

DEUTERONOMY

Introduction

Author. See Introduction to Genesis and Exodus.

Date. Since the events and (therefore in this case) the writing of the book occurred just before the people entered into the land and before the death of Moses, a probable date would be around 1406 B.C.

Occasion. The generation after the exodus had grown to maturity after the events of Sinai and during the wilderness wanderings. Thus they did not experience the ratification of the covenant at Sinai. They were, however, about to experience a large part of the fulfillment of the promises of God to the Patriarchs. Thus they needed to know the terms of the relationship with the God whose blessings they were about to experience.

Structure. This book is fashioned after an ancient form of a Suzerain/Vassal treaty. Although many forms existed Deuteronomy conforms to the following basic pattern:

1.	Preamble	1:1-5
2.	Historical Prologue	1:6--4:43
3.	Stipulations	4:44--26:19
	a) general principles	4:44--11:32
	b) specific regulations	21:--26:19
4.	Sanctions	27:1--28:68
	a) blessings	28:1-15
	b) cursings	28:16-68
5.	Witnesses	29:1--30:20
6.	Provision for safe-keeping	31:9

Message Statement. A renewal of the covenant was necessary in Israel. The people, being prone to wander, had significantly breached the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 32-33), Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 13-14) and at Beth-Peor (Numbers 25). Beyond this, a new generation had arisen since the covenant was first ratified at Sinai (Exodus 19). Thus, it was necessary that this new generation commit themselves to a covenant relationship with God before they attempted to secure and enjoy the blessings of the covenant. They also needed to understand that although God had called them to obedience, ultimately they could

only attain the blessings of God by the mercy of God. The message of Deuteronomy, then is: *the renewed terms of the covenant call for a heart of faithful obedience yet foresees the ultimate realization of covenant goals only in God's mercy.*

Argument

- 1A INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 1:1-5
As Moses sets the stage for his exposition to the nation he mentions two recent victories. The implication seems to be that these kinds of victories can only be enjoyed by continuing fidelity to the covenant.
- 2A HISTORICAL PROLOGUE 1:6--4:43
In order to respond to the terms of the renewed covenant in both gratitude and humility it was necessary that Israel hear those terms from the perspective of the past and the future. A look at the past (1:6--3:29) would fill them with gratitude towards, and confidence in, their God. A look to the future (4:1-43) would caution them concerning self-confidence and hopefully instill them with a profound humility.
- 1B God is Faithful to the Covenant in the Past from Mt. Sinai to Beth-Peor 1:6--3:29
God's faithfulness to the covenant in the past could be easily observed by those with the dullest of spiritual senses. After the Exodus He constituted them a nation and immediately offered the promise of the land. The people, however, rebelled at God's offer and were judged for forty years. Even during those years, though, God's hand of provision and blessing was evident (2:7). Near the end of the wilderness wanderings, God gave the people a taste of conquest with victories over Sihon (2:26-37) and Og (3:1-11). Even in God's dealings with Moses (3:21-29), He is consistent with His previous prohibition about Moses' entrance into the Land. In all of these instances, Israel had a history of relations with a God who was gracious and just. Thus, she was able to make an intelligent choice about the One with whom she would enter into this covenant relation.
- 2B The Future of the Covenant Relationship Will Only be Sustained Despite the Peoples' Unfaithfulness by God's Mercy 4:1-43
Even as Moses explains that the covenant calls for loyal obedience, he recognizes that ultimately only after the people's failure will God's mercy cause the covenant to succeed. Moses begins this section with a painful reminder of the nations' failure at Baal Peor (4:3; Numbers 25). This departure from the covenant well illustrates the need for severe warnings. He then warns the people of the certainty of exile if they disobey (4:27). God's mercy and the uniqueness of His work in history climax Moses' call for fidelity. This then is the conclusion of the introduction to the Law. An appeal to God's faithfulness and a call to the people's faithfulness are followed by a full exposition of the covenant.
- 3A THE ADDRESS OF MOSES: THE LAW 4:44--26:19
In this, the major section of the book, Moses explains the covenant terms for the people. In a word, the covenant simple demands a heart of faithful obedience. It was never intended as a method of attaining righteousness thereby flattering human pride. The Law simply outlines the way in which one who is grateful for God's goodness can respond in love to Him. God speaks first to the individual within the nation (5-11) and then to the nation (12-26).
- 1B Introduction 4:44-49

Moses' prosaic foreword formally introduces his explanation of the covenant terms. This introduction is evenly balanced with a conclusion (26:16-19).

