

## Deuteronomy: The “Retelling” of the Law

Introduction to Deuteronomy. Israel's wilderness wanderings reviewed; a review of the law; Commands concerning God, festivals, leaders, and relationships; Israel's covenant ratified; Moses' farewell; The “rediscovery” of the law and its later impact

## Introduction to Deuteronomy

- **Devarim** or “words” (Hebrew); **Deuteronomion** or “Second Law” (Greek)
  - 17:8 - Greek Septuagint mistranslated “copy of the law” to “second law”
- An anthology of Moses' final speeches
  - A genuine testimony of Mosaic faith, the book as it exists now seems to have been shaped 600 years later
- **Authorship**
  - **Moses**
    - Core traditions go back to the time of Moses and the Exodus
  - **Intermediate Source(s)**
    - Similarities to the Elohistic author (E) suggest that a transmitter of the material may have been a northern Levite who fled the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C.
  - **The Deuteronomist (D)**
    - The major editor, using both J and E material, seems to have put the book in final form either during the reign of Hezekiah (715–687 B.C.) or Josiah (640–609 B.C.)
      - Both were righteous kings who worshiped YHWH and initiated reforms to centralize worship where “the Lord put his name” – ie. Jerusalem and the temple
  - **Final Editors (DH and others)**
    - Later writers, using D as a guide, wrote the history of Israel and Judah reflecting the results of not following Deuteronomy; they may have revised or written portions of the fifth book of Moses during or after the exile

## Josiah and Deuteronomy: 2 Kings 22

- In the time of **Josiah** an old copy of the Law was found in the temple
  - *Josiah read this and instituted reforms to bring the people back under the Law*
  - Destroyed idols and altars his father built YHWH **to centralize and control worship at the temple in Jerusalem**
  - **Perhaps this old law was an old copy of Deuteronomy brought by an Elohist from the North Kingdom?**
- Book of Mormon contact
  - *It may be a similar case to the brass plates, a record from Lehi's fathers in the Northern Kingdom which was brought to the South when the Northern kingdom was destroyed*
- Later someone from this Deuteronomistic school looked at the history of Israel and saw when they were blessed or cursed for keeping or breaking the law
  - This is where DH comes in
  - *Same as Mormon using the Lehite covenant as a lens to understand Nephite history*

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## Themes

- **One God**
  - Practical monotheism—scholars continue to argue whether early Israelite religion was **monotheist** (YHWH was the only God – no other gods at all) or **henotheist** (YHWH was the god of Israel and the only one to whom they were to be loyal and worship)
  - Worried about gods of other lands becoming **syncretized** with YHWH worship
  - Deuteronomy 6:4–5
- **One People**
  - Addressed to the people of God as a whole—no distinction between tribes or the later kingdoms
  - Covenant made with the fathers is now “with us alive today” (5:3)
  - Concept of **election**: Israel was chosen by God at his initiative as a “treasured [own] possession” (Deut. 7:6)
- **One Faith – One Form of Worship**
  - Demands uniformity of worship—only YHWH, in the way he prescribes, and **in the place he will choose**

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## Structure

- **Introduction (1:1–5)**
- **Recapitulation of the Forty Years of Wandering (1:6–4:43, “Mosaic Memoirs”): A Historical Review**
- **Rehearsal of Israel’s Law (4:44–26:19)**
  - Transition to the Second Address (4:44–49)
  - **Restatement of the Ten Commandments (5:1–13:18): A Legal Review—*Who to Worship, Where to Worship, When and How to Worship***
  - **Rules for Family and Community Life (14:1–26:19): Further Legal Review—*A Holy People* (cf. Holiness Code of Leviticus 17–26)**
- **The Covenant and Its Renewal (27:1–30:20): *Not just with the fathers but with those today!***
- **Conclusion (31:1–34:12): *The End of Moses’ Ministry and the Beginning of Joshua’s***

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## Structure: Another View

- **Prologue (1:1–4:49)**
- **The Law (5:1–29:1)**
  - **Essence of the Law (5:1–11:31)**
  - **Core Laws (12:1–26:19)**
  - **Cursings and Blessings (27:1–29:1)**
- **Covenant Renewal (29:2–32:52)**
- **Epilogue (33:1–34:12)**

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## Deuteronomy as a Covenant Treaty

- Scholars have noted similarities with ancient treaties
  - *Or did agreements between ancient states have similarities to covenants with God?*
- Introduction (4:44–49)
- Historical Background (5:1–11:31)
- Conditions (12:1–26:19)
- Publication (27:1–10)
- Divine Witnesses (30:19)
- Blessings and Cursings (27:1–29:1)

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## “Ye shall not add unto the word . . .”

