

Introduction to Deuteronomy

I. Name of the Book

- A. In Hebrew: *Debarim* (“words”) From opening phrase
- B. In Greek: *Deuteronomion* (“second law”) from 17:18 (LXX)

II. Relevance

- A. One of the most influential books ever written (1 of 2 sources for the 10 Commandments)
- B. Contains “the Shema” (6:5)—which Jesus called “the greatest commandment” (Matt.22:38)
- C. Supplement to Numbers of historical data (as Chronicles is to Samuel and Kings)
- D. Its rediscovery influenced the revival in Josiah’s time (2 Kings 22:8—23:25/Dt.31:24-26)
- E. Jesus quoted 10 times (and exclusively when tempted by Satan in the wilderness)
- F. Quoted over 80 times in New Testament (more than any OT books besides Psalms & Isaiah)
- G. Paul made spiritual applications to 22:10 (2 Cor.6:14) and 25:4 (1 Cor.9:9; 1 Tim.5:18)
- H. Paul based his teaching on “the curse of the law” on Deut. 21:23 and 27:26 (Gal.3:10,13) and saw 30:14 as a statement revealing justification by faith (Rom.10:8)
- I. Contains a significant prophecy of Christ (18:15; cf., Acts 3:22; 7:37)

III. Authorship — Plainly self-attributed to Moses (e.g., 1:1, 5; 31:9, 22, 24)

- A. Attributed to Moses in later Old Testament (1 Kings 2:3; 8:53; 2 Kings 14:6; 18:12)
- B. Attributed to Moses by New Testament (Matt.19:7-8; Acts 3:22-23; Rom.10:19)

IV. Setting

- A. On the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho (1:1)
- B. Probably between 1450 and 1400 BC: 39 years, 11 months after the exodus (1:1-5)
- C. Distance from Horeb (Sinai) to Kadesh = 165 miles (266 km); eleven days’ march (1:2)
- D. Moses’ death is immanent (31:1-2), and Israel is about to begin the conquest of Canaan

V. Contents

- A. Looking backward and looking forward
- B. Outline:
 - 1. Introduction (1:1-4)
 - 2. First Discourse: Historical review (1:5—4:40)
 - 3. Cities of refuge (4:41-43)
 - 4. Introductory summary of second discourse (4:44-49)
 - 5. Second Discourse: Review and expansion of covenant stipulations (Chs.5—26)
 - 6. Blessings and Curses (Chs.27-28)
 - 7. Third Discourse: Covenant Reaffirmed (Chs.29-30)
 - 8. Appendix 1: Instructing Priests, Levites and Joshua (31:1-29)
 - 9. Appendix 2: Song of Moses (31:30-Ch.32)
 - 10. Appendix 3: Moses’ Blessing (Ch.33)
 - 11. Appendix 4: Death of Moses (Ch.34)

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VI. Suzerainty Treaty?

A. In 1954, G.E. Mendenhall published two articles *Biblical Archaeologist*, which have influenced most scholarly thinking about the structure of Deuteronomy—in which he pointed out similarities between Deuteronomy and the Hittite suzerainty treaties from the 2nd millennium BC.

B. Appropriateness: God is the Great King; Israel the vassal—would support early composition

C. Typical suzerainty treaty structure:

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| 1. Preamble | (1:1-5) |
| 2. Historical prologue | (1:6-Ch.4) |
| 3. General stipulations of the treaty | (Chs.5-11) |
| 4. Specific stipulations | (Chs.12--26) |
| 5. Arrangements for the preservation of copies | (Ch.27) |
| 6. Blessings and curses | (28:15-68) |
| 7. Review and provisions for continuity | (Chs.29-34) |

VII. Parallels between the Book of the Covenant (Ex.21-23) and Deut. (about 50% of former)

Hebrew servants	Exodus 21:1-11	Deut. 15:12-18
Murder: deliberate and accidental	Exodus 21:12-14	Deut. 19:1-13
Kidnapping	Exodus 21:16	Deut. 24:7
Marriage to a seduced virgin	Exodus 22:16-17	Deut. 22:28-29
Oppression of the weak or helpless	Exodus 22:21-24; 23:9	Deut. 24:17-22; 24:17f
Charging interest on loans	Exodus 22:25	Deut. 23:19-20
Taking pledges (collateral) from the poor	Exodus 22:26-27	Deut. 24:10-13
Law of the firstborn	Exodus 22:29-30	Deut. 15:19-21
Eating meat not properly butchered	Exodus 22:31	Deut. 15:22-23
False witnesses	Exodus 23:1	Deut. 19:16-21
Impartial justice in court	Exodus 23:2-3, 6-8	Deut. 16:18-20
Kindness to neighbors, including enemies	Exodus 23:4-5	Deut. 22:1-4
The Sabbath Year/ Year of Release	Exodus 23:10-11	Deut. 15:1-11
The Sabbath Day	Exodus 23:12	Deut. 5:13-15
Oaths only in the name of Yahweh	Exodus 23:13	Deut. 6:13-14
Three annual festivals	Exodus 23:14-17	Deut. 16:1-17
The Law of Firstfruits	Exodus 23:19a	Deut. 26:2-10
Don't boil a kid in its mother's milk	Exodus 23:19b	Deut. 14:21b

Characteristic presentation in Deut.: State law briefly, then expand, preach, exhort and warn (e.g., 14:22-27; 15:1-11; 15:12-18)

VIII. Common words phrases oft repeated:

A. Common words:

To “love,” “hear/hearken to,” “serve,” “fear,” “cleave to”, “walk in the way[s] of” Yahweh
“covenant,” “your gates,” “abomination”

B. Common phrases:

“The place that Yahweh will choose [or “make His name to dwell”]”

“Redeemed from the house of bondage [or “from Egypt”]”

“Remember, you were a slave in the land of Egypt”

“The land which Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance [or “to possess”]”

“That you may prolong your days in the land”