

# D

**D.** See AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH; PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM, HISTORY OF; SOURCE CRITICISM.

**DAILY OFFERING.** See SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS.

## DAN

In the Pentateuch Dan is the fifth son of \*Jacob, the ancestor of one of the twelve tribes of Israel and the name of a city in northern Palestine.

1. One of the Twelve Sons of Jacob
2. The Name of the Clan Associated with His Family
3. The City
4. Historical Questions

### 1. One of the Twelve Sons of Jacob.

**1.1. The Meaning of the Name.** Many Hebrew names are translatable sentences or phrases, often expressing faith in God or a prayer to him. It has been suggested that the name Dan is probably an abbreviation of Danilu or Daniel, “The god El has judged/is my judge.” In the rivalry between Leah and Rachel, Jacob’s wives, Rachel was unable to bear children so she gave her husband her slave Bilhah, and from their union came a son. In the custom of the time Rachel was able to adopt the boy as her own son and named him Dan because she felt vindicated by God (Gen 30:1-6).

**1.2. Dan’s family.** Dan was the fifth son of Jacob following four sons of Leah. No details of the history of Dan are given in the patriarchal narratives, but his household is listed with those of his brothers who went down into Egypt (Ex 1:4). Only one son is mentioned in connection with Dan. His name is Hushim (Gen 46:23) or Shuham (Num 26:42). T. R. Ashley accounts for the different renderings by “a simple metathesis

of consonants” (528 n.33).

### 2. The Name of the Clan Associated with His Family.

The descendants of Jacob are usually called “the tribes of Israel,” but A. O. Mojola has argued that all Israel (*bēnē yiśrā’ēl*) constituted a tribe and that “clan” is a better translation of *šebet/matteh* than “tribe.” For this reason reference is made to the clan of Dan.

#### 2.1. The Clan’s History from Egypt to Canaan.

Some evidence suggests that the clan of Dan was small (six hundred fighting men according to Judg 18:11). It is somewhat surprising, then, to see the figures given in the two censuses in Numbers (62,700 in Num 1:39; 64,400 in Num 26:43). Recent attempts to explain these large numbers include E. W. Davies’s conjecture that they are a literary convention for the theological purpose of showing that God’s promise to the patriarchs of countless descendants was being fulfilled. Humphreys has revived and refined the argument that can be traced from F. Petrie to J. Wenham that the word *’elep* has a range of meanings, including a military unit (“troop”), and that this should replace the translation “thousand.” This gives for Dan sixty-two troops adding up to seven hundred fighting men in Numbers 1 and sixty-four troops with four hundred men in Numbers 26. The number of men per troop could vary and be quite small. Humphreys also replies to criticisms of this approach.

**2.1.1. The Construction of the Tabernacle.** According to the book of Exodus, God gave \*Moses instructions about the construction and furnishing of the \*tabernacle during the \*wilderness journey. One of the skilled craftsmen who worked on the furnishings was Oholiab from the tribe of Dan (Ex 31:6; 35:34; 38:23). He assisted his more famous partner Bezalel. They are both referred

to as capable teachers, engravers, designers and embroiderers. Oholiab is also called a weaver of fine materials. After the completion of the tabernacle when the tribes brought their offerings, Ahiezer from the tribe of Dan brought one silver dish and one silver bowl both full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, together with one gold pan full of incense, three animals for burnt offerings, one for a sin offering and seventeen for peace offerings (Num 7:66-71), a pattern repeated for each of the tribes on consecutive days. G. J. Wenham comments that placing the gifts of the tribes at this point in the narrative represents the response of the people to God's prevenient grace (Wenham 1981, 92). It also demonstrates that "every tribe had an equal stake in the worship of God and that each was fully committed to the support of the tabernacle and its priesthood" (Wenham 1981, 93).

**2.1.2. After Sinai.** The place of Dan varies in the lists in Numbers, which themselves vary according to the purpose of the list. Where the subject is leaders, the list is based on genealogy; where camping or marching, it is based on the formation of the clans in relation to the tabernacle (Ashley, 51-53). When the Israelites marched from Sinai, Dan brought up the rear, accompanied by Asher and Naphtali (Num 10:25). When the Israelites camped, Dan was on the north side alongside those same two tribes. On the first spying expedition, Ammiel represented Dan (Num 13:12), and when it came to apportioning the land the leader chosen from Dan to help with this task was Bukki the son of Jogli (Num 34:22). On the borders of the Promised Land Moses gave instructions for the pronouncement of blessings and curses on Mount Ebal in the covenant-renewal ceremony. Dan lined up with Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali to respond to the twelve curses with a loud "Amen" (Deut 27:13-26, if the ceremony went as the Mishnah suggests; see Craigie, 331).

**2.2. The Clan's Prospects.** In Jacob's final blessing, Dan is said to live up to his name as judge of his people. G. J. Wenham suggests that this means his victories will benefit the whole nation of Israel rather than just his particular clan (Wenham 1994, 481). He is also described as a snake that bites the horse's heels (Gen 49:16-17). O. T. Allis takes this to be a reference to the cerastes, a small, venomous snake that hides in hollows from which it darts to make surprising attacks on passers by (Allis, 24). It may

well refer to Samson's exploits, as Jewish interpreters have held (e.g., *Tg. Neof.*), and possibly also to the sacking of Laish when the Danites moved north (Judg 17-18). In the final blessing of Moses, the clan of Dan is said to be "a lion's whelp" (Deut 33:22), which implies, according to P. C. Craigie, the fear and weakness of youth but with the promise of powerful strength in the future. The final line of verse 22 suggests that Dan will launch attacks from Bashan, but there are no other references to Bashan as a base for the Danites. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman argue that the word *bāsān* should not be understood as a proper name but as cognate to the Ugaritic *btu* ("viper"), and they translate the phrase, "Who shies away [or leaps forth] from a viper" (Cross and Freedman, 195, 208). This suggests a play on the words of Genesis 49:17. Although in Jacob's blessing Dan is the viper, here he is afraid of it, and the word for "snake" in Genesis 49:17 is different (*nāhās*). It might therefore be better to see both blessings as predictions that the attacks of the Danites will be sudden and unexpected.

### 3. The City.

Dan is the only clan to have a city named after it. The Danites so renamed Laish after capturing it (Judg 18:7-29). The reference to \*Abraham pursuing the kings who had captured \*Lot as far as Dan (Gen 14:14) probably reflects the time of the later writer or editor. The same can be said for the description of Moses' view (Deut 34:1).

### 4. Historical Questions.

It is not unusual to find the sons of Jacob described as "eponymous ancestors" (Gottwald, 80, 854; for Dan, see Hadley, 497). This is often taken to mean that Dan is a fictional character (e.g., McCarter, 28-29) or at least not existing as the biblical text represents (e.g., Spina, 62). But much depends on the character of the narratives. They are stories about family life rather than tribal groups. G. J. Wenham argues that stories about human beings in other ancient Near Eastern literature fall into three categories: autobiographies or biographies that follow the events they describe quite closely, historical legends full of fantastic deeds, and purely fictional stories. He accepts K. A. Kitchen's judgment that the patriarchal narratives fall between the first two categories. In re-

alistic content they are close to the first category, and they lack the elements of fantasy in the second. Wenham concludes, “we are dealing with real historical figures” (1994, xxi-xxii). In the absence of corroboration of the biblical texts on details about Dan, scholars either manufacture their own diverse accounts or try to establish the plausibility of the biblical narrative (Hoffmeier; Kitchen).

See also ASHER; BENJAMIN; GAD; ISSACHAR; JACOB; JOSEPH; JUDAH; LEVI, LEVITES; NAPHTALI; REUBEN; SIMEON; ZEBULUN.

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**DATE OF EXODUS.** See EXODUS, DATE OF.

**DAUGHTERS OF MAN.** See SONS OF GOD, DAUGHTERS OF MAN.

**DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD.** See ZELOPHEHAD, DAUGHTERS OF.

**DAY OF ATONEMENT.** See ATONEMENT, DAY OF.

**DEAD SEA SCROLLS.** See TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

**DEATH.** See LIFE, DISEASE AND DEATH.

**DEBT, REMISSION OF.** See SABBATH, SABBATICAL YEAR, JUBILEE.

## DECALOGUE

The Decalogue, from the Greek translation meaning “ten words” or, in Hebrew, the *‘āseret haddēbārīm* (Ex 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4), is more commonly known as the Ten Commandments. This material is first encountered in Exodus 20, but the number ten and the familiar two-tablet description initially occur in Exodus 34. The Decalogue sits at the center of the \*covenant between God and Israel, as mediated through \*Moses. Its stipulations provide the foundational definition of an appropriate relationship between the Israelites and God and among individual Israelites under the terms of the covenant. In its OT context, the Decalogue is directed exclusively toward members of the Israelite community. As part of the Christian canon, more universal interpretations have been attached to it. One easily sees a significant influence on Christian thinking, as some informal definitions of Christian morality and piety are built upon the Decalogue. Its impact can also be observed on legal systems and business practices. Some contemporary discussions contend that the value of the Decalogue transcends any particular religious tradition and could therefore represent appropriate social values outside the domain of a religious setting.

1. Date and Origin of the Decalogue
2. Numeration of the Decalogue
3. Locations of the Decalogue Within the Text
4. The Decalogue as Covenant
5. The Decalogue as Law
6. Decalogue Content
7. Interpretation of the Decalogue
8. Hermeneutical Issues and Contemporary Relevance

### 1. Date and Origin of the Decalogue.

According to the text, Moses received these com-

mandments directly from God after he ascended the holy mountain. This would place the date shortly after the Israelites' escape from \*Egypt, which is frequently assigned to either the fifteenth or thirteenth century B.C. (*see* Exodus, Date of). Many critical scholars reject Mosaic \*authorship of the Decalogue based on historical-critical analysis of the text. From a literary perspective, it is argued by some that the Exodus version of the Decalogue has been introduced into an earlier narrative. Comparisons of the Exodus version with that of Deuteronomy demonstrate that paraenetic expansions occurred as this material was used in different settings. Many historical-critical scholars assign dates of origin for this material ranging from the twelfth through the ninth centuries B.C. However, from social, political and legal perspectives, there is nothing in the short, succinct "ten words" themselves that could not date to the time of Moses. Neither are there verifiable historical anchors in the text. Thus, one's position on date and origin of the material hinges on larger questions of biblical authority and canon formation.

## 2. Numeration of the Decalogue.

Different numbering systems are assigned to the Decalogue. The divergence stems from the treatment of the commandments to worship no other gods, to have no idols and not to covet. Jewish, Roman Catholic and Lutheran interpreters treat the laws prohibiting worship of other gods and the use of idols as one commandment. The Jewish tradition retains the number ten by treating "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" as the first commandment. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions divide the commandment that prohibits coveting into two distinct parts, separating coveting the neighbor's house from coveting the neighbor's wife, servants and livestock. In doing so, they too retain ten as the number of commandments. Orthodox and Reformed traditions view the prohibitions against the worship of other gods and the use of idols as two separate items, while treating the commandment against coveting as a single prohibition.

## 3. Locations of the Decalogue Within the Text.

The Decalogue occurs in more than one location in the Pentateuch. In Exodus 20, where God gives the law at Sinai, the Decalogue is situated at the beginning of the \*book of the covenant.

Source and redaction critics have argued that the Decalogue interrupts the flow of material between Exodus 19 and 20:18. With the Decalogue removed, the remaining material describes a theophany in which God instructs Moses to set limits around the holy mountain, with only Moses and \*Aaron allowed to ascend the mountain. The people, frightened by the thunderous theophany, request that Moses be their intermediary so that they will not die from standing in God's overwhelming presence. In the current structure of Exodus 19—20, God gives the Decalogue in the midst of that theophany. The commandments precede a larger body of legal and other material known as the \*book of the covenant (or covenant code), contained in Exodus 21—24.

The Decalogue in Exodus appears to be given a second time in chapter 34. When Moses discovers that the Israelites began worshipping the \*golden calf in his absence, he angrily breaks the tablets containing the laws. Moses then ascends Sinai yet again, where God gives a set of replacement tablets. Though Exodus 34:28 says that God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments," the commands given in Exodus 34 are clearly different from the ones recorded in Exodus 20. The prohibition against \*idols and the call to \*sabbath rest do appear in Exodus 34, but the remaining stipulations pertain to religious \*festivals and \*sacrifices.

