
BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Approximate date: 1440-1400 B.C.E. (Right); 1300-1200 B.C.E. (conservative-moderate); before 623 B.C.E. and/or 500s B.C.E. (Left)

Time period: Israel preparing to enter into the Promised Land

Author: Moses exclusively (Right); Moses, Joshua, and later editors (conservative-moderate); a pious teacher or priest in Jerusalem, compiled traditions and mythologies (Left)

Location of author: wilderness journey after the Exodus (Right, conservative-moderate); Jerusalem, Babylon, and/or Land of Israel (Left)

Target audience and their location: people of Israel preparing to enter the Promised Land (Right, conservative-moderate); Jewish religious leaders during reign of King Josiah and/or Jewish exiles returning from Babylon (Left)

People:

Moses, Israelites, Caleb (son of Jephunneh), Joshua (son of Nun)

People mentioned:

Sihon, Amorites, Og, Reubenites, Gadites, Canaanites, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Amalekites, descendants of Esau, Moabites, descendants of Lot, Emites, Anakites, Rephaites, Horites, Ammonites, Zamzummites, Avvites, Caphtorites, Sidonians, Jair, Geshurites, Maacathites, Makir, Pharaoh, Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, Aaron, Jaakanites, Eleazar, Egyptian army, Dathan, Abiram, sons of Eliab, Edomite(s), Egyptians

Places:

Jordan, Arabah, Suph, Paran, Tophel, Laban, Dizahab, Moab, Pisgah, cities of refuge (Bezer, Ramoth, Golan), Mount Gerizim, Mount Ebal, Mount Nebo

Places mentioned:

Horeb, Kadesh Barnea, Mount Seir road, Heshbon, Edrei, Bashan, Ashtaroth, Negev, Lebanon, Euphrates, Valley of Eshcol, Egypt, Seir, Hormah, Red Sea, Elath, Ezion Geber, Moab, Ar, Zered Valley, Gaza, Caphtor, Arnon Gorge, desert of Kedemoth, Jahaz, Aroer, Gilead, Jabbok, Mount Hermon (Sirion, Senir), Salecah, Rabbah, Argob, Havvoth Jair, Kinnereth, Salt Sea, Baal Peor, Massah, Taberah, Kibroth Hattavah, Moserah, Gudgodah, Jotbathah, Gilgal, Aram Naharaim, Sodom, Gomorrah, Desert of Zin

Key Themes and Events:

Moses speaks before the assembly of Israel, recalling: the appointment of leaders, the mission of the twelve spies, and the arrogance of certain Israelites going into the

