective and legal. It invokes obedience and explains what God expects Israel to do through the exposition of His covenant Law. The third sermon, found in chapters 27-34, is prospective and prophetic. It invokes hope

by explaining what God will do for Israel and by providing a final summation of the covenant demands.

Christ in Deuteronomy

The most direct Christological reference in the book is the prediction that God would one day raise up a prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18). A number of similarities can be drawn between Moses and Christ. First, Moses is unique in that he received direct revelation from God (Num 12:6-8). While other OT figures received revelation in the form of dreams and visions, God spoke to Moses "face to face" and "mouth to mouth." As a member of the Trinity, Christ enjoyed the same privilege. Furthermore, Moses imitates Christ as a redeemer (Ex 3:10), mediator (Ex 20:18-21), and intercessor (Ex 32:7-35). Moreover, Moses was like Christ since he was the only other man to fulfill the three offices of prophet (Ex 34:10-12), priest (Ex 32:31-35), and king (Ex 33:4-5).

Genre

Although the book contains some narrative material, it mostly consists of the legal genre. However, the book is also sermonic since it represents an exposition of the Law (1:5). The entire book can also be categorized a suzerain vassal treaty since it contains the six parts contained in a 15th–13th century BC Hittite treaty structure. Various sub-genres represented in the book include travel itineraries, exhortations, hymns, and poetry.

Theological Themes

Recurring theological themes include the principle that forgetfulness of God leads to arrogance and disobedience. God's love for Israel and Israel's love for God are also dominant themes (6:5-6; 7:7-8; 8:2-5; 10:15; 23:5). The book also stresses obedience as a necessary prerequisite in order to experience covenant blessing (28–30).

Unique Characteristics

The Book of Deuteronomy boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, the book contains almost two hundred references to the land. However, such frequency is to be understood since it fits with the covenant renewal theme. Second, other scriptural authors frequently cite the book. For example, the book is quoted 356 times in the Old Testament. Moreover, the book is quoted roughly eighty times in seventeen of the twenty-seven NT books. In fact, "According to the *Index locorum* of Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* Deuteronomy is quoted or otherwise cited at least 95x in the NT (compared to 103 for Genesis, 113 for Exodus, 35 for Leviticus, and 20 for Numbers) making it one of the favorite Old Testament books of Jesus and the apostles."

Third, Deuteronomy is used extensively by Christ not only to validate His messiahship and summarize the Law but also to rebut Satan (Matt 4:4,7,10; Deut 8:3; 6:16,13). Fourth, the book is given in expositional (1:5) or sermonic form and can be categorized into three sermons. Fifth, while other books of the Pentateuch reveal new Law, Deuteronomy helps the reader have a deeper appreciation for existing covenant Law. Cate explains:

The Book of Deuteronomy makes easier reading than any of the other legal material in the Old Testament. For anyone who seriously labored through the legal materials of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, this ease in reading is quite striking, and raises the issue of why it should be so. The answer is really quite simple. The Book of Deuteronomy is primarily exhortation, preaching. Instead of being simply a set of laws, it is preaching about the Hebrew laws. It claims to be three sermons which Moses preached to the people of Israel while they encamped upon the plains of Moab immediately before their entrance into the land of Canaan. A single theme runs throughout the book. Yahweh is the sovereign God who is active in history and Israel is His one holy people, chosen by His sovereign grace to live in a covenant relation with Him. In addition to the three sermons, three short appendices are found at the end.

[Robert L. Cate, *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Study* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1987), 183-84.]

Sixth, although the book contains legal material, it is unlike Leviticus in the sense that it is for the benefit of the laity rather than the priests. Seventh, the book instructs not just the immediate audience but also the future leaders of Israel. For example, the book instructs future kings although the office of king had not yet been established (Gen 17:6,16). Eighth, the book serves as Moses' farewell address to the nation. Thus, Deuteronomy represents his last will and testament.