The Decalogue occurs yet another time in Deuteronomy 5, where its form and content are comparable to the material in Exodus 20. A book of speeches, Deuteronomy has a sermon-like, exhortative quality. Here the Decalogue is incorporated into hortatory material by Moses that reminds Israel of its covenantal identity and responsibility in preparation for entering Canaan.

Deuteronomy recalls the giving of these laws at Mount Horeb, a more general name for the locale, rather than Mount Sinai, the more specific name for the mountain. Apart from that difference of name for the holy mountain, distinct differences between the Exodus version and the Deuteronomy version of the Decalogue are minimal. The commandment to observe a sabbath rest in Exodus is based on God's divine \*rest on the seventh day. In Deuteronomy, the motivation for a sabbath rest is Israel's memory of its enslavement in Egypt.

#### 4. The Decalogue as Covenant.

**4.1. Definition.** The Decalogue constitutes a covenant between God and Israel. The Hebrew term *bērit* is generally translated as “covenant,” though it is sometimes rendered “promise, pledge, obligation, agreement, contract or treaty.” Its etymology is uncertain. The most widely accepted suggestions include: (1) from the root verb *brh*, meaning “to see or decide”; (2) from the preposition *bir̄it*, unknown in Hebrew but found in Akkadian, meaning “between”; or (3) from a noun *bir̄itu*, found in Akkadian and also in the Talmud, meaning “clasp, fetter.”

Whatever its exact etymological origin, in general a covenant is a solemn promise between two parties, made binding by an oath. Both parties recognize this promise as the formal act that binds them to fulfill the promises made in the covenant. Ancient covenants could take place between different sociopolitical groups, thus creating or regulating the relationship between them. Covenants could also be made between groups within one particular legal community, in which case obligations were assumed that were not otherwise provided for by the laws and norms of that community. In this ancient Near Eastern context, these covenants usually had the sanction of a god or gods, and thus the idea of covenant was closely related to religion.

**4.2. Forms.** Two primary forms of covenant rooted in ancient Near Eastern culture are represented in the OT materials. The *royal grant* covenant known from Assyrian, Babylonian and Hittite sources has been used to identify the form and interpretation of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. The function of the royal grant was to bestow land or a house to a loyal vassal for past loyalties and extremely faithful service. As such, the royal grant was a reward.

The second type of covenant found in the OT closely models the *suzerainty* covenants. First known from Hittite treaties dating as early as the Late Bronze Age (1400-1200 B.C.), this covenant type is present in several later periods as well. This wide range of usage means that while the form is helpful for understanding the function of the biblical material, it is not useful for dating covenants of this type. The suzerainty covenant is closely associated with the Mosaic covenant and, thus, the Decalogue.

The suzerainty covenant was one between a superior and subordinate political powers. Treaties of this type have been found to contain many

elements similar to those of the Mosaic covenant.

(1) The treaty typically begins with a *preamble*, which gives the identity and title of the triumphant king, sometimes in detail and often opening with the phrase, “These are the words of . . .” (2) A *historical prologue* provides the foundation for the remainder of the covenant. It recounts the accomplishments of the king, especially those on behalf of the vassal. It may describe the past relationship between the two parties, likely emphasizing acts of benevolence by the suzerain for the vassal. It often reveals that the suzerain is responsible for placing the vassal power on the throne. (3) The *stipulations* spell out the obligations of the vassal to the suzerain. The content of these stipulations varies widely but is frequently meticulous in terms of military obligations. For instance, the vassal may not enter alliances with other independent kings and must be a friend to the suzerain’s friends and an enemy to his enemies. The vassal must answer any summons by the suzerain for military forces. The stipulations also define the treatment of refugees and war booty. Some of the more humorous prohibitions include “murmuring unfriendly words” against the suzerain. Last but not least, a stipulated tribute is imposed. (4) After the stipulations, provision is made for the *deposit* of the covenant agreement in a “sacred” place. Periodic public reading of the covenant is required. The covenant is usually placed in the sanctuary of the vassal’s temple and is read from once to four times yearly in a covenant-renewal ceremony. (5) *Witnesses* are then called to verify the implementation of the treaty. These are usually the respective gods of the groups involved. At times they include the features of the natural world, such as rivers or springs. (6) This is followed by *blessings and curses* that signify the good and the bad things that are to happen, according to the loyalty or lack of loyalty by the vassal to the suzerain. (7) Sometimes an oath or description of a ratification ceremony is included in the covenant, as is a binding symbol, such as a slaughtered animal. The latter represents what will happen to the vassal if the oath is broken.

Against this background, certain similarities with the Decalogue have been proposed. (1) The preamble finds a parallel in God’s statement, “I am Yahweh your God.” (2) The historical prologue, recounting the suzerain’s deeds on behalf of the vassal, is contained in the phrase “who brought you out of Egypt.” (3) The stipulations, or the terms of the covenant, are the prin-

ciples contained within the Decalogue.

Certain elements of the suzerain form are not part of the Decalogue itself but are described in other parts of the OT where keeping the covenant is the subject. For instance, the elements of depositing the law in a sacred place and of public reading are evident in Joshua 24. Deuteronomy 10:5 describes the ark of the covenant as a depository for the Decalogue. Public reading of the Torah, which includes the law, is mentioned in Deuteronomy 31:10-11. Witnesses are summoned in Joshua 24 (people and stones) and in Deuteronomy 32 (heaven and earth). Finally, \*blessings and curses are attached to the book of Deuteronomy, which itself has been favorably compared to the suzerainty form.

Despite the shortcomings of the formal parallels with the Decalogue exclusively, the suzerainty treaty provides insight into reading and interpreting the exodus experience and the resulting covenant. Interpreted in that manner, the Decalogue represents an agreement between a superior party (God) and a subordinate party (Israel). In return for past deliverance and future provision, undivided loyalty in all matters is expected of Israel. Like the suzerainty covenants of the political realm, this covenant also hinged on a condition: Israel's observance of the stipulations. Whether one understands the response as one of obligation or gratitude is irrelevant at this point. Failure to keep the stipulations would lead to a breach of the covenant. Breach of the covenant would invoke the curses and thus ensure the demise of the vassal party.

## 5. The Decalogue as Law.

**5.1. Casuistic Law.** \*Form-critical studies of OT law reveal two distinct types of law, along with a hybrid form that combines these two forms. The first type of law is *casuistic law*. Casuistic laws are conditional and are noted for their "if-then" structure: "If X does this, then Y will happen." This form of law establishes a hypothetical situation and prescribes the proper course of action should such a situation occur. Its *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life") is thought to be the realm of the courts, because casuistic laws are concerned with typical problems that emerge in societies, and laws of this type are easily found in other secular legal codes.

**5.2. Apodictic Law.** The second form of law is *apodictic law*. These laws are absolute prohibitions of the "thou shalt not" variety, often con-

cerned with religious or moral issues. Unlike casuistic laws, apodictic laws offer no condition. They simply say, "Whoever does X will surely die" or "You shall not . . ." with the understood penalty being death. Even if death is not prescribed, death is the understood penalty for breaking apodictic laws. Some scholars initially argued that the apodictic laws were uniquely Israelite, with the *Sitz im Leben* being Israelite religion. Thus, these laws reflected Israel's attempt to live completely under the guidance of their God. This argument is no longer credible because apodictic laws have been found in other ancient Near Eastern materials as well. Instead, apodictic law seems to operate in settings that rely upon persuasion for urging compliance with the law rather than upon physical force or structures.

The negative prohibitions contained in the Decalogue resemble the apodictic laws, though the threatened punishment of death is lacking. Some scholars maintain that punishment by death is implied, though this cannot be conclusively demonstrated. Many of the Decalogue stipulations remain in the simplest of apodictic form, though expansions have been added to some, supplying justifying motives for the laws. For instance, one keeps the sabbath because God rested. One honors parents so that long life will follow. As the Decalogue operates within the suzerainty form of covenant given by God and mediated by Moses, their similarity with the apodictic form conveys the seriousness of keeping the covenantal stipulations.

**5.3. The Decalogue as Principles or Law?** Ultimately, is the Decalogue to be considered "law" in the strict sense? The Decalogue is contained within the Torah, a term frequently used synonymously with \*law. Its location in Exodus, where it precedes the book of the covenant, and in Deuteronomy contributes to the perception that the commandments are laws. Similarities of form with apodictic law further encourage the conclusion that the Decalogue is legal material. The term *dēbārīm*, used to describe these commandments, is understood by some scholars of biblical law as a legitimate category or subcategory of legal material.

There are, however, some considerations that suggest that a wider understanding of the Decalogue is appropriate. First, the context for the giving of the Decalogue is a religious one, as God provides a covenant and in some sense a founding charter for the people delivered out of

Egypt. Second, penalties need to be stated and enforced when laws are broken if those laws are to be functionally effective. The stipulations of the Decalogue lack any prescribed punishment for those who break these laws, relying on fear of the Lord to promote allegiance to the terms of the covenant. Finally, the Decalogue addresses subject matter that is not “culture specific” but that instead has universal relevance and appeals to principles broadly held. For these reasons, the stipulations that form the Decalogue may be legitimately understood as “ordinances” or “principles” rather than as “laws” in the strictest sense (*see* Law).

### 6. Decalogue Content.

The suzerain-treaty form and the apodictic-law form should guide interpretation of the Decalogue. As an act of self-disclosure, this covenant indicates that God desires to be known by the Israelites. In typical suzerain fashion, the emerging relationship is based upon what God has already done on Israel's behalf. This is a covenant of choice, of \*election. God has already chosen the Israelites to be a holy nation, and he has already been active on their behalf. Thus, the Decalogue is not a collection of commandments kept in order to be chosen by God. They are stipulations to be kept in response to *being chosen* by God. The deposit of these tablets, their public reading, the covenant-renewal ceremonies described in other locations and the Israelites' willingness to excommunicate, even kill, community members who violate the covenant affirm the central role of the covenant in Israel's identity.

Commentators have long recognized the Decalogue's personal appeal with its use of the singular pronoun “you.” Equally obvious is the clear progression of focus within the Decalogue material, though different categorizations and descriptions of this progression have been offered. Many have understood the first four laws as defining humanity's proper relationship with God. The fourth, regarding sabbath rest, expands beyond the divine-human relationship and begins to address life in community. The final six stipulations regulate relationships between members of the faith community. An alternative interpretation describes the first five, which each contain the divine name, as applying specifically to Israel; the second five commandments, which do not contain the divine name, address moral issues and are intended

for a more universal audience.

The *first commandment*—“you shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:3)—demands absolute loyalty to Yahweh, the God of Israel. As a first response to God's election of Israel, this principle calls for an allegiance appropriate to the elect status. As a people created by God and set apart for holy purposes, commitment to Yahweh is to be fundamental to Israel's identity. Of course, Israel was frequently tempted toward, and guilty of, choosing gods other than Yahweh. Baal, Marduk, Asherah and a host of ancient Near Eastern deities, each of whom was believed to rule a particular domain such as fertility or rain, competed with Yahweh for Israel's devotion. It is probable that ancient Israel was not always a monotheistic society. Even if one argues to the contrary, OT literature is emphatic that Israel frequently worshiped other false gods, real or imagined.

With the first commandment prohibiting external threats to Israel's relationship with God, the second and third commandments are designed to prevent internal erosion of the community's perception of God's power and of their relationship to God. In doing so, the stipulations prohibit two practices common among Israel's peers.