Promised Land against the Lord's command / the Israelites' wanderings in the desert are summarized / the defeat of King Sihon and King Og is remembered / the Reubenites' and Gadites' inheritance outside of Canaan is remembered / Moses is allowed to look into the Promised Land from a mountain peak / Joshua is designated Moses' successor / the Instruction of God is repeated to Israel, as they prepare to go into the Promised Land / the Israelites are admonished not to commit idolatry, lest they be cast out of the Promised Land / there is a promise for restoration should Israel fall into idolatry, and later repent / the Lord is uplifted as a great and powerful God for Israel / three cities are designated as places of refuge (Bezer, Ramoth, Golan) / Moses repeats the Ten Commandments to the assembly of Israel / Israel's requirement to hear and obey¹ the Lord, loving Him, is emphasized / the Israelites are told to displace and destroy the current inhabitants of Canaan / Israel is told to obey the Lord, and not forget His faithfulness demonstrated during the wilderness sojourn / Israel will dispossess the Promised Land because of the sin of its current inhabitants / Moses recounts the incident of Israel worshipping the golden calf / Moses recalls the Ten Commandments God ordered him to chisel himself / the Israelites are commanded to circumcise their hearts / love and obedience to God go together, as the Exodus is recalled / a designated place within the Promised Land is where sacrifices are to be made / eating the blood of animals is prohibited / false prophets who speak presumptuously are to be executed / clean and unclean meats are listed / a tenth of Israel's produce is to be offered as a tithe / every seven years debts are to be canceled / indentured servants are to be released after six years of service / firstborn of all animals are not to be put to (normal) work / three pilgrimage feasts are specified: Passover, Feast of Weeks, Tabernacles / judges and officials are to be appointed in each Israelite town / syncretism among the people of Israel is not to be tolerated / the decisions and rulings of Israel's religious leaders are to be respected / kings of Israel are to write out a copy of the law they are expected to uphold / proper provisions are to be made for the Levites / witchcraft and divination are prohibited, mandating the death penalty / God will hold Israel accountable for not listening to His prophets, but those who speak presumptuously are to be ignored / cities of refuge are to be established for those who commit unintentional manslaughter / proper witnesses are to be consulted when a person stands accused of a crime / the Israelites are not to be afraid when going to war, but provisions are to be made for the men (the newly married and fearful) / the Lord targets specific groups to which peace in war cannot be offered, due to their intense sin / atonement is to be presented for an unsolved murder / regulations are given regarding women taken in battle, whom Israelite males may desire to marry / firstborn sons must receive inheritance, even if the father has had two wives / rebellious children are to be put to death / those executed for high crimes are to be buried on the same day / specific laws respecting Creation are given / marriage violations and their penalties are given / specific exclusions from the assembly of Israel are defined / uncleanness in the camp of Israel is defined / miscellaneous laws further defining Israel's holiness are listed / regulations regarding a tithe of firstfruits are listed / Israel is to follow God's instructions so He can make them great, and they can be holy / Israel is to agree to a series of blessings and curses at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim / specific curses will be incurred by Israel if they fail to obey the Lord / Moses calls Israel to remember the covenant that the Lord has made with

¹ Heb. *shama* (שָׁמָע).

them, leading them out of Egypt and performing signs before them / Moses warns of the severities of disobedience to the Lord / prosperity and restoration are available for those who repent and turn toward the Lord / God's instruction is not intended to be difficult to keep / the Law is to be read every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles / Israel's future rebellion against God is predicted / Moses recites a specific song for Israel, which attests to the Lord as its Rock and Savior / the Lord tells Moses to go up to Mount Nebo to die, being able to see the Promised Land from a distance / Moses pronounces blessings over each of the tribes of Israel / Moses dies on Mount Nebo and is buried by the Lord / Joshua prepares to lead the Israelites into their destiny

Key Scriptures: Deuteronomy 1:10-11; 2:14; 4:1-2, 5-8, 26-31; 6:1-3, **4-9**; 7:7-10, 16; 9:4-5; 10:12-13, 16; 11:16-21, 26-28; 12:4-7, 29-31; 16:21; 17:2-7, 10-12; 19:15; 26:16-19; 27:9-10, 26; 28:9-10; 30:1-6, 11-14; 31:10-13, 16-18; 32:3-4, 36-39 / **What God has done for Israel: Moses' First Address** (1:1-4:43); **Principles for Godly Living: Moses' Second Address** (4:44-28:68); **A Call for Commitment to God: Moses' Third Address** (29:1-30:20); **The Change in Leadership: Moses' Last Days** (31:1-34:12)

Theological Summary: No book of the Torah or Pentateuch is more concise, or more frequently consulted as a single reference, than the Book of Deuteronomy. The Hebrew name of this text is *Devarim* (דְּבָרִים), meaning “words,” derived from its opening sentence: “These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel” (1:1). This calls the reader to heed the words that Moses spoke.² Another Jewish title seen in some works is *sefer tokchanot* or “Book of Admonitions.”³

Our English term Deuteronomy is derived from its Greek Septuagint designation of *Deuteronomion* (ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝΟΜΙΟΝ), literally meaning “second law.” This meaning is derived from 17:18 where a king of Israel is told he “shall write for himself a copy of this law.” The Hebrew of this is *mishneh ha'Torah* (מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה), as *mishneh* means “double, copy, second” (*BDB*).⁴ The LXX rendered this as *deuteronomion* (δευτερονόμιον). Many Christian scholars regard this as a mistranslation,⁵ even though there are many Jewish traditions that refer to the fifth book of the Pentateuch as *Mishneh Torah*, meaning “repetition of the Torah” (*ABD*),⁶ and thus Deuteronomy would not be an invalid term, being a reflection of this view.

