

DEUTERONOMY

I. Background

A. Authorship

1. Speculative modern scholarship

Places the composition of the book in the time (625 b.c.) of Josiah's reforms (II Kings 22) as a "pious fraud" intended to justify Israel's cultic beliefs by linking the contemporary cultus (viz., Josiah's reforms) to the legendary days of the formation of the nation; viz., Deuteronomy is a pseudepigraphal work by late Jewish scribes.

"Centralization of worship would contribute to closer political unification of all parts of the kingdom, and it would insure that all revenues from the pious would pour into the coffers of the Jerusalem priesthood. Therefore this book was concocted to serve the governmental campaign, and its discovery was then staged at the psychological moment." —Archer, *OT Intro Survey*, p. 82.

a. De Wette (early 1800s) pioneered this idea, theorizing that the bulk of Deuteronomy was written to codify the religious reforms under Josiah.

b. Wellhausen (1885) modified the thesis to propose that after the fall of the northern kingdom, Jewish scribes began to codify their monotheistic religious system. The bulk of D was in place prior to the Josianic reforms in 622. This literature was then instrumental in instigating and directing the religious renewal of the nation.

c. JEDP

In the late 1700s Astruc noticed that the parallel accounts for creation in Gen. 1 & 2 referred to God by different names. Eichorn built upon this to recognize other narrative "doublets" in the Pentateuch based upon the names **Jehovah** and **Elohim**. The theory arose that the Pentateuch was woven together by later editors (redaction criticism) from diverse sources (documentary hypothesis) which had different traditions by which they called upon God.

The critics placed **Deuteronomy** in a separate class by itself because of its style and content and its alleged later date. It is limited solely to the book of Deuteronomy and to literary influences in later historical books.

Leviticus, originally part of **E**, is the legal, **Priestly** source.

2. Mosaic authorship (see Archer, pp. 109ff.)

a. Internal

- (1) self-pronouncement (1:1,5; 31:9)
- (2) eye-witness details
- (3) See argument from literary/historical **structure**, 3.c. below.

b. External Biblical

(1) OT

- (a) Later citations of Moses (I Kgs 2:3; 8:53; II Kgs 14:6; 18:6,12)
- (b) (Several Psalms use the language of the Song of Moses, chpt. 32)

- (2) NT confirmation by Jesus (Mt. 19:8) and Paul (I Cor. 9:9 cf. Dt. 25:4, muzzling the ox)

B. Deuteronomy's Place in the Pentateuch

1. Purpose: a **new generation** in Moab calls for a **renewal** and explanation (1:5 = statement of purpose) of the same covenant that was made with their fathers at Sinai (Josh. 5:4-6; cf. Num. 32:15). Note that later generations are also called upon to renew for themselves the covts made with the fathers (Joshua's [24:25] and Josiah's leadership)

a. 10 Commandments repeated in Chpt. 5

- b. Additional applications of the law are added or reinforced (chpts. 12-26) in this "Second [Giving of the] Law." Our English title has been inherited from the LXX, probably from the Greek language of 17:18 where the king was commanded to make a "copy" (δευτερονομιον *deuteronomion*) of the law.

- c. This covenant renewal will be ratified at Gilgal (Joshua 5:4-6) by partaking of the signs of the covenant: mass circumcision and the first passover in a generation.

2. While reconfirming the Sinai Covenant with the new generation, Deuteronomy

also anticipates a **New Covenant** (Jer. 31:31; Ezk. 36:22ff.; etc.) to supercede the conditional covenant of Sinai. This New covenant is alluded to (Dt. 30:6-16) in the face of anticipated continued disobedience to the terms of Sinai (30:1, etc.).

