

DEUTERONOMY

Contents:

- [Background](#)
- [Author](#)
- [Date and Location](#)
- [Purpose](#)
- [Unique Features](#)
- [Outline](#)
- [Timeline](#)

BACKGROUND

In about 1406 B.C., having nearly completed their 40-year "sentence" of wilderness wandering ([Numbers 15-36](#)) due to their rebellion at Kadesh-barnea ([Numbers 13-14](#)), the Israelites were encamped "in the land of Moab east of the Jordan River" (compare [Deut. 1:5](#) with [Numbers 36:13](#)). Deuteronomy, which means "second law," is a collection of history lessons and teachings by Moses, aimed especially at those Israelites who would have been younger than 20 at the time of the Exodus ([Numbers 14:29-31](#)), and therefore might never have heard a formal presentation of the law.

AUTHOR

Moses (see [Genesis: Author](#); [Exodus: Author](#)). There are indications within the book itself that Moses is its author ([Deut. 1:1](#); [Deut. 4:44](#)). The detailed eyewitness accounts and speeches attributed to Moses could only have been recorded by Moses himself or by someone working closely with him, such as Joshua. The NT specifically refers to Moses as the author of parts of Deuteronomy ([Matthew 19:7](#) refers to [Deut. 24:1-4](#); [Luke 20:28](#) refers to [Deut. 25:5-6](#)).

DATE AND LOCATION

Since the Exodus took place in 1446 B.C. (see [Exodus: Date and Location](#)), Deuteronomy could not have been written until about 1406 B.C. Moses probably kept a journal of the wanderings, so Deuteronomy, like Numbers, would have been written over the course of the 40 years and put into its final form as Israel prepared to enter Canaan.

PURPOSE

- To give detailed instruction about God's law and his covenant with Israel:
 - Genesis tells of Israel's *election*.
 - Exodus tells of its *redemption*.
 - Leviticus tells of its *sanctification*.
 - Numbers tells of its *direction*.
 - Deuteronomy tells of its *instruction*.
- To exhort Israel to pay attention to God's instruction; the words *do*, *keep*, and *observe* appear 177 times in Deuteronomy.
- To show that God rewards obedience and punishes disobedience.

UNIQUE FEATURES

- As does Leviticus, Deuteronomy places great emphasis on the word of God ([Deut. 4:1-2, 9](#); [Deut. 11:18-20](#); [Deut. 12:32](#); [Deut. 30:11-14](#)).

- Jesus began his ministry by quoting from Deuteronomy three times in answer to three temptations by the devil:
 - [Matthew 4:4](#) quotes [Deut. 8:3](#).
 - [Matthew 4:7](#) quotes [Deut. 6:16](#).
 - [Matthew 4:10](#) quotes [Deut. 6:13](#).
- Key prophecies in Deuteronomy provide a basic outline for all of Israel's history:

<i>Prophecy</i>	<i>Fulfillment recorded in</i>
Victorious entrance into Canaan (7:2 ; 9:1-3 ; 31:3)	Joshua
Sin while in Canaan (31:16-29)	Judges- 2 Kings 16 ; 18-24
Exile (4:26-28)	2 Kings 17 ; 25 ; Ezekiel-Daniel
Return from exile (30:1-3)	Ezra-Nehemiah

OUTLINE

1. SERMON ONE ([Deut. 1:1-4:43](#))

1. Remembering the wilderness ([Deut. 1-3](#))
2. Remembering Sinai: A call to obedience ([Deut. 4:1-43](#))

II. SERMON TWO ([Deut. 4:44-26:19](#))

- A. The Ten Commandments reviewed ([Deut. 4:44-5:33](#))
- B. A call for wholehearted commitment ([Deut. 6](#))
- C. Blessings of the chosen people ([Deut. 7](#))
- D. Blessings of the chosen land ([Deut. 8](#))
- E. Remembering the rebellions ([Deut. 9](#))
- F. The Ten Commandments given again ([Deut. 10:1-11](#))
- G. A call for wholehearted commitment stated again ([Deut. 10:12-22](#))
- H. Love and obedience demanded and rewarded ([Deut. 11](#))
- I. False religions, true worship ([Deut. 12](#))
- X. False prophets ([Deut. 13](#))
- K. Various regulations ([Deut. 14-15](#))
- L. Three main festivals reviewed ([Deut. 16:1-17](#))
- M. Various regulations ([Deut. 16:18-25:19](#))

N. Stewardship obligations ([Deut. 26](#))

III.SERMON THREE ([Deut. 27-30](#))

A. Blessings and curses ([Deut. 27-28](#))

B. A call for commitment ([Deut. 29-30](#))

IV.FINAL DAYS OF MOSES ([Deut. 31-34](#))

A. Deposition of the law; commission of Joshua ([Deut. 31](#))

B. Song of Moses ([Deut. 32](#))

C. Final blessings of Moses ([Deut. 33](#))

D. Death of Moses ([Deut. 34](#))

TIMELINE

1446 B.C.:	The Exodus, Law given
1443 B.C.:	Kadesh-barnea, wilderness wandering begins
1406 B.C.:	Israel at Jordan, events of Deuteronomy, Israel enters Canaan

[Deut. 1:1-8](#) *Remembering the wilderness: Introduction.* As Deuteronomy opens, what should have been an 11-day walk ([Deut. 1:2](#)) had tragically stretched into 40 years of wandering. Now, as the Israelites camped by the Jordan, ready to enter the Promised Land, Moses began a series of dynamic sermons to remind them of, and teach them about, their special relationship to God. In [Deut. 1-4](#) he will trace their journey from Sinai to the Jordan.