The *second commandment* prohibits the use of a *pesel* (“image”) in worship. The reference to things in heaven, on earth or under the earth covers all possible material forms. This prohibition of \*idol worship served two primary functions. First, it distinguished Israelites from their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, many of whom used idols in their religious practices. The OT contains numerous references to such practices (cf. 2 Kings 17:7-18); archaeology confirms this testimony. Idols are physical representations of the deity, and herein lies one reason Israelites were not allowed to make such representations: few people were allowed to see the face of God and live. How, then, could one make an accurate representation of a God whose image had not been seen? Thus, integrity and the accuracy of the image representing God is an issue. Furthermore, idols are static, nonfeeling and nonresponsive, not at all like the God of Israel (cf. Isaiah's parody of idols; e.g., Is 40:18-20; 41:5-7, 21-29; 44:6-20; 46:1-7). The OT presents Yahweh as a God who is dynamic, who rejoices and suffers with the chosen people and who sees the actions and hears the cries of the covenant people. God is known through actions on behalf of the people, as God acts to fulfill the covenant

within Israel's historical experience.

Second, idols are never *only* a visual representation. In ancient Near Eastern religions, idols were sometimes bathed, clothed and fed as though they themselves were gods. Thus, idols could become objects of allegiance and ultimately be hallowed as \*holy objects. At that point, the representation itself threatens to cause violation of the first commandment as the idol assumes a place of priority in the devotion of the worshiper. Equally important is the issue of using the idol as a means of containing and manipulating God. The idol, and supposedly God, could be used whenever desired and was to some degree at the mercy and disposal of its owner. To fashion an idol is to attempt to reduce God to manageable proportions and to assume that God is susceptible to the control of the worshiper. Such a theology is at odds with the OT, which describes Yahweh as transcendent and beyond human control.

Whereas the second commandment regulates visual and physical representations of the deity, the *third commandment* focuses upon verbal representations of God. The linguistic range of meaning for *šāw'* ("misuse") includes false swearing, false speech, and that which brings disaster. Thus, the misuse described in this commandment pertains to associating the name of Yahweh with false or disastrous purposes. This prohibition was deeply connected with the significance attached to personal names in ancient Near Eastern culture. Names revealed the character and identity of the individual. A close relationship existed between one's name and one's reputation. Equally important when considering this commandment is the ancient Near Eastern belief in the power of the spoken word. At some level, a causal connection was assumed between words and events (e.g., the concept of \*blessings and curses). Thus, to know the name of God was to understand something of the divine identity. To invoke the divine name was to associate the power and purposes of Yahweh with the thing being spoken and the purposes being represented. Using Yahweh's name in vain involves associating God with purposes and powers that are inconsistent with God's identity and will. The end result is a misrepresentation of God, a false claim to divine power and endorsement, and a miscommunication of truth.

The *fourth commandment* is best understood by considering the meaning of the root word for

\*sabbath (*šabbāt*), which simply means "rest." The commandment could thus be read, "Remember the rest day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a rest day to the Lord your God." The Exodus version of the Decalogue anchors this commandment in God's rest as described in the \*creation story. That act of divine rest is the theological framework for this regulation in which the sabbath becomes a special day set aside to remind the Israelites that the cycle of life should include a period of rest, refreshment and remembering their Creator. When Israel remembers their Creator, they remember that the same God delivered them from bondage. When they remember that newly acquired freedom, they remember the covenant. So it is no surprise that in the Deuteronomic version of the Decalogue, the reason given for observing the sabbath is not because God rested, but because God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. Thus, sabbath rest is about more than relaxation from toil and labor and the rejuvenation of tired muscles and aching backs. This "rest," contextualized by the words "remembrance" and "holy," is a weekly reminder for the Israelites of what God has done to create this covenant community and of the holy, separate identity it bears as the covenant people. In effect, the sabbath is a sign of the covenant.

Like the fourth commandment, the *fifth commandment* is expressed positively, calling for the Israelites to honor their fathers and mothers. This command is not the only regulation of the treatment of parents (cf. Ex 21:15, 17). \**"Honor"* is a translation of *kābōd*, which also means "glory" and, interestingly enough, "weighty." To honor someone in this Israelite context was to regard that one as a person of worth and value. Though the fourth commandment has traditionally been a parent's refuge when children misbehave, this verse was not originally a catechism for that purpose. It was directed to the Israelite community as a whole, shaping the way they treated their aging parents. It functioned as a guideline within a covenant community composed of family units united in a tribal federation.

According to the exodus story, these were families in the process of moving from Egyptian slavery through a \*wilderness wandering to the Promised Land. They were going from a setting where their Egyptian owners determined what they received, and who consequently had some responsibility for their care, to a wilderness set-

ting where God provided for them. From there, the Israelites eventually entered Canaan, the Promised Land. Once settled there, each family received a \*land inheritance and from that point onward had the primary responsibility of caring for their own.

Meeting basic subsistence needs would have been a challenge for many of the Israelite families. Archaeological discoveries indicate that Israelites initially settled in the rough, undeveloped terrain of the hill country. Land needed to be cleared and terraced. Homes had to be built. Agrarian economies were developed. Rainfall was limited. Struggles for survival were common, with debt slavery always a lingering possibility. In a situation where resources were at a premium and sacrifices had to be made, the uncomfortable question became: Who is expendable? In such cases, it would have been tempting to spend resources on those who had most of their lives before them and whose young, energetic, virile bodies would soon help relieve the nearly insurmountable work load. To combat that possibility, this commandment insists that families honor the elderly, who are sometimes weaker and needier than their adult children. This stipulation, designed to protect those who may be regarded as unimportant, unproductive or burdensome, insists that human value and meaningful life are not equated with productivity.

The social structure of the Israelite tribal system, normally described as a tripartite structure of tribes, clans and families or *bêt 'āb* ("house of the father"), gives this law an additional significance. The *bêt 'āb* created an extended family setting in which the patriarch and matriarch of the family wielded much power over the lives of the individual family members of the younger generations. This structure had economic and political ramifications (cf. the \*Jacob and Laban stories). Younger generations could easily tire of the lack of control they had over their own lives and over family decisions, leading to animosity toward the father and mother of the house. In a situation primed for tense situations, this commandment reaffirms the place of honor given to the head of the *bêt 'āb*.

The *sixth commandment* prohibits killing, which is ironic given the amount of violence contained in the OT. Indeed, interpretation of this commandment is difficult, given its context. The usual word for "kill" in biblical Hebrew is *hārag*, but that is not the word used here. This

commandment prohibits *rāṣah*, an interesting choice because this word has a wider range of possible meanings than *hārag*. Normally *rāṣah* refers to "murder," the willful, premeditated killing of an individual, often as an act of \*blood vengeance. This would suggest that this commandment intended to limit acts of revenge to protect the life of innocent community members. However, *rāṣah* can also refer to unintentional homicide, as in the laws of asylum (cf. Deut 4:41-42). This usage means that intentionality can no longer be the dividing line by which one keeps or breaks this command. The word also describes the execution of a convicted killer (cf. Num 35:30). Such usage demonstrates that the implications of this commandment reach far beyond simplistic or legalistic interpretations. This is a commandment that values life and relationships, leaving decisions to end life in the hands of God. Where taking the life of another had divine sanction, the OT generally associates those deaths with certain sins for which the prescribed punishment was execution. Punishment by death was limited to capital offenses (e.g., Ex 21:12-17) and to actions that threatened the holiness of the community and the integrity of Israel's covenant with God (e.g., Josh 7). Where the Israelite community was given authority to take the lives of individuals, those decisions were not to be made lightly.

Adultery is prohibited in the *seventh commandment* (see Sexuality, Sexual Ethics). Such a stipulation presupposes an understanding of marriage, because without the latter, the former is pointless. To some degree polygamy was practiced by some Israelites, although it is impossible to know how widespread it actually was. The economic realities of polygamy may have curtailed its popularity. In certain circumstances, a marriage could be dissolved, and Israelite law contained guidelines describing when divorce was appropriate. However, so long as the marriage was intact, certain standards were to be respected. Abstaining from adultery was one of those guidelines, although a double standard existed in Israel's patriarchal society. The law prohibited wives from having sexual relations with anyone other than their husbands. In contrast, men were not to have relations with the wives of other men. Elsewhere, death is clearly stated as the penalty for adultery (cf. Deut 22:22). In contrast, the penalty for the violation of a virgin was marriage or payment (cf. Ex 22:16-17;

Deut 22:28-29). In the clan-based, tribal-affiliated Israelite community, stable home lives were essential if the community itself was to remain functional. Without such stability, intratribal and intertribal conflicts arising from these acts would threaten the survival of the group (see Family Relationships).

The *eighth commandment* prohibits \*theft. The choice of *gānab* as the verb suggests the element of “secrecy.” Questions have arisen about the relationship between this stipulation and the tenth commandment, given the apparent overlap. Drawing support from other laws (cf. Ex 21:16; Deut 24:7), some have suggested that this commandment refers to kidnapping. If one presumes that theft is a capital offense, such an argument has some logic, but there is no compelling evidence to support such a claim.

The mere possibility of stealing requires, first of all, a concept of ownership. If ownership grants access to certain people while denying access to others, that means that ownership establishes boundaries accompanied by restricted entry or access. To some degree property is understood to be an extension of the self of the owner. Consequently, the theft of property is a violation or injury of the person, not just loss of wealth. The loss may well deprive a person of the ability to survive. Elsewhere in Israel’s law, prohibitions of theft generally are related to the provision of basic subsistence needs. Along with personal violation and threat to survival, theft also contributes to the loss of privilege. The loss of those things reduces the possibility of a satisfying or abundant life.

Lying is prohibited in the *ninth commandment*. The Hebrew literally reads, “you shall not respond against your neighbor falsely,” and uses language that suggests a court context. Two immediate observations deserve comment. The first is only obvious in the Hebrew text. The verb used is *ʿanā*, which is usually translated as “respond.” It can, however, also mean “oppress, afflict or put down.” Thus this verse could read, “You shall not oppress your neighbor by lying.” Lying is more than deceit and dishonesty; it oppresses the person to whom or about whom the lie is told. The second observation is the commandment’s reference to the neighbor. Thus the stipulation emphasizes that lying is a social, not a private, evil. The worst victim is the neighbor, which is to say, the one to whom or about whom the lie is told.

There is no lie that does not, in some way, affect others. At the very least, false information limits the hearer’s ability to make an informed decision because he or she does not have accurate information. In the Israelite community, lying was prohibited because of what it did to the recipients of the lie. The ninth commandment protected the neighbor as well as the neighbor’s reputation. It ensured the neighbor’s freedom to make an informed choice and thus helped the neighbor to decide and act with integrity. Ancient Israel had no place for such a casual approach to truth and lying, especially in their law courts. Elsewhere the laws stipulate that a person who gave worthless testimony about another was to receive the penalty that the one about whom the lie was told would have been subject to, if the testimony had been true (Deut 19:18-21). In some cases that meant death; in others it meant three- or fourfold restitution. Such strenuous penalties illustrate the seriousness of false testimony in the context of the faith community.

With the *tenth commandment*, questions frequently arise about the relationship between stealing and coveting, since their territory seems to overlap. There is one primary difference. Stealing is linked completely to the act itself, in which someone takes that which belongs to another. Coveting (*hāmad*), however, has to do with an attitude deep within. It involves desires that are so strong one is willing to reach out and take, or commit other unacceptable acts, to satisfy those desires.

After nine commands that either focus on God or outer behavior, the tenth command enters the realm of the heart and mind. This prohibition does not focus on outward, visible actions. It concentrates instead on a person’s thoughts, motives and attitudes. Covetous thoughts motivate and inspire, frequently producing action that will violate one of the previous nine commandments.

Laws legislate actions, not thoughts or attitudes, precisely because the former can be monitored whereas the latter cannot. The act of coveting cannot be witnessed, only becoming visible when that internal craving is acted upon. This tenth commandment’s shift to the interior dimension of the human life lessens the probability that the Decalogue functioned as an actual set of laws in ancient Israel. It does, however, demonstrate that God’s covenant never depends

solely upon adherence to external details. The Decalogue begins with a command that insists there be no God before Yahweh. Like coveting, one's loyalty to God also begins as an internal posture that only secondarily becomes evident in external practice. Thus two commandments that are essentially rooted in the heart and mind of the covenant people encircle a set of principles that properly order worship and community relationships.

### 7. Interpretation of the Decalogue.

**7.1. Old Testament.** When one studies the history of interpretation of these laws, or any biblical passage, one will notice development and change in the meaning assigned to these passages. Biblical passages take on new meaning, partially shaped by the context of the community or individual reading them. For that reason, understanding the history of interpretation is useful to readers who search the text for meaning.