It appears that the purpose of Moses' covenant teachings in Deuteronomy is to hold out to the new generation the prospect of returning to what he described as being lost in the opening chapters of the Pentateuch. Consider:

- a. the new generation's fresh start in innocence, 1:39,31
 - b. the new generation's inheritance of land, life, and fruitfulness, Dt. 8:1,6 (cf. Gen. 1:28)
 - c. The Father's probationary testing of the new generation before their inheritance, 8:2,5
 - d. Moses' summation
 "See, I set before you today life and prosperity [Hebrew: "life, namely, the good"], death and destruction [Hebrew: "death, namely, the evil"]. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees, and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess' (Dt. 30:15,16). What the man and woman lost in the Garden is now restored to them in the Torah, namely, God's plan for their good." *PaN*, 424
3. Some Dispensational students see a unique "**Palestinian Covenant**" laid out in Deut. 28,29. Actually, this is simply a restatement of the earlier Sinai Covenant with the new generation.
 4. Moses gives his charge to the nation in his farewell addresses —31-33

C. Structure

Significantly, the **structure** of Deuteronomy is basically parallel to ancient contemporary law treaties (secular covenants, particularly from the Hittites), a fact that has exploded critical theories which suggest the seeming disjointed structure of the book is a patchwork by scribal editors.

Craigie (*NICOT Deuteronomy*), notes that in Egypt these treaty forms were employed, not only with foreign vassal states, but also with foreign (labor) groups within Egypt, (pp. 23,79ff.).

Prior to this relatively recent observation (1950s), the book was considered a typical OT farewell address (cf. Joshua, Samuel, David).

Note the structure of Deuteronomy compared with other ancient treaties:

<u>Treaty Structure</u>	<u>Dt. Outline</u>
1) Title/Preamble	1:1-5
2) Historical Prologue	1:6-3:29
3) Stipulations	4, 5-11, 12-26
4a) Deposit of the text	31:9, 24-26
4b) Public Reading	31:10-13
5) Witnesses	31:16- <u>28</u> -30; 32:1-47
6a) Blessings	28:1-14
6b) Cursings	28:15-68

Chapter 27 deals with future renewal ceremonies of the covenant. Chpt. 32, “The Song of Witness,” may have marked the end of this renewal ceremony, and would have been an enduring reminder of the more technical terms of Deuteronomy.

“The form of covenant found in Exodus-Leviticus and in Deuteronomy (plus Joshua 24) is neither arbitrary nor accidental. It is a form proper to the general period of the exodus, current in the 14th/13th centuries BC, and neither earlier nor later on the total available evidence.” —Kenneth Kitchen in *The Bible in Its World*, p. 79; also see Meredith Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*

Israel was the vassal in this covenant relationship based on love (Craigie in *NIC*), and the King of the nation was God Who had delivered the nation from servitude.

D. Style: hortatory (4:1; chpt. 8). More than a corpus of law, Moses’ discourses are designed to move the people to obedience.

E. Theological imagery and themes

1. Father’s love

a. Care, 1:31; 8:3,4

b. Discipline, 8:5

c. Fatherhood of God, 32:6,18

d. Necessary response of love, (5:16), 6:5

“Love, the basic principle, finds its expression in the Decalogue, the constitution of the

state whose king was God. In other words, love was not simply a principle or abstract ethical concept; it was given clear expression in the commandments, which showed the ways in which a man's love for God and for his fellow man must be given expression.... To break the commandments was to disrupt the relationship of love; when there was no love, there could be no covenant." —Craigie, *NICOT*, p. 42

Jesus teaches the same relation to the law under the terms of the New Covt, e.g., John 14:15.

2. The one and the many, unity in diversity

“No man is an island’: he was part of the community, and though he was responsible for his own sin and could be punished for it, the whole community was endangered by the sins of its members. If a crime were committed and the criminal were not brought to justice, then the community was responsible to deal with the wickedness that had been done and to seek God’s forgiveness (21:19).” —Craigie, p. 43

3. Curses and blessings under the covenant, esp. 27-28

Curses and blessings are a necessary concomitant to ancient treaties. Yet it should be born in mind that the watershed for blessing and cursing was God’s creation and man’s fall.

Craigie notes that the curses listed here seem to move from mere warning to almost prophetic anticipation of Israel’s future history.