[Deut. 1:9-18](#) *70 Spirit-filled assistants.* Before leaving Mount Sinai, Moses had gazed across the seemingly endless throngs of Israelites and realized he couldn't lead them alone. Following his father-in-law's advice, he appointed 70 Spirit-filled elders to assist him ([Exodus 18:13-27](#)). On OT manifestations of the Holy Spirit, see exposition on [1 Samuel 9:27-10:8](#).

[Deut. 1:19-46](#) *Kadesh-barnea: "You refused him, so he refused you."* Moses next recalled the disastrous Kadesh-barnea rebellion ([Numbers 13-14](#)), when Israel had refused to enter Canaan. Israel's initial disobedience ([Deut. 1:26](#)) led from one sin to another, but it all stemmed from their unbelief in God's promises ([Deut. 1:32](#)).

Since Israel had refused God, he refused them; he barred all adult Israelites from entering Canaan ([Deut. 1:35, 39](#)) and condemned them to wander in the wilderness ([Deut. 1:40](#); [Numbers 14:26-37](#)).

The old saying "What goes around comes around" surely fit these disobedient people. What they sowed in refusing to enter the land they reaped by dying in the wilderness. God was offended by Israel's disbelief, so he judged them harshly.

When the death sentence was pronounced, the Israelites changed their minds, but it was too late ([Deut. 1:41-46](#); [Numbers 14:39-45](#)). Many people are sorry for their sin only after they get caught.

Deut. 2:1-3 *The 38 lost years of wandering.* Moses was not exaggerating when he said, "We wandered around Mount Seir for a long time." That "long time" was 38 years! In Numbers, Moses covered those 38 years in [Deut. 15-19](#), which give almost no historical detail. In Deuteronomy, he covers them in one verse!

After the 38 years, God decreed that Israel had wandered "long enough," and he directed them to "turn northward" toward Canaan.

Deut. 2:4-23 *"Don't pick a fight with your relatives."* As the Israelites turned northward, God told them not to disturb those whose land they must pass through who were "your relatives"; this included the Edomites, descendants of Esau, and the Moabites and Ammonites, descendants of Lot.

Deut. 2:24-37 *"But if they attack first, you can fight back."* If, however, any of those nations started a confrontation, Israel would be allowed to defend itself. When the Ammonite King Sihon attacked, Israel "conquered all his towns and completely destroyed everyone—men, women, and children" ([Deut. 2:34](#)).

Why did God allow the killing of children on this and similar occasions? These children were being raised in immorality and hatred of God (see [Canaanites](#)); their death before the age of accountability not only spared them a similar life of godlessness but also probably secured them a place in heaven.

Deut. 3:1-11 *The man with the big bed.* Continuing north on the east side of the Jordan, Israel defeated Og, the Amorite king of Bashan ([Deut. 3:1-11](#); see exposition on [Numbers 21:31-35](#)). Og was no little man. His iron bed was more than 13 feet long and 6 feet wide.

Deut. 3:12-20 *The territory of the two and a half.* The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh settled east of the Jordan, from the Dead Sea in the south to the Sea of Galilee in the north ([Numbers 32:1-42](#)).

Deut. 3:21-22 *Moses reassures his successor.* Moses recalled reassuring Joshua that, just as God had given victory over Sihon ([Deut. 2:30-33](#)) and Og ([Deut. 3:1-3](#)), he would be with Israel as they entered the Promised Land ([Joshua 1:1-9](#)).

Deut. 3:23-29 *But for Moses, the answer was still no.* God had already told Moses he could not enter the Promised Land ([Numbers 20:12](#); [Numbers 27:12-14](#)). When Moses asked again, the answer was still no, but God graciously promised him he would get to climb Mount Pisgah for a breathtaking view of the land ([Deut. 34:1](#)).

Deut. 4:1-8 *Remembering Sinai: "If you want to live, keep his laws."* Having reviewed the 38 years of desert wandering, Moses took his readers back to the giving of the law at Sinai. He called them to obey the law "so that you may live" ([Deut. 4:1](#)). There's a great difference between the law that came through Moses and the grace that came by Jesus Christ ([John 1:17](#)). The law said, "Obey and live; disobey and die." Grace says, "Believe and live."

Deut. 4:9-14 *"And teach your children the miraculous message."* Israel was to tell their children and grandchildren about the miracles at Sinai and to teach the law revealed there.

Deut. 4:15-31 *Idols should be avoided.* . . . Moses warned against idol worship, noting that the Lord is both jealous ([Deut. 4:24](#)) and merciful ([Deut. 4:31](#)). Israel was his property, and he was zealous toward his own as a consuming fire. If God's children turned from him to worship images or nature, he would scatter them among the nations.