“[T]he error on which the English title Deuteronomy rests is not serious, as Deuteronomy is in a very true sense a *repetition* of the law” (Edwards and Harrison, *ISBE*).⁷ The Book of Deuteronomy does not just repeat the commands of the Torah, but it also sets forward the responsibilities of God's people in light of a treaty-covenant.⁸ “Deuteronomy...is a

² Meredith G. Kline, “Deuteronomy,” in *NIDB*, 269.

³ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 635.

⁴ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 1041.

⁵ G. Von Rad, “Deuteronomy,” in *IDB*, 1:831; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 655; Kline, “Deuteronomy,” in *NIDB*, 269.

⁶ Moshe Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” in *ABD*, 2:168.

⁷ D.M. Edwards and R.K. Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:934; cf. Dillard and Longman, 91.

⁸ R.K. Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *NBCR*, 201.

deeply traditional text that, more than any other book of the Bible, provides the foundation of Judaism” (*Jewish Study Bible*).⁹ The *Shema* and ritual objects like the *mezuzah*, *tefillin*, and *tzitzit* all find their basis in Deuteronomy.¹⁰ For Believers in Yeshua, it is notable that Deuteronomy is quoted more than any other book of the Torah in the Apostolic Scriptures.

The events of Deuteronomy occur as the Israelites are on the plains of Moab, preparing to enter into the Promised Land (1:5; cf. Numbers 36:33). Moses is handing the leadership to Joshua (34:9; cf. Joshua 1:1-2), who was yet unproven as the newly designated leader.¹¹ Moses is recalling what has happened to Israel since the Exodus, and delivers a series of speeches likely given over just a few days. Interestingly enough, this “has possible antecedents in the Egyptian method of diffusing moral teaching. Most of the Egyptian wisdom instructions were dressed in the form of testaments of kings and viziers to their successors....This technique may have exerted its influence on Israel’s literature” (*ABD*).¹²

The audience of Deuteronomy is an entirely new generation of Israelites who needed to be admonished about obeying the Lord.¹³ The forty years of required wandering had been completed, with all having died out except Joshua and Caleb. “In some respects Deuteronomy is...‘the last will and testament of Moses’” (Dillard and Longman).¹⁴ Deuteronomy does expound upon the instruction that God has given the people thusfar, but in some distinct instances changes and/or modifies it for their entry into the Promised Land.¹⁵ “The word contains the essentials of Leviticus rewritten in such a manner as to make the more priestly and esoteric material amenable to the populace, and in this sense Deuteronomy can be said to comprise a popular version of the Levitical law, thereby approximating to something like an ‘Everyman’s Torah’” (Harrison).¹⁶

The text of Deuteronomy is divided into five major parts. The first part is **(1)** a prologue introducing Moses’ speech (1:1-4:43). This is followed by **(2)** comments preparing Israel to receive God’s covenant law (3:33-5:5), including a summarization of the Ten Commandments (5:5-21). Additional admonitions given include understanding the importance of learning God’s commandments (6:1-25), and how Israel has become God’s people because of His gracious choice (7:1-26). This is followed by a series of warnings about disobedience (8:1-20), and a reminder for Israel to consider past failures (9:1-29). The **(3)** largest section of Deuteronomy is a repetition of the law code that the people are to follow (12:1-26:15). The story closes with **(4)** a listing of blessings and curses that are agreed upon by Israel at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (26:16-30:20), and **(5)** an epilogue describing Moses’ death (31:1-34:12).

The authorship of Deuteronomy was unanimously accepted to be Moses by both Jewish and Christian scholarship until the rise of German higher criticism in the Nineteenth Century. Deuteronomy itself attests Mosaic authorship (1:1, 5; 31:24-25), and the Tanach further

⁹ Bernard M. Levinson, “Deuteronomy,” in *Jewish Study Bible*, 356.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Harrison, in *NBCR*, 201.