“But the sad story is not written to enable us to pass judgment on the men of ancient Israel. It serves rather as a paradigm of the nature of man. Granted the highest possible privilege, an intimate relationship with God, man nevertheless goes his own way, forgetful of that high calling, until he brings upon himself the curse of God. The curse of God is not something inflicted with vindictive pleasure; rather, it appears to be the inevitable outcome of life that is lived regardless of God, by rejecting a relationship with God whose essence is love.” —Craigie, p. 44.

II. Outline (Geisler) and highlights

A. Introduction: a review of Israel’s wanderings — 1-4

1. Historical review, 1-3

1:6-8 promised land has same boundaries as promised to the fathers, Gen. 15:18-19

3:20 “rest” (*nu-ach*) is a key theme associated with the gift of the land (cf. Gen. 2:1-3 [*shabath*], Gen. 2:15 (*nu-ach*))

2. Exhortation against apostasy [in Moses' immanent absence] 4

Hamilton notes that when Moses inveighs against the tempting idolatry of the Canaanites, the order of graven images is in the reverse order (4:15-19,23,25) from Moses' record of God's creation pattern in Gen. 1,2. "For Israel to abandon her Lord and to engage in idolatry would so reverse His will for their lives." [It is the reversal equal to the undoing of His creation.] — Hamilton, p. 397.

B. Rehearsal of God's laws — 5-26

1. Restatement of Sinaitic laws for a new generation that is connected to the old one by the words, "Lord our God" 5:2,3 — chpts. 5-11

a. 5:9 "third and fourth generations" has new meaning of warning when spoken to the second generation that saw God's power (Dt. 11:2ff.)

b. Fourth Commandment (5:12,15): Note that the language of the terms and supporting argument are somewhat different from Ex. 20.

(1) Different **words**

(a) Added are the words "...so that your...servants may rest...", a reflection of the law's humane concern for the lower social strata (= protection of minorities)

(b) Changed is the command: "Keep/Guard" (*shamar*) as opposed to "remember" of Ex. 20

(2) The **reason** for the Fourth Commandment is different from the creation design argument of Ex. 20. Here in Dt. 5:15 it is based on God's redemption.

Together these two great reasons for observance of a day of spiritual rest (Heb.4) are confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus on the Lord's Day: what happened on that day of resurrection secures and therefore calls for our grateful recognition of

(a) a new creation (Ex. 20; I Cor. 15:20-24), and

(b) a great redemption (Dt. 5; Heb. 2:14,15; Rom. 8:11-13)

- c. “That it may go ‘well = good’ (*tov*) with you” (cf. Gen. 1,2) is added to the fifth commandment in this catalog (5:16)
- d. The objects of coveting in the 10th commandment are reversed from Exodus 20. In Dt. 5:21 “wife” comes before “house.” This indicates the unity of the last commandment, making it harder for RCs and Lutherans to split it into #9 and #10
- e. 6:2,3 repeats the creation themes of life, increase, and land
- f. “**Shema**”: 6:4,5 “Hear O Israel, Yaweh is our God, Yaweh only” (Cf. 9:1; 20:3; 27:9 for “**Hear**, O Israel”)

Primary:

- (1) **Monotheism** as a creed in a polytheistic age (6:4)
Hamilton says this creedal statement is to be understood in more of an historical sense than in a ontological sense; cf. Rom. 3:30. “God is always consistent with Himself and with us.” p. 408

Corollary:

- (2) Still, the choice of the word “one,” (*‘echad*) may imply a composite **unity**: cf. the same word used for the plurality of persons forming “one” flesh in Gen. 2:24; cf. Dt. 10:20
- (3) Although some treaties commanded love for the suzerain earthly king, no other ancient law commanded **love** of the pagan gods

- g. Application of the second commandment, ch. 7

7:2-4 marriage to idolaters is forbidden (vs. 4); but to converted foreigners seems permissible: 21:10,11
- h. Testing in the [unordered] wilderness, ch. 8, before a return to [pre-fabricated] Eden.
 - (1) Sailhamer (*PaN*, 441, q.v.) believes that the manna (8:3) served as a test much like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden
 - (2) Note Jesus’ use of this passage in the time of His testing in the wilderness (Mt. 4:4-10, cf. Dt. 8:3; 6:13,16).
 - (a) He appears as the Son of God (Mt. 4:6) to pass the tests of fidelity and contentment that a previous son of God (Israel in Deut 8:5) had failed when tested in the wilderness.

