

Deuteronomy

I. The Main Idea of Deuteronomy

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses prepares the new generation of Israelites for holy living in the promised land by leading them through a covenant renewal and exhorting them to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might.

Importance of the Book of Deuteronomy:

It is cited or referenced over 100 times in the New Testament!

Example: While being tempted by Satan, Jesus quotes from Deut. 8:3, 6:13, and 6:16. Deuteronomy clearly is still valuable for God's people today!

II. Outline of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 1-4	Moses' 1 st Sermon: Historical Summary & Exhortation
Deuteronomy 5-28	Moses' 2 nd Sermon: Restatement of 10 Commandments and Other Laws
Deuteronomy 29-30	Moses' 3 rd Sermon: Covenant Renewal
Deuteronomy 31-34	Moses' Final Actions and Death

In general, the topics in chapters 5 to 28 are organized to match the topics covered by the 10 Commandments, illustrating again how the 10 Commandments set the trajectory for the rest of the laws.



Plains of Moab below Mount Nebo with camels

III. Interpretive Keys to Deuteronomy

- Genre: Speech/Public Address
 - The book of Deuteronomy is primarily comprised of three speeches (sometimes referred to as "sermons") and other public addresses by Moses directed to the Israelite people. He was exhorting them to honor the covenant they have with God and to live by the stipulations of the covenant so that they will experience God's blessings.

- At the same time, Moses was fully aware that Israel will not be faithful to the covenant and will eventually experience God's discipline through exile (Deut. 29:2-4; 31:16-22).
- The name "Deuteronomy" comes from the Greek name for the book (*Deuteronomion*) means "second law." It captures the idea that Moses was leading Israel through a covenant renewal, preparing the new generation to live rightly as they enter the promised land.
- Deuteronomy also sets the stage for the rest of the Old Testament. For example, the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings are referred to as the "Deuteronomic History" because they record how the rest of Israelite history played out using the concepts and principles provided in the book of Deuteronomy.

IV. Key Passages of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 5 (cf. Exodus 20-24) - The Mosaic Covenant

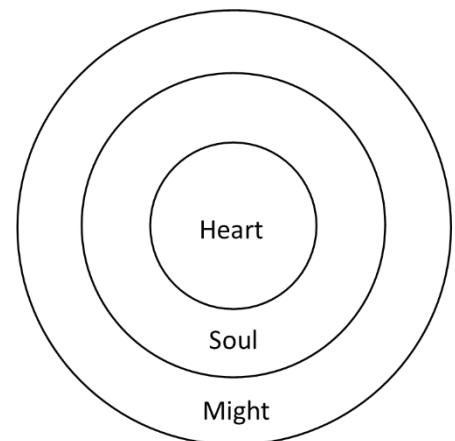
- Parties: Made between God and Israel (Exod 19:3-6; 24:1-11; 34:27-28)
- Type of Covenant:
 - Conditional - Based on obedience (Lev. 28; Deut. 26)
 - Exod 19:5-6 "Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant**, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."
 - Can be broken (Lev 26:15; Deut 31:16, 20).
- Time Period: Indefinite, but Ultimately Temporary
 - Jer 31:31-32
 - Heb 8:7-8, 13
 - **Note:** The Noahic (Gen 9:16), Abrahamic (Gen 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chr 16:17; Psa 105:10), Davidic (2 Sam 23:5), and New Covenants (Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:40; Jer. 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26) are each described as an "everlasting covenant." But that phrase is never used in reference to the Mosaic Covenant.
 - **Additional Note:** Occasionally, a Hebrew phrase translated as "covenant forever" is used in reference to the Sabbath (Exod 31:16), the bread of the presence in the Tabernacle (Lev 24:8), or the portion of the sacrifices that the priests were allowed to keep (Num 18:19). However, the word translated as "forever" in those verses is better translated as "indefinitely."



- See Allan A. Macrae, "1631 דלג," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 672.
- Sign of Covenant: the Sabbath (?)
 - Exodus 31:13-17
 - Cf. Gen. 9:12-13, 17; 17:9-14
- Promises:
 - Exod 19:5-6 "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, **you shall be my treasured possession** among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."
 - Deut 5:33 "You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, **that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.**"
 - Various blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Lev. 26; Deut. 28).

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

- When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He quoted two commandments. According to Jesus, this is the greatest commandment.
 - Matthew 22:34-40 "But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'"
- "Most likely, rather than detailing three distinct parts of a person, these elements characterize three expanding, yet overlapping, human spheres of life, all of which are to proclaim God's supremacy.
 - 'Heart' relates to all that is internal—one's desires, emotions, attitudes, perceptions, *and* thoughts.
 - 'Soul' refers to one's entire being—all that is part of the 'heart' plus everything outward: one's body, words, actions, reactions (e.g., Gen. 2:7; Lev. 26:11).
 - Finally, 'might' is not only physical strength but also all that one has available for honoring God, which would include one's spouse, children, house, land, animals, wardrobe, tools, and toys.