Outline

I. First sermon: What God has done for Israel (Deut 1:1—4:40)

(1) Introduction to the covenant setting (1:1-5)

(2) Review of Israel's past (Deut 1:6—3:29)

(A) From Sinai to Kadesh (1:6-18)

(a) Command to leave Horeb (1:6-8)

(b) Command to appoint judges (1:9-18)

(B) At Kadesh (1:19-46)

(a) Dispatching the spies (1:19-25)

(b) Israel's rebellion (1:26-46)

(C) From Kadesh to Moab (2:1-23)

(a) Command not to disturb the Edomites (2:1-7)

(b) Command not to disturb the Moabites (2:8-15)

(c) Command not to disturb the Ammonites (2:16-23)

(D) Conquest of the Transjordan (Deut 2:24—3:20)

(a) Defeat of Sihon (2:24-37)

(b) Defeat of Og (3:1-11)

(c) Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh settle east of Jordan (3:12-20)

- (E) Moses prohibited from and Joshua commissioned to cross the Jordan (3:21-29)
- (3) Exhortation to obey the covenant (4:1-40)
 - (A) Exhortation to obey (4:1-9)
 - (B) Reminder of the divine manifestation at Sinai (4:10-14)
 - (C) Warnings against idolatry (4:15-24)
 - (D) Trans-generational consequences of idolatry and repentance (4:25-31)
 - (E) Yahweh and Israel's uniqueness (4:32-40)
- II. Second sermon: What Israel must do for God (Deut 4:41—26:19)
 - (1) Preparation for the covenant text (4:41-49)
 - (A) Cities of refuge (4:41-43)
 - (B) Introduction to the covenant setting (4:44-49)
 - (2) The Law, its essence, and application in light of the impending conquest of Canaan (Deut 5:1—11:32)
 - (A) Law: the Decalogue (5:1-33)
 - (a) Setting (5:1-5)
 - (b) The 10 Commandments (5:6-21)
 - (c) Israel's response (5:22-27)
 - (d) God's response (5:28-33)
 - (B) Essence: love and obey Yahweh (6:1-25)
 - (a) Exhortation to obey the law (6:1-3)
 - (b) *Shema* and its implications (6:4-25)
 - (i) *Shema* (6:4-5)
 - (ii) Implications (6:6-25)
 - (a) Parental responsibility (6:6-9)
 - (b) Warnings against pride (6:10-12)
 - (c) Warnings against following Canaanite deities (6:13-19)
 - (d) Connection to redemption (6:20-23)
 - (e) Connection to Israel's survival (6:24-25)
 - (C) Application in light of impending Canaanite conquest (Deut 7:1—11:32)
 - (a) Command to destroy the Canaanites (7:1-26)
 - (i) Command to destroy (7:1-2)
 - (ii) No intermarriage (7:3-4)
 - (iii) Destroy their altars (7:5)
 - (iv) Maintenance of Israel's uniqueness (7:6-11)
 - (v) Ushering in blessing (7:12-16)
 - (vi) Admonition not to fear (7:17-24)
 - (vii) Admonition to destroy their booty (7:25-26)

- (b) Exhortations against pride in forgetting God (8:1-20)
 - (i) God will bring and prosper Israel in Canaan (8:1-10)
 - (ii) Israel not to take credit (8:11-20)
- (c) God's blessings are a result of His grace (Deut 9:1—10:11)
 - (i) Conquests due to God's grace (9:1-6)
 - (ii) Israel's historical sinfulness (9:7-29)
 - (a) At Sinai (9:7-21)
 - (b) In the wilderness: Taberah, Massah, Kibroth-hattaavah, Kadesh Barnea (9:22-29)
 - (iii) Conquests due to God's grace (10:1-11)
 - (a) New tablets placed in the Ark (10:1-5)
 - (b) Levites' inheritance (10:6-9)
 - (c) Command to conquer Canaan (10:10-11)
- (d) Necessity of loving God and man (10:12-22)
- (e) Consequences for disobedience and rewards for obedience (11:1-32)
 - (i) Understanding God's grace leads to obedience (11:1-7)
 - (ii) Command to take Canaan (11:8-12)
 - (iii) Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (11:13-17)
 - (iv) Necessity of teaching children (11:18-25)
 - (v) Law of blessing and curses (11:26-32)
- (3) Exposition of the Decalogue (Deut 12:1—25:19)
 - (A) Laws arising from the first commandment (12:1-32)
 - (a) Destruction of Canaanite places of worship (12:1-4)
 - (b) Central place of worship (12:5-14)
 - (c) Blood not to be eaten but rather offered in the central place of worship (12:15-28)
 - (d) Warning against imitating pagan practices (12:29-32)
 - (B) Laws arising from the second commandment (13:1-18)
 - (a) False prophet (13:1-5)
 - (b) Close relative (13:6-11)
 - (c) Town (13:12-18)
 - (C) Laws arising from the third commandment (14:1-21)
 - (D) Laws arising from the fourth commandment (Deut 14:22—16:17)
 - (a) Tithes (14:22-29)
 - (b) Canceling debts (15:1-6)
 - (c) Rights of the poor (15:7-11)
 - (d) Freeing servants (15:12-18)
 - (e) Consecration of the firstborn (15:19-23)

