

DEUTERONOMY

STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR

Moses is the author of this final book of the Pentateuch. He is named as the author in Deut. 31:24 and numerous first-person references support his authorship. He was 120 years old at his death, but vigorous to the very end. Obviously, Moses could not write chapter 34, the story of his own death. Joshua, Moses' close friend and protégé, is the most likely candidate for authoring the last chapter of the book.

DATE

Deuteronomy is in essence Moses' final instructions and farewell speech to the children of Israel right before they were to enter the Promised Land. Covering less than a two-month period, which included the 30-day mourning period for Moses, the book was written close to 1400 B.C.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The title of the book, Deuteronomy, means "second law." It's not that a second law was given, but rather a repeated presentation of the law given at Mt. Sinai. What is most notable about the literary structure of Deuteronomy is that it closely follows the pattern of ancient covenantal treaties between a king and his subjects, otherwise known as a suzerain-vassal treaty.

- **Preamble** (1:1-5). Introduces Yahweh as the Great King and Moses as the appointed mediator of the covenant.
- **Historical Prologue** (1:6-4:40). Establishes the rights of God to assert His leadership over Israel based on their past relationship. As their Deliverer from Egypt, God demonstrated His protection, favor, and rightful claim over His chosen people. Review of the historical dealings can also explain why the covenantal treaty would be necessary to prevent rebellions or other insubordinate behaviors.
- **General Stipulations** (5:1-11:32). Spells out the basic principles of relationship between God and Israel, best summed up in the Shema (*pronounced sheh-máh*) of Deut. 6:4-5, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." The stipulations focus upon Yahweh as King, what He has done for them and will continue to do, and the proper response of Israel to His established kingship.
- **Specific Stipulations** (12:1-26:15). Expansion of the general stipulations into more specific covenant regulations. You may notice the further stipulations are organized as elaborations and/or applications of the Ten Commandments.
- **Blessings & Curses** (27:1-28:68). As a covenantal treaty, this section defines rewards and sanctions for Israel's behavior toward her King. Proper behavior toward the King elicited favor & protection. Disloyalty and/or disobedience received disciplinary wrath, judgment, and potential annulment of described benefits. Deuteronomy clearly establishes God's expectations of a mutually committed relationship.

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- **Witnesses** (30:19; 31:19; 21:1-43). Normally, ancient agreements would be enacted in the presence of “the gods,” but with God Himself as one of the parties of the covenantal treaty, He could not be an external witness, nor would He be subject to other beings. Therefore, the witnesses are heaven and earth (Deut. 30:19). Moses’ song near the end of the book also serves as a witness to binding relationship between God and His people.

While the book is largely in the suzerain-vassal treaty format, there are still some key differences making Deuteronomy more than just a formal agreement.

- It is longer than any other existing document of its kind.
- Presents as a farewell message from Moses (the covenant mediator) to Israel.
- Filled with non-legal passages such as itineraries, warning speeches, hymns, etc.

As the closing book of the Pentateuch, it’s hard not to miss the fatherly tone and deep love Moses has for the people, along with the passionate, loving, and jealous heart God has toward His chosen ones. Deuteronomy shows that within the confines of covenant, healthy relationship can flourish.