All that we are and have should ring out, 'My God is Yahweh!'" --Jason S. DeRouchie, *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, p. 148.

Deuteronomy 32:45-47 "And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, 'Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.'"

- Was the Law a blessing or a curse for the Israelites?
 - Although an initial reading of the NT gives the impression that the Mosaic Law was a curse (John 1:17; Gal. 3:10-13), it actually was a blessing to them for the following reasons:
 - It provided instructions about how to obey God and to obtain forgiveness from sin. This was one thing that made the religion of the Israelites stand out from the rest of the world: pagan worshippers had no idea how to please their gods.
 - It was a tutor and guardian for believers until the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:24).
 - Contrast Moses' words, "it is no empty word for you but your very life," and Psalm 119:97-104, with the following frustrated prayer from a pagan worshiper. This worshiper felt the conviction of sin, but did not know what to do to receive forgiveness for that sin.



Ancient Sumerian Prayer to an Unknown God

May the wrath of the heart of my god be pacified!
May the god who is unknown to me be pacified!
May the goddess who is unknown to me be pacified!
May the known and unknown god be pacified!
May the known and unknown goddess be pacified!
The sin which I have committed I know not.
The misdeed which I have committed I know not. ...
An offense against my god I have unwittingly committed.
A transgression against my goddess I have unwittingly done.
O Lord, my sins are many, great are my iniquities!
My god, my sins are many, great are my iniquities! ...
The lord, in the anger of his heart, hath looked upon me.
The god, in the wrath of his heart, hath visited me. ...
I sought for help, but no one takes my hand.
I wept, but no one came to my side.
I lamented, but no one hearkens to me.
I am afflicted, I am overcome, I cannot look up. ...

Psalm 119:97-104

Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
Your commandment makes me wiser
than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my
teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get
understanding;

How long, known and unknown god, until the anger of thy heart be pacified? How long, known and unknown goddess, until thy unfriendly heart be pacified? Mankind is perverted and has no judgment. Of all men who are alive, who knows anything? They do not know whether they do good or evil. ... My god, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins! My goddess, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins! Known and unknown god, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins!	therefore I hate every false way.
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- Unlike the pagan worshippers, when an Israelite sinned against God, he or she knew what needed to be done in order to be granted forgiveness.

V. Messianic Elements within Deuteronomy

Direct Prophecy(?):

- Deuteronomy 18:15-19 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen ... And the LORD said to me ... 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.'"
- *The Essence of the Old Testament* refers to this passage as "the most direct Christological reference in the book" (p. 118), but its discussion of the passage is confusing.
- At first glance, it appears that this passage seems to be merely introducing the class of "prophet" into Israelite society. Just like Moses, there would be other prophets who would deliver God's messages to the Israelites in the future (such as Elijah, Isaiah, and Hosea). The Israelites were required to listen to such a prophet whenever God raised one up.
- However, the Jews in the New Testament period saw something more. The Jews of the 1st century viewed this as a prophecy about a specific prophet that God would raise up in the future, but they did *not* identify this prophet as the same person as the Messiah/Christ:
 - John 1:19-21, 25 "And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' '**Are you the Prophet?**' And he answered, 'No.' ... They asked him, 'Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor **the Prophet?**'"

- John 6:14 "When the people saw the sign that he [Jesus] had done, they said, '**This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!**'"
- John 7:40-41 "When they heard these words, some of the people said, '**This really is the Prophet.**' Others said, 'This is the Christ.' But some said, 'Is the Christ to come from Galilee?'"
- Peter seems to give some validation for this interpretation in Acts 3. He seems to identify Jesus as this Prophet in his words to the Jews in the temple courts. But unlike the Jews, he identifies Jesus as **both** the Messiah/Christ and the Prophet:
 - Acts 3:19-26 "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. **Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'** And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."
- So this is probably an example of a prophecy that was partially fulfilled in the Old Testament period, but ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. As explained in the *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (p. 313):
 - "The context envisions a series of prophets who function like Moses to continue divine revelation after the Mount Sinai experience. This is therefore a collective reference to the prophets after Moses—a type of prophetic succession. But since no one equaled the great Moses (34:10), this text is the basis for a future Messianic expectation of a new Moses and receives a unique fulfillment in Jesus (see John 1:21, 25, 45; 5:46; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22-26; 7:37)."
- (Tip from the Professor: This is *not* the best Messianic prophecy to pick when writing your final exam essay since its fulfillment is unclear. Instead choose a prophecy that clearly points to something specific in Jesus's life.)