Deut. 4:32-40 *". . . for we have known him."* Israel alone of all people since Creation had been chosen by God, had heard him speak, and had witnessed his mighty power in delivering them from Egypt. Such gracious love demanded obedience to God's Word.

Deut. 4:41-43 *Salvation cities east of Jordan.* Revenge was a popular concept among the Gentiles but was not to be allowed among God's people. To help hold this human tendency in check, God established six cities of refuge, three on the east side of Jordan and three on the west, where anyone who had committed involuntary manslaughter could take refuge until the matter was settled. The three eastern cities are named here; the western cities were named after Israel entered Canaan ([Deut. 19:1-13](#); [Joshua 20:7](#)).

Deut. 4:44-49 *Another look at the law.* Having reviewed Israel's fruitless wilderness wanderings, Moses moved on to a restating of the law. This new section begins with the statement, "This is the law" ([Deut. 4:44](#)), and continues through [Deut. 26:19](#).

Deut. 5:1-27 *"First, consider the commandments."* Moses began by restating the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20](#)) for the new generation of Israelites. He reminded them that these commandments were written on stone tablets by God himself and that Israel had promised to hear and obey all that God commanded ([Deut. 5:27](#)).

Deut. 5:28-33 *The rest of the rules: "Then you will live."* God took the people up on their promise to hear and obey, commanding them to hear the rest of the law and to walk in all his ways; "then you will live long and prosperous lives" ([Deut. 5:33](#)).

[Deut. 5:31](#) names three parts of the law, which can be equated with three sections of Exodus:

- commands ([Exodus 20:1-17](#))
- laws guiding community life ([Exodus 21-23](#))
- regulations guiding worship ([Exodus 25-31](#))

Deut. 6:1-5 *The bottom line of the law.* Having exhorted the people to keep the law, Moses reminded them of God's supreme majesty and urged them to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength" ([Deut. 6:5](#)). When a scribe asked Jesus what he considered the essence of the law, he quoted [Deut. 6:5](#) ([Matthew 22:34-40](#)). It was the "bottom line" for ancient Israel and it is the bottom line for Christians today.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" ([Deut. 6:4](#)), also translated "The LORD our God, the LORD is one," is known in Judaism as the "Shema" (Hebrew, "hear"). It is one of the four

Scriptures carried in the phylacteries still used by Orthodox Jews ([Deut. 6:8](#); [Deut. 11:18](#); see exposition on [§Exodus 13:1-16](#)).

[Deut. 6:6-25](#) *Teaching, writing, and "wearing" the law.* God's Word was to be in the heart as well as in the head. Whenever possible, night or day, parents were to teach their children the Scriptures. Had the people really done this, the failures of the book of Judges would have been avoided.

For the "wearing" of the law ([Deut. 6:8](#)), see [Deut. 11:18](#) and exposition on [§Exodus 13:1-16](#).

[Deut. 7:1-5](#) *No compromise with the condemned.* The seven nations mentioned in [Deut. 7:1](#) represented all Gentiles currently living in the Promised Land. All were to be destroyed—men, women, and children. For Israel to do less than this would be to compromise their devotion to God.

[Deut. 7:6-11](#) *". . . because he chose to love us."* The Israelites were a holy people because God had chosen them above all others. God's love for and favor toward them was based not on their worthiness but on his unconditional love.

[Deut. 7:12-26](#) *Obedience means blessing and freedom from fear.* If the people would faithfully obey God, they would be blessed in the Promised Land. They would have no reason to fear their enemies because the same mighty God who had delivered them from Egypt would eliminate the Gentile nations one by one. On [Deut. 7:22](#), see exposition on [§Joshua 13:1-7](#).

[Deut. 8:1-6](#) *40 years of room, board, and clothing.* Throughout their 40 years of wandering, the Israelites always had adequate provision for their physical needs. One might think that the dependable refreshments of God's miraculous care and his promises of "the good land" ([Deut. 8:10](#)) would have elicited obedience from God's people. Israel never had a problem believing God's Word, but they did have trouble "behaving" it.

[Deut. 8:7-9](#) *Almost like the Garden of Eden!* What glorious prospects were in store for the Israelites if only they would walk in God's ways. Canaan was beautiful and fertile, and God would supply their every need (see [Romans 8:28](#); [Phil. 4:19](#)).

[Deut. 8:10-20](#) *"Remember! Don't forget!"* When they finally enter the land and enjoy its bounty, Israel must not forget the God who gave it to them. Nine times in Deuteronomy Israel is warned not to forget God's faithfulness ([Deut. 4:9, 23, 31](#); [Deut. 6:12](#); [Deut. 8:11, 14, 19](#); [Deut. 9:7](#); [Deut. 25:19](#)). Forgetfulness has been a problem among God's children throughout history.

[Deut. 9:1-3](#) *Israel's enemies: "They're big, but he's bigger."* Recalling the spies in Canaan ([Numbers 13](#)), Moses reminded Israel that when they entered the land they would face armies humanly impossible to defeat. But human power is useless against God's promises ([Phil. 4:13](#)). With God going before his people, the enemy would quickly fall.

