

DEUTERONOMY

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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

DEUTERONOMY

by

Bruce Oberst

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

by Don DeWalt

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION

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SUMMARY

by Adam Clarke

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FOREWORD

The generation in which we live is straining at every seam in its quest for more education. Never have so many people in so many nations been able, because of education, to do so many things. Yet it seems that lawlessness continues to increase. This book is designed to educate the popular mind in the ways of righteousness; to turn the lawless to the laws of God.

Much of the material in this volume was taught in the Hollywood Drive Church where it proved very useful. The author's purpose was to produce a work particularly useful—relevant to twentieth-century Christians. He has accomplished this objective. By the time each person in the class had answered and discussed the questions following each lesson he had become well acquainted with its contents. It is hoped that other churches will find these lessons profitable in the same way.

From the pages of this book the honest inquirer will surely enrich his life by gaining a deeper understanding of such subjects as purity and separation of God's people, the tithes due God that support His work, the fate of those that "wax fat" and forsake God, and many other topics equally applicable to our time.

My acquaintance with Brother Oberst over the years has been both enjoyable and profitable. He has proven himself a preacher and teacher of real worth to the Kingdom. I am happy to have passed a part of the time of this sojourn in fellowship with him. I commend to you his work on Deuteronomy.

Vernon Watkins, elder
Hollywood Drive Church
Anchorage, Alaska
June, 1968

P R E F A C E

It is believed that the present volume is versatile enough to be useful to Christians in many walks of life—not just preachers, elders, and teachers in the congregation, but every member who desires to further his knowledge of the Word. There is so much in Deuteronomy that has 20th century application. Deuteronomy is a series of *sermons*, and time and again Moses begins his remarks with the phrase, "Hear O Israel . . ." It is, very literally, a dying man's message to dying men. The pathos of Moses' soul is revealed again and again as he implores this nation to turn from its evil ways lest they be destroyed from the Land of Promise.

This volume is divided into twenty-four lessons. With few exceptions, the portion of scripture treated in the lesson progresses naturally with Deuteronomy's present form. The lessons are not precisely uniform in length, though they usually cover approximately the same number of verses. One's pace through them, therefore, should best be determined by a teacher and/or personal needs. One should avoid getting "bogged down" in details. To do so, all too often, is to miss the hortatory or sermonic nature of Moses' message. My own suggestion would be to study in the following manner:

1. Read the entire book of Deuteronomy through, *not* taking time to consult any other book. (Remember nothing, *absolutely nothing*, can replace a face-to-face contact with God's word).
2. Now read the introductory notes. Be sure to check out the scripture references.
3. As each lesson is studied:
 - a) Read carefully the text for *that lesson*, including the Amplified Version.
 - b) With your present knowledge answer the *thought questions*.
 - c) Study the comments.
 - d) Re-read the scripture text of the particular lesson (hopefully with a better understanding). This will be your third time through the scripture itself.
 - e) Reanswer the *thought questions*.
 - f) Now you should be ready for the quiz. On the questions dealing with *meaning*, it does no harm to refer back to the passage.
 - g) Check again all your answers—or check back on those you couldn't answer. The questions are not all designed to be "brain teasers". Indeed, we make no apology for asking

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many questions on the *content* of Bible text itself. What is more valuable in life than to know what the *Bible actually says* on important subjects? In a day of gross ignorance of the simple statements of *scripture*, we need more students of the *words of the Holy Spirit!*

It will be noticed that in some quotes the sources are abbreviated. Such titles are given in full in the Bibliography. (Example: I. S. B. E. for The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

The reader will notice some repetition of the *Amplified Bible* in the notes accompanying the scripture text. This was caused by the fact that it was decided somewhat late in the manuscript preparation to include this version in the book.

To some, these notes may appear "too detailed", for others perhaps they will seem "too shallow", but our attempt has been to find a happy medium, and to keep in mind the "busy church member" as well as the scholar. The special articles on the authorship by McGarvey and Rotherham will not be of interest to all—but we are acquainted with no finer two articles on the subject.

A special word of thanks must be given here for certain ones of the many who were especially helpful to me in the preparation of these lessons. My wife and four children have been my most encouraging "Cheerleaders" in this project, and they have made many sacrifices so that Dad might have time to write. My sister, Mrs. Ron Leighton, has typed the manuscript through twice. Mrs. Vernon C. Watkins has given much help by her patient proofreading.

Deuteronomy has soul, life, and spirit—it reveals the heart of God and the heart of Moses. Its teachings have infinite applications, and only a few are mentioned here. If these notes will be of some aid to those who seek to know and comprehend "the things that are revealed" (29:29), this servant of God shall feel truly rewarded.

Bandon, Oregon
June, 1968

DEUTERONOMY

DEDICATION

To My Wife, Bonnie

"Thou hast given me courage"

INTRODUCTION

It will be invaluable to our understanding of this book if we can see it in its proper setting. Hence the need of a few words of introduction. But even the reading of these beginning remarks would be made easier if the student, first of all, read the book through. In the final analysis, it is the *Word of God* that we want to understand and implant in our minds. Nothing can replace a constant "face-to-face" contact with the Bible itself! In this last book of the Pentateuch, we certainly have no exception to this rule.