- (f) Feast days (16:1-17)
- (E) Laws arising from the fifth Commandment (Deut 16:18—18:22)
 - (a) Judges and other officials (16:18—17:13)
 - (i) Requirement of righteousness (16:18-20)
 - (ii) What judges must address (16:21—17:3)
 - (a) Idolatry (16:21-22)
 - (b) Improper sacrifice (17:1)
 - (c) Apostasy (17:2-3)
 - (iii) Guidelines for execution (17:4-7)
 - (iv) Supreme Court (17:8-10)
 - (v) Penalty for not carrying out Supreme Court's verdict (17:11-13)
 - (b) King's (17:14-20)
 - (c) Priests and Levites (18:1-8)
 - (d) Prophets (18:9-22)
 - (i) Pagan practices to avoid (18:9-14)
 - (ii) Prophet like Moses to be raised up (18:15-19)
 - (iii) Test of a genuine prophet (18:20-22)
- (F) Laws arising from the sixth Commandment (Deut 19:1—22:14)
 - (a) Protection of those committing manslaughter (19:1-13)
 - (b) Prohibition against moving boundaries (19:14)
 - (c) Prohibition against malicious witnesses (19:15-21)
 - (d) War (20:1-20)
 - (i) Command not to be afraid (20:1-4)
 - (ii) Those exempted from warfare (20:5-9)
 - (iii) Terms of surrender (20:10-11)
 - (iv) Instructions regarding when a city would not capitulate (20:12-15)
 - (v) Instructions regarding holy war (20:16-18)
 - (vi) Instructions regarding trees (20:19-20)
 - (e) Unsolved murder (21:1-9)
 - (f) Wives and children (21:10-21)
 - (i) Women captured in war and married (21:10-14)
 - (ii) Right of first born (21:15-17)
 - (iii) Punishment of a rebellious child (21:18-21)
 - (g) Burial of a hanged person (21:22-23)
 - (h) Returning property (22:1-4)
- (G) Laws arising from the seventh Commandment (Deut 22:5—23:18)
 - (a) Illustrations of improper mixing (22:5-12)
 - (b) Seven cases involving the marriage bed (22:13-30)

- (c) Admission to worship (23:1-8)
- (d) Prohibition against nocturnal emissions within the camp (23:9-14)
- (e) Protection for a slave seeking refuge (23:15-16)
- (f) Prohibition against cultic prostitution (23:17-18)
- (H) Laws arising from the eighth Commandment (Deut 23:19—24:7)
 - (a) No charging interest to fellow Jews (23:19-20)
 - (b) Making payment on vows (23:21-23)
 - (c) No stealing another's crops (23:24-25)
 - (d) Divorce and remarriage (24:1-4)
 - (e) Marital duties (24:5)
 - (f) No taking of an instrument necessary for one's livelihood in a pledge (24:6)
 - (g) No kidnapping (24:7)
- (I) Laws arising from the ninth commandment (Deut 24:8—25:4)
 - (a) Leprosy (24:8-9)
 - (b) Debtor's rights (24:10-11)
 - (c) No taking advantage of the poor (24:12-15)
 - (i) Regarding the poor man's pledge (24:12-13)
 - (ii) Regarding the poor man's wages (24:14-15)
 - (d) Individual responsibility for sins (24:16)
 - (e) No twisting of justice for the poor (24:17-18)
 - (f) Leaving a harvest for the poor (24:19-22)
 - (g) Rights of the accused (25:1-3)
 - (h) Rights of animals (25:4)
- (J) Laws arising from the tenth commandment (25:5-19)
 - (a) Levite marriage (25:5-10)
 - (b) Unfair fighting by a wife (25:11-12)
 - (c) Unjust weights and measures (25:13-16)
 - (d) Command to blot out Amalek (25:17-19)
- (4) Conclusion (26:1-19)
 - (A) Laws remembering the covenant (26:1-15)
 - (a) The First fruits (26:1-11)
 - (b) Third-year tithe (26:12-15)
 - (B) Moses' concluding exhortation to obey (26:16-19)
- III. Third sermon: What God will do for Israel (Deut 27:1—34:12)
 - (1) Ratification of the covenant at Shechem: blessings and curses (Deut 27:1—28:68)
 - (A) Ceremony to be followed at Shechem (27:1-26)
 - (a) Establishment of the altar (27:1-8)

