

Deuteronomy I

(NOTE: in the daily readings, there is a good bit of moving from one text and book to another, so instead of strictly following the readings, we will provide a broader overview of Deuteronomy in two parts).



embedded in the Law so that their faith would not be shaken. With their faith in God and His Law, they could continue in God's will and know that God was still with them even when Moses was gone.

“Deuteronomy” (“second Law”) comes from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Though it is a “restatement” of the Law of Moses, there is more involved. The book picks up from Numbers, provides an overview of the journeys of the children of Israel, then records a series of speeches delivered by Moses in Moab shortly before his death. Recall that Moses could not enter the Land.

Deuteronomy serves as a covenant renewal for the new generation of Israelites who would enter the Land. The generation that came out of Egypt has died in the wilderness, and this new generation is ready to accept the responsibilities of being in God's covenant. To that end, they needed to be prepared for several matters that they had not previously had to grapple with:

First, they needed to get ready to deal with losing Moses. This generation had never known another leader. Moses had been with them from their earlier years. Now they would, for the first time, be without him. This means that they needed to be heavily

Secondly, they needed to get ready for entering the Land, which would mean levels of fighting and warfare they had not yet known. They would be entering a land that was filled with pagans and enemies. God told them how He would dispossess these peoples from the Land, and warned them that they needed to stay faithful to the covenant if they wished to be blessed in the Land and remain long in it. Concerning the people in the Land, they were told, “You shall not dread them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God” (Deut. 7:21). God would fight for them.

The Law demonstrated that the reception of the Land was received because of God's Promise to Abraham. However, staying in the Land was conditioned on their faithfulness to God. The danger they faced was not just from the enemies within, but their own sense of apathy and self-reliance that would later settle in. They were warned:

“When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not

keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Deut. 8:10-14, NASU)

Deuteronomy contains speeches of Moses that focus on God’s great faithfulness to Israel as He led them through the wilderness (chapters 1-4), what it means to live in covenant with God (5-26), and various sanctions that would be imposed if they didn’t ultimately listen (27-31). Many have recognized that there are similarities between Deuteronomy and other Ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties made between kings and subjects. The point is that Deuteronomy would be seen as the official document that ratified the formal covenant between God and His people. This was serious, and they needed to be impressed by the gravity of the Law.

As a charter document of the covenant, their way of life would be completely based on it. This informed them of their religious, political, and civil responsibilities; they knew no “separation of the church and state.” Most of the emphasis is on their dwelling in the Land and what that meant. It also served as an elaboration on the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy restated the Ten Commandments (ch. 5), but then began to show how these would be practically lived out. Among the instructions we find what Jesus would later call the greatest commandment along with their need to diligently instruct their children for

generations to come:

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut. 6:4-9, NASU)

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