[Deut. 9:4-29](#) *"It's not because we're so good, but because they're so bad."* Moses emphasized that God would drive out the Canaanites because of their wickedness, not because of Israel's worthiness (see [Leviticus 18:24-30](#); [Canaanites](#); [Ugarit](#)). From the time they left Egypt, the Israelites had continually provoked the Lord to wrath ([Deut. 9:8](#)). He was especially grieved with their worship of

the golden calf ([Exodus 32](#)). The sins of his own people are an affront to God. Moses recalled his own righteous anger over their idolatry ([Deut. 9:13-24](#)).

[Deut. 10:1-5, 10-11](#) *The new stone tablets: Inscribed and stored for safekeeping.* After Moses had broken the stone tablets, God told him to prepare two more tablets, on which he inscribed the Ten Commandments once again ([Exodus 34:1](#)). He placed the new tablets in the Ark of the Covenant.

[Deut. 10:6-9](#) *Aaron's death, and an honor for Levi.* In this parenthetical note Moses recalled Aaron dying, his son Eleazar becoming high priest, and the tribe of Levi being set apart to bear the Ark of the Covenant ([Deut. 18:1](#); [Numbers 18:1-6](#)).

[Deut. 10:12-22](#) *What God wants most of all.* In an impassioned plea, Moses stressed that the law was not merely an outward ritual of sacrifices and festivals; it was primarily a heart attitude, a life of respect, love, and service to God ([Psalm 51:16-19](#)).

[Deut. 11:1-7](#) *First call to obedience: For parents only.* God's call for love and obedience was directed most forcefully at the older Israelites, who had witnessed his mighty acts along the way from Egypt to Canaan. Their children, who had not fully shared those experiences, would be held less accountable ([Deut. 11:2](#); compare [Luke 12:48](#)).

[Deut. 11:8-17](#) *Second call to obedience: For everyone.* God loved the *land* of Israel even as he loved the people ([Deut. 11:12](#)). His promise to bless the land, however, depended on the obedience of the people. Failure to love, obey, and serve God would bring his curse on both the people and their land ([Deut. 11:16-17](#)).

[Deut. 11:18-21](#) *"Store it in your heart, share it with your children."* Israel was to teach God's Word to their children, but they would be able to do so only as they stored his Word in their own hearts ([Deut. 11:18-21](#)). [Deut. 11:18](#) describes the use of phylacteries (see exposition on ^s[Exodus 13:1-16](#)).

[Deut. 11:22-32](#) *Blessing or judgment? "It's your call."* God's blessings on the Israelites depended on their diligently keeping the law ([Deut. 11:22-32](#)). Law and grace are exact opposites. The law said, "Do and you will live"; grace says, "You have been given life; therefore do."

[Deut. 12:1-28](#) *"Destroy those altars, then build one just for me."* When they entered the land, Israel was to destroy all altars and images of false gods ([Deut. 12:2-4](#)). God would choose their place of worship ([Deut. 12:8-11](#)). Knowing that many of them would live far from the place he would choose, God provided for the killing of animals for food in such remote areas ([Deut. 12:20-28](#)). However, all animals for sacrifice were to be brought to the designated place. (The question of killing animals in the remote areas would have come up because many Israelites ate meat only when offering sacrifices.)

[Deut. 12:29-32](#) *No addition or subtraction allowed.* God's people were not to be entrapped by the ways of the heathen nations or to inquire after their gods ([Deut. 12:29-32](#)). They were neither to add to nor take away from the law ([Deut. 12:32](#); [Deut. 4:2](#); see [Rev. 22:18-19](#)).

[Deut. 13:1-18](#) *Avoiding and punishing apostasy.* These verses reveal three things that often draw God's people into apostasy: false prophets with miraculous signs; evil influence within families; and

ruthlessly persuasive men. Death by stoning was decreed for those who served other gods ([Deut. 13:6-11](#); see [Deut. 17:2-5](#)). God was so insistent that his people worship and serve him only, that he demanded the destruction of entire cities if their leaders influenced them to serve other gods ([Deut. 13:12-18](#)).

Deut. 14:1-15:23 *Various regulations:*

__ Deuteronomy __ *Mourning: Pagan or proper?* ([14:1-2](#)). God's people were his "special treasure" and must not be involved in such heathen practices as cutting themselves or shaving their hair on behalf of the dead.

__ Deuteronomy __ *Food for the faithful* ([14:3-21](#)). Most of the forbidden animals had some connection with pagan religions or were simply unfit for human consumption ([Leviticus 11](#)).

__ Deuteronomy __ *Guidelines for giving to God* ([14:22-29](#)). The law provided specific patterns for giving, and specified the purpose: "to teach you always to fear the LORD your God." Giving to the Lord brought blessing ([Deut. 14:24](#)) and rejoicing ([Deut. 14:26](#)).

__ Deuteronomy __ *Debts and the poor* ([15:1-11](#)). During the seventh-year Sabbath ([Leviticus 25:1-7](#)), there was to be a "rest" or cancellation of debts. This was intended to promote concern for the poor. Ideally, people would loan to the poor even though the Sabbath year ([Deut. 15:9](#)) was approaching and their loan might not be repaid.

