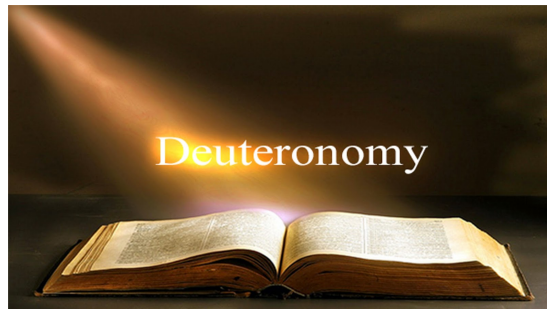




The Book of Deuteronomy



This summary of the book of Deuteronomy provides information about the title, author(s), date of writing, chronology, theme, theology, outline, a brief overview, and the chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy.

Title

The Hebrew name of the book is *elleh haddebarim* ("These are the words") or, more simply, *debarim* ("words"; see 1:1).

The word "Deuteronomy" (meaning "repetition of the law") arose from a mistranslation in the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT) and the Latin Vulgate of a phrase in Dt 17:18, which in Hebrew means "copy of this law."

The error is not serious, however, since Deuteronomy is, in a certain sense, a "repetition of the law" (see Structure and Outline).

Author and Date of Writing



The book itself ascribes most of its content to Moses (see 1:1,5; 31:24 and notes).

For that reason, the OT elsewhere ascribes the bulk of Deuteronomy and other Pentateuchal legislation to Moses (see, e.g., Jos 1:7-8; 23:6; 1Ki 2:3; 8:53; Mal 4:4 and notes).

Similarly Jesus attributed Dt 24:1 to Moses (Mt 19:7-8; Mk 10:3-5), Peter attributed Dt 18:15,18-19 to Moses (Ac 3:22-23), as did Stephen (see Ac 7:37-38), and Paul attributed Dt 32:21 to Moses (Ro 10:19).

See also Mt 22:24 and; Mk 12:18-19; Lk 20:27-28.

At the same time, it seems clear that the narrative framework within which the Mosaic material is placed (e.g., the preamble [1:1-5] and the conclusion [ch. 34]; see also 5:1; 27:1,9,11; 29:1-2; 31:1,7,9-10, 14-25,30; 32:44-46,48-52; 33:1-2) comes from another, and unknown hand.

See Introduction to Genesis, Author and Date of Writing.

AUTHOR: Moses

DATE: 1450-1410 B.C.

Title

The English word *genesis* comes, by way of Latin, from the Greek title to this book. In Hebrew, the book was named from its first word, which means “in the beginning.” Genesis means “origin” and thus is an apt title for a book that reveals the origins of all human history.

Historical Setting

Deuteronomy locates Moses and the Israelites in the territory of Moab in the area where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea (1:5).



As his final act at this important time of transferring leadership to Joshua, Moses delivered his farewell addresses to prepare the people for their entrance into Canaan. In them, Moses emphasized the laws that were especially needed at such a time, and he presented them in a way appropriate to the situation.

In contrast to the matter-of-fact narratives of Leviticus and Numbers, here the words of Moses come to us from his heart as this servant of the Lord presses God's claims on his people Israel.



The trajectory of the story that unfolds in Genesis-Numbers seems to call for an account of the conquest of Canaan as found in Joshua to bring closure to the movement from promise to fulfillment (see Introduction to Joshua: Title and Theme).

But Deuteronomy intervenes as a massive interruption.

Here there is very little forward movement.

At the end of Numbers, Israel is "on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho" (Nu 36:33) and at the end of Deuteronomy, the people are still there (Dt 34:8) waiting to cross the Jordan (see Jos 1:2).

All that has happened is the transition from the ministry of Moses as God's spokesman and official representative to that of Joshua in his place (Dt 34:9; see Jos 1:1-2).

But Moses' final acts as the Lord's appointed servant for dealing with Israel are so momentous that Deuteronomy's account of them marks the conclusion to the Pentateuch, while the book of Joshua, which narrates the initial fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarchs and the conclusion to the mission on which Moses had been sent - (see **Nu 17:15-23; Jos 21:43-45**), serves as the introduction to the former prophets.

So, Deuteronomy creates a long pause in the advancement of the story of redemption:

1. of deliverance from bondage to a world power (Egypt) to a place in the earth where Israel can be a free people under the rule of God;
2. of deliverance from rootlessness in the post-Babel world (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to security and "rest" :
(see **Dt 3:20 and note; 12:10; 25:19**) in the promised land;
3. of deliverance from a life of banishment from God's Garden (**Ge 3**) to a life in the Lord's own land where he has pitched his tent (**Jos 22:19**).

But in that long pause on the threshold of the promised land Moses, in this renewal of the Sinaitic covenant, reminded Israel at length of what the Lord required of them as his people if they were to cross the Jordan, take possession of the promised land and there enjoy the promised "rest" in fellowship with him.

It was a word that Israel needed to hear over and over again.



Upon reading the Pentateuch, Israel was brought ever anew to the threshold of the promised land and its promised "rest" to hear again this final word from God through his servant Moses (**Ps 95:7 NIV**):

let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

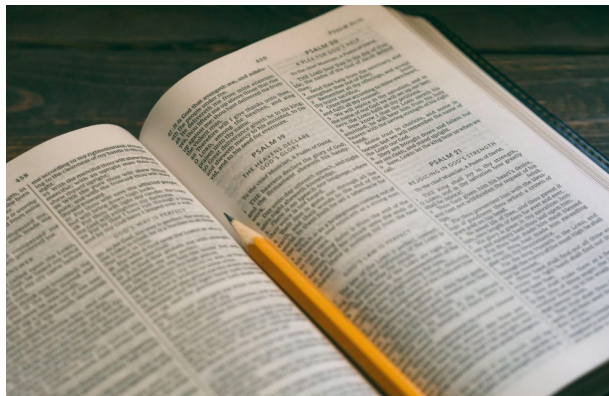
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for he is our God

**and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.**

Today, if only you would hear his voice,

For this reason, all the history of Israel in Canaan as narrated in the Former Prophets is brought under the judgment of this word.



Theological Teaching and Purpose

The book of Deuteronomy was cast in the form of ancient Near Eastern suzerainty-vassal treaties of the second millennium b.c.

It contained the Great King's pledge to be Israel's Suzerain and Protector if they would be faithful to him as their covenant Lord and obedient to the covenant stipulations as the vassal people of his kingdom.

There would be blessings for such obedience, but curses for disobedience (chs. 27 - 30).

Deuteronomy's purpose was to prepare the new generation of the Lord's chosen people to be his kingdom representatives in the land he had unconditionally promised them in the Abrahamic covenant (see Structure and Outline below; see also notes on 3:27; 17:14,18).

The love relationship of the Lord to his people, and that of the people to the Lord as their sovereign God, pervade the whole book.

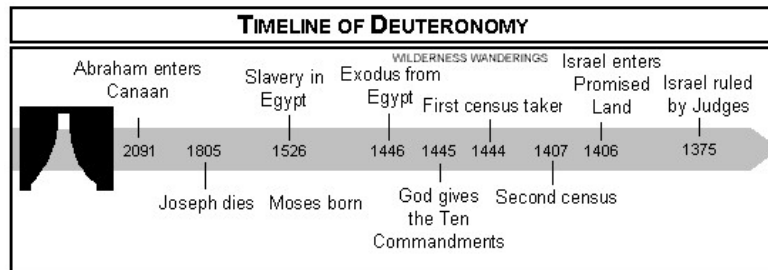
Deuteronomy's spiritual emphasis and its call to total commitment to the Lord in worship and obedience inspired references to its message throughout the rest of Scripture.

In particular, the division of the Hebrew Bible called the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) is thoroughly imbued with the style, themes and motifs of Deuteronomy.

Among the Latter Prophets, Jeremiah also reflects strong influence from this book.



Structure and Outline



Deuteronomy's literary structure supports its historical setting.

By its interpretive, repetitious, reminiscent and somewhat irregular style it shows that it is a series of more or less extemporaneous addresses, sometimes describing events in non chronological order (see, e.g., 10:3).

But it also bears in its structure clear reflections of the suzerain-vassal treaties of the preceding and then-current Near Eastern states, a structure that lends itself to the Biblical emphasis on the covenant between the Lord and his people.

In this sense Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document, as the following outline shows:

Preamble (1:1-5) Historical Prologue (1:6;4:43)

Stipulations of the Covenant (4:44;26:19)

The Great Commandment:

The Demand for Absolute Allegiance (4:44;11:32)

God's covenant Lordship (4:44;5:33)

The principle of consecration (ch. 6)

The program for conquering Canaan (ch. 7)

A call to commitment in the new land (ch. 8)

The lesson of the broken tablets (9:1;10:11)

Another call to commitment (10:12;11:32)

Supplementary Requirements (chs. 12-26)

Ceremonial consecration (12:1;16:17)

Human leaders in God's righteous kingdom (16:18;21:21)

Sanctity of God's kingdom (21:22;25:19)

Confessions of God as Redeemer-King (ch. 26)

Ratification; Curses and Blessings (chs. 27-30)

Leadership Succession under the Covenant (chs. 31-34)

Change of Leadership (31:1-29)

Song of Moses (31:30;32:47)

Moses' Testamental Blessing on the Tribes (32:48;33:29)

Death of Moses and Succession of Joshua:



Deuteronomy 34:5-7 (NIV):

And **Moses** the servant **of** the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. **Moses** was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.



Please remember friends, that You can't buy your way into heaven or out of hell.

Rev. Jesus Del Rio, ED