Interpreters of the Decalogue should begin by remembering that in its original context, these stipulations were not universal truths revealed to the entire world. They were given for and directed to a specific group of people, Israel, that was chosen by God. These commandments helped define the nation of Israel in its relationship with God and to each other. Israel was rooted in and defined by the concept of "covenant."

Many Biblical scholars maintain that covenant is the key idea for understanding the OT. Israel repeatedly used the concept of covenant to understand their history, from the call of \*Abraham through the people's return from Babylonian exile. It even influenced their understanding of God and their conception of proper social organization. Indeed, it is difficult to find a more foundational or relational term than *covenant*, especially in regard to the Israelite understanding of community.

Israel's covenant was foundational for its community in the sense that it specified the reason for entering into the agreement with God. God delivered them from bondage, which provided the motivation for entering the covenant, and the foundation for Israel's continuing trust in God. Furthermore, the ensuing commands in Exodus 20, and again in Deuteronomy 5, provided a framework that delineated the essential characteristics and values of the community.

God and Israel both expected these commandments to be accepted and shared by those who participated in the covenant.

The covenant defined by the Decalogue was relational in the sense that it formally established the faith relationship with God. Other contexts demonstrate that the primary relational characteristic that God brought into the covenant was *hesed*, usually translated as "steadfast love." Besides the accompanying responsibilities and privileges it created, this covenant was characterized by the assurance of God's steadfast love.

As the covenant described God's actions and intentions in this *hesed*-oriented relationship with the Israelites, it also delineated the basic expectations for the participants regarding their relationship with God and with other Israelites. In short, it outlined acceptable standards for relationships shaped by faith in the God of Israel.

The Decalogue's central location within the Mosaic covenant and the revelation at Sinai demonstrates its importance in the OT's theological understanding of Israel's identity. Other lists of "ten," and prophetic admonitions that loosely parallel the Decalogue without specifically naming it, confirm its significance. However, one must balance this testimony with the claim of 2 Kings 23, where during Josiah's reign a book of the law was found in the temple, the contents of which seemed unknown to the people. This raises the question of whether the law had as central a place in the lives of the people as the theology of the OT desired it to have. In fact, the Deuteronomistic History highlights disobedience as the reason for Israel's fall and subsequent exile, confirming that though the law was central to Israel's identity as a nation, the laws were not sufficiently observed to maintain the terms of the covenant.

**7.2. New Testament.** The NT contains various references to the Decalogue or portions of its stipulations (cf. Rom 13:9; Col 3:5-11; Heb 4:4, 10; Jas 2:11). Reference is made to them in the conversation between the rich young ruler and Jesus (Lk 18:18-23). Some view the Beatitudes as a reinterpretation of the Decalogue. Moving beyond these literal citations, larger interpretive questions hinge on the continuing validity of these commandments, given the new covenant through Christ. At the very least, interpreters should recognize that laws once meant for a specific group of people, Israel, are now being

redirected at another faith group that, while rooted in its Jewish heritage, has a different understanding of law and covenant.

Jesus occasionally challenged Jewish traditions regarding the law and offered new interpretations of it. He also understood his work as fulfilling the law. Jesus as interpreter of the law, or as the fulfillment of the law, is different from Jesus as the negation of the law, a description one hears all too often within the church. Jesus declared he was the fulfillment of the law, suggesting that the spiritual truths represented by the various laws were to be internalized. The transfiguration (Mt 17; Mk 9; Lk 9) depicts Jesus in conversation with Moses and Elijah, representatives of the Law and Prophets. John 1:16-17, directed at early Christians, describes how they received "one blessing upon another." First the law was given through Moses; then grace and truth came through Christ. So Christians should not be quick to dismiss totally the OT material as worthless (*see DJG, Law*).

Equally important to a NT discussion of the Decalogue's continuing validity is Paul's perspective on the law, which is a more critical one than that of Jesus. Paul insisted that grace, not law, had the power to bring salvation and that "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4). However, he also insisted that all Scripture, which would have certainly included the OT law, is "inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17; *see DPL, Law*).

The heart of the discussion may be described as "law as source of salvation" versus "law as valuable for instruction." Christ has done what the law could not do. Consequently, Christians do not seek salvation through the observance of the law. However, with Christ as the fulfillment of the law and its correct interpreter, OT law can continue to be a source of inspiration and a resource for wisdom. The new covenant through Christ, not the Decalogue, occupies the center of the Christian community. The spiritual truths represented by the Decalogue's stipulations should be internalized as useful instruction for faithful living within the new covenant.

**7.3. Later Judaism.** One finds two themes in the rabbinic treatment of the Decalogue. One strand of tradition accords the Decalogue a central place in Jewish prayer and liturgy. Its com-

mandments were included among the material contained in phylacteries at Qumran. The Jerusalem Talmud (*y. Ber. 1:5A*) describes a direct correspondence between each word of the Shema and one of the Ten Commandments. A second strand of tradition, contained in the same document, downplays the centrality of the Decalogue in Jewish prayer, allowing the full revelation of God through Moses to be emphasized. Rabbinic literature is content to let this apparent contradiction stand.

**7.4. Christian History.** The Christian church's interpretation of the Decalogue has varied greatly over the course of its history, again demonstrating the influence of culture and context upon interpretation. Early catechetical material, such as the *Didache*, demonstrates a legalistic use as a means of influencing morality. Others, such as Irenaeus, used the concept of natural law as a means of embracing the value of the Decalogue while still maintaining that the Jewish law was no longer valid. Augustine promoted a Pauline argument that the law itself was good but that its goodness had been obscured by sin. The value of the Decalogue within the new covenant was its contribution to shaping the new life in Christ. The influence of these movements continued in the thinking of Reformers in a manner that elevated these formerly community-oriented stipulations to the level of eternal, divine law applicable to all times and all peoples. As a result, in the post-Reformation, precritical period, the exposition of the Decalogue was a usual feature of theological works. As critical scholarship emerged in the academy, eighteenth-century treatment of the Decalogue, and indeed the entire Bible, analyzed the text with a variety of historical-critical methods. These analyses raised questions regarding the authorship, date and origin of the Decalogue. Meanwhile, within the confessional community, the treatment of the Decalogue as a set of eternal laws to be applied universally has generally continued unscathed. Unfortunately, this has encouraged many within Christianity to use the Decalogue as a gauge for measuring righteousness, substituting legalistic prohibitions for covenant faith. A number of recent books of an interpretive nature are available, each seeking to connect the truth or spirit of the Decalogue with contemporary issues, thus demonstrating its continued relevance (Marshall, Moriarty, Timmerman).

### 8. Hermeneutical Issues and Contemporary Relevance.

Given the specific Israelite origin of the Decalogue and the range of meaning assigned to it by readers throughout history, modern interpreters do well to resist merely insisting upon the universal relevance of these commandments. As universal morals imposed from without, independent of a relationship with the God who gave the Decalogue, these commandments lack spiritual value. Indeed, as apodictic law without a formal structure to enforce adherence to them, there is little motivation for keeping these commandments apart from the covenant. When they are applied beyond the bounds of the faith community, a different motivation is necessary. The statements given here distance interpretation of the Decalogue from the common Christian assumption that they are universal laws. There may indeed be eternal truths within them that are worthy of wide application, but these commandments depend upon the covenant for their authority.

A first step toward discovering the contemporary relevance of the Decalogue, therefore, requires a recovery of *covenant* and *community* as central concepts within the church. The covenant established the context in which these commandments were heard. It established God's prior action on behalf of the people, God's choice of these people and God's desire to communicate with them. The commandments of the Decalogue expressed the divine will for the covenant people. As such, they provided a gift of opportunity and a warning of potential destruction. They provided the foundational principles for thinking about God and about religious living, creating a distinct group of people by defining their relationship to God differently from that of other religious groups. The commandments pertaining to social relationships framed life between members of the group. Faithful living, and indeed a faith community, results from living by the terms of the covenant.

Covenant and community remain as emphases of the Decalogue when viewed through a NT lens even though the NT redefines the faith community. Theological and conceptual parallels exist in God's prior action on the behalf of a people whom God desired to choose and in the revelation of the divine will through Jesus, who is the new covenant. The Decalogue remains useful within the new covenant, though some

important shifts must be recognized. Rather than Israel, the faith community comprises followers of Jesus. Jesus' new command points to love of God and neighbor as the summation of the law. Christians do not keep the commandments as a means of keeping the covenant. Rather, they keep them as a way of expressing their love for God. The catechetical use of the Decalogue is not inappropriate so long as the distinction is maintained between law as "resource for instruction" and law as "measurement of piety" or worse, "source of salvation." With the Decalogue as a relevant resource for instruction, the challenge for the contemporary church is to utilize the positive principles contained in these apodictic formulations in ways that emphasize the spirit of God that undergirds the letter of the law.

*See also* BLASPHEMY; BODILY INJURIES, MURDER, MANSLAUGHTER; ETHICS; FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS; LAW; SABBATH, SABBATICAL YEAR, JUBILEE; SEXUALITY, SEXUAL ETHICS; THEFT AND DEPRIVATION OF PROPERTY.

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**DESERT.** See WILDERNESS, DESERT.

**DEUTERONOMIC COVENANT.** See COVENANT; DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF.

**DEUTERONOMIST.** See AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH; DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF; PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM, HISTORY OF; SOURCE CRITICISM.

## DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF

This article discusses the contents, theological themes and setting of the book of Deuteronomy. It shows how Deuteronomy relates to the OT books that precede and follow it. It describes the contents of the book as a series of speeches of \*Moses on the plains of Moab, which re-present in a distinctive manner themes developed in the first four books of the Pentateuch. It goes on to review the interpretation of Deuteronomy in the modern period, explaining why it has been closely associated with the reform of King Josiah in the late seventh century B.C. and identifying the implications of this setting for its theological interpretation. Then, in critical dialogue with the thesis that Deuteronomy is the document of a Judean promonarchical program, it is argued

that the book presents a vision of a thoroughly distinctive constitution for Israel in which Yahweh's authority is mediated through the *tôrâ* (or \*law) taught by Moses, with the people having final responsibility for managing Israel's affairs. The principal themes of the book are then reviewed in the light of this overarching view and in relation to other parts of the Bible.

1. Deuteronomy in the Canon of the Old Testament
2. An Outline of the Book
3. Deuteronomy in Modern Interpretation
4. Deuteronomy as a Constitution for Israel
5. Establishing a Setting for Deuteronomy
6. Deuteronomy in the Canon

### 1. Deuteronomy in the Canon of the Old Testament.

**1.1. The Name of the Book.** The name "Deuteronomy" comes from the Greek translation (LXX) of Deuteronomy 17:18, which misunderstands the phrase "a copy of this law" as "this second law" (*to deuteronomium touto*). The title in Hebrew is "These are the words," taken from the opening words of the book. Deuteronomy is not a mere addition of new material to that which was already known, but a re-presentation and inculcation of the requirements of the \*covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The former title makes an observation about the relation of the book to the remainder of the Pentateuch, while the latter focuses on its content.

**1.2. Its Place in the Canon.** Deuteronomy is the fifth book of Moses, the last book in the Pentateuch. While the word *Pentateuch* is based on the Greek for "five scrolls," the Hebrew term *tôrâ* also came to designate the same five books. The association with Moses was a key factor in marking out these books as primary. In this context, Deuteronomy brings to a conclusion the story of the formative events of Israel's history with Yahweh. Its narrative of the death of Moses (Deut 34) marks the end of the primary era in Israel's life and the transition to the next phase.

