

NAME

The Jews identify the book by its first words: אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים “elleh hadd^ebarîm” (meaning “these are the words”) - which comes from אֵל-לֵה “el-leh” (meaning “these”) and דְּבַר “dabar” (meaning “words” - as in a message or command), or by the phrase in 17:18 cited above, or by “The Book of Admonitions” or reproofs or corrections. It is also known as “The Fifth” or “Fifths of the Law.”

The name Deuteronomy results from a mistranslation of Deuteronomy 17:18 in the LXX and Vulgate. For the Hebrew “a copy of this law,” the LXX and the Vulgate have terms meaning “the second law” or “a repetition of this law.”

In Greek (LXX) the title is ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝΟΜΙΟΝ “deuteronomion” (meaning “second law”) - which comes from the ordinal ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ “deuteros” (meaning “second in number” - without the idea of time) and ΝΟΜΟΣ “nomos” (meaning “law”).

Deuteronomy reviews the law formerly given. It does not repeat it so much as it interprets it. In light of the changed situation after 40 years of wandering it is a restatement of the law along with a review of God working and then the application of these two themes (law and history) to a new situation for God’s people. The purpose of this interpretation is to prepare God’s people, the new generation, for the conquest of Canaan.

In Deuteronomy God reviews Israel’s history and the laws which are to keep them on the path of obedience. But, notice that Deuteronomy introduces a new literary form: A series of addresses. Prior to Deuteronomy God spoke to Moses. Now Moses speaks to the people.

AUTHOR

Conservative scholarship has maintained Mosaic authorship and whoever recorded his death in chapter 34 (the most probable assumption is that it was Joshua). However, as with the rest of the canon, recent higher criticism has questioned Mosaic authorship. For a discussion on the argument of higher criticism (Documentary Hypothesis) see the discussion on authorship from Notes on Genesis (JEP).

DATE

Then events take place at the end of 40 years of wandering as Israel transitions from being a nation of nomads to settlement in the Promised Land. The book includes a review of the past after 40 years of wandering. Deuteronomy is a book of transition. It documents the transition to a new generation (after the old generation had died off), to a new possession (Canaan), to a new revelation (God’s love), and a new experience (houses and corn instead of tents and manna). The book can be dated, in relationship to the Exodus, at about 1406 B.C.

THEME

Type of Literature: Law, History - the form is that of a formal treaty between God and His people (see Halley page 166).

Halley (page 43): Laws of the Hebrew Nation

Kartozian: Obey = Blessing verse Disobey = Curse (Deuteronomy 10:12,13; 11:22-28)

Moses’ Second Discourse contains the legal theme of the book and these four key words. It is crucial to remember that what motivates this should be a loving response to what God has done

(see below Key Word - Kartoizian).

Mitchell: The Motive for Obedience is Love for God

Love for God is pretty much a foreign concept prior to the book of Deuteronomy. In this book this word "love" is found 22 times, while the word "obey" is found but 10 times. Obedience motivated by love is a key factor in Christian living. Jesus said, *"If you love Me, you will keep my commandments"* (John 14:15)

Key Word: "Remember" ("Forget not") - Kartoizian (Remembering is to motivate a response of love which is foundational to obedience.) Remember: God's laws are an expression of His love.

- Remember when you stood before the Lord your God and agreed to the Covenant/Law - Deuteronomy 4:9-13,23
- Remember the Lord your God - Deuteronomy 8:18
- Remember you were a slave in Egypt - Deuteronomy 5:15; 15:15; 16:12
- Remember what God did to Pharaoh - Deuteronomy 7:18,19; 16:3
- Remember God leading you in the wilderness (why you were there, your unbelief, what God taught you) - Deuteronomy 8:2; 9:7; 24:9; 25:17
- Remember the days of old (keep the picture of God's multigenerational dealings with His people in mind and keep in perspective God at work in your life) - Deuteronomy 32:7

Key word (Nelson's): "Covenant" - The primary theme of the entire Book of Deuteronomy is the renewal of the covenant - Nelson's

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12,13).

"I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deuteronomy 30:19,20).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): Chapter 27: The formal ratification of the covenant occurs in Deuteronomy 27, as Moses, the priests, the Levites, and all of Israel, *"Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the Lord your God"* (27:9).

Outline:

- I. Moses' First Discourse chapters 1-4 (Historical)
- II. Moses' Second Discourse chapters 5-26 (Legal)
- III. Moses' Third Discourse chapters 27-30 (Prophetic)
- IV. Moses' Last Days chapters 31-34 (Historical Appendices)

RECIPIENTS

God's people - specifically the Hebrews...and us.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

- As literature Deuteronomy ranks with Genesis, Job, Psalms, and Isaiah the major five of the Old Testament.
- Deuteronomy contains three great orations by Moses who is by now an elder statesmen.
- Jesus quoted 3 times from this book in meeting Satanic temptation.

Striking Features

- Contains the greatest doctrinal statement of the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4)
- Contains the first mention of the coming Great Tribulation (Deuteronomy 4:29-31)
- Contains the great promise of a coming prophet like unto Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18)
- Contains a promise of Palestine to Israel (Deuteronomy 34:5-8)
- Contains an account of the lonely and strange death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34)

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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