

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Old Testament, of the Torah (law), and of the Pentateuch (five scrolls). To know Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy is to know "five-fifths of the law." It is the book stressing obedience to God.

What does Deuteronomy mean? The repeated (*duetero*) law (*nomos*).

What is its Hebrew title? "These are the words" (1:1a).

Whose words? Mostly Moses' (1:1, 5), except for his obituary (34).

Spoken to whom? All Israel (1:1).

When? Forty years after Israel left Egypt (1:3), in Moses' 120th year (31:2).

Where? Moab, east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho (1:1, 5; 32:49).

Why? Because Moses wanted to write a farewell, leading Israel to renew her covenant with Yahweh before entering Canaan (29:1-15).

Deuteronomy is a book of remembrance and hope, retrospect and prospect. It looks back to Israel's deliverance from Egypt and her desert wanderings; it looks ahead to the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey. This symbolizes the Christian life, between conversion and final glory.

Much of Deuteronomy sounds like preaching. Moses' sermons are the Bible's first. His climactic appeal: "I have set before you today life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life ..." (see 30:15-20).

Interesting facts or words:

- Mt. Sinai is always Horeb (1:2);
- Israel as many as the stars (1:10);
- 6' x 13' bedstead of King Og (3:11);
- God "brought us out" to "bring us in" (6:23);
- hornets as weapons (7:20);
- Egypt watered "by foot" (11:10);
- boundaries of Promised Land (11:24);
- anarchy among Israel (12:8, 9);
- meat-eating permitted (12:20ff);
- list of occult practices (18:9-14);
- cross-dressing prohibited (22:5);

- promise of future return to the land (30:1-5);
- ways of an eagle (32:11).

Deuteronomy was oft-quoted by Jesus and the apostles, along with Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah. Perhaps Deuteronomy was the Lord's favorite. All three of His responses to the Devil's temptations are here:

- "Man shall not live by bread alone..." (8:3);
- "You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him..." (6:13);

- "You shall not tempt the Lord your God..." (6:16).

Other famous quotes:

- The Shema – "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (6:4, 5);
- The great Prophet – "Him you shall hear..." (18:15, 18).

Previous laws are repeated:

- Ten Commandments (5:7ff, from Exodus 20);
- distinction between clean and unclean foods (14:3-21, from Leviticus 11);
- tithe (14:22-29, from Leviticus 27);
- year of release (15:1-18, from Exodus 21:2ff);
- annual festivals and feasts (16:1-16, from Leviticus 23);
- cities of refuge (19:1-13, from Numbers 35:10ff);
- several similar to book of the covenant (Exodus 21 – 23).

New laws are introduced:

- concerning the king (17:14-20);
- concerning occult practice (18:9-14);
- concerning warfare (20);
- concerning unsolved murder (21);
- concerning permission for divorce (24:1-4);
- concerning Levirate marriage (25:5-10).

What does Deuteronomy say about law?**Laws were...**

- God's covenant (4:13);
- given for people's good (6:24; 10:13; 12:28).

God...

- spoke Ten Commandments to the people and added no more (4:13; 5:6, 22);
- wrote the Decalogue on tablets of stone deposited in the ark (4:13; 5:22; 10:4, 5).

Deuteronomy in a sentence: You shall remember to love the Lord your God with all your heart; do not forget to obey Him today, as you go in and possess the land which the Lord your God gives you.

(all numbers in parentheses list chapters and verses in this month's feature, except where otherwise noted)

Moses...

- taught other statutes and judgments to the people (4:5,14; 5:31; 12ff);
- wrote these laws in a book and gave it to the priests (31:9, 24, 26).

People's duty to the law...

- do it (5:27; 7:12; 11:22);
- obey it (11:13, 27; 12:28);
- keep it (4:2, 40; 5:10, 29; 6:2, 17; 7:9, 12; 8:2, 11);
- hear it (4:1; 5:1; 6:3);
- talk it (6:7; 11:19);
- walk it (5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22);
- wear it (6:8; 11:18);
- learn it (5:1; 31:12, 13);
- teach it (6:7; 11:19);
- write it (6:9; 11:20);
- absorb it (6:7; 11:18);
- observe it (4:6; 5:1; 6:1, 3, 24; 7:11; 8:1; 11:32; 12:1, 28);
- act according to it (4:5);
- not add to or subtract from it (4:2; 12:32);
- not turn to the right or left of it (5:32).