Modern interpretation has aligned Deuteronomy not only with the books that precede it canonically but also with those that follow it (in the Hebrew canonical order): Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings—the Former Prophets in Jewish tradition or more generally the Historical Books. Deuteronomy occupies a position between Genesis—Numbers and Joshua—Kings. It is a kind of pause in the narrative, since the

story of the progression from the \*wilderness of Sinai via the plains of Moab into the land itself is essentially told in Numbers and Joshua. This position outside the main line of the narrative has led to different placements of the book. Some scholars think of a *Hexateuch* in which Deuteronomy is aligned mainly with the preceding books, but the story unfolded there is perceived as having a true conclusion in Joshua, with its account of the taking of the land of Canaan, promised as early as Genesis 12:1-3 (von Rad 1966a). Others have marked off the first four books, Genesis—Numbers, as a *Tetrateuch* and made Deuteronomy the first book in the series that follows, the whole being known as the Deuteronomistic History, in which Deuteronomy provides the theological basis for the interpretation of history that follows (Noth). It is best to think of Deuteronomy as having both a concluding function and an orientation toward the ensuing history, given its nature as an exhortation to the people to keep the covenant once they have entered the land (so Clines).

## 2. An Outline of the Book.

Whereas Genesis through Numbers consists predominantly of narratives interspersed with laws and instructions, Deuteronomy is largely in the form of speeches of Moses. These are essentially four (Deut 1:6—4:40; 5:1—26:19; 27:1—28:68; 29:1—30:20), the last four chapters being a mixture of narrative and final sayings. The speeches are set in the plains of Moab, the position that the people of Israel have reached after their \*exodus from \*Egypt, the covenant made at Sinai (Ex 19—24) and the forty-year period of wandering in the Sinai wilderness, following their failure to enter the Promised Land at the first attempt due to their lack of faith in Yahweh (Num 13—14; note 14:34). The speeches are, therefore, both retrospective and prospective. The opening verses of the book place it in relation to the past events, in the form of brief allusion and on the assumption that the story is known. They include a reference to the defeats of the Transjordanian kings Sihon and Og (Deut 1:4; see also Num 21:21-35), which were a kind of beginning of the taking of the Promised \*Land, though the decisive crossing of the Jordan would be left to \*Joshua rather than Moses. Moses' initiation of the conquest is recalled in Deuteronomy 1—3, which tells again how Israel came to spend a long time in the wilderness

(Deut 1) and gives its own account of its progress to its present station, including the campaigns against Sihon and Og (Deut 2—3). After an exhortation (Deut 4), this part is framed by a report of \*cities of refuge being set up in Transjordan (Deut 4:41-43), a mark of Israel's legitimate occupancy and jurisdiction there, which would be matched by similar appointments in due course in the land proper (Deut 19; see also Josh 20).

The exhortation in Deuteronomy 4 is centered on the covenant making at Horeb (Deuteronomy's regular name for Sinai; Deut 4:10-14), and this is elaborated in the first major set of instructions in the book (Deut 5—11). The book continues to revisit ground covered in the preceding narratives by giving a version of the Ten Commandments (or \*Decalogue; Deut 5:6-21; see also Ex 20:1-17), followed by exhortations to keep the covenant of which these commands formed the fundamental requirements. These exhortations focus particularly on the first commandment in the sense that they warn Israel not to turn to the worship of other gods (Deut 7:1-5, 17-26). The apostasy at Sinai/Horeb is recalled in order to show that the people have already failed in this regard (Deut 9:4—10:11; see also Ex 32) and as a spur to greater faithfulness in the future. The reason for this uncompromising position lies in the \*holiness of Israel to Yahweh, which is almost the same as the idea that he has chosen them as his special possession (Deut 7:6, see also Ex 19:5-6; see Election). The orientation of the exhortations is consistently toward the future life of Israel in the Promised Land, not only in the present generation but in those to come (the point is illustrated by Deut 6:1-3).

The larger part of Moses' second speech (Deut 12—26) takes the form of a law code augmented by motivations and exhortations. This code corresponds to the law code in Exodus known as the \*book of the covenant (Ex 20:22—23:19) in the sense that it represents extensions of the Decalogue into specific cases. Resemblances between the Deuteronomic code and the book of the covenant have long been observed (see Driver, iii-x). Each is prefaced by a law governing worship at a place or places appointed by Yahweh (Ex 20:24-25; Deut 12) and proceeds to aspects of both religious and civil \*law. The laws in Deuteronomy often differ in detail. For example, in the law concerning slave-release, Deuteronomy considers the female

slave on a par with the male, unlike Exodus (Ex 21:1-11; Deut 15:12-18).

The law governing worship is also distinctive in Deuteronomy (see further below) and dominant in the law code. Its formula recurs, with variations, a number of times, namely: “you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there” (Deut 12:5; see also Deut 12:11, 14, 21; 14:23; 15:20; 16:6, etc.). This command corresponds to the holiness of Israel and the obligation to keep distinct from the other peoples of the land and their worship practices (Deut 12:2-4). Laws concerning religious ceremonies are to the fore in Deuteronomy 12–16, while laws on civil matters occupy Deuteronomy 19–25. A central section, not paralleled in the other pentateuchal law codes, addresses the political structure of the nation (Deut 16:18–18:22). Finally, the code is completed by a final command concerning worship (Deut 26). The bracketing of the code with religious requirements effectively signals that adherence to Yahweh and his covenant brings all of life under his sway.

Deuteronomy is not merely concerned with the covenant between Israel and Yahweh as a topic but is itself a covenant-making document. The chapters following the law code make this clear. Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 26:17-19 declare that the parties to the covenant are “today” (on the plains of Moab) taking its obligations on themselves. The next chapter prescribes a covenant confirmation to be performed after the occupation of the land at Shechem, involving the invocation of curses for breaching it (Deut 27). A further extensive section of \*blessings and curses ensues (Deut 28). The covenant at Moab is then shown to correspond to the fundamental one at Horeb (Deut 29–30). The document of the covenant, called “the book of this law [*tôrâ*]” (Deut 28:61; see also 28:58), and apparently referring to a form of Deuteronomy itself (Sonnet, 235-62), is to be deposited by the ark of the covenant, kept in perpetuity by the levitical priests and formally read aloud at the Feast of Tabernacles every seven years (Deut 31:9-13; see Festivals and Feasts). The book then offers a final exhortation by Moses in the form of a song (Deut 32) and his farewell “blessing” (Deut 33), in an act that resembles a father’s final blessing on his children. Then, in accordance with the decree of Yahweh that

Moses would see the land but not enter it, the book closes with the account of his death on Mount Nebo (Deut 34).

This survey shows that Deuteronomy both fits into the story that stretches from Genesis to Joshua and has its own unique characteristics. Its reprise of history, law and covenant from the former books is not mere repetition but offers a complete and individual view of the foundations of Israel’s life. The scene has moved on from Sinai to Moab, and this shift has brought with it an entirely new covenant, which gives a basis for thinking about Israel’s responsibilities in the land in the light of their history with Yahweh to that point.

### 3. Deuteronomy in Modern Interpretation.

**3.1. Deuteronomy as a Unique Document.** Deuteronomy’s distinctive characteristics have dominated its interpretation in the modern period. The special style of Deuteronomy’s speeches of Moses was first noted in 1805 by W. M. L. de Wette, but the classic description of it came from S. R. Driver nearly a century later (Driver, lxxvii-lxxxviii; see also Weinfeld 1972, 320-65). Driver’s analysis laid the foundation for the belief that the kind of language found in the book, which was recognizable in other places in the OT, provided evidence for a whole class of literature, indeed a movement, that could be described as Deuteronomic. This language had a repetitive, sermonistic style, with stereotyped phrases, especially on the topics of the imminent entry to the Promised Land and the need to keep the commands of the covenant and to worship Yahweh at the place that he would choose.

We have seen that the book falls into a series of speeches by Moses. However, as a covenant-making document, it also has structural similarities with ancient Near Eastern treaties. These similarities, especially to second-millennium B.C. Hittite vassal treaties, were first noticed by M. G. Kline and K. A. Kitchen (90-102; see also Craigie, 22-23). The main elements in the form can be given as follows, along with the corresponding sections of Deuteronomy (this division of the material only partly corresponds to its division according to the speeches of Moses): (1) a preamble announcing the treaty and those who are party to it (Deut 1:1-5); (2) a historical prologue rehearsing the previous relations between the parties (Deut 1:6–4:49); (3) general stipulations (Deut 5–11); (4) specific stipulations (Deut

12–26); (5) a deposition of the document for the purpose of public reading (Deut 27:1-10; 31:9-29); (6) witnesses (Deut 32); and (7) blessings and curses (Deut 27:12-26; 28:1-68). The match between the form of Deuteronomy and that of the treaties is not exact. For example, the last six chapters are not included in the analysis just offered, the “stipulations” are closer to ancient law codes than to treaty stipulations, and the curses section is much longer than in the known Hittite treaties. There is, in addition, a question whether the form is closer to Assyrian treaties of the first millennium (so Weinfeld) than to the Hittite treaties. However, the treaty analogy helps identify Deuteronomy as a book with its own independent standing and rationale. It is also a suitable vehicle for Deuteronomy’s highly developed covenant theology.

**3.2. Deuteronomy as a Document of Reform.** In modern times critical scholarship has regarded Deuteronomy as deriving from a later time in Israel’s history than that of Moses. How far it was thought to rest on Mosaic tradition has varied depending on the attitudes of different scholars. Its dating and interpretation, following Julius Wellhausen in the late nineteenth century, have been based on the assumption of its origin in King Josiah’s reform in the late seventh century B.C., that is, a century after the fall of the northern kingdom and only a generation before the exile of the people of Judah to Babylon (Clements, 69-83). The connection arose from the account in 2 Kings 22:8 of the discovery of “the book of the law” in the temple during renovations being carried out there in the year 621 B.C. This and similar terms were applied to a form of Deuteronomy both in the book itself and in Joshua (Deut 28:58, 61; 31:26; Josh 1:8). The chronology of the reform is given slightly differently in 2 Chronicles 34–35, which suggests that it had already begun in 628 B.C. and that the discovery of the “book of the law” merely gave it fresh impetus (see Nicholson 1967, 8-11).

On this view, the reform movement and the composition of Deuteronomy are inseparable. Deuteronomy was widely seen as the document that justified the measures taken by Josiah. The formula governing worship was thought to have been conceived to legitimate Josiah’s centralization of worship in Jerusalem by destroying the other sanctuaries of Judah. A plurality of worship places had been the norm in the earlier period, as evidenced by the stories of Samuel (1

Sam 9:14; 10:3) and Elijah (1 Kings 18). The law of the \*altar in Exodus 20:24, furthermore, did not seem as exclusive as that of Deuteronomy 12:5. The unnamed “place” of the Deuteronomic formula was taken to refer to Jerusalem, and certain texts appeared to support this view (1 Kings 8:29; 2 Kings 21:4). The formal anonymity of the “place” in Deuteronomy was attributed to the need to be consistent with the Mosaic setting.

Deuteronomy thus became a midpoint, not only in the development of the OT religion, but also in that of the pentateuchal documents (JEDP) and law codes (see Source Criticism). The book of the covenant (Ex 20:22–23:19) represented the older traditions, while the Priestly writings contained the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26), sometimes regarded as a separate source but usually dated after Deuteronomy in any case. The progression from the book of the covenant through Deuteronomy to the Priestly writings/Holiness Code could be seen as tightening the regulation of worship. Where the book of the covenant allowed worship in a number of places, Deuteronomy restricted it to one, albeit with dispensations (see next paragraph), and the Priestly writings/Holiness Code restricted this requirement further (Lev 17:2-9).

Deuteronomy therefore came to be seen as the document of Josiah’s “centralization” of worship. Josiah’s destruction of local sanctuaries (2 Kings 23:4-14) brought about a major change in the life of Judah, for the people had been worshipping at the “high places” (as they are called in Kings), where they had honored deities other than Yahweh. Interpreting Deuteronomy against this background appeared to explain a number of the book’s features. Distance from the main sanctuary became a ground for permission to slaughter meat nonsacrificially (Deut 12:15-25) as well as to convert tithe-produce into money at home in order to repurchase produce for the offering at the sanctuary (Deut 14:22-27). In other instances an opposition is set up between the towns of Judah (or “gates,” as they are metonymically called in Deuteronomy) and the central sanctuary. For example, the Passover is to be celebrated at that place, not in the towns (Deut 16:5-6), and while legal proceedings were normally to be pursued in the localities, difficult cases had to be taken to a sort of high court at the sanctuary (Deut 17:2-7, 8-9). Regarding priestly service, Deuteronomy 18:6-8 permits

\*Levites from the countryside to come to the main sanctuary to participate as priests in the worship there. This has frequently been regarded as one Deuteronomic ideal that Josiah refused to enact, since he took severe measures against the “priests of the high places” (2 Kings 23:5, 9).