- (b) He appears as the obedient Son of man (Mt. 4:4) to overcome the privations and chaos of the wilderness that rebel man had chosen (Adam at the tree of the KoG&E, and Israel at Kadesh Barnea) in an effort to be autonomous apart from God.
- i. Symbolism of circumcision, 10:16 (man is active); 30:6 (man is passive before God).
 - (1) Cf. New covt statement in Jer. 31. and inward meaning of circumcision in Rom. 2:28,29
 - (2) Significantly, the male child was given no name (identity before God) until God's mark was put upon him; cf. Lk. 2:21
- j. Pure Religion shown to widows and orphans, 10:18,19 cf. Jms. 1:27
10:12-22 = 5 action verbs: "fear, walk, love, serve, observe"
- k. Blessings and cursings from the central mountains of Gerezim and Ebal, 11:29
- 2. Restatement of the special laws, phps following the sequence of the 10 commandments given in ch. 5 — 12-26

KNOW:

- a. Dual Test of false prophets, 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 - (1) Does the prophet lead after false gods?
 - (2) Is the prophet truthful in predicting the future?
- b. Every third year a second tithe taken for the poor, 14:28-29
- c. Guidelines for the king who was already promised to Abraham (Gen. 17:18), Dt. 17
 - (1) anti-elitism = much wealth
 - (2) anti-softness/idolatry = many wives
 - (3) anti-entangling alliances = many horses
- d. "Prophet like unto Moses," 18:15-19. As God's prophet, Moses was God's

spokesman in establishing the covt. Cf. Acts 3:22; Heb. 1:2 for Messianic Mediator of the Covt

Both Servants of God

- were preserved as infants from the power of antichrist
- returned after the death of the tyrant
- showed power over creation
- had intimate contact with God
- were lawgivers from the mountain
- changed water to something sweet and life-giving
- brought manna or bread of life to feed a multitude
- intercede for the nation at personal cost

e. Promise of three more cities of refuge never fulfilled, 19:8,9

f. Stubborn and rebellious son, 21:18-21

Dt. refers to Israel as God's "son," and other OT passages regularly apply the phrase, "stubborn and rebellious" to Israel (23:5,6; 23:18)

g. Terms of divorce, 24:1-4

Note that she could become another man's wife, i.e., she would legally be bound to a new husband in remarriage

25:15: justice in labor relations

h. Capital offenders only will be punished by deliberate intervention of the magistrate, but not their family, 24:16

i. Beginning of return to Eden, 26

(1) Promised land

"Inasmuch as Deut. 26:1 commences with the assertion that Palestine is God's gift to Israel, we remind ourselves that we are here dealing with what is a major covenant theme in Deuteronomy, the basic theological aim of which is to unite the Sinai and Abrahamic Covenants, to marry nation and land." —Dumbrell, *Covenant & Creation*, p. 117. Cf. 26:15,18

(2) Israel as Adam

“There are . . . real parallels which can be drawn between Adam’s and Israel’s position. Like Adam, Israel was formed outside of the land (cf. Gen. 2:8); like Adam Israel was then put into a sanctuary which God had created; as in the case of Adam life in the land was to be regulated by covenant; and finally, like Adam Israel was to be expelled from the land because [of the breach of the covt relationship].” —Dumbrell, p. 120.

C. Revelation of Israel’s future — 27-34

1. Mosaic covt amplified — 27-30

- a. Half the tribes on Mt. Gerezim and half on Mt. Ebal to pronounce the curses and blessings on the heads of the nation, 27:11-26
- b. Blessings and cursings reminiscent of creation blessings and the exile after the fall, 28:4,8; ctr. vv. 36,64ff.

2. Moses’ third address = 29-30

- a. The emphasis of the second address (5-28) was on the immediate **future**: obedience was required to stay in the land. The emphasis of the third address seems to be on the distant future; what will be necessary to regain the land is repentance (29:22; 30:3).