- **Torah and its synonyms (statues, ordinances, etc.) appear in Deuteronomy more than any other text of the Pentateuch**
  - “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” 4:2
  - *The Lord can add or take away from scripture – humans, even prophets, cannot except by the will of the Lord*
- “And this *is* the law which Moses set before the children of Israel: These *are* the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt.” (4:44–45)
- Rearticulation of the Decalogue—which is actually called “The Ten Commandments” here (6:6–21; cf. Exodus 20:2–17)

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## The Great Commandment (6:1–9)

- The Shema
  - **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.** And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as **frontlets** between thine eyes. And thou shalt **write them upon the posts of thy house**, and on thy gates.” (6:4–9)
    - There is one God?
    - The YHWH alone is god?
- Symbolic reminders
  - **Tefillin** (phylacteries)
    - Boxes of this text on straps tied in such a way to keep them near the heart and mind
  - *Mezuzah*
    - Parchment attached to the doorframe of the home

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## Law and Blessings

- **The Essence of the Law (10:12–22)**
  - “And now, Israel, **what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? . . . Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.**” (10:12–13, 16)
- **Rewards for Obedience (11:1–31)**
  - “And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That **I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.**” (11:13–14)

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## The Place YHWH Chooses (12:4–28)

### ■ Warnings about pagan shrines (12:1–3)

- “Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.” (12:2–3)

### ■ Proper worship at a proper place

- “Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord: And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that *is* within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.” (12:21–22)

- *To the editors this was the temple in Jerusalem*

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## A New Prophet Like Moses (18:15–19)

- **“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken ...** I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”(18:15, 18)
- Template for **all future prophets** or **a particular Prophet**?
  - In Jewish tradition this was **a standard for all prophets**
  - **Early Christian fulfillment of this in Jesus** – Jesus even quotes this in the gospels
- **More Warnings against False Prophets** (18:20–22; first warning was in 13:1–18)
  - The test to see **whether there prophesies have come true** makes particular sense from the after-the-fact perspective of D—a way to ensure that subsequent prophets had been in the mold of Moses

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## The Earliest Creed (26:5–10)

- Part of the Ceremony of the Firstfruits at Shavuot was a creedal statement: **Who Israel Is** and **What YHWH Has Done for Them**
  - “And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us ... And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God: (26:3, 10)
- The worshipper attests three major historical events in the history of Israel and then pledged his worship
  - The wanderings of Jacob and his families move to Egypt
  - The Egyptian bondage and Israel’s miraculous delivery
  - The conquest of Canaan, a land “flowing with milk and honey”

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## Curses and Blessings

- **Twelve Curses from Mt. Ebal** (27:11–26)
- **Blessings from Mt. Gerizim** (28:1–14)
  - “ And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that **the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth**: . . . The Lord shall **establish thee an holy people unto himself**, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.” (28:1, 9)
- **Warnings against Future Disobedience (28:15–68) —prophesy, Deuteronomic hindsight, or both?**
  - “The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed away: So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head. **The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known**; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee . . . **The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand.**” (28:33–37, 49)

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## The Covenant Renewed in Moab (29:1–29)

- “These *are* the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. “ (29:1)
- “That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: **That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself**, and *that he may be unto thee a God*, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. **Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; But with *him* that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with *him* that *is not here with us this day*” (29:12-15)**

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## Moses’ Final Words

- Exhortation to Choose Life (30:11–20; cf. 2 Nephi 2:27–28!)
- The Song of Moses (31:30–32:47)
- Moses’ Final Blessing on Israel (33:1–29)

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## Epitaph of Moses

- **Moses “Dies” and Is Buried in the Land of Moab** (34:1–12)
  - On Moses’ death/translation, see JST Deut 34:6, Alma 45:19, D&C 110:13 – translation meant entering a greater promised land!
- **Joshua succeeds** (34:9)
- Posthumous reputation
  - **“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.”** (34:10–12)

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## Deuteronomy and Its Later Impact

- **“Rediscovery” during temple renovations under Josiah**
  - “And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it . . . And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.” (2 Kings 22:8, 11–13)
  - **Sparked the Reforms of Josiah, which were all in line with the strictures of Deuteronomy**
- **The “Deuteronomic History” (DH), which covers the Former Prophets (effectively Joshua–2 Kings) interprets Israelite and Judahite history from the perspective of Deuteronomy**

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