¹² Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” in *ABD*, 2:169.

¹³ Von Rad, “Deuteronomy,” in *IDB*, 1:831.

¹⁴ Dillard and Longman, 92.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁶ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 636-637.

testifies to Mosaic authorship of the legislation found in the text (Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 8:53; Nehemiah 8:1; Malachi 4:4). The New Testament likewise unanimously affirms principal Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, including various testimonies of how certain commandments or admonitions were given by him to Israel. These are all found in the words of Yeshua (Matthew 19:7-8; Mark 10:3-5; cf. Deuteronomy 24:1), Peter (Acts 2:22-23; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19), Stephen (Acts 7:37-38), and Paul (Romans 10:19, cf. Deuteronomy 32:21).

Conservative scholars today all widely recognize that the narrative framework and conclusion of Deuteronomy likely come from another hand. Such material is generally referred to as being “a-Mosaica” (Dillard and Longman).¹⁷ While Moses is accredited as being the author of his speeches in Deuteronomy, the introduction to the text as well as its conclusion, were probably written by scribes in his inner circle and/or Joshua. It is certain that Moses did not write about his own death.¹⁸ Jewish tradition recognized that Joshua wrote eight verses of the Law (b.*Bava Batra* 14b),¹⁹ and these are likely the verses that speak of Moses’ death (34:5-12):

“As regards the obituary itself, Jewish tradition is most probably correct in assigning the final eight verses of the Torah to Joshua. Following normal Near Eastern tradition, narratives dealing with events of any importance were written down at the time of, or shortly after, the particular incidents had occurred, and this doubtless took place in connection with the death of Moses” (Edwards and Harrison, *ISBE*).²⁰

Conservatives largely date Deuteronomy’s composition in either the late Fifteenth Century or late Thirteenth Century B.C.E.,²¹ depending on how the Exodus is dated (see **Exodus** entry for a summarization of the conservative debates over the timing of the Exodus).

Liberal theologians who deny any Mosaic authorship of the Torah, largely basing their conclusions on the work of Julius Wellhausen and his documentary hypothesis (see **Genesis** entry for a summarization of the JEDP documentary hypothesis), generally identify Deuteronomy as the so-called D source or Deuteronomist.²² Some date Deuteronomy’s composition after the Babylonian exile, but others date it during the reign of King Josiah in the Seventh Century B.C.E. They assert that the Book of Deuteronomy was written as a “pious fraud” and then “discovered” in the Temple,²³ providing the impetus for Josiah’s reforms in 2 Kings 22:3-23:25.²⁴ Thus, Deuteronomy was only written to call the people back to God when the Southern Kingdom faced extreme threats from both Assyria and Babylon.

¹⁷ Dillard and Longman, pp 92-93; cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 637-640, 659.

¹⁸ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 661; Harrison, in *NBCR*, 203; Kline, “Deuteronomy,” in *NIDB*, 269.

¹⁹ “Joshua wrote the book that is called by his name and the last eight verses of the Torah” (b.*Bava Batra* 14b; *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*).

²⁰ Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:938; cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 661.

²¹ Harrison, in *NBCR*, 204; Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:938.

²² Von Rad, “Deuteronomy,” in *IDB*, 1:831-832.

²³ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 647.

²⁴ Von Rad, “Deuteronomy,” in *IDB*, 136; Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:935-936; Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” *ABD*, 2:175-176; Levinson, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 357.