The judgment of being scattered among a people of an unknown tongue takes the reader’s mind back to the scattering of the people at the Tower of Babel. Covenant breakers will share in the judgment of the *goyim* who tried to live apart from God (e.g., 29:2,3).

29:18: the “root of bitterness” is found in the context of unbelief (Heb 12:15)

- b. Sailhamer (*PaN*, 471ff.) holds that the final five chapters foreshadow the establishment of the New Covenant (n.b., 29:4; 30:6).

(1) It is grounded in the Abrahamic covt, 29:9-13

(2) It will be by the creative work (Gen. 1:2) of the Holy Spirit, Ezk. 36:26,27 which is especially manifest in Acts 2; cf. the Spirit’s work through Joshua (Dt. 34:9) and Joseph (Gen. 41:37) and Bezalel (Ex. 31:3).

- c. 30:16 “Moses skillfully draws his book to a conclusion by returning to its central

themes. He thus ends on the same note as he began —compare: ‘You will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess’ (30:16) with : ‘Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the land’ (Gen. 1:28) *** “The tragedy latent in these final words of hope is that in the next chapter Moses will show that the future choice of God’s people would not be for the good; rather, ‘they will forsake [the Lord] and break the covenant [he] made with them . . . [and] many disasters [evils] and difficulties will come upon them’ (Dt. 31:16-17). Their actions were thus foreshadowed in those of the first man and woman in the Garden (Gen. 3:6-8)” *PaN*, 474

3. Moses’ final song (32) and blessing (33) — 31-33

a. Covenant form of introduction (31) to the Song

- 1) deposition of the text (v. 26)
- 2) public recital (vv. 10-11)
- 3) witnesses of the renewal (vv. 19,21,26,28)

b. Poetic form of 32,33: Sailhamer in *EBC* II.7 notes that Moses’ literary pattern in the Pentateuch is to weave together small, self-contained narratives into larger blocks that are concluded with a major poetic section.

“The technique of using a poetic speech and a short epilogue to conclude a narrative is well known in biblical literature and occurs frequently within recognizable segments of the Pentateuch itself. *** More importantly, however, the poetic speech-short epilogue pattern recurs at a much higher level within the entire Pentateuch, suggesting that the technique was extended as part of the large poetic text (Gen. 49:1-27) at the close of the patriarchal narratives, along with the epilogue of chpt 50. *** Finally, the pattern can be seen to embrace the whole of the Pentateuch in that the whole of the narrative of the Pentateuch, which stretches from Genesis 1 through Deut, is concluded by the poetic “Song of Moses” (Dt. 32-33) and the epilogue of chpt 34.”

c. Fatherhood of God (developed in John by Jesus), 32:6,18; sonship has already been stressed in chpts. 6,8

d. “Apple of His eye,” 32:10b, an English idiom that translates the Hebrew idiom “little man of my eye;” cf. Zech. 2:8

e. 32:45-47 The Torah is offered as a new tree of life

f. Moses is depicted as king in 33:5, thus completing the typical circle of prophet, priest, and king (*PaN*, 477)

- g. Contrast this final oracle of all blessings for the tribes with Jacob's final oracle in Gen. 49. Childs (in Hamilton, p. 472) notes that God's plan for His people ultimately will prevail in spite of the nation's failure.

4. Death of Moses - 34

Even though he is in good health (34:7), he succumbs at age 120 to the limit set for post-diluvians (Gen. 6:3), dying as another example of the consequences of the fall of mankind. Like Adam and Eve, he was not allowed to enjoy the blessing of the good land.

God's people would still await the coming of One like unto Moses (34:10).

After the predicted apostasy and exile (Dt. 28:64; 31:16,17), Nehemiah looked for this promise in his day Neh. 9, and saw tokens of the Spirit's working (Neh. 9:20-25) in keeping with the promises. Still, he realized that the Creation/Abrahamic/New covenant had not been fulfilled (9:26,33). The consolation of Israel would wait to come in the days of Simeon (Lk. 2:25).