THE NAME

The title "Deuteronomy" is taken directly from the name it was given in the Septuagint Version—the famous Greek translation of the Old Testament made in Egypt about two hundred years before Christ. It literally signifies "*second (or repeated) law*," being derived from the Greek words *deuteros* (second) and *nomos* (law). Thus the popular definitions, "Repetition of the law," or "Second giving of the law," referring of course, to the law of Moses.

The title we have inherited is in some ways unfortunate. *Historically*, it is true, there is practically nothing new recorded in this book; most of the exceptions being the events that relate to Moses' renewal of the covenant between God and Israel, his charge to Joshua, and death—all of which occur in the closing chapters. But there is much more here than a mere repetition of the law given at Sinai as recorded for us in Exodus. For example, in Chapters 22-26 we have such items as:

1. Extirpating false prophets and idolatrous cities
2. Making a battlement around the roof of a residence
3. Expiating uncertain murder
4. Taking down "hanged" malefactors in the evening
5. Punishing rebellious children
6. Distinguishing apparel of the sexes
7. Marriage of captive women and wives of deceased brethren
8. Divorcing wives and the trial of virginity
9. Runaway servants

The above subjects are either not treated *at all* in previous books, or, if they are, are not treated in the same manner as in Deuteronomy. The list could be extended considerably, especially of those subjects that are treated or applied differently in this book, for Moses' point of reference is now vastly different than at any other time in Israel's brief history.

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We must remember that Deuteronomy was originally included as a part of a *single book*—"the book of the law of Moses" (Neh. 8:1) or "the book of Moses" (II Chron. 25:4)—titles which were still understood in Jesus' day to refer to the entire Pentateuch—Luke 24:27, 44; Jn. 5:46, 47. In the Hebrew manuscripts these books were connected in one unbroken roll. "At what time they were divided into five portions, each having a separate title, is not known, but it is certain that the distinction dates at or before the time of the Septuagint translation"—*Robert Jamieson*. In Hebrew the book came to be called *Elleb haddebharim*, 'These (are) the words,' taken from the first line. The modern English translation of the Hebrew ("The Torah"*) has shortened this simply to *Dabbarim*, "words" or "discourses."

THE OCCASION AND OVER-ALL VIEW: THE NECESSITY OF THE BOOK

There was good reason for Israel having the laws and ordinances reiterated to them at this time—with the amplifications and applications God through Moses gave to them. There was also good reason for the new ones he gave. Many of the former laws, by their very nature and importance, *needed* to be repeated—especially in view of the fact that most of the adult Israelites, (those twenty years old and upward**) who were at Sinai were now dead, and the new generation now needed to be reminded and exhorted concerning their responsibilities toward God—especially as they entered the very land that was the goal of their fathers when leaving Egypt. Thus Deuteronomy is "custom made" to fit these "nomads" who were now about to go through the rigors of adjusting to a settled agricultural way of life. "Moses had before him not the men to whom by God's command he delivered the law at Sinai, but the generation following which had grown up in the wilderness. Large portions of the

*Published by the Jewish Publication Society of America.

**Joshua and Caleb were the only persons *among those that were numbered* to enter the Promised Land after leaving Egypt. In both the first (Num. 1:1-3, 45-47; 2:32, 33) and second (Num. 26:1, 2, 51, 62-65) numberings, only those men twenty years old and upward, "able to go forth to war in Israel" are numbered. The Levites were not numbered at all, nor were women, old men, children, or strangers. In Numbers 14:29 we are specifically told that the curse resulting from their rebellion at Kadesh rested only on the group that was numbered. As the "uncursed" group must have been a great multitude, many of them must surely have been alive thirty-eight years later as Israel entered the Promised Land—especially those who were under twenty years of age at the time of the first census.

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law necessarily stood in abeyance during the years of wandering; and of his present hearers, many must have been strangers to various prescribed observances and ordinances. Now, however, on their entry into settled homes in Canaan a thorough discharge of the various obligations laid on them by the covenant would become imperative; and it is to this state of things that Moses addresses himself." (*Cook, in Barne's Notes*) Similarly, *Halley* states, "In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, laws had been promulgated at intervals. Now, their wanderings over, on the even of entrance into Canaan, these laws were rehearsed and expounded, in anticipation of, and with applications to, settled life." The forward-looking nature of so many laws in this book is a chief key to its rightful understanding. Of what significance, for example, would a law demanding a battlement atop a new house (22:8), or forbidding the sowing of two kinds of seed in a vineyard (22:9), or forbidding plowing with an ass and an ox together (22:10) have to a vast horde of people in the deserts of the Sinaitic Peninsula?