Liberals generally assert that Deuteronomy's "authors were teachers and public officials" (Clements, *New Interpreter's Study Bible*)²⁵ or "rural Levites" (*IDBSup*).²⁶ "By employing 'Moses' as their spokesperson, they established a link with tradition at precisely the time when tradition, for the sake of survival, had to be transformed" (*Jewish Study Bible*).²⁷ Harrison validly points out that these views regarding Deuteronomy's composition were "an integral part of the evolutionary reconstruction of Hebrew religion which Wellhausen promulgated upon a basis of Hegelian philosophy."²⁸ This liberal scholarship "assigned [Deuteronomy] with entirely unwarranted confidence to the activities of an unknown prophet" (Harrison, *NBCR*).²⁹ Harrison further states, "Arguments that suggest the possibility of a 'pious fraud' are therefore based on analogies from the Graeco-Roman period, and as such have no bearing upon the literary practices of the ancient Near East, where such fabrications simply did not occur."³⁰

While believing that Deuteronomy was originally written during the time of King Josiah, many liberals will argue for later editing by P or the so-called Priestly source, as Deuteronomy contained laws for Israel.³¹ Frank M. Cross, in particular, argued for a double redaction of Deuteronomy: one prior to the time of Josiah, and then one after the Babylonian exile.³²

Most conservatives will concur with liberals that the text found in Josiah's time was the Book of Deuteronomy,³³ but will not agree with them that it was a fraud designed to get people (re)focused on the worship of the God of Israel. Liberals will particularly argue for a late dating of Deuteronomy because the text speaks affluently of "the place which the LORD your God will choose" (Von Rad, *IDB*),³⁴ claiming that its author wants Israel to focus on the Temple and its service, and the exclusivity of Israel's worship³⁵ versus the paganism of Assyria or Babylon. But what is more likely, as conservatives validly point out, is simply a "Centralization of worship," which "reflects Deuteronomy's ideal picture of 'one God, one people, one sanctuary'" (Dillard and Longman).³⁶ Harrison further notes, "the assumption that Jerusalem was the place intended by Deuteronomy where the cultus was to be centralized is entirely subjective in nature, and has no textual warrant for it whatever."³⁷

Interestingly enough, many liberals will argue for an earlier dating of Deuteronomy than all of the other books of the Torah,³⁸ even though still consigning it to the Seventh Century

²⁵ Ronald E. Clements, "Deuteronomy," in *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, 242; cf. Von Rad, "Deuteronomy," in *IDB*, 1:836.

²⁶ N. Lohfink, "Deuteronomy," in *IDBSup*, 229.

²⁷ Levinson, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 358.

²⁸ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 640.

²⁹ Harrison, in *NBCR*, 202.

³⁰ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 647.

³¹ Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," in *ABD*, 2:171-172.

³² Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 640; Dillard and Longman, 105.

³³ Edwards and Harrison, "Deuteronomy," in *ISBE*, 1939; Dillard and Longman, pp 93-94.

³⁴ Von Rad, "Deuteronomy," in *IDB*, 1:834.

³⁵ Lohfink, "Deuteronomy," in *IDBSup*, 231; Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," in *ABD*, 2:177-178.

³⁶ Dillard and Longman, 104.

³⁷ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 643.

³⁸ Kline, "Deuteronomy," in *NIDB*, 270; Edwards and Harrison, "Deuteronomy," in *ISBE*, 1:936.

B.C.E. Conservatives will respond to the liberal criticism, insisting that the covenant language of Deuteronomy mirrors that of vassal treaties extended all the way back to the Third Millennium B.C.E., even though these sorts of agreements did exist in the Seventh Century B.C.E.³⁹ “The similarity of the structure of Deuteronomy especially to the treaties of the last half of the second millennium B.C. strongly buttresses the basic unity of the book and therefore the Mosaic authorship of it” (*EXP*).⁴⁰ In light of this evidence, some liberals will now admit, “Deuteronomy...is a loyalty oath imposed by God on his vassal, Israel. Such loyalty oaths were prevalent from the days of the Hittite Empire in the 15th-14th centuries through the Assyrian Empire down to the Roman Empire” (*ABD*).⁴¹