__ Deuteronomy __ *"Set him free after six years"* ([15:12-18](#)). Remembering their slavery in Egypt, Israel was to release Hebrew slaves after six years (see exposition on [^sLeviticus 25:35-55](#)). At the time of release, they were to give their slaves ample provisions for starting a new life. Slaves who chose to remain with their master were marked with a pierced ear. The Lord promised a special blessing on those who treated their slaves well.

__ Deuteronomy __ *Firstborn animals* ([15:19-23](#)). To acknowledge God's provision and Israel's being his firstborn, the firstborn of the herds were to be set apart from normal use (see exposition on [^sExodus 13:1-16](#)).

Deut. 16:1-17 *The three main festivals reviewed.* Once a year, Israel was to celebrate its miraculous escape from Egypt. The celebration was called Passover in remembrance of the death angel passing over all the homes protected by the blood of the lamb ([Deut. 16:1-8](#); see exposition on [^sExodus 12:1-28](#)).

Seven weeks after Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, Israel celebrated what is variously called Pentecost, the Festival of Harvest, the Festival of Weeks, or the Day of the Firstfruits ([Deut. 16:9-12](#); [Numbers 28:26](#)).

The Festival of Shelters ([Deut. 16:13-15](#)), also known as the Festival of Booths, the Festival of Ingathering or Final Harvest ([Exodus 23:16](#); [Exodus 34:22](#)), or the Festival of the Lord ([Leviticus 23:39](#), NIV), was a reminder of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and the shelters in which they lodged before entering the Sinai desert.

All Israelite men were to appear before the Lord ([Deut. 16:16-17](#)) during these three festivals.

Deut. 16:18-18:14 *Various regulations:*

__ Deuteronomy __ *Judges and justice* ([16:18-20](#)). The people were to appoint judges who were impartial and incorruptible.

__ Deuteronomy __ *Sacred trees and pillars* ([16:21-22](#)). Worship of idols in the form of sacred trees and pillars was forbidden.

__ Deuteronomy__ *"Be sure to offer the best" (17:1)*. Sacrifices were to be without defect. The God of holiness and perfection refuses to accept less than our best.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Wanted: At least two witnesses (17:2-7)*. While idolatry was abominable to God, punishable by stoning, he ensured justice by requiring two or more witnesses for a guilty verdict.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Settling serious disputes (17:8-13)*. Disputes too difficult for the two parties to resolve were to be brought before the spiritual leaders and judges ([Matthew 18:15-17](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *Rules for kings (17:14-20)*. Anticipating Israel's demand for a king ([1 Samuel 8:5-22](#)), Moses gave principles to guide their selection and conduct. The primary stipulation was that the king be an Israelite ([Deut. 17:15](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *Support of priests and Levites (18:1-8)*. Priests and Levites were forbidden certain privileges, such as inheriting land, in exchange for the higher honor of spiritual leadership. The people were to provide for their physical needs.

__ Deuteronomy__ *The abomination of the occult (18:9-14)*. Israel was to avoid Canaanite "abominations" such as child sacrifice, witchcraft, "calling up the dead," and astrology.

[Deut. 18:15-19](#) *A prophet like Moses*. Moses interrupted his recitation of laws to foretell of "a prophet like me" who would one day be raised up from among Israel and would speak with authority in God's name. Peter understood this as a reference to Christ ([Acts 3:22](#)).

[Deut. 18:20-25:16](#) *Various regulations:*

__ Deuteronomy__ *"If the prophecy fails, the prophet dies" (18:20-22)*. A professed prophet who spoke in the name of any god except the one true God, or whose prophecy failed to come true, was to be put to death.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Cities of refuge (19:1-13)*. The six cities of refuge are mentioned once again ([Deut. 4:41-43](#); see exposition on ^s[Numbers 35:9-34](#); [Joshua 20:1-9](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *"Leave those landmarks alone" (19:14)*. Apparently the clandestine moving of a neighbor's boundary stone was a common practice in those days. As the Israelites prepared to become landowners, Moses forbade such trickery.

__ Deuteronomy__ *The penalty for perjury (19:15-21)*. False testimony was a serious matter; those guilty of it were to be put to death.

__ Deuteronomy__ *"If your name is on this list, go home." (20:1-9)*. Men who were newly betrothed or at other transition points in life were exempt from military service. The "terrified" were exempt as well, lest their lack of courage demoralize other soldiers.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Other nations: Strike a deal, or destroy? (20:10-20)*. Nations outside of Canaan, but within the larger territory promised to Abraham, were to be offered servanthood if they would declare peace with Israel. Otherwise, every adult male among them was to be slain. Of the nations living within Canaan, not even women and children were to be spared ([Deut. 20:16-17](#)). God knew, and history would prove, that failure to "completely destroy" those wicked nations would result in his people committing their abominations ([Deut. 20:18](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *Atonement for unsolved murders (21:1-9)*. When a murder was unsolved, the town nearest where the victim was found was to sacrifice a young heifer as atonement for the murder.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Marrying female captives (21:10-14)*. An Israelite soldier could marry a female captive, but was to follow certain rules to protect her dignity. These rules were a great improvement over how most ancient nations treated captive women.