The theory of centralization required an understanding of the nature of the reform movement that culminated in it. If Josiah was reasserting ancient Israelite religion in the face of Assyrian religious influences, why would that require centralization, if that had not formerly been essential to Yahweh worship (see Lohfink 1987)? It is now thought that the reform may have intended to oppose an upsurge of popular devotion to the goddess Asherah, on the grounds that the archaeological record attests a sudden increase in goddess figurines in the seventh century (Holladay). The reform may have faced two directions: on the one hand against this groundswell of popular piety throughout Judah, and on the other against the Assyrianization of the official worship that had taken hold under Manasseh (Levinson, 63).

In any case, the reform is still widely understood as emphasizing the spiritual and ethical side of religion, as against its external or ritual expressions. For example, Deuteronomy has the clearest concern in the law codes for the poor and disadvantaged (*see* Wealth and Poverty). It makes a number of provisions for the stranger, the \*orphan and the \*widow (e.g., Deut 14:28-29; 16:14). Such provisions can be seen as making a deliberate contrast with a more ritual concept of religion; in the case of the tithe, the “priestly” law presents it as a requisite of the Levite (Num 18:21-24) rather than Deuteronomy’s concept of an offering put to charitable use.

In the development of the scholarly view of Deuteronomy, therefore, a certain paradox emerges. A document thought to concentrate ritual and sacrificial worship in one place, thus maintaining the privileges of the Jerusalem temple and its clergy, is also held to promote a more spiritual and ethical kind of religion. The paradox is often explained as a kind of compromise. The spirit of the reform was covenantal and prophetic, as shown by Deuteronomy’s affinities with northern traditions typified by the prophet Hosea, who also preached about the covenant and criticized Israel’s apostasy to the worship of

Baal (Hos 2; 8:1). These traditions were brought south by Yahwists fleeing the Assyrian ravages that led to the northern kingdom’s fall in 722 B.C. and fed into the reform movement in Judah. Covenant theology in Judah itself had taken a different route because of the continuity there of the Jerusalem temple and the memory of the promise to David (2 Sam 7). The Deuteronomic reform was, therefore, a compromise between the radical theology of the north and the temple-oriented theology of Judah (see Nicholson 1967).

Concentration of worship in Jerusalem could be seen as curtailing ritual worship generally (Weinfeld 1972, 190; see also Tigay, xvii), while controlling it in the capital, and therefore compatible with the prophetic themes of Deuteronomy. Its emphases on the preaching of the covenant, faithfulness to Yahweh as a matter of the “heart” (Deut 6:5) and care for the weak in society could thus be located in a royal reform of religion, inspired by a prophetic call to return to Israel’s covenantal roots. In Tigay’s words: “Deuteronomy’s aim is to spiritualize religion by freeing it from excessive dependence on sacrifice and priesthood” (Tigay, xvii).

In the dominant modern form of this analysis, M. Weinfeld situates Deuteronomy in the royal scribal schools of the late Judean monarchy. These schools were the counterpart of the scribal schools in Assyria that produced political treaties. The Judean scribes were influenced by wisdom thinking, which lay close to the spiritual and ethical form of religion found in Deuteronomy. For them political and religious ideals were inseparable. Weinfeld sees their reform as both “secularizing” and “demythologizing” (1972, 190-209). That is, religion itself has become more rational than older ritualized forms, and at the same time the life of Israel is largely freed from priestly control. Even the worship in Jerusalem, therefore, was radically altered by Deuteronomy’s program. The essence of this revolution in religious concepts was in the concept of \*God himself. Weinfeld understands Deuteronomy’s idea of the placing of the divine name at the sanctuary (Deut 12:5) by reference to the (Deuteronomic) prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. In that place the idea of the name’s presence at the temple is closely associated with the proclamation that Yahweh dwells in heaven. This is thought to imply that he does not dwell on earth (1 Kings 8:27, 29),

and Weinfeld concludes that Deuteronomy systematically develops a theology of divine transcendence, in contrast to the older, more naïve idea that God was actually present in the temple.

More radical than Weinfeld is the recent thesis of B. M. Levinson, who has argued that Deuteronomy is so innovative that it repudiates all older religious traditions. In particular it aims to replace the book of the covenant. This is one attempt to explain the differences between the book of the covenant and Deuteronomy. We shall return to this point below.

**3.3. Deuteronomy in Old Testament Religion.** In the usual critical discourse about Deuteronomy it is assumed that the book reached its present form over a period of time. What we have said thus far, therefore, refers properly to a core of the book. Scholars see the development of Deuteronomy as a development toward an ever more elaborate covenantal theology. Since the work of L. Peritt (followed in its main aspects by, e.g., Nicholson 1986), it has been supposed that Deuteronomy was largely responsible for creating the OT's covenant theology. Further work attempted to discern levels of this development in the book by \*literary-critical means, and it is widely thought that a progression toward greater conditionality can be found. This view of Deuteronomy as an initiator of covenantal thought may be aligned with the idea that court scribes turned to Assyrian treaty models in order to express their own theological and political ideas.

#### 4. Deuteronomy as a Constitution for Israel.

In the section that follows we outline an alternative analysis to that described above, which will in turn lead us back to the question of setting in Israel's history.

**4.1. The Laws of Officials.** We saw earlier (see 2 above) that Deuteronomy presents a vision of Yahweh as the sovereign agent in all of Israel's life. This appears in the form of the law code, in which civil laws are framed by the fundamental command to adhere to Yahweh. It is implied also in the borrowing of the treaty form itself, mixed with the law-code form, to express the idea of Yahweh as Israel's overlord. So far these ideas could be embraced within the account offered above, in which the book promotes the royal reform of Josiah. However, Deuteronomy's program for the government of Israel in Deuteronomy 16:18—18:22, a part of its law

code that has no counterpart in the other codes, suggests a different setting.

At the heart of this section is the Deuteronomic law of the king (Deut 17:14-20), the only law concerning the king in the OT. In it Israel is permitted to appoint a king, with certain important conditions attached. A king of Israel must be a "brother" Israelite (Deut 17:15; this key term is lost in some translations, including NRSV, because of their inclusive-language policy). He must not make himself powerful by amassing a cavalry and especially not by entering an alliance with Egypt for the purpose (Deut 17:16). He must not surround himself with a harem, in the manner of other oriental kings, nor acquire a fortune for his own use (Deut 17:17). On the contrary, he must keep his own copy of the "this law," namely, Deuteronomy (Deut 17:18; this was the text on which the name of Deuteronomy was based, see 1 above). He must be a student of the law and not aspire to rise above his "brothers" in status (Deut 17:19-20).

This remarkable portrait looks like a direct repudiation of the style of kingship adopted by Solomon, in some ways the most successful king of Israel (1 Kings 10:26—11:3). Moreover, it runs counter to basic expectations regarding kingship throughout the ancient Near East, for in general the king was chief executive in both religious and political administration (Ahlström, 1-25). It may be an idealized portrait, for it was hardly matched by any king of Israel or Judah. What is important, however, is that its context among the other laws of officials (Deut 16:18—18:22) appears to sideline the king altogether. First, it is not the king but Yahweh who has power to give land (a royal prerogative in the ancient Near East; Deut 16:18; 17:14). Second, only the king is an unessential part of the picture in this section: \*judges must be appointed (Deut 16:18); priests are chosen by Yahweh (Deut 18:5); and likewise the \*prophet will be raised up by Yahweh to succeed Moses (Deut 18:15; this must be understood as a succession of prophets). Nor is this king a "son of God," as David is (Ps 2:7); that title is applied to Israel as a whole (Deut 1:31; 14:1; for fuller analysis along these lines, see B. Halpern).

**4.2. Sovereignty of the People Under Torah.** Israel, therefore, should be quite distinct from other ancient Near Eastern societies. It had, after all, escaped from a tyranny in Egypt, and Yahweh's intention in delivering his people

from that slavery was to liberate them into service to himself (Ex 5:1; Deut 26:8-11). In Israel power would not be concentrated in an individual but diversified in the other major offices (see Lohfink 1993). Moreover, the final political responsibility lay with the whole people. The people as such are addressed in many instances of the second-person singular in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 16:18 the people are responsible for appointing judges. It is the people too who *may* appoint a king (Deut 17:15). This sovereignty of the people in principle is effected in practice by representatives. However, these take their authority from the “assembly” of Israel. Israel as an assembly is encountered by Yahweh at Horeb, and the day of that meeting comes to be designated “the day of the assembly” (Deut 9:10). Future meetings of the people at the great annual worship events are then seen as realizations of that first encounter. These are typified by the gathering for the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh year, at which the “book of the law” is formally read (Deut 31:10-13). The authority of the assembly is therefore derivative. Real authority lies with Yahweh’s *tôrâ* itself.

The primacy of *tôrâ* (“law”) explains the role of Moses in the book, for it is he who mediates it by his preaching in the covenant renewal at Moab. His teaching responsibility is established in Deuteronomy 4:14, where it appears to entail an interpretive activity in relation to the Decalogue. The teaching of the *tôrâ* is carried on in Israel in a number of ways, not least by parents who teach their children (Deut 6:7-9), but it is symbolized especially by the prophet. Of the offices prescribed in Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22, only the prophet is expressly said to be Moses’ successor (Deut 18:15). The point of this is to ensure that the primacy of *tôrâ* is guarded in all of Israel’s subsequent life.

In Samuel’s time the elders of Israel take up the permission given in Deuteronomy 17:15 and demand that Samuel give them a king (1 Sam 8:4-9). The people are represented by “the elders of Israel,” and the authority of Yahweh and his *tôrâ* reposes in Samuel the prophet, who in that office functions as the successor of Moses.

**4.3. Deuteronomy’s Main Features in this Framework.** We can now return to some of the main features of Deuteronomy in light of the view of the book outlined above.

**4.3.1. *Tôrâ.*** Deuteronomy’s strong emphasis on the *tôrâ* itself, or the “words” of Yahweh, in-

deed the whole vocabulary of law (“the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances,” Deut 5:31), derives from this supremacy of *tôrâ* in Israel’s life. This recognition should govern our understanding of \**law* in Deuteronomy. Too often in interpretation law has been cast in a negative role, as something opposed to \**grace*. In Deuteronomy, however, it is a function of Yahweh’s gift of \**life* to Israel. The law imposes an obligation to maintain a society in which justice reigns. The basis of the laws in a love of justice is asserted in hortatory tones in Deuteronomy 16:20, and the pursuit of it is seen as the way to life. The administration of justice in Israel as an obligation of the people places it in the context of Deuteronomy’s radical vision for freedom in service to Yahweh and a society that protects the individual from the tyranny of powerful hierarchies.

**4.3.2. *Election, Brotherhood and Spiritual Religion.*** Israel as the chosen, holy people of Yahweh (Deut 7:6) may be read in terms of both its external and internal relations. Externally, it means that Israel is chosen, not other nations. The rejection of other nations is grounded in their wickedness (Deut 9:5b). However, the choice of Israel is dependent solely on Yahweh’s love for them, rather than either their great size (Deut 7:7) or their righteousness, for they too were wicked (Deut 9:4, 6-7). The theology of \**election* both explains Israel’s favored position with Yahweh and secures that it is due to his grace only.

In terms of Israel’s internal relations, the whole people of Israel are elect, “children of the LORD” (Deut 14:1), not just the king. In this sense election is consonant with the Deuteronomistic theme of the brotherhood of all Israelites. This is one of the most powerful expressions of the unity of the people before Yahweh and their freedom from tyranny. Deuteronomy consistently minimizes distinctions of rank between members of the community. It even downplays tribal distinctions (introduced in the context of the conquest of Transjordan [Deut 2–3], in the ceremony on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal [Deut 27] and in the blessing of Moses [Deut 33]). Strikingly, the term “brother” is often used in unexpected places. It is used of debtors and slaves (Deut 15:3, 7, 12) to assert their full membership in Israel and their fundamental right to the benefits of the Promised Land. It also emphatically includes women

within the designation “brother,” in a bold extension of this metaphor of equality (Deut 15:12). The purpose of these laws of release of debts and slaves is to restore those who have become disadvantaged to their position of full rights in the Promised Land, especially so that they can participate in the feasts. (It is no accident that the laws providing provisions for release come almost directly before the laws about the feasts.)