Deuteronomy’s unity with the rest of the Torah must also be considered on compositional and literary grounds.⁴² A major critique that stands against the view that Deuteronomy was composed during the time of Josiah is that it sets the God of Israel against the gods of Canaan, but more than anything else demonstrates the honest character and humanity of Moses. “The picture of Moses thus presented in Deuteronomy is completely consistent with what is found in the historical sections of Exodus and Numbers, and furnishes for the reader a realistic image of a mortal man as contrasted with the highly idealized depictions of later Judaism” (Harrison, *NBCR*).⁴³

The integrity of the text of Deuteronomy is strong, even though there are some important things to take note of. The language of Deuteronomy does not necessarily date from the Seventh Century B.C.E., as some liberals would like to see it, in light of Semitic linguistic studies done of the Second Millennium B.C.E.⁴⁴ Deuteronomy was a favorite text of the Qumran community, and all but eight chapters of the book are represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls fragments.⁴⁵ Deuteronomy is also well preserved in its Greek Septuagint translation. Notably, some variations of quotes from Deuteronomy in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures often appear because they are from the LXX, and not the Hebrew Masoretic Text. This confirms that the Hebrew source text for the LXX was slightly different than the present Hebrew text. Some of these variations are minor, but a few may be major.⁴⁶ None of these are major enough to radically alter our ideas about any foundational doctrines when compared against other extant ancient versions.

The major theme repeated throughout Deuteronomy is the repetition of God’s covenant with Israel.⁴⁷ This covenant is set in the context of the Ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties that would be made between parties. In this case, Israel would be God’s chosen nation if they remained faithful to Him. We see this theme when the various blessings and curses are

³⁹ Harrison, in *NBCR*, 202; Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:937-938; Dillard and Longman, pp 96-99.

⁴⁰ Earl S. Kalland, “Deuteronomy,” in *EXP*, 3:5; cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 648-650.

⁴¹ Weinfeld, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” in *ABD*, 2:170.

⁴² Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:938.

⁴³ Harrison, in *NBCR*, 203.

⁴⁴ Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:938.

⁴⁵ Kalland, in *EXP*, 3:7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:9.

⁴⁷ Kline, “Deuteronomy,” in *NIDB*, 269.

pronounced for Israel's faithfulness, or lack of faithfulness, to God's commands (chs. 27-30). Deuteronomy calls God's people to totally commit to Him, with an emphasis placed on both corporate and personal choice. The Israelites, while no longer slaves in Egypt, must not abuse the freedom that God has given them.⁴⁸

Deuteronomy also instructs Israel on how to live when they enter into their new life in Canaan.⁴⁹ "[T]he strong humanitarian emphasis of other pentateuchal writings is just as prominent in Deuteronomy. In order to ensure that the spiritual traditions of the covenant relationship will be sustained at the highest level through future generations, the Israelites are urged to bring up their children in the reverence and admonition of the Lord" (Edwards and Harrison, *ISBE*).⁵⁰ Deuteronomy has major prophetic overtones regarding the entry of Israel into the Promised Land. It is no surprise that the major themes of the text are picked up by what are frequently called the Former Prophets in the Jewish canon: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The three significant concepts seen in Deuteronomy that are exemplified throughout the whole Bible are (1) remembering the uniqueness of Israel's God, (2) remembering the uniqueness of God's people, and (3) remembering the uniqueness of God and His people together. God's people are able to partake of His blessings via obedience to Him.⁵¹

Deuteronomy is one of the most widely quoted books from the Tanach in the Apostolic Scriptures with eighty total quotes.⁵² Deuteronomy tells us of a prophet who is coming like Moses (18:14-22), which points us to the ministry of Yeshua the Messiah.⁵³ It is specifically quoted by Yeshua in His rebukes of Satan.⁵⁴ As Believers in Him, Deuteronomy reminds us that we are to revere God with all that we are (4:28; 5:10), as He has first loved us. Likewise, none of us must abuse the liberty that we do experience in Yeshua, just as Ancient Israel had its responsibilities when it was freed from Egyptian bondage (5:15; cf. 4:21).