J. B. Tidwell, writing concerning the occasion and necessity of the book, gives two good reasons Israel needed such laws at this time: "(1) A crisis had come in the life of Israel. The life of the people was to be changed from that of wandering in the wilderness to that of residence in cities and villages, and from dependence upon heavenly manna to the cultivation of the fields. Peace and righteousness would depend upon a strict observance of the laws. (2) They would be tempted by a new religion of Canaan against which they must be put on guard. The most seductive forms of idolatry would be met everywhere and there would be great danger of yielding to it. Especially would they as farmers be tempted to worship Baal, who was thought to be the god of the farm and of crops. A poor crop would tempt them to worship him and bring upon themselves the displeasure of the Lord."*

THE WRITER

That Moses was the writer of the basic content of the book is not only generally accepted truth, but affirmed by the book itself and reaffirmed by our Savior and the apostles. "*And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests*" (31:9). "*So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel*" (31:22). "*And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished . . .*" (31:24).

*In *The Bible Book by Book*, Eighth Edition Revised.

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Being a part of the Pentateuch ("five-fold book") or Torah ("law"), Jesus includes *this* book in "The law of Moses" (Luke 24:44); "Moses" (Matt. 19: 7,8, Luke 24:27, Jn. 5:46); "his [Moses'] writings" (Jn. 5:46, 47); "the scriptures" (Luke 24:27, Jn. 5:39, etc.) and "the word of God" (Mk. 7:13).

The excellent statement of *William Evans*, in his *Outline Study of the Bible*, is here in order: "The question as to the authorship of the five books [Pentateuch] resolves itself into the question, "What think ye of the Christ?" Did he know who wrote the Pentateuch? Or was he mistaken in (supposedly) adopting the popular view which was a mistaken one? If he was in error, what becomes of his omniscience, and how much reliance may we place upon him as a Teacher from God professing to speak the word of God infallibly? Did Jesus Christ know who wrote these books, or not knowing, did he make a pretense of knowing? If so, what becomes of his sincerity; how is he then the Truth?"

Paul attributed the book to Moses' hand (Rom. 10:19) and also to *God* (Heb. 13:5). Likewise, the prophecy of Deut. 18:15-19 was attributed to Moses by Peter and Stephen (Acts 3:22-23, 7:37). To impugn Moses' authorship is to challenge not only the truthfulness of these men, but "the Spirit by which he [they] spake" (Acts 6:10).

We agree with *F. C. Cook* who said: "The alleged anachronisms, discrepancies, and difficulties admit, for the most part, of easy and complete explanation; and no serious attempt has ever been made to meet the overwhelming presumption drawn from the unanimous testimony of the ancient Jewish Church and nation that Moses is the author of this book." The objections, we believe, surely *can* be met; but destructive critics have at least made many efforts that *they* believe are "serious attempts" to discredit the Mosaic Authorship of the book—usually much of the rest of the Pentateuch as well. For those interested in exploring this subject further, the *Special Study* at the close of this volume will be found profitable. Brother C. C. Crawford's article on "*The Authorship of the Pentateuch*" in his first volume on Genesis (pp. 47-70) is also of great value, and forms an excellent preface to the reading of *any* of the first five books.

TIME COVERED IN DEUTERONOMY

In 1:3 we have the beginning of this record on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt. In 34:5-8 Moses dies, and is wept over for thirty days. According to Joshua 4:19 Israel crossed the Jordan under Joshua's leadership on the tenth day

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of the first month, or two months and ten days after Moses begins his first discourse. Thus the entire book of Deuteronomy was composed in no more than two months, and Moses' three discourses could not have involved more than about a month—possibly a much shorter time. We have recorded for us, then, the history of Israel during one month before Moses' death, and another after it.

This had been a difficult year for Israel, and particularly its leading family. In the first month Miriam, Moses' sister, died (Num. 20:1). In the fifth month, on the first day, his brother Aaron died (Num. 33:38,39) at the age of one hundred and twenty three. And, so far as can be determined, Moses died at about the end of the same year (Deut. 34:7,8) being one hundred and twenty years old.

GENERAL OUTLINE OR STRUCTURE OF DEUTERONOMY

I. THE FIRST DISCOURSE: Review of the Journeys (1:1—4:43)

After a brief historical introduction, the speaker recapitulates the chief events of the last forty years in the wilderness. The Cities of Refuge, east of the Jordan, are set aside.

II. THE SECOND DISCOURSE: The Law of God (4:44—26:19)

Here we have the great bulk of the book, which, in substance, is a review of the law previously given at Sinai, with a number of modifications and additions, and the whole given an "evangelistic" application.

III. THE THIRD DISCOURSE: Future of Israel Foretold (27:1—30:20)

Moses and the elders command the people to erect the stone monument at Mt. Ebal and on it to write "all the words of this law." The curses which are to be pronounced from Ebal, and the blessings from Gerezim, are given, and the covenant is made in Moab. All of this is accompanied by solemn injunctions and promises, a prophecy concerning disobedient Israel, and warnings of the fearful and horrible consequences of breaking the covenant they had made with God.

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IV. MOSES' LAST DAYS (31:1—34:12)

Knowing of his imminent death, Moses encourages the people. After Joshua is commissioned for his new post as successor to Moses, the law is delivered into the custody of the elders and Levites, with the charge that it be read every seven years before all Israel. Finally, we have the "Song of Moses," his blessing upon Israel, and his death.

SUGGESTED LESSON UNITS

(As used with the *Comprehensive Outline*):

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