

Deuteronomy

Pastoral Note to Reader

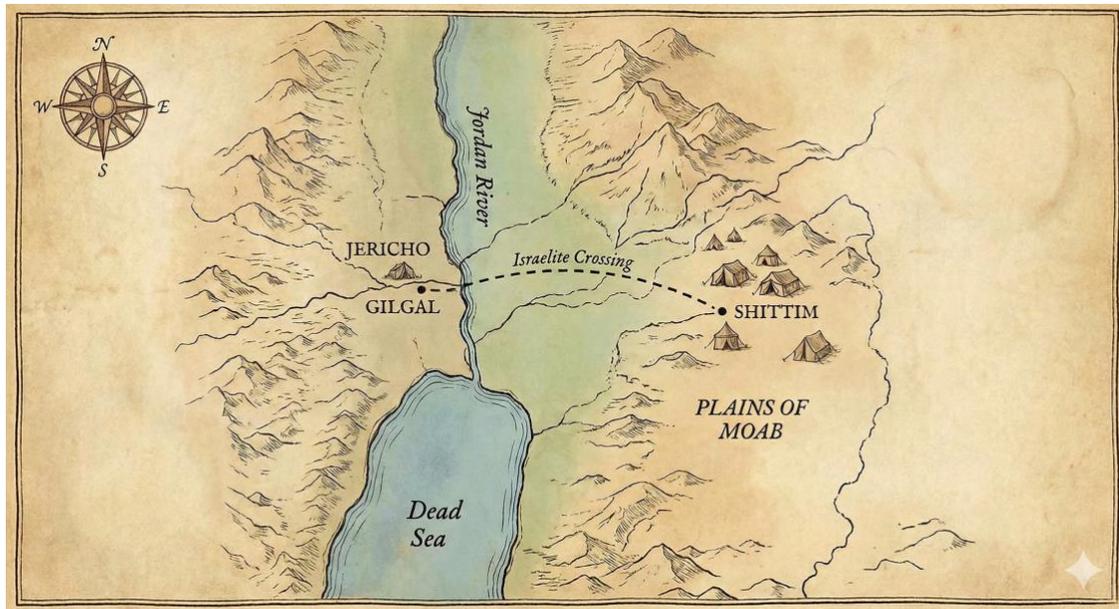
The Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of sermons delivered by Moses, that serve as an exposition of the words of God to Israel at Mt. Sinai. It has been said that along with the Psalms, Deuteronomy was a favorite of Jesus; and for good reason.¹ Moses gives a final command at the end of his life, “Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!” (Deut. 30:19c). Our Savior relied on the very words of God while facing temptation—Jesus quoted Deuteronomy when he was tempted in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-4). By storing up in our hearts the words given to us by God, we too can choose life daily.

Important Facts

Author: Moses

Location: The area east of the Jordan known as the Plains of Moab, North East of the Dead Sea (cf. Num. 22:1; 33:48–49; Deut. 1:5; 34:1, 8).

¹ Block, Daniel I. Deuteronomy : From Biblical Text ... To Contemporary Life. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2012.



Date: The Mosaic authorship tradition suggests the original composition of 1406–1400 B.C., based on biblical chronology linking the exodus to 1447/1446 B.C.² Others propose a later narrator/editor composed the final form in the 7-6th century B.C.³

Primary Message and Purpose

Deuteronomy's main message is that Israel's future depends on staying loyal to God in love and obedience. The book renews the covenant and urges the new generation to commit themselves to God before entering the promised land. Its laws are not just rules but ways of living in a close relationship with God. In the larger story of the Bible, Deuteronomy explains why Israel later experiences blessing or judgment based on their faithfulness. It also prepares the way for Jesus by showing God's character and pointing to the need for a changed heart that ultimately comes through Christ. The General Structure of Deuteronomy: Historical Prologue - Deut 1:1-4:43, Covenant Law - 4:44-28:68, Covenant Renewal - Deut 29-30.

² Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).

³ Michael Grisanti, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Deuteronomy*, Edited by Tremper Longman and David E. Garland. Revised edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

Deuteronomy profoundly shapes the New Testament: The Gospels record Jesus quoting Deuteronomy in all three of Satan's temptations, showing himself as the faithful Son who obeys where Israel failed. Paul in Romans (Rom. 9–11) draws heavily on Deuteronomy (especially Deut. 29–30) to explain Israel's unbelief, the nearness of the gospel, and the covenant renewal accomplished in Christ. Throughout the New Testament, Deuteronomy provides a theological framework for the mission Jesus accomplished and Paul's gospel, making it one of the most influential Old Testament books in redemptive history.⁴

Important Doctrines or Themes

Character of God: Israel is to worship Yahweh only (4:35; 32:39) and is the Lord of the covenant (6:4). God's character is revealed through his acts, presence, and direct revelation (his words). Yahweh is:⁵

- Redeemer (1:30-31; 6:21-23; 26:6-9),
- Warrior (2:21-22, 30-31; 7:1-2, 20-24),
- Judge (7:13-16; 11:14-15; 30:3-9).
- "Gracious (5:10; 7:9, 12),
- Loving (1:31; 7:7-8, 13),
- Righteous (4:8; 10:17-18),
- Merciful (4:31; 13:17),
- Powerful (4:34, 37; 6:21-22),
- Holy (5:11),
- Glorious (5:24-26),

⁴ August H. Konkel, "Deuteronomy," *ESV Expository Commentary. Volume 2: Deuteronomy-Ruth*. James M. Hamilton and Jay Sklar, eds. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021).

⁵ Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).

- Faithful (7:9, 12),
- A Jealous God (4:24; 13:2-10;29:20)

Covenant Relationship: Deuteronomy describes Israel's relationship with God as a renewed covenant, where God again commits Himself to His people and calls them to live faithfully as they enter the promised land. Its laws explain how Israel should show loyalty, purity, justice, and proper worship, all flowing from the basic commands of the Ten Commandments and the Shema (Deut. 6:5). Because this covenant reveals God's heart and is frequently used in the New Testament, its message remains important for Christians, who also receive God's grace and are called to live in a way that reflects His character.

Memory Verses

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NLT)

4 "Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. 5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. 6 And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. 7 Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. 8 Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 13:4 (NLT)

"Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him."

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 (NLT)

18 “When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy for himself this body of instruction on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees. 20 This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. And it will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel.

Deuteronomy 30:16

16 For I command you this day to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.

Criticism & Apologetic Defenses

1. Criticism: Deuteronomy promotes “harsh” laws—especially capital punishment and warfare—that seem morally outdated.

Apologetic Response: The message of Deuteronomy is a theological message addressing the idol worship of the region. Commentators note that the Book of Deuteronomy is not to be read as a moral model for warfare. Rather, as God’s judgement against idol worship. The Canaanites’ practices (child sacrifice, temple prostitution, necromancy) threatened Israel’s

ability to live as Yahweh's covenant people.⁶ In-light of these detestable practices, Israel was commanded to eradicate threats to their pure worship of Yahweh.⁷

2. Criticism: Deuteronomy emphasizes obedience in a way that feels legalistic or works-based.

Apologetic Response: Deuteronomy's commands flow from a relationship already established by God's grace—He redeemed Israel first, then invited them into covenant obedience. Its emphasis on the heart (Deut 6:5; 10:16; 30:6) shows that love, not mere rule-keeping, is God's intention. Christian theology sees Deuteronomy's moral vision fulfilled in Christ, who empowers heart-level obedience rather than external legalism.

⁶ Daniel Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text To Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

⁷ Garry Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000).