OBSERVATION WORDS

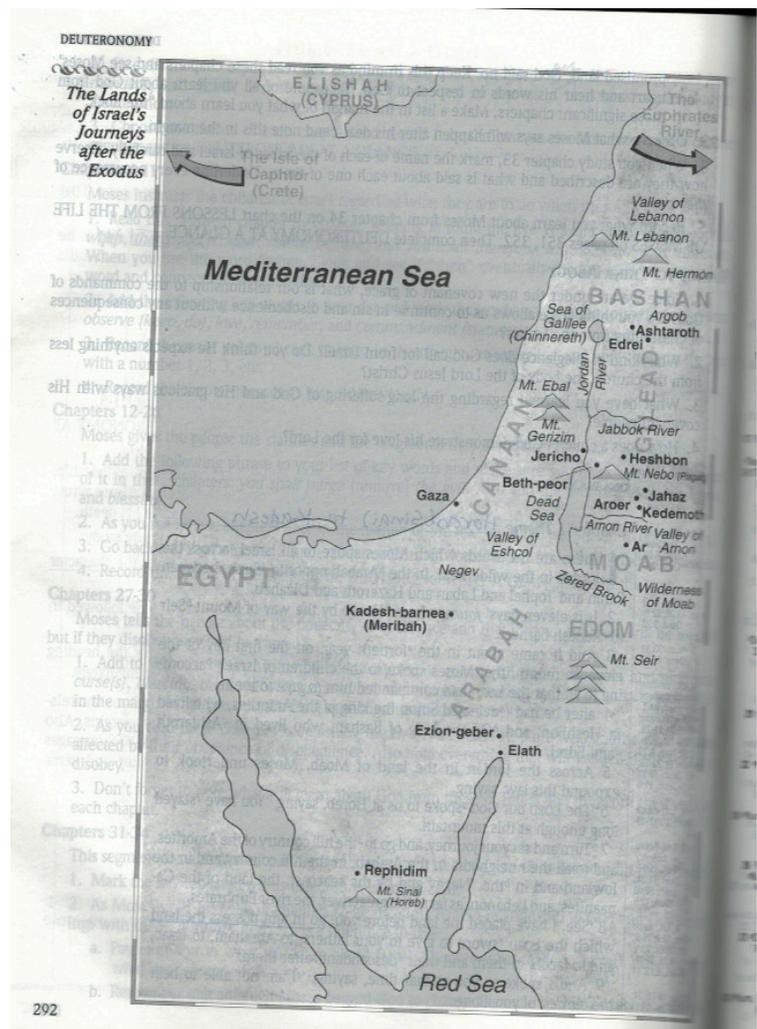
- **God, Jesus, Holy Spirit**
- **Observe/Keep/Do/Remember**
- **Hear/Listen**
- **Command/Commanded**
- **Command/Instruct/Told**

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

We’re going to again break the material down into sections with accompanying summary questions. There may be some additional key words to watch out for within different sections to help you grasp the points being made.

Chapters 1- 3

- Use the map to identify the different places Israel traveled.



- Write below some of the characteristics you learn about God (include here info from other chapters as well. They're scattered throughout!)

Chapters 4-11

- What more do you learn about God's character?
- What does "hear/listen" really mean based on how the text uses those words?
- What was Israel to guard against? How does this apply today?
- How does personal righteousness play into God's choosing of Israel and their victories? What does this mean for us as believers in Christ?
- Describe Moses' intercession in ch. 9. How did he go about it? What key points did he bring before the Lord? How does this affect your intercession for others?

Chapters 12-26

- Watch for the following key words in addition to the general ones already listed:
 - Remove/purge the evil
 - Blessing
 - Life
 - Curse(s)
 - Death
- What are some of the things is TO DO and NOT TO DO (aka the "To Do" and "To Don't" lists)?
- Why will poor always be in the land if God promises to bless? (Deut. 15:11) Why have such provisions? What does this teach about humankind & God's people?

- If we are a royal priesthood (and we are! - 1 Pet. 2:9), what do we personally need to learn from Deut. 17:14-20? How are godly leaders supposed to function?
- Verses 26:17-19 speak to the agreement and confirmation of the Lord's terms of covenant relationship. How are you doing with your commitment? What do you need to improve upon? Do you see yourself as God's treasured possession? If so, what does that mean? If not, why not?

Chapters 27-30

- If you were to categorize the blessings and curses, what would some of those categories be (i.e. physical health)?
- What are a few blessings and curses that caught your attention. Why?
- Pretend you are Moses speaking to God's people (the church) about His covenant (the Bible). What would you say? Use ch. 30 to assist you.

Chapters 31-34

- What do you learn about Israel's future?
- What hope is presented in this section?
- What do you learn about Moses?

OVERALL SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What did the Lord teach YOU through what you read?

- Where/how is **Jesus** & the **Holy Spirit** represented in the book?

KEY WORD – How would you summarize what you’ve read into one word or very short phrase? Why did you choose that?

KEY VERSE(S) & CHAPTER – Like key words, key verse & chapter reflect something that stood out to you from the book. It may be a means of summarizing the book, or it may be something that the Lord taught you through that verse & chapter. So, what are they for you and why?