- 2B The Basic Commandments: Expository Exhortation 5:1--11:32
 Rather than beginning with a formal list of prohibitions and allowances, God first lays the groundwork for His revelation. Rather than perfunctory obedience, at its highest level, the law demands nothing less than a loving response. Only by loving the LORD with all one's might can the requirements of the law begin to be kept. This section (5-11) which deals with the individual's response comes to a definite summary and conclusion (10:12--11:32) before moving on to National concerns.
- 1C What God fundamentally demands 5:1-33
 The ten commands serve to summarize and principle the fundamental demands of the covenant. Moses first gives a summons to obey (5:1-5) and then records the essence of the law. This is followed by the record of an intimate conversation between God and Moses in which God expresses the desired heart condition of the people, *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!* (5:29).
- 2C The basic response to God's demands: Love 6:1-25
 After outlining the basic demands of God on the people, Moses defines the proper response: love. Fundamentally, the Law requires love of God. Heartless obedience falls short of God's desire. Unfortunately the tendency is to forget God rather than love Him, so Moses next warns against neglecting God after He prospers them. Moses then concludes with the basis for love of God: His love for the nation as expressed in their redemption from Egypt (6:20-25).
- 3C The basis for possessing the land 7:1-26
 As the nation stood on the borders of the promised land they needed to understand the relationship of the covenant they were making and their possession of the land. Contrary to other nations, their possession of the land would not be based on military superiority, but rather upon obedience to the covenant. The only reason they even had the opportunity to enter the land was because of God's choice to bless them (7:8-9). And this promise of God (Land) would only be obtained as any other promise of God, on the necessary condition of faith and obedience.
- 4C The strength of Israel 8:1-20
 Any notion of self-sufficiency would not only deny the very basis of the promise, but also frustrate any hope of its fulfillment. Thus, God addressed the issue of Israel's strength. Jesus found this passage appropriate when as the perfect son of God He expressed His dependence upon God.
- 5C The nature of Israel 9:1--10:11
 In order to understand their propensity to self-sufficiency, the nation needed to comprehend its own nature. God speaks to that very issue as he first describes Israel as a "stiff-necked people," and then proves His point with a brief historical summary (9:7-24). As Israel began to accept her own inadequacy, she would be forced to understand her only true hope, the mercy of God (9:25--10:11).
- 6C Summary of the basic commandments 10:12--11:32
 As a conclusion to this section (5:1--11:32) Moses almost summarizes the whole covenant. He covers Israel's responsibility to fear (10:12-22) and love God (11:1-12),

and then closes with the very optimistic listing of the consequences of Israel's obedience (11:13-32).