The concept of brotherhood is truer to the concerns of Deuteronomy than the general notion of ethical sophistication or enlightenment, which is sometimes attributed to an upward evolution in Israel’s religion. The vision here is, on the one hand, not so inclusive, since it distinguishes between Israelites and others in its provisions (e.g., Deut 15:3; 23:19-20) but, on the other hand, it goes much deeper, for it envisages a society that is quite distinct from every other known society in its world: based on the absolute respect for all its members, all equally enjoy the protection of the law of God.

It is in this context too that one must understand the religion of the “heart” in the book. It used to be held that Israel’s religion was in its early stages corporate and ritualistic and that it gradually progressed to a higher level, characterized by individualism in ethical responsibility and spirituality. It was thought to be the classical prophets, as well as Deuteronomy, who provided evidence of this development. The point rests on a fallacy. In Deuteronomy Israel is indeed called to “love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). This, however, is in the context of the speeches of Moses’ address to the people as a whole. The call to love Yahweh has analogies in the treaty language of the ancient world. In Deuteronomy it is one way of expressing the command that the people as a whole should be faithful to Yahweh rather than defect to other gods. It is the people in all the dimensions of life—in their pursuit of justice, rigor in implementing the laws and worship together—who are commanded to love Yahweh with all their heart, mind and soul.

**4.3.3. Land.** Deuteronomy’s setting on the border of the Promised Land, together with repeated allusions to “the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess,” makes \*land one of the dominant themes in the book. Deuteronomy contains delightful images of a plentiful land

(Deut 8:7-10; 11:9-11). This emphasis is often attributed to the increasingly precarious hold that the people had on their land in the late seventh century B.C. A conditional theology of land was developed as part of an explanation of its loss. However, Deuteronomy’s theology of land goes well beyond the simple idea that it is possessed as a reward for keeping the covenant. The insistence that Yahweh (not the king) is the giver of land is crucial, as is the fact that he gives it to the people as a whole. The theme of land cannot be separated from the idea of the unity and brotherhood of the people nor from their covenantal relationship with Yahweh. (C. J. H. Wright [1990] explores the relationship between these themes of brotherhood and land.)

We saw this connection between brotherhood and land in the preceding section (see 4.3.2 above) when we observed that the laws of release secured the participation of all Israelites in the annual feasts. Indeed, the land theme finds its highest expressions in the images of Israel gathered at the place of worship. Deuteronomy, more than other books, portrays worship as celebratory, involving all the people, with scant attention to priestly mediation or to the range of \*sacrifices. The people are seen feasting and rejoicing together (Deut 12:6-7, 12; 14:22-27; 16:14-15). The poor are included, and the offerings have an explicit connection with provision for them (Deut 14:28-29). These are pictures of a people enjoying the land they have been given, returning grateful worship to God for it and at the same time expressing their unity, compassion and justice (Lohfink 1995). Their eschatological vision is at the very heart of Deuteronomy.

**4.3.4. Covenant.** Descriptions of Deuteronomy’s \*covenant theology have often focused on different perceptions of the relation between law and grace in successive redactional layers. There are indeed complementary aspects of covenant in the book. The word *bērit* (“covenant”) is closely associated in some texts with the Decalogue (Deut 4:13; 5:2-3); in another it is in a hendiadys with *hesed* (“steadfast love,” Deut 7:9); the same context recalls the “oath” that Yahweh made to the patriarchs. These passages illustrate the richness of the idea in the book, embracing promise, command and the loyalty that gives covenant its qualitative content. Covenant in Deuteronomy cannot be reduced to a kind of tense dialogue between polar opposites

of law and grace (pace von Rad, who thought he could discern in the book “a declension from grace into law” [1996b, 91]). Such a concept is foreign to the book’s own discourse. Covenant consists instead in the vision of a full and vital relationship between Yahweh and Israel, in which his blessing is received with grateful rejoicing and issues in their commitment to a just society.

The most interesting aspect of Deuteronomy’s covenant theology lies in the structural relationship between the covenants of Horeb and Moab, which is a key to understanding the book. The succession of Horeb and Moab is a kind of fusing of horizons between generations. This in turn is part of Deuteronomy’s establishment of a solidarity of Israel. The classic case is Deuteronomy 5:2-3, in which the Moab generation are addressed rhetorically as if they were the Horeb generation. The concept of the Moab covenant, with its repeated use of the hortatory “today,” is to make the Horeb covenant perpetually alive in each generation of the people. In doing so it is no mere repetition of previously existing laws and commands. Rather, the teaching of Moses represents a continual updating and reapplication. The death of Moses outside the land has a positive function for interpretation in this connection (Olson). The people, in the land without Moses, will be responsible themselves for maintaining their life with Yahweh. The Moab covenant both establishes covenant renewal as an essential dimension of covenant itself and imposes an obligation of reinterpretation.

*4.3.5. The Chosen Place and the Divine Name.* Finally, Deuteronomy’s command to “seek the place that the LORD your God will choose” (Deut 12:5, etc.) should be related to this notion of perpetual covenant renewal. The refusal to name a particular place, far from being a mere device in keeping with the Mosaic setting, is consistent with a vision that includes the changing scenes of Israel’s life in all its generations. In this vision, no particular place is paramount or signals the end of Israel’s journey. Not only Jerusalem but also Shiloh in its time corresponds to the formula (Jer 7:12), as does even Gibeon (Josh 9:27). The “chosen place” is a counterpart in the ongoing life of Israel to the encounter at Horeb. As Israel once stood “before Yahweh” at that mountain (Deut 4:10), so it comes “before Yahweh” at his chosen place forevermore (Deut 12:7). The “chosen place,” therefore, in com-

mon with Moab, represents fresh Horeb-like encounters, now projected indefinitely into Israel’s future.

Indeed, Israel’s story in Deuteronomy is constructed as a journey. The journey proceeds from Egypt through wilderness (note the locations along the way [Deut 1:1]) to Moab, Shechem (Deut 27), the “chosen place,” exile and back again to land (Deut 30:1-10). Deuteronomy’s view of covenant is that at every stage of its life and at every place Israel should reenter the covenant afresh (“today”) as if for the first time (see further McConville and Millar).

The theology of the divine name is in close connection with that of place. It has nothing directly to do with the mode of the divine presence (pace Weinfeld, whose thesis about transcendence does not account for the repeated “before the LORD” in the “name” passages; see further Wilson). Rather, it is part of Deuteronomy’s insistence on the people’s dealing always with Yahweh rather than with other gods. (The command to seek the place that Yahweh will choose and put his name there is in express contrast to the command to destroy the “places” at which the other peoples worship their gods and to blot out their names from those places [Deut 12:2-4]). Since the “name theology” is not, after all, about the nature of Yahweh’s presence, it is mistaken to find in it a dispute about presence with the priestly literature. Deuteronomy does not describe the tent of meeting and its geography of holiness, because it has a different mission from the texts that explore that topic (Ex 25—31, primarily), namely, to demonstrate Yahweh’s sovereignty in every aspect of Israel’s life and to recall the people to their commitments on the broadest canvas.

### 5. Establishing a Setting for Deuteronomy.

In my view, the vision of Deuteronomy is for a society quite different from that which Josiah tried to create, mainly because it does not promote the idea of king as chief executive. Indeed, it proposes a structure of authority in Israel that is thoroughly at odds with the monarchic idea. This leads to the question: What is the best situation for the book? Deuteronomy could come from an early period, before the establishment of the monarchy at all; it could be a counterprogram to a monarchic reform, whether Josiah’s, Hezekiah’s or some other king’s; or it could be a postexilic reflection on the failure of the monar-

chy and an attempt to construct a better alternative. In favor of the last possibility, it is argued that the king law (Deut 17:14-20) is utopian and that it could never have been really implemented (Lohfink 1993). Others have believed, however, that the king law is ancient and that the laws governing the officials belonged to a premonarchic constitution of Israel (Halpern; see again 4.2 above on the king law in relation to 1 Sam 8). A decision on this cannot be made with certainty, and then only in the context of decisions on a whole range of issues. In my view, the affinities between Deuteronomy and the prophetic books play an important part here. The book's similarities to Hosea, for example, are well known (Weinfeld 1972, 366-70), especially their sharing of the themes of covenant, opposition to other gods and coolness about kings. The theological sequence of punishment and restoration by means of repentance (Deut 30:1-10) is shared with a number of prophetic books, as is the importance of the religion of the "heart" (the Deuteronomic text just quoted is close in substance to Jeremiah's new covenant [Jer 31:31-34]). These correspondences are often explained on the premise of Deuteronomic influence on the prophetic books as a scholarly activity in late Judah and the exile. But the ideas shared by Deuteronomy and the prophets can equally well be traced to an earlier time, when the basic issues of Israel's existence were being thrashed out.

#### 6. Deuteronomy in the Canon.

We can now make some further observations about the location of Deuteronomy in the OT and the Bible. In relation to the Pentateuch, we raised the question earlier (see 3.2 above) about how it relates to other law codes, especially the book of the covenant. The resemblances yet differences between Deuteronomy and the book of the covenant raise the question whether the relationship between them is one of displacement or development. B. M. Levinson took the former view, believing that Deuteronomy deliberately reuses elements of phraseology and vocabulary from the book of the covenant in completely new ways. However, this seems to underestimate the fact that both codes, together with the Holiness Code, stand in the canonical Pentateuch. What is interesting theologically is that codes that cannot easily be harmonized have been brought together into an entity that has an over-

arching rationale. We have referred to Deuteronomy as a kind of hermeneutic, and this juxtaposition of the different codes shows one function of the canon, namely, to invite further theological interpretation.

In relation to the Historical Books, the intriguing comparison lies in the presentation of kingship. Deuteronomy's preference for a decentralized administration of Israel sits in tension with the divine favor enjoyed by David and his dynasty in the narrative that follows. Here again there is an invitation to careful interpretation. The path to the dynastic promise to David involves contingencies in which the choices made by Israel are scrutinized critically (1 Sam 8—12). The story of David is a tribute to God's mercy and accommodation to the sinfulness of Israel. It is one possible story among other possible stories. The confrontation between Deuteronomy and the Historical Books sets the reality of human life, with its mix of good and bad choices, alongside the call to uncompromising faithfulness and perpetual renewal.

Deuteronomy has interfaces with other parts of the OT as well. In common with the wisdom literature, especially Proverbs, Deuteronomy knows of an order in life, both moral and natural. Yet both books know also that truth cannot be reduced to simple equations. Deuteronomy's theology of mercy for a people it knows to be already rebellious is a case in point. Yet people are still called to be trained in what is right because a joyful human experience depends on acknowledging that life is a gift from God.

We have already noticed affinities between Deuteronomy and prophecy. Superficially the difference between these blocks may be expressed as Deuteronomy setting out an agenda in advance, while the prophets recall a people who have strayed. Yet we have seen that Deuteronomy too already addresses the people as those who need to be rebuked and brought into a true path. The loudest echoes of prophecy come in Deuteronomy 32, which gives poetic expression to the Deuteronomic themes of fidelity to Yahweh (and the dangers of infidelity), of judgment and of the mercy of God coming through in the end. There are particular echoes of Isaiah 40—55.

Deuteronomy contributes to the Bible's theology of the salvation of the world. This is so despite the absence of an explicit theology of salvation for the nations, and indeed its com-

mand to show no mercy to the people of the Promised Land (Deut 7:1-5). The picture is relieved by Deuteronomy 2, in which Yahweh is the giver of land not only to Israel but to other nations as well (see also Amos 9:7). Furthermore, Israel's obedience to *tôrâ* is presented as a witness to the nations (Deut 4:6-8). Indeed, the eschatological pictures of Israel functioning as a covenant society may be seen as a paradigm of a nation living before God (see Millar, 147-60).

