

#5. THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

1. Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Bible, and the part of the Torah (the Law of Moses). The Book's name essentially means *second law* and is so named because the basics of God's Covenant Law are given for the second time. The contents of Deuteronomy are not different from the earlier Law, but is the original Law given in contract form to the young generation of Israelites that are getting ready to possess the land. The purpose of Deuteronomy is to encourage the young nation to remember God's goodness to them and to urge them to rededicate their lives to Him.
2. **The author is Moses.** See 1:1, 5; 31:9, 22, 24. The date of composition is probably 1405BC, during the last weeks of Moses' life. Moses lived 120 years. The final summary was probably written by Joshua after Moses' death.

3. Key Chapters

- Chapters 1-4:43 give thanks for God's unfailing faithfulness during the 40 years of wandering.
- Chapters 4:43-29:1 give a summary of the Law as received by Moses.
- Chapters 29:2-30:20 is a challenge by Moses to the people for them to live honorable lives before God, by remaining true to the Covenant.
- Chapters 31-34 are the account of Moses' last days and the resulting leadership changes. This section was probably completed by Joshua.

4. Key Verses

- Deuteronomy 7:6-9 NASB For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷"The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.

- Deuteronomy 27-29 is the formal ratification of the Covenant between Jehovah and Israel. “This day, you have become the People of The Lord, your God!” (27:9)

5. Key People

- Moses – the great prophet and Lawgiver
- Joshua – the general of Israel’s armies and assistant to Moses.

6. Key Places

- The Plains of Moab – Southeast of the Dead Sea, where Israel is poised to begin the conquest of the Canaan.

7. Key Themes

- **Remembering their heritage.** The people were reminded of their history with God from the days in Egypt until the last days of Moses.
- **Remembering the Law.** A summary of the Law in contract form was presented to the people.
- **Remembering to Love.** The Israelites were to focus on God’s great love for them and love Him in return. They were also commanded to love their neighbors as they love their own lives. They could choose to obey or not. God would not force their allegiance, nor would He impose His blessing. They were to serve God based on the motives of love and reverential fear. Deuteronomy has been called *The Gospel of Love*.
- **Remembering to Obey.** Meredith Kline observed in his work *Treaty of The Great King* (Eerdman’s Publishers; Grand Rapids; 1963) that there are five parts to this covenantal agreement:
 - The preamble of the contract, identifying the suzerain, or master (1:1-5).
 - A description of the existing relationship (1:6-3:29).
 - The stipulations and requirements of the suzerain (chapters 4-26).
 - The swearing of allegiance, blessings for keeping covenant, and curses for breaking covenant (chapters 27-30).

- Witnesses and instructions (chapters 31-34).¹

8. The Contents of Deuteronomy

- Moses' First Message (1:1-4:43)
 - (1) Introduction (1:1-5)
 - (2) Salvation History (1:6-3:29)
 - (3) A call to covenant (4:1-40)
 - (4) Cities of Refuge (4:41-43)
- Moses' Second Message (4:44-26:19)
 - (1) Discussion of the Moral Law (The Ten Commandments 1:6-3:29)
 - (2) Discussion of the Ceremonial Laws (12:1-16:17)
 - (3) Discussion of the Civil Law (16:18-18:22)
 - (4) Discussion of the Criminal Law (19:1-21:9)
 - (5) Discussion of the Social Laws (22-25)
 - (6) Discussion of the First Fruits and the Tithe (26:1-19)
- Moses' Third Message (27:1-26)
 - (1) The Covenant Ratification Ceremony (27:1-26)
 - (2) Blessings and Curses (28:1-68)
 - (3) The Covenant Sealed (29:1-30:20)

¹ See also Meredith G. Kline, Deuteronomy, in Wycliffe Bible Commentary, ed. by C.F. Pfeiffer and E.F. Harrison. Chicago: Moody Press, 1962, pp. 155-204, 459-490.

- Moses' farewell and death (31:1-34:12)
 - (1) Transitioning to the leadership of Joshua (31:1-29)
 - (2) The Song of The Covenant Witnesses (31:30-32:47)
 - (3) Moses' blessing upon Israel (32:48-33:29)
 - (4) Moses death and the appointment of Joshua (34:1-12)

Worth noting

- The book of Deuteronomy is about transitioning.
 - We see Israel through the eyes of a new generation.
 - We see Israel about to enter a new land.
 - We see Israel about to enjoy a new experience.

- *"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."* This passage is called The Shema (*Hear*) and is the motto of Israel. It was distinguished by Jesus as the greatest commandment. The Shema is often the first Scripture portion a Jewish child learns.

- **When reading Deuteronomy**
 - Observe the unrelenting demand for a monotheistic worship of Jehovah.
 - God's plan revolves around *the land* (a phrase that is used over 100 times in the book).
 - Israel must not only worship Jehovah exclusively, they must also destroy every vestige of false worship in the land.
 - Israel is to be united in both worship and warfare.