This permission to marry non-Israelites applied only to non-Canaanite captives and did not contradict the prohibition against marrying Canaanite women ([Deut. 7:1-3](#)): Canaanite women were to be killed along with their husbands and children ([Deut. 20:16-17](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *The son of an unloved wife* ([21:15-17](#)). A man with more than one wife was not to deny the rights of his firstborn son just because he was the son of an unloved wife. These instructions show that polygamy was never God's ideal for marriage.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Death to the disobedient son* ([21:18-23](#)). A son who failed to honor his father and mother, continually rebelling against their discipline, was to be stoned.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Good neighbors at the Lost and Found* ([22:1-4](#)). Anyone finding a lost item or injured animal was to make all reasonable efforts to restore it to its owner.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Proper dress for male and female* ([22:5](#)). Dressing like the opposite sex was declared to be something the Lord detests.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Birds in the nest* ([22:6-7](#)). The rules protecting nesting birds show God's concern for all life, animal as well as human.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Safety first in building plans* ([22:8](#)). The safety of neighbors and visitors was to be considered when building a new home.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Separation of seed, animals, and fabrics* ([22:9-12](#)). Principles of sanctity and separation applied to garden seed, animals, and garments. Fringes (tassels) were reminders of God's commandments ([Numbers 15:37-41](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *Accusations of unchastity* ([22:13-21](#)). A man falsely accusing his wife of not being a virgin when they married was to be punished and fined. If the accused wife was proved not to have been a virgin at marriage, she was to be put to death.

__ Deuteronomy__ *The seriousness of sexual sins* ([22:22-30](#)). If a man and woman committed adultery, both were to be stoned. If a man raped a betrothed woman, only he was to be stoned. If he raped a virgin who was not betrothed, he was to pay a fine and marry her. The severity of these penalties shows God's intolerance for sexual sin.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Barred from the sanctuary, but not from grace* ([23:1-8](#)). Whether for ceremonial or symbolic reasons, certain Israelites and proselytes from surrounding nations were not permitted to enter the sanctuary for worship. Such prohibition, however, did not deny them God's grace and forgiveness.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Sanitation on the battlefield* ([23:9-14](#)). Even in battlefield conditions, sanitation was a priority.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Runaway slaves* ([23:15-16](#)). Slaves who had escaped (presumably after being mistreated) were to be allowed to live in peace and were not to be forcibly returned to their master.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Ritual prostitution* ([23:17-18](#)). Both male and female prostitution, common in Canaanite religion, were forbidden.

__ Deuteronomy__ *For all Israelites: Loans without interest* ([23:19-20](#)). Interest could be charged to foreigners, but not to fellow Israelites.

__ Deuteronomy__ *"Pay your vows promptly."* ([23:21-23](#)). Vows to the Lord were to be taken seriously and paid promptly.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Fruit from your neighbor's field* ([23:24-25](#)). Produce could be eaten in a neighbor's vineyard or field, but only so much as the person could eat while there; none could be kept for later.

__ Deuteronomy__ *Restrictions on divorce and remarriage* ([24:1-4](#)). God allowed divorce in some cases, but only as a means of restricting and regulating the practice. [Malachi 2:16](#) expresses his overriding disapproval of divorce (see exposition on [^sMatthew 19:1-12](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *After the wedding, free for a year* ([24:5](#)). A new husband was to be free of military and business duties for one full year, to encourage and strengthen the new couple in their mutual commitment. The military exemption applied to betrothed men as well ([Deut. 20:7](#)).

__ Deuteronomy__ *Various humane rules* ([24:6-18](#)). There were specific rules concerning loan collateral ([Deut. 24:6](#)); kidnapping ([Deut. 24:7](#)); leprosy ([Deut. 24:8-9](#)); loan collection ([Deut. 24:10-](#)

13); payment for services ([Deut. 24:14-15](#)); administration of justice ([Deut. 24:16](#)); the rights of widows and orphans ([Deut. 24:17-18](#)).

__ Deuteronomy __ *Produce left for gleaning* ([24:19-22](#)). Israelites were to leave a portion of their harvest to be gleaned by strangers, orphans, and widows. They were to do this remembering "that you were slaves in the land of Egypt."

__ Deuteronomy __ *The 40-stripe limit* ([25:1-3](#)). Criminal justice was to be equitable, with a maximum of 40 lashes to the guilty party.

__ Deuteronomy __ *"The oxen that plow should also partake"* ([25:4](#)). Oxen used for treading grain should not be muzzled but should be allowed to partake of the grain. Paul applied this to the support of evangelists ([1 Cor. 9:9-10](#)).

__ Deuteronomy __ *How a brother-in-law loses his shoes* ([25:5-10](#)). A widow's brother-in-law was to marry and provide for her. If he refused, the rejected widow could publicly remove his sandals and spit in his face—divinely motivated social pressure to encourage obedience! Called levirate marriage (*levir* = Latin "brother-in-law"), the practice was common in ancient cultures. Though he lived centuries before the Mosaic law, Onan was killed by God for refusing to honor this custom ([Genesis 38:1-10](#)). By contrast, Boaz honored this law (see exposition on ^s[Ruth 1-4](#)).

__ Deuteronomy __ *Modesty on the battlefield* ([25:11-12](#)). Certain immodest actions were forbidden even though they would have been good self-defense.

__ Deuteronomy __ *Honesty in business* ([25:13-16](#)). Honesty and fairness were to govern business transactions.

[Deut. 25:17-19](#) *Amalek's actions: Unforgivable, unforgettable.* As the Israelites left Egypt, the Amalekites, descendants of Esau, attacked them ([Exodus 17:8-16](#)). During the battle they attacked the sickly and helpless Israelites who lagged behind ([Deut. 25:18](#)). Moses reminded the people that God wanted the Amalekites utterly destroyed because of this ([Exodus 17:14-16](#)). King Saul would later lose his throne for failing to fulfill this decree ([1 Samuel 15](#)).

[Deut. 26:1-15](#) *"My firstfruits for his faithfulness."* In gratitude for deliverance, the people were to give the earliest produce of each harvest to the priest. As they did so they were to recite the details of their deliverance. Their tithes were to help Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows ([Deut. 26:12-15](#)).

[Deut. 26:16-19](#) *The mutual commitment of God and his people.* Moses declared Israel's commitment to the Lord and his commandments, and God's commitment to exalt Israel as his holy people.

[Deut. 27:1-26](#) *Blessings and curses.* Upon crossing the Jordan, the Israelites were to erect a monument containing the words of the law, followed by an altar ([Deut. 27:1-8](#)). Worshiping God and obeying his Word were absolutes for Israel's life in the Promised Land.

Moses prescribed in detail a ceremony of blessing and cursing that was to take place in Canaan ([Deut. 27:9-26](#)). With the priests and the Ark in the valley between, half of the tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim and the other half on Mount Ebal. Those on Mount Gerizim would pronounce blessings for obedience. Those on Mount Ebal would pronounce a great chorus of curses on those who disobeyed the law.

Joshua, Moses' faithful successor, carried out these instructions with great precision ([Joshua 8:30-35](#)).

Deut. 28:1-14 *Abundant blessings for obedience.* Military superiority ([Deut. 28:1-2](#)), prosperity ([Deut. 28:3](#)), physical well-being ([Deut. 28:4-5](#)), spiritual well-being ([Deut. 28:9](#)), and international respect ([Deut. 28:10](#)) were assured Israel if they would obey God ([Deut. 28:1, 12](#)).

Deut. 28:15-68 *"But disobedience will bring disaster."* Disobedience, on the other hand, would bring curses ([Deut. 28:15-68](#)), including diseases, severe drought, and military defeat. Along with defeat would come despair. Everything the people put their hand to, including marriage ([Deut. 28:30](#)), would prove unsuccessful. Such failure would be a clear sign of their disobedience ([Deut. 28:46](#)). What a tragic downward spiral would occur—from disease to drought to defeat to despair to ultimate deportation by Gentile powers ([Deut. 28:48, 64](#))—if Israel refused to heed God's Word. And this is just what happened (see 2 Kings).

Deut. 29:1-8 *His faithfulness, their fickleness: A review.* Once again God through Moses reminded Israel of the triumphs and trials they had experienced in their deliverance from Egypt. While God had been faithful, Israel had been ungrateful.

Deut. 29:9-29 *A call for commitment.* With the past behind them, God called his people to renewed covenant obedience, promising to establish them and to be their God. If they broke their covenant, all the foregoing curses would be upon them. The ultimate curse would be loss of the Promised Land.

Deut. 30:1-10 *"If we repent, he will restore."* Having lost their land, if Israel would then repent, God would remove all the curses and restore their land.

Deut. 30:11-20 *"Life or death? It's up to you."* The law would be Israel's test, and it was very clear: It was as close as their very mouths and hearts. Though God is infinite in wisdom and power, he is very direct and simple with his people: Life and blessing would come if they loved and obeyed the Lord; death and cursing would come if they turned away to false gods. It was up to them.

Deut. 31:1-8 *Joshua commissioned to lead.* Moses reminded the people of his old age and that God had anointed Joshua to succeed him as their leader ([Numbers 27:18-23](#)). God's promise of his unfailing presence with Moses ([Deut. 31:6](#)) was extended to Joshua ([Deut. 31:7-8, 23](#)) and belongs to the church today ([Hebrews 13:5](#)).

Deut. 31:9-13 *"Read it every seven years."* Having put the entire law into written form, Moses delivered it to the priests and specified that it was to be read publicly every Sabbath year at the Festival of Shelters. Later ([Deut. 31:24-27](#)), Moses instructed the priests to keep the Book of the Law beside the Ark of the Covenant.

Deut. 31:14-30 *"Sing them a song of warning."* God told Moses about Israel's future apostasy and instructed him to compose a song of warning for them. The song was to celebrate the person and work of God, the demands of the law, and the penalties for breaking it. It would "stand as evidence against" the Israelites after their apostasy had led to disaster ([Deut. 31:21](#)). That God's warnings came true can be seen in the book of Judges.

Deut. 32:1-47 *The Song of Moses.* 32 records the song Moses was commanded to write. The prelude ([Deut. 32:1-3](#)) called upon all to hear and take hold of the doctrine to be taught in the song.

The first part of the song ([Deut. 32:4-14](#)) emphasized the person of God in all his perfection and justice toward Israel. He had bought them, set their bounds, protected them, and provided for them.

The second part ([Deut. 32:15-27](#)) noted that, in spite of his grace and provision, Israel had taken God for granted and had forsaken and forgotten him. His response, in grieved jealousy and righteous anger, was to break his promises and determine to remove them from their land ([Deut. 32:26](#)).

Part three ([Deut. 32:28-33](#)) focused on Israel's inability to understand God's dealings with them.

Part four ([Deut. 32:34-47](#)) was the grand finale, with God declaring his sovereignty over all, his ultimate vengeance on his adversaries, and his future mercy toward his people.

[Deut. 32:48-52](#) *Permitted to see the Promised Land.* God told Moses he would be allowed to see the Promised Land from Mount Nebo before he died ([Deut. 3:23-29](#); [Numbers 27:12-14](#)). But because of his disobedience ([Numbers 20:7-13](#)), he would not be allowed to enter the land.

[Deut. 33:1-25](#) *The final blessings of Moses.* As he prepared to die, Moses prepared his people for victory in Canaan by pronouncing his blessings on the 12 tribes. He spelled out the two things that would be the ultimate source of blessing in Israel: the continued presence and protection of God ([Deut. 33:2](#)) and the counsel of his Word ([Deut. 33:3](#)). The blessings are prophetic: Moses the statesman became Moses the prophet as he forecasted the various activities of the 12 tribes.

[Deut. 33:26-29](#) *"Underneath are his everlasting arms."* In a final crescendo of praise, Moses declared Israel a happy people because of their incomparable God, whose everlasting arms would undergird and protect them.

[Deut. 34:1-12](#) *". . . and from Mount Pisgah's lofty height . . ."* The Lord evidently prepared a clearer-than-usual day to show Moses the Promised Land from Mount Pisgah, which is the highest point of Mount Nebo. With no cloud cover, Mount Hermon, on Israel's northern border, can be seen from Pisgah.

So special was this godly man that the Lord himself secretly buried him in an unmarked grave ([Deut. 34:6](#)). Though 120 years old, Moses' strength and sight were that of a young man ([Deut. 34:7](#)). Moses received one of the greatest eulogies ever written ([Deut. 34:10-12](#)).

DEUTERONOMY'S PORTRAIT OF GOD

THE PERSON OF GOD

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" ([Deut. 6:4](#)).

"Look now; I myself am he! There is no god other than me!" ([Deut. 32:39](#)).

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

"The LORD your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and takes no bribes" ([Deut. 10:17](#)).

THE GRACE OF GOD

"I will say it again: The LORD your God is not giving you this good land because you are righteous, for you are not—you are a stubborn people" ([Deut. 9:6](#)).

THE LOVE OF GOD

He loved Israel's ancestors

"Because he loved your ancestors, he chose to bless their descendants and personally brought you out of Egypt with a great display of power" ([Deut. 4:37](#)).

He loved Israel

"For you are a holy people, who belong to the LORD your God. Of all the people on earth, the LORD your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure. The LORD did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! It was simply because the LORD loves you, and because he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the LORD rescued you with such amazing power from your slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt" ([Deut. 7:6-8](#)).

"For the people of Israel belong to the LORD; Jacob is his special possession. He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as his most precious possession. Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them in and carried them aloft on his pinions. The LORD alone guided them; they lived without any foreign gods" ([Deut. 32:9-12](#)).

He would continue to love Israel

"He will love you and bless you and make you into a great nation. He will give you many children and give fertility to your land and your animals. When you arrive in the land he swore to give your ancestors, you will have large crops of grain, grapes, and olives, and great herds of cattle, sheep, and goats" ([Deut. 7:13](#)).

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

He provided for Israel in the wilderness

"The LORD your God has blessed everything you have done and has watched your every step through this great wilderness. During these forty years, the LORD your God has been with you and provided for your every need so that you lacked nothing" ([Deut. 2:7](#)).

"For forty years I led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out. You had no bread or wine or other strong drink, but he gave you food so you would know that he is the LORD your God" ([Deut. 29:5-6](#)).

He did so in spite of their constant sin

"Remember how angry you made the LORD your God out in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until now, you have constantly rebelled against him" ([Deut. 9:7](#)).

THE WILL OF GOD

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? He requires you to fear him, to live according to his will, to love and worship him with all your heart and soul, and to obey the LORD's commands and laws that I am giving you today for your own good" ([Deut. 10:12-13](#)).

THE WORD OF GOD

His Word is clear and near

"This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you to understand or perform. It is not up in heaven, so distant that you must ask, 'Who will go to heaven and bring it down so we can hear and obey it?' It is not beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear and obey it?' The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it" ([Deut. 30:11-14](#)).

Don't add to it or take away from it

"And now, Israel, listen carefully to these laws and regulations that I am about to teach you. Obey them so that you may live, so you may enter and occupy the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors,

is giving you. Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you from the LORD your God. Just obey them" ([Deut. 4:1-2](#)).

Meditate on it personally

"So commit yourselves completely to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead" ([Deut. 11:18](#)).

Teach it to your children

"Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" ([Deut. 11:19-20](#)).

Put it into practice

"The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it" ([Deut. 30:14](#)).