- (b) Exhortation to obey (27:9-10)
 - (c) Half the tribesmen on Gerizim representing blessing and half of the tribes on Ebal representing curses (27:11-13)
 - (d) Recitation of the curses for individual sins (27:14-26)
- (B) Blessings and curses (28:1-68)
 - (a) Blessings (28:1-14)
 - (b) Curses (28:15-68)
- (2) Imposition of the Land Covenant (Deut 29:1—30:20)
 - (A) A New Covenant (29:1)
 - (B) God's past faithfulness (29:2-8)
 - (C) Nation gathers for covenant renewal (29:9-15)
 - (D) Consequences of disobeying the covenant (29:16-29)
 - (E) Israel's ultimate restoration (30:1-10)
 - (F) Accessibility of the covenant (30:11-14)
 - (G) Choice of life and death (30:15-20)
- (3) Transition toward New Covenant leadership (Deut 31:1—34:12)
 - (A) Transition from Moses to Joshua (31:1-29)
 - (a) Joshua to lead Israel (31:1-8)
 - (b) Instructions regarding the covenant renewal ceremony to take place every seven years (31:9-13)
 - (c) Israel's future apostasy (31:14-22)
 - (d) Joshua commissioned (31:23)
 - (e) Covenant placed in Ark (31:24-29)
 - (B) Moses' song (Deut 32:1-47)
 - (a) Heaven and earth as witnesses (32:1-4)
 - (b) Israel rebuked because of her sinfulness (32:5-6)
 - (c) God's grace to Israel (32:7-14)
 - (d) Israel's rebellion (32:15-18)
 - (e) Israel's coming judgment (32:19-33)
 - (f) Israel's eventual vindication (32:34-43)
 - (g) Concluding exhortation to obey (32:44-47)
 - (C) Moses' death (Deut 32:48—34:12)
 - (a) Announcement of Moses' death (32:48-52)
 - (b) Moses' blessing upon the tribes (33:1-29)
 - (c) Moses views Canaan from a distance (34:1-4)
 - (d) Moses' death (34:5-8)
 - (e) Joshua replaces Moses (34:9)
 - (f) Moses' uniqueness (34:10-12)

Introduction

Whose sermons are quoted most in the Bible? The answer may surprise you. Just as the NT epistles are our primary interpretive commentary on the historical narratives (the

Gospels and Acts), the most venerated portion of the OT—the *Torah*—has, within it, its primary commentary in the form of three sermons by its principal author, Moses.

And Moses was eminently qualified to speak for God. He was more than Israel's human Lawgiver: he was the founder of Israel's religion; he was the mediator of the covenant at Sinai; he was Israel's first prophet. [1] (Though God called Abraham a prophet, [2] Israel did not then exist as a nation.) Through Moses, God set such a high standard for the people that all subsequent prophets lived under his shadow, never attaining to it, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not surprisingly, the NT authors mentioned Moses more frequently than any other OT person. His concluding remarks after a 120-year lifetime have been handed down to us as the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is essentially a series of sermons by the greatest OT prophet. Jesus Himself quoted more from Deuteronomy than from any other portion of the OT. (In a sense, Deuteronomy is the Romans of the OT.)

The Hebrew title of the book is *'elleh haddebarim* ("these are the words") in keeping with the Hebrew custom of often titling a work by its first word(s). The English title Deuteronomy stems from the Septuagint's mistranslation of Deut 17:18, "this repetition of the Law." The Septuagint translated those words *deuteronomion* (*deutero* means "two" or "second," and *nomion* is "law"; lit., "second Law"), which were rendered *Deuteronomium* in the *Vulgate*, Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible.