Deuteronomy calls all who read it to rededicate themselves to God, and recognize Him as the only focus of worship in one's life. Just as the Ancient Israelites stood on the edge of entering into an unknown Promised Land—and needed to be reminded of who the Lord was to their emerging nation—so do many of us likewise need to be reminded of how God has been faithful to the ancients, and to us as well. Deuteronomy has a significant amount that we need to be mindful of as Messianic Believers regarding how we are to obey God, and how He will be faithful to us if we submit to Him. It provides us the impetus for reforming our own lives and orientation toward the Almighty.

When reading Deuteronomy, there are some things that we as Messianics need to be mindful of. Some of us run the risk of ignoring Deuteronomy's repetition of the commandments, and instead may focus solely on their listing(s) in either Leviticus or Numbers. The problem with this is that Deuteronomy adds details on how they were to be

⁴⁸ Harrison, in *NBCR*, 204.

⁴⁹ Kalland, in *EXP*, 3:5.

⁵⁰ Edwards and Harrison, "Deuteronomy," in *ISBE*, 1:940.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1:935.

⁵² Harrison, in *NBCR*, 202.

⁵³ Dillard and Longman, 105.

⁵⁴ Edwards and Harrison, "Deuteronomy," *ISBE*, 1:935; Kalland, in *EXP*, 3:7.

kept, and in some instances changes how they are to be kept.⁵⁵ Most significantly with this, “The way in which Moses undertook to ‘explain’ the law (1:5) indicates that he thought it desirable to expound what had been delivered previously” (Edwards and Harrison, *ISBE*).⁵⁶ Moses delivers the commandments to Israel in the way which they are to be kept in the Promised Land.

The challenge with reading Deuteronomy for many of us is remembering that Israel eventually does not heed Moses’ warnings when they reach the Promised Land, and the people quickly fall into sin. Messianic Believers who often study the Torah will often not go beyond Deuteronomy and read the history texts of the Tanach. This is a mistake because while Moses is insistent in Deuteronomy about how Israel is to obey God in the Promised Land, *they are never there*. In fact, Israel as a nation (excluding the period of Jacob and his sons) is never present in the Promised Land in the narratives of the Torah. We need to couple our Torah studies of Deuteronomy with what takes place throughout the rest of the Tanach, lest we fail to understand its warnings for our own lives today. Each one of us is called to that special relationship that God wanted with Israel in Deuteronomy, and it is fully available now that the Prophet greater than Moses, Yeshua the Messiah, has come.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON DEUTERONOMY:

1. What is your initial impression of the place of Deuteronomy within the Torah? What role does Moses perform in this book, compared to the others of the Pentateuch?

⁵⁵ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 650-651; Dillard and Longman, 95.

⁵⁶ Edwards and Harrison, “Deuteronomy,” in *ISBE*, 1:938.

2. How important do you think it was for Moses to repeat what has happened to the Israelites in their travels?

3. Which one statement or phrase (or concept) jumps out at the reader throughout the Book of Deuteronomy?

4. What does the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 call the Israelites to do? (How significant will this word be for the continuance of the Biblical narrative?)

5. Why would Israel be commanded to exterminate the (then-present) occupants of the Promised Land? (Does this affect one's interpretation of later books in the Tanach?)

6. Of the commandments and ordinances seen in Deuteronomy, which one(s) strike(s) you as the most intriguing, or perhaps needing further reflection and study?

7. Do you believe that *all* of the laws seen in Deuteronomy can be followed by Messianics today? Why or why not?

8. What is the significance of what Israel is to commit to at the base of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim?

9. Do you believe that the instruction of Deuteronomy is difficult to follow, or at least consider for character formation? Why or why not?

10. Did anything about Moses' declarations upon Israel strike you as being significant (chs. 32-33)? If so, what was it?

11. How would the Book of Deuteronomy have had significance for a generation like Josiah's? (Do you find any parallels between Josiah's time and ours today?)

12. What important lessons might today's Messianic community learn by listening to the message of Deuteronomy?

REFLECTION ON DEUTERONOMY'S PLACEMENT IN THE CANON

Write two short paragraphs about what struck you about reading the Book of Deuteronomy: