

“Choose Life” — Week 1: Orientation to Reading Deuteronomy

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Facts About Deuteronomy

- Greek: *deuteros* (second) + *nomos* (law). In fact, counting Exod 32–34 as the second law, this is the “third law”!
- Hebrew: “These are the words...”
- Third most-cited and most-alluded-to book of the OT in the NT
- Narrative advancement: single day!
- Setting: Plains of Moab, near Mt. Nebo, right across the Jordan

Why Read Deuteronomy?

- It's God's Word! The struggle to read it is part of the reward, and leads to greater reward
- Pivot of Hebrew Bible/OT
 - Scripture interpreting Scripture: Teaches us to read Genesis–Numbers
 - Heavy reliance on Deut: Josh–Jdg–Sam–Kgs; Chr; Ezr–Neh; Lam; Jer; Isa 40–55; etc.
- NT reliance on Deuteronomy. Examples:
 - Jesus's temptation — Lk 4:1–13; Deut 8:3; 6:13; 6:16
 - Law-keeping, belief and confession — Rom 10:5–13; Deut 30:11–14
 - Great Commandment — Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30–33; Luke 10:27; Deut 6:5
 - Cursed is he who is hanged on a tree — Gal 3:13; Deut 21:23
 - Don't muzzle the ox — 1 Cor 9:9; 1 Tim 5:18; Deut 25:4
 - Heb 10:30; Deut 32:35–36

Chronology Surrounding Deuteronomy

- 1446 BCE (or mid-13th cent.) — exodus event, wandering (Exod–Deut)
 - Egypt to Sinai (Exod 12–18) 3 months
 - At Sinai (Exod 19–Num 10:10) ~11 months
 - To Kadesh (Num 10:11–14:45) ~3 months
 - Wandering in the Wilderness (Num 15–19) 38 years!
 - To the Plains of Moab (Num 20–Deu 34) 7 months
- c. 1406 (or c. 1200) — Conquest; beginning of judges period (Josh, Jdg, 1 Sam 1–7)

Pentateuch: Themes

- Instruction: Both Laws and Stories. *Torah* — “instruction,” not “law.” Laws are not atemporal; they are given in context of a narrative. Also, contains genealogies and poems, literary forms that were more useful in an oral culture

- Monotheism — Creation, exodus, Moab, Canaan (Deut 7), heavenly host
- Ethical/Covenantal Monotheism — special relationship between YHWH and Israel
- Universalism and particularism: Special covenantal relationship with Israel, but for the benefit of the nations
- Promises: fulfilled and yet-to-be-fulfilled — Land, Seed/Offspring, Blessing
- Redemption/Rescue
- Tension between “Law” and Grace — Covenants in tension/tandem: unconditional Abrahamic Covenant and conditional Mosaic Covenant

Deuteronomy: Themes

- Choice: prosperous life in the land, or death. Really, God wants love from a circumcised heart (10:16, 30:6), which will result in obedience. Choice like Adam and Eve faced in the garden: Gracious offer, not at all in proportion to the required obedience; Easy law, incredible blessing promised
- “Today” 58x in Deut — covenant renewed in every generation, with every individual. “You” in Deut — alternating use of 2ms and 2mp pronouns with no discernable pattern
- “Success” in relationship with God is directly related to the degree to which the following generation trusts God. In the land, remember the exodus

Biblical Theology

- Sailhamer: Land, Seed/Blessing, Blessing. Many iterations: Creation, fall; Violence, flood; Election: Abraham; Exodus from Egypt; Conditional Mosaic covenant; Monarchy; Division; Exile; Partial restoration; diaspora
- 1. Kingdom-garden-land → Babel-east-exile
 - Gen 1–11: Eden → Flood; New Creation → Babel
 - Gen 12–Deut 34: Babel → land → captivity → land
 - Joshua–Kings: land → Babel-east-exile
- 2. Kingdom-garden-land → Babel-east-exile → **return!**
 - Isaiah: kingdom → exile → **return** (several iterations)
 - Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Twelve
 - Psalms: David–Solomon (Books I–II) → exile (Books III–IV) → **return!** (Book V)
 - Job: kingdom → exile → **return**
 - Prov–Chr: kingdom (PrRuthSong) → exile (EcclLamEstDan) → **return** (EzrNehChr)
 - 1 Chr 1–9: Adam → kingdom → exile → **return** (1 Chr 9)
 - 1 Chr 10–2 Chr 36: captivity (1 Chr 10) → kingdom → exile → **return**

ANE Suzerain-Vassal Treaties

- Narrative prologue, describing the benefits accrued by the vassal at the hands of the suzerain
- Laying out of the stipulations
- Statements of consequences for keeping or not keeping the covenant

Kline: 'For example, the treaty made by Suppiluliumas with Mattiwaza states: "A duplicate of this tablet has been deposited before the Sun-goddess of Arinna... In the Mitanni land (a duplicate) has been deposited before Tes-sub... At regular intervals shall they read it in the presence of the king of the Mitanni land and in the presence of the sons of the Hurri country." Deposit of the treaty before the gods was expressive of their role as witnesses and avengers of the oath. Even the vassal's gods were thereby enlisted in the foreign service of the suzerain.' (Kline, "The Two Tables of the Covenant," 139)

"I am the Lord thy God", the opening words of the Sinaitic proclamation (Exod. 20:2a), correspond to the preamble of the suzerainty treaties, which identified the suzerain and that in terms calculated to inspire awe and fear. For example, the treaty of Mursilis with his vassal Duppi-Tessub of Amurru begins: "These are the words of the Sun Mursilis, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, the valiant, the favorite of the Storm-god, the son of Suppiluliumas, etc." Such treaties continued in an "I-thou" style with an historical prologue, surveying the great king's previous relations with, and especially his benefactions to, the vassal king. In the treaty just referred to, Mursilis reminds Duppi-Tessub of the vassal status of his father and grandfather, of their loyalty and enjoyment of Mursilis' just oversight, and climactically there is narrated how Mursilis, true to his promise to Duppi-Tessub's father, secured the dynastic succession for Duppi-Tessub, sick and ailing though he was. In the Bible the historical prologue is found in the further words of the Lord: "which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2b). This element in the covenant document was clearly designed to inspire confidence and gratitude in the vassal and thereby to dispose him to attend to the covenant obligations, which constitute the third element in both Exodus 20 and the international treaties.' (Kline, "The Two Tables of the Covenant," 134)

- Kline (*Treaty of the Great King*; "The Two Tables of the Covenant"): Like Hittite treaties of the 2nd millennium. Others: Like Assyrian treaties of the 8th century.
- Cf. Hammurabi Stele to Deut 24
- Perhaps "two tables" of the covenant were two copies: one for YHWH, one for Israel. Kline thinks the laws could all have fit on one stone tablet.

Deuteronomy: Three discourses (1–30) — "These are the words" (1:1) — [cities of refuge (4:41–43)] — "This is the torah/instruction" (4:44) — "These are the words of the covenant" (29:1) — Conclusion 31–34

1:1–4:40 First Discourse of Moses

- 1:1–5 Historical prologue of Deuteronomy
- 1:6–3:29 Historical prologue of 1st discourse: YHWH's precise plan to give Israel the land
- 4:1–24 Covenant stipulations
- 4:25–31 Consequences
- 4:32–40 Concluding exhortation

4:44–28:68 Second discourse of Moses

- Decalogue (5)
- Exposition of the Decalogue (6–11)
- Law Instruction (12–26)
- Covenant Blessings and Curses (27–28)

29–30 Third Discourse of Moses

31–34 Conclusion