Moses' words were addressed to *all Israel*, an expression used at least 12x in the book. Its frequent occurrence emphasizes the unity of Israel which was brought about by God's mighty deliverance of the nation from Egypt, and by her acceptance of His covenant at Sinai. They were uniquely God's people, the only nation on earth that had as its "Constitution" the Word of God.

Sometimes very crucial progress occurs at an excruciatingly slow pace. From Horeb to Kadesh Barnea was only about 200 miles. The Israelites turned an 11-day journey—from Horeb (another word for Mount Sinai) [3] to Kadesh Barnea, the first site for entering into the Promised Land from the south—into a 40-year wandering in the wilderness before they came to their second potential site for entering the land.

It took only three days to get Israel out of Egypt; but it took 40 years to get "Egypt" out of Israel! As Stephen pointed out centuries later, [4] the Israelites had always been slow to believe God.

Lessons in Trust

God led them into the desert where they had no alternatives but to trust Him or to murmur against Him. In the desert they could not produce their own food but had to depend on God for food and, thus, for their very lives. When Moses reminded them that they did not live on bread alone he meant that even their food was decreed by the Word of God. They had manna because it came by His command. It was therefore ultimately not bread that kept them alive but His Word! "Bread alone," that is, bread acquired independently of His Word, could not keep them alive.

This was why Jesus refused Satan's temptation to turn the stones into bread when He was in the wilderness. [5] Jesus knew that God had not decreed those stones for His food, and also that His Father would provide food apart from the Son's working of a miracle at the suggestion of Satan. [6] It is significant that each of the three temptations were met by a quote from the Book of Deuteronomy.

Virtually every day the Lord finds different ways to ask us, "Do you trust Me?" This pillar of a book has many critical lessons for our own walk as well! It is important to fully appreciate that these words are, indeed, the craftsmanship of the Creator Himself.

The book can also be viewed as a basic "Constitution" for the nation, following the classic ancient treaty structure: a prologue, basic stipulations, detailed stipulations, a document clause, followed by blessings if followed, cursings if not followed, and a recapitulation. But there are also a number of more puzzling issues.

Canaanite Genocide

One of the disturbing paradoxes in the OT is God's instruction to destroy all the nations within the borders of Canaan. This always strikes us as incompatible with the Gospel of Love in the NT. The command to destroy them totally, that is, men, women, and children, strikes us as unethical for a loving God.

In addition to understanding the paramount importance of keeping this emergent nation from the infections and contamination of the paganism practiced by the indigenous tribes, we must also understand the bizarre *origins* of these tribes: the *Rephaim*, the *Horim*, the *Emim*, the *Zamsumin*, et al.

When God covenanted the land of Israel to Abraham He also announced that his descendants would return after 400 years to receive their inheritance. [7] That gave Satan

four centuries to lay down a minefield in his continuing attempts to thwart the plans of God.

A Treasure Chest of Discoveries

Moses' review of the Law includes many crucial issues such as the legitimacy of war, the role of capital punishment, divorce, as well as the proper forms of worship, keeping the Sabbath, etc. But the surprise for many are the *prophetic* aspects of this foundational book: the future history of Israel-including an astonishing prediction of the Holocaust, etc. [9] However, all Scriptures are Christ centered. [10] so perhaps most challenging for the dedicated students are the "types" and "macrocodes" throughout the book.

We find them in the roles of the *goel*, the Kinsman-Redeemer, the cities of refuge, the levirate marriage, and the many calendar issues. The many parallels between "The Prophet of Moses" and the Messiah are fascinating: both were spared in infancy; [11] both renounced a royal court; [12] both had compassion for the people; [13] both made intercession for their people; [14] both spoke with God face to face; [15] both were the mediator of a covenant; [16] and both yielded the greatest revelation of their respective testaments. [17]

Basic Message

God has not changed since then. Man has not changed since then. And God's primary message through His servant Moses was *Love*. Not a list of do's and don'ts, not legalism, but relationship. And, of course, the ultimate consummation of all these things was, and is, fulfilled in our Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. [18] God always rewards the diligent student, and a careful review of this foundational book is guaranteed to be life-changing!