- 3B The Specific Legislation 12:1--26:15
The specific listing of terms of the covenant here call for a national heart response of obedience to God. The section is opened and closes by the subject of greatest interest, national worship (12-16; 26). For the theocracy to function properly, God laid down specific rules for each aspect of national leadership (16-20). Then God covered miscellaneous aspects of national life which would concern the common man (21-25).
- 1C Concerning national worship 12:1--16:17
The place given to national worship by the order of mention and length of this section is clear. An essential to national worship was the discussion of the central sanctuary, the topic which forms an inclusio of this portion (12 and 16).
- 1D The place of worship: the central sanctuary 12:1-31
In order to insure ritual purity by close Levitical scrutiny, God commanded that all Israel's formal worship take place at a particular location to be disclosed in the future.
- 2D The procedure for dealing with false worship 13:1-18
In a theocracy religious apostasy was tantamount to treason. Therefore, those who taught or advocated false gods, either openly or secretly were to be punished with their lives. The truth could only be protected by separating it completely from error.
- 3D The principles for foods and tithes 14:1-29
God's design was that Israel should stand apart for His purposes and few ordinances served better to practically separate Israel from interaction with pagan nations than these food laws. Also fundamental to national worship was the place of the tithe which served to remind each family that ultimately all they owned belonged to God.
- 4D The year of canceling debts and law of firstborn 15:1-23
Love of one's neighbor was also a primary concern of the law. Thus, the proper treatment of the helpless (the poor and slave) is clearly outlined. God's blessing is promised for obedience to these gracious actions.
- 5D The times of worship at the central sanctuary 16:1-17
The topic of this section concerns only those feasts which required attendance at the central sanctuary. It thus serves along with chapter 12 as an inclusio for the portion concerning corporate worship. For Israel, national worship was to begin and end at the central sanctuary.
- 2C Concerning national leadership 16:18--20:20
After national worship the nation's leadership was the most critical element to ensure covenant fidelity.
- 1D The juridical 16:18--17:13
The justice system is described first. True to the covenant theme, the promise of a long sojourn in the land is given for appointing God-fearing judges.

- 2D The royal 17:14-20
The king as well is given general guidelines which will help safeguard his covenant loyalty. Among those instructions was that the King have a personal copy of the covenant so that he could read it "all the days of his life" (17:19). The promise in this case for covenant obedience grants that the king and his sons will *reign* a long time in the land (17:20).
- 3D The priestly 18:1-8
The regulations in this section are meant as much for the people as the priest. God ensures here that the priests will be provided for adequately.
- 4D The prophetic 18:9-22
Because the practice of divination was widespread in Canaan, God gives specific prohibition against such pagan practices. He also gives positive instructions, however, concerning discerning and relating to the correct sources of revelation, the prophet.
- 5D The juridical 19:1-21
In order to provide protection for the one guilty of an intentional murder God designated six levitical cities. He also gives directions to protect the innocent person against false witnesses (19:15-21).
- 6D The military 20:1-20
Because Israel's wars were by definition holy wars, the priest was to take a leading role in the military marching, reminding Israel of her source of strength. Although secular philosophy teaches that all is fair in war, Israel's God ordained a particular behavior in war for his people.
- 3C Concerning national life 21:1--25:18
After outlining the laws for national worship and leadership, God next dealt with the behavior of the common man. Miscellaneous laws covering every aspect of life teach that no area of life is outside the concern of God. No dichotomy existed between the sacred and the profane in Israel. From family affairs to kidnapping, to working oxen to the extermination of Amalek, God's rules were to shape the behavior of Israel.
- 4C Concerning national worship 26:1-15
After covering laws for the national leadership and the common man, Moses closes this section with a return to laws about Israel's worship. This major section covering specific regulations (12:1--26:19) begins and ends with the emphasis upon national worship. These particular reminders concerning firstfruits and tithes were both intended to remind Israel that all that they had came from God and belonged to Him.
- 4B Conclusion 26:16-19
Just as Moses formally introduced (4:44-49) the main body of the law (chapters five through twenty-six) he also formally concludes it here. He once again encourages careful observance of all that preceded with "all your heart and all your soul" (26:16). Even in his conclusion, Moses emphasizes that perfunctory allegiance is insufficient. The covenant demands nothing less than grateful and whole-hearted response to the Suzerain of Israel.
- 4A THE ADDRESS OF MOSES: BLESSINGS AND CURSINGS 27:1--28:68
As was the pattern in ancient near eastern treaties, the terms of the covenant were followed by the Suzerain's promised responses to the vassal's behavior. So also, here, God outlines his blessings

and cursings for the people. In order to preserve and enjoy their relationship with God the peoples' conduct was critical.

1B Renewal of the Covenant Commanded 27:1-26

Moses not only demanded obedience to the covenant which the people had just heard him recite but also demanded a future reconfirmation of the covenant upon entrance into the land. He lays particular emphasis upon their verbal agreement with several representative curses (27:15-26). The final curse is a comprehensive one which pronounces a curse on the man "who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out" (27:26). Israel was not free to choose only certain parts of the covenant. The burden of this law was clearly impossible for any person attempting to fulfill it without supernatural power. Israel's history displays this truth only too well.