Theological aim of the law: to prevent idolatry and apostasy (13:1-18; 17:2-7).

Humanitarian aims of the law were for...

- the good of all the people (6:24;

10:13; 12:28);

- the stranger, fatherless, and widow (10:18, 19; 24:17-22);
- social justice and equity (16:18-20; 25:13-16);
- animals and the environment (5:14; 20:19, 20; 22:6, 7; 23:12-14; 25:4);
- the weakest members of society (15:1-18; 24:10-15);
- combining justice (19:20; 25:1) with mercy (25:2, 3).

If obeyed, the law would have...

- brought life and land (4:1);
- been wisdom and understanding (4:6);
- brought welfare and prolonged days (4:26, 40; 5:33; 6:2, 24);
- been Israel's righteousness (6:25).

Instead of faithful obedience, Israel...

- provoked the Lord while leaving Egypt (9:7), at Sinai (9:8, 21), and in the wilderness (9:22, 23);
- were rebellious from the beginning (9:24);
- would be rebellious in the future (31:16, 21, 27, 29; 32:5, 33).

Despite disobedience, Israel inherited the land because of God's love and promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (9:4, 6; 10:15).

What does Deuteronomy say about God?

- a multiplying God (1:10, 11);
- a God nearby (4:7);
- a non-visible God (4:11, 15);
- a merciful God (4:31);
- the only God (4:35; 6:4, 5);
- a loving, choosing God (4:37; 33:3);
- a delivering God (5:6);
- a commanding God (5:7ff);
- a jealous God (5:9);
- a revealing God (5:24);
- a promising God (6:3);
- a faithful God (7:9);
- a great and awesome God (7:21; 10:17);
- a chastening God (8:5);
- an empowering God (8:18);
- a provokable God (9:7, 8);
- a consuming fire (9:3);
- an impartial, just God (10:17, 18);
- a seeing, caring God (11:12);
- a rest-giving God (12:10);
- a communicating God (18:15-19);
- a hearing, looking God (26:7);
- a blessing God (28:1-14);
- a God who permits curses (28:15-68);
- a keeper of secrets (29:29);
- a perfect, righteous, upright God; the Rock (32:4);
- a God of judgment (32:39-41).

Deuteronomy as covenant

The essence of biblical covenants is the agreement that Yahweh will be Israel's God and that Israel will be His people (26:17, 18; 29:13).

Deuteronomy follows a common covenant pattern of that day. When two persons or nations made agreements, they were expressed in this form:

- I. Preamble - names the parties; in Deuteronomy, Yahweh God and Israel (1:1-6).
- II. Historical prologue - traces highlights of their relationship; in Deuteronomy, deliverance from Egypt and guidance through the wilderness (1:6 — 3:29).
- III. Stipulations, list of conditions - two types in Deuteronomy: absolute moral laws (5:6-21) and further regulations for the nation in the new land (12:1 — 25:19).
- IV. Blessings and cursings - give incentive to keep the covenant (27:11 — 28:68).
- V. Call for witnesses to the terms of covenant; in Deuteronomy, heaven and earth (4:26, 32; 30:19; 31:28).
- VI. Provision for deposit and reading - words of the Deuteronomic covenant were written on a stone altar (27:1-8), read publicly (31:9-13), and deposited in a book (31:24-26).

Thus, the new covenant gospel is found in Deuteronomy:

- Because of human weakness, the law will never save (Romans 8:3a).
- Obedience is vital for daily life and liberty (Romans 13:9).

The last things Moses did:

- commissioned Joshua as leader (31);
- spoke a song (31:30 — 32:44);
- blessed the children of Israel (33);
- climbed Mt. Nebo to view the Promised Land (34:1, 4; 32:48, 52);
- with strong hand and keen eyes, died at age 120 (34:5, 8).