The Torah

Genesis - The Book of Beginnings

Exodus - The Birth of the Nation

Leviticus - The Law of the Nation

Numbers - The Wilderness Wanderings

Deuteronomy - The Laws Reviewed

The Book of Deuteronomy is the bridge between the first four books (outside the Land) and the next seven books (inside the Land). It contains the Sh'ma: the Great Commandment. There are more quotes by Jesus from Deuteronomy than from any other book; it also includes the Song of Moses.

Prophetic Overview

The book of Deuteronomy provides an outline of Israel's history before they ever cross the Jordan and enter their land as a nation for the first time over three and a half thousand years ago. Much of what was prophesied about the national course of Israel's history has already taken place in the first two thousand years of their existence. Now, after three and a half thousand years, there are a number of items that have never been fulfilled yet. As the Lord continued to reveal the rest of the Old Testament books of Scripture to Israel, the prophetic sections have been greatly expanded upon and they have never departed from the original outline provided in Deuteronomy.

Further, the NT also does not ever change or deviate from the prophetic outline provided early on in Deuteronomy. The NT does add the prophetic details of the Church, which is said in Paul's Epistles to have not been revealed in the OT since it was a mystery revealed only in the NT (Rom 16:25-27; Eph 3:4-6; Col 1:24-27). Nowhere in the NT does Scripture say that God has forever rejected Israel, Israel's national promises, nor their land promises. In fact, Paul says of Israel: "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" (Rom 11:2a). All of this leads to only one conclusion: The Lord will yet redeem the remnant of Jewish Believers and literally fulfill their national and land promises, no matter how impossible it may appear in relation to the modern state of Israel. This means a lot of Bible prophecy regarding Israel is still in our future.

Israel's Prophetic Outline

The Mosaic Covenant, encompassed throughout Deuteronomy, is a conditional covenant binding an inferior vassal to a superior suzerain and was binding only on the one who swore (Suzerain/Vassal Treaty). When we look at the Suzerain/Vassal treaty format of Deuteronomy we see the following breakdown:

- Preamble (1:1-5)
- Historical Prologue (1:6–4:40)
- Covenant Obligations (5:1–26:19)
 - Outline what the Vassal must do to gain the blessing of the Suzerain
 - Contains the 10 Commandments, plus 603 additional laws explaining the 10 Commandments
- Storage and reading instructions (27:2-3; 31:9,24,26)
 - So the nation would remember the Laws of God and the terms of the covenant
- Witnesses (32:1)
 - God calls heaven and earth as His witnesses
- Blessings and Curses (28)

- Detail about the covenant curses are outlined in Lev 26; Deut 28 (v1-14 are blessings; v15-68 are curses; maybe God's omniscience?)
- If you study those chapters, you begin to see Israel's history in advance

In the Historical Prologue section, the suzerain rehearses the history of dealings in the past between the two parties. The Lord does the same with Israel in 1:6—4:25, however, He adds a prophetic overview of what will take place in the future in relation to God's relationship with Israel in 4:25-31. The outline of Israel's future history is laid out by the Lord before they ever entered their land. Of course, this is no problem for a Sovereign God like the Lord. A summary of these events would be as follows:

- (1) Israel and her descendants would remain long in the land.
- (2) Israel would act corruptly and slip into idolatry.
- (3) Israel would be kicked out of the land.
- (4) The LORD will scatter them among the nations.
- (5) Israel would be given over to idolatry during their wanderings.
- (6) While dispersed among the nations, Israel would seek and find the LORD when they search for Him with all their heart.
- (7) There would come a time of *tribulation*, said to occur in the latter days, during which time they would turn to the LORD.
- (8) "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them" (Deut 4:31).

If the first five events have happened to Israel—and no one would deny that they have—then it is clear from the text that the final events will also occur to the same people in the same way. The Bible does not "change horses in midstream" so that suddenly Israel who has received the curses, is dropped out of the picture and the church takes over and receives the blessings. The Bible nowhere teaches that God has forsaken Israel. Since the same identity is referred to throughout the whole of the text under examination, the last three events remain to be fulfilled for Israel in the same historical way in which the first five events are recognized to have taken place. Thus, a fulfillment of the final three events in the life of Israel will happen in the future.