2B The Blessings and Cursings Pronounced in Moab 28:1-68

Although the blessings are listed first they are in the numerical minority compared to the cursings. Material and spiritual blessings are promised to the nation which honors God. Cursings of various degrees are promised for the unfaithful nation. Basically, the blessings involve enjoyment and security in the land while the curses involve hardship in the land and eventual exile from it. The curses progress from difficulty and defeats in the land to complete dispersion and exile. The climax to the curse involves the nation's transportation back to Egypt to be sold back into slavery (28:68). Thus, if Israel was unfaithful to the covenant God would undo all that He had done for her.

5A THE ADDRESS OF MOSES: CALL FOR AN OATH 29:1--30:20

Moses' realistic understanding of the demands of the covenant results in a paradoxical statement. He calls for an oath of allegiance on the part of the people while realizing that ultimately the people will fail and the goal of the covenant relationship will only be fulfilled by God's mercy.

1B An Appeal for Covenant Faithfulness 29:1-29

Even in his appeal for obedience Moses admits and reveals that in the nation's short history she had demonstrated herself to be ignorant and blind to God (29:4). In spite of this poor beginning, Moses warns Israel against disobedience with a futuristic look at the consequences of exile.

2B A Vision of an Ultimate Realization 30:1-10

In a realistic view of Israel's chances under this covenant Moses looks forward to the exile of the nation. His hope is that then the nation may finally recognize its helplessness, repent of sin and call out to God. He is certain that God will renew the people not only by returning them to the land but by changing their hearts (30:6). Ultimately, the only hope for the nation was a regenerate heart which would fulfill the design of the covenant with heartfelt obedience. When this occurs, Moses foresees the final fulfillment of the promises of the covenant in a glorious relationship with God in the land of Palestine (30:7-10).

3B A Call for an Oath 30:11-20

In his formal call for an oath from the people Moses reminds them of two things. First, the fulfillment of the commands were possible for the one who desired to walk in God's ways (30:11-14). Second, the only consequences were either life or death. With the LORD was life; without Him was destruction.

6A THE CONTINUITY OF THE COVENANT FROM MOSES TO JOSHUA 31:1--34:12

Because of his lack of faith in striking the rock, Moses was unable to lead the people into the land. As good a leader as Moses was by God's grace he was insufficient to lead Israel to the fulfillment of

her promises. This section records Moses' parting words and transfer of leadership to Joshua.

- 1B The Commission of Joshua and Deposition of the Law 31:1-13
In order to ensure the future of the covenant Moses commissioned God's man to lead the people into the land and deposited the copy of the book with the Levites for its safekeeping.
- 2B The Song of Moses 31:14--32:47
God appears to Moses and directs the writing of his song. The purpose as stated by God of the song was "so that it may be a witness for me against them" (31:19). The song, evidently meant to impress upon Israel that which they would not admit, clearly foresees and pessimistic and realistic view of the nations self-satisfaction and rebellion against God. Against the backdrop of God's goodness in creating Israel, the nation will, in its prosperity (32:15), abandon the God who made her. God will, of course, judge the nation but also holds out the hope of ultimate deliverance after his vengeance is satisfied (32:43).
- 3B The Blessing of Moses 32:48--33:29
As the patriarch of the nation, Moses fills the customary role by blessing the tribes. Levi is included and presumably Manasseh and Ephraim are included under the heading of Joseph but Simeon is missing completely. This may be because later Simeon was absorbed by Judah. Moses' blessing of the tribes begins and ends with praise to God. Without Him no blessing would be possible.
- 4B The Death of Moses and Leadership of Joshua 34:1-12
The last words about Moses' life concern his inability to enter the promised land. This sets the stage for Joshua's commission to power and his mandate to finish the work which Moses could not. Thus, this chapter provides a natural introduction to the book of Joshua.

Outline

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3C	Joshua's assumption of power	34:9
4C	Moses' eulogy	34:10-12

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