

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

I. The Name of the Book

Not 'A Second Law' but 'The Repetition of the Law'.

II. Various Suggestions Regarding the Structure of the Book.

1. R. B. Girdlestone, *The Student's Deuteronomy*, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1899, pp. xvi – xvii (see accompanying sheet).
2. J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Leicester, IVP, repr. 1976, pp.16,17,18,19,20 (see accompanying sheet).
3. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*, in New Bible Commentary, Leicester, IVP, 1994, pp. 200-201 (see accompanying sheet).

III. The Nature of the Material in the Book.

1. Apart from the historical account of Moses' death and burial (ch. 34), the book is a collection of sermons, or addresses, by Moses.
2. This collection is made up of three major groups of material (cf. J. G. Millar in *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, by J. G. McConville and J. G. Millar, Sheffield Academic Press, Supplement Series 179, pp. 15-88)

IV. The Major Thrust of Moses' Sermons in Group A.

1. Recollection of Israel's journey from Horeb (Sinai) to the plains of Moab. 1:1 – 3:29
 - a. from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea takes only eleven days. 1:2
 - b. but at Kadesh-barnea Israel as a whole repudiated the goal of God's redemption, namely, entry into the promised land. 2:19-46
 - c. as a result Israel had to wander in the desert until all that generation had died.
 - d. then God gave them victory and unexpected possession of territory east of Jordan. ch. 3
 - e. Moses is not allowed to enter the land; but Joshua is appointed to lead the people

into their inheritance.

3:23-29

2. The decision now to be taken in the plains of Moab. chs. 4-11
- a. if they would enter the Promised Inheritance they must remember the nation's experience at the Theophany and Giving of the Law at Horeb, when God spoke to the nation.
 - b. they must reckon themselves as a living part of the nation to whom God spoke.
In a sense they too stood before the Lord at Horeb. 4:10
 - c. they, therefore, must make up their minds to reject all idolatry, both now and when they enter the land. 4:15-40
 - d. they must obey God's law and the voice of God which they *heard* at Horeb, and the commandments which Moses will now give them. 4:24 – 5:33
 - e. they must *love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;* and not forget the Lord when they are surrounded with good things in the land; but remember how God delivered them out of Egypt. ch. 6
 - f. they must not fall in love with the Canaanites, but remember God's love to them (the Israelites); they must not be afraid that they will not be able to drive out the Canaanites; but remember God's great acts of power that delivered them from Egypt. ch. 7
 - g. they must remember all God's training of them, through hunger, in the desert, to teach them that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God: lest when they are full of good things in the land, they become independent of God. ch. 8
 - h. they are not to imagine that it was because of their righteousness that God brought them into the land (9:4-5). Let them remember their apostasy at Horeb, and their rebellion at Kadesh-barnea. God's mercy on them was due to Moses' intercession and God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are therefore to humble themselves and prepare their hearts to obey God. chs. 9-10
 - i. they have seen *the chastisement of the Lord* (11:2),

what He did to Pharaoh's horses and chariots,
and to Korah, Dathan and Abiram in the desert,
and fear God, do His commandments,
teach them to their children.

If they do, they will experience God's blessings in the land;
if they don't they will suffer God's curse.

ch. 11

V. The Major Thrust of Moses' Sermons in Group B.

- a. As soon as they enter the land,
they are to go to Shechem, build an altar,
set up great stones
and write the words of the law on them. 27:1-8
- b. They are to pronounce the blessings and the cursings. 27:9-26
- c. A detailed description of the blessings, and of the curses. ch. 28
- d. The terms of the covenant in the land of Moab
made with them and their posterity.
If they disobey,
their punishment will be a lesson to the Gentiles. ch. 29
- e. But if, as a result of their punishment they repent,
God will end their captivity, restore them to the land,
and bless them. ch. 30
- f. About to die soon, Moses counsels Israel
how to behave after they have entered the land.
They are to keep the set feasts
in order to remember God's redemption.
They are to teach their children to fear God,
lest they forget and go after idols. 31:1-18
- g. To help Israel remember,
Moses composes a song,
and teaches it to the Israelites
to pass on to their children. 31:19 – 32:47
- h. Moses' blessing on the tribes, before his death.

THE THREE GROUPS OF MATERIAL IN DEUTERONOMY

1. 1:1 – 11:32

- a. Recollection of the journey from Horeb (Sinai) to the Plains of Moab. 1:1 – 3:29
- b. Exhortation and instruction in view of the imminent entry into the land. 4:1 – 11:32

NB this group ends with the command that,
upon entering the land,
they are to set the blessing on mount Gerizim
and the curse upon mount Ebal.
11:29-32

2. 12:1 – 26:19

These are the statutes and judgments (12:1)

The Detailed Specific Laws

3. 27:1 – 33:29

NB this group begins with the command that,
upon entering the land,
they are to assemble at mount Gerizim and mount Ebal
and pronounce the blessings and the curses 27:1 – 28:6

And in addition:

- a. The covenant in the land of Moab;
and recollection of the past to urge Israel
to take seriously the warning of the effect of breaking the covenant;
and yet the promise that repentance will bring restoration. 29:1 – 30:20
- b. Appointment of Joshua to lead Israel into the land. 31:1-8

- c. Moses' Song: its preamble and purpose. 31:9 – 32:52
- d. Moses' blessing of the tribes. 33:1-29