It remains to indicate some specific ways in which Deuteronomy relates to the NT. The central question is how its vision of a people under *tôrâ* might help to understand the nature of the people of God in Christ. First, it seems that Deuteronomy's idea of the people has informed the writings of Luke. In Luke 1—2, the church is conceived as "Israel," the people (*laos*) of God to whom Jesus has come. Acts 2—5 shows the apostles gathering the true "Israel" out of the Jews and only then beginning the Gentile mission. These two stages belong together: Israel is only complete when the Gentiles are brought in. In this context, Acts 15:14 alludes to Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18-19, as well as Exodus 19:5. Similarly, Acts 3:22-23 cites Moses' saying that Yahweh would raise up a prophet like him (Deut 18:15, 18-19). There are further Deuteronomistic echoes in the same passage (Acts 3:26).

Second, Paul, in Romans 10:1-5, expressly draws the reflection on *tôrâ* in Deuteronomy 30:11-14 into his christology. It seems that Paul's understanding of faith in Christ subsumes the keeping of the *tôrâ*, this having been accomplished by Christ. It follows that Paul's concept of salvation in this place is filled with content drawn from Deuteronomy. The keeping of *tôrâ* and faith in Christ are not opposites. On the contrary, Christ's fulfillment of the *tôrâ* confers validity on it.

Finally, the *tôrâ* in Deuteronomy as a vision for society in the midst of a godless world may be aligned with Jesus' prophetic opposition to social and political oppressions of his time. In announcing the kingdom of God, Jesus turned a searchlight on society as it was, not only Roman but also Jewish. He did so by exposing the failures of people to live by the covenantal standards of justice and righteousness. The Deuteronomistic resonances in Jesus' teaching consist in the refusal of both to identify their understanding of the kingdom of God with one particular institution, whether political or reli-

gious. This is the point of Deuteronomy's demand that the people constantly reinterpret *tôrâ* and eschew reposing absolute authority in any human agency. In doing so, it precludes the use of religious authority to justify any status quo. This is the lasting contribution of the book. It is capable of informing practical thinking about the organization of societies while maintaining a vision of the kingdom of God.

*See also* COVENANT; PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM, HISTORY OF.

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**DEVOTIONAL INTERPRETATION.** See HERMENEUTICS.

**DISEASE.** See LIFE, DISEASE AND DEATH.

### **DIVINATION, MAGIC**

Divination and magic were widely practiced in the ancient Near East and are vigorously condemned in the Pentateuch and throughout the Bible. The practices overlap in many important ways and have similarities with \*prophecy and religion, which makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between them. All involve interactions with supernatural beings or powers. While the Bible prohibits divination and magic, some permitted practices share common features. On the other hand, approved practices such as prophecy, prayer or the laying on of hands are denounced when practiced with a magical mindset. For these reasons, descriptions of the methods in-

volved are not enough; one must also consider the beliefs motivating the practices and the practitioners' worldview.

1. Background
2. Torah's Prohibition
3. The Methods of Divination and Magic
4. Theological Perspectives

#### **1. Background.**

Even while risking oversimplification, concise definitions of the practices of divination and magic are useful. Divination attempts to gain supernatural knowledge, usually either to understand why something has occurred or to predict the future. Magic attempts to use supernatural powers to influence people, events or other supernatural beings. Biblically approved practices emphasize divine initiative and divine prerogative. Magic and divination are human efforts to understand, control or manipulate the divine realm by methods believed to practically guarantee the desired results. These tend to be the satisfaction of immediate human needs, such as healing, protection, sustenance or knowledge.

The religions of the ancient Near East were infused with magic and divination. Illness, famine and military defeats were frequently believed to have spiritual origins. In both Mesopotamia and Egypt, skilled practitioners of magic were highly regarded. \*Moses and \*Aaron confronted these magicians when they sought to release the Hebrews from Egypt (Ex 7:11). \*Balaam was an esteemed diviner whom Balak, king of Moab, attempted to use to curse Israel (Num 22:4-7). These cultures approved certain forms of magic by designated practitioners but outlawed other practices, often labeled witchcraft or sorcery. For example, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (c. 1868-1728 B.C.) punished sorcery with the death penalty. Witches were viewed as being in league with demons and causing bad things to happen. The approved magicians would use magic to counteract these influences and act as diviners of useful information.

God placed Israel in the midst of cultures saturated with divination, magic and witchcraft. He desired that the Israelites come to him for revelation and insight. In the midst of uncertainty, they were to rely on his trustworthiness and provisions, not attempt to manipulate their circumstances. Divination and magic were strongly

denounced because they drew people away from God and dependence on him.

## 2. Torah's Prohibition.

The Pentateuch contains the most extensive biblical prohibition of divination and magic:

Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God. The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so. (Deut 18:10-14 NIV).

Elsewhere the Israelites were prohibited from pursuing divination and sorcery (Lev 19:26) or consulting mediums and spiritists (Lev 19:31). A sorceress was to be put to death (Ex 22:18), as were mediums and spiritists (Lev 20:27). In contrast, instances of divination and magic are recorded in the Pentateuch without condemnation. Laban is said to have used divination to discover that God had blessed him through his nephew Jacob (Gen 30:27). Jacob used what some view as a magical practice to influence his flock's breeding (Gen 30:37-43). \*Joseph gave his brothers the impression that he used his silver cup for divination (Gen 44:5, 15).

Each of these passages, however, raises difficulties in translation. Laban's statement traditionally translated "I have divined" can also be rendered "I have grown rich." G. J. Wenham prefers this translation, noting it unlikely that Laban would use divination while prospering. Rather than practicing magic, Jacob may have used his years of shepherding experience cunningly to outwit Laban by manipulating normal breeding patterns to produce stronger animals for himself. Joseph did not state that he used his silver cup for divination, which is part of the ruse to determine if his brothers had repented of their crime against him. Regardless of these problems, the lack of explicit condemnations does not necessarily mean the texts support these practices, nor does it in any way contradict the clear prohibitions against divination and magic.

## 3. The Methods of Divination and Magic.

**3.1. Divination.** Divination and magic involve a number of practices described by various names. The supernatural information obtained by divinatory (or mantic) methods can come from natural phenomena or altered states of consciousness. The supernatural signs are called omens or portents and are "read" to determine their meaning. The ancient Near Eastern cultures prodigiously recorded omens and their interpretations. The omen interpreters were called seers or soothsayers.

Numerous natural phenomena were interpreted as omens. Underlying these practices was the belief that the universe was interconnected and that the parts reflected the whole. For example, in astrology the positions of the stars and planets are believed to reflect the divine will. Understanding how the parts relate to the whole thereby gives insight into the divine will and the future. Magical methods then allow humans to influence those events.

Astrology was practiced throughout the ancient Near East but was prohibited in Israel (Is 47:13). It never became popular, like other forms of divination, perhaps because of Israel's belief in God's sovereignty over the stars (Gen 1) and the prohibition of sun, moon or star worship (Deut 4:19). Just as the stars were used to discern the divine will, so too were many smaller objects. Livers and entrails were believed to reflect divine dispositions when an animal was sacrificed and were examined in a practice called hepatoscopy (Ezek 21:21). Clay models of livers with inscriptions have been found in the regions occupied by ancient Israel. Augury finds omens in the movements of animals, especially the flight paths of birds. This was usually practiced on high ground and may have been why Balaam divined from a barren height (Num 23:3). Hydromancy used the movement of oil drops on water in a cup to give omens. This may have been the method referred to by Joseph (Gen 44:5, 15). A Mesopotamian handbook for reading these omens dates from the nineteenth to seventeenth centuries B.C., around the time of Joseph. Rhabdomancy (or belomancy) involved throwing sticks or arrows into the air and reading omens from their patterns when they landed (Ezek 21:21). Throughout the ancient Near East trees were believed to represent life, which then endowed wood with special powers leading to rhabdomancy and divining rods (Hos 4:12).

Many other objects were also used for divination.

Casting lots (or cleromancy) was another divinatory practice common in the ancient Near East. This method was sanctioned in Israel with the Urim and Thummim (Ex 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8). Their precise nature is not known, but they were small objects held in a pocket on the high priest's breastplate (*see* Priestly Clothing). The priest threw them to receive guidance from God. Although similar to rhabdomancy and other lot-casting methods, the Urim and Thummim were viewed differently because they were given by God and used to determine his will (Prov 16:33).

Divination by ordeal was another method approved for particular situations. People suspected of crimes would undergo some process that would normally injure them. Their innocence would be divinely revealed if they survived unharmed. The Pentateuch called for this practice when a woman was suspected of adultery (Num 5:11-28). Other ancient Near Eastern cultures used similar practices, but the similarities are procedural. The other cultures believed guilt magically weakened people, which the ordeal would reveal mechanistically. Israel, it seems, believed that God used the procedure (harmless in and of itself) to reveal whether the woman was guilty or innocent. Thus, similar practices are viewed completely differently depending on the mindset and beliefs of the practitioners.

The prohibition of infant sacrifice that begins the Deuteronomic condemnation of divination may refer to another form of ordeal divination (Deut 18:10). Why infant sacrifice is listed with divination is unclear, unless they are similarly detestable to God (Deut 12:31). The Hebrew terms used literally mean to make a child pass through fire. This may have been another method of divination by ordeal whereby the effects on the child would be taken as omens. However, little is known about this ritual, except that as part of worshiping the god Molech it was a capital offense in Israel (Lev 20:1-5).

A second category of divination involves divine revelations during certain experiences, including visions, trances and dreams. The distinction between these methods and accepted means of prophecy and revelation had more to do with the message's source than the practice's

methodology. Thus, visions and dreams were used by God to communicate with his people (Num 12:6). God sometimes gave the interpretation of symbolic dreams, as with Joseph (Gen 40—41). In contrast, a dream leading people away from God was to be rejected and the dreamer put to death (Deut 13:1-5). Prophets from other ancient Near Eastern cultures used many methods to induce altered states of consciousness for divination. In contrast the biblical record shows God revealing his messages to prophets and others in various ways, sometimes when the recipients least expected revelation. The appropriate locus of control remains with God, not humans.

Mediums, also called spiritists, soothsayers or oracles, communicate directly with spiritual beings. Communication with the spirits of the dead is a particular form of mediumship called necromancy. Saul's use of the medium of Endor to contact Samuel's deceased spirit affirms that necromancy can bring contact with spiritual beings, even while it reinforces the illegitimacy of this practice (1 Sam 28:7-19).

**3.2. Magic.** Magic cannot be completely distinguished from divination, but the emphasis shifts from understanding supernatural phenomena to using supernatural powers. Magic is often difficult to distinguish from religion, with magic usually characterized as deviant, antisocial and sometimes illegal. Such is the view of the Pentateuch (Ex 22:18; Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10). Magic is often synonymous with sorcery and witchcraft. If a distinction is made, sorcery is magic learned from master practitioners, while witchcraft deals with innate supernatural powers.

As with divination, magic includes both materialistic methods using the alleged interconnectedness of the universe and direct contact with spiritual beings. Within the first approach, sympathetic magic uses the similarity of objects to cause desired effects. Some herbs look similar to parts of the human body and thereby gain magical reputations for healing those body parts. Thus, mandrakes have fleshy, forked roots that resemble the lower parts of the human body and were used to promote fertility (Gen 30:14-17), though the text shows their ineffectiveness (Wenham, 247). However, this passage counters the magical use of herbs, since Leah gives up the mandrakes and becomes pregnant, while Rachel uses the mandrakes and remains barren

for the time being.

In contagious magic, objects that have been connected or in close proximity are believed to influence one another, such as how psychics claim to locate missing persons once they obtain something belonging to the person. Malevolent magicians cast spells on people via a piece of their hair or clothing. To counteract this type of magic, special protective objects can be worn (charms or amulets), incantations cited or rituals performed. The third commandment against taking the name of the Lord in vain may partly involve a reaction against its use as a magical incantation (Ex 20:7; Deut 5:11). These practices are believed to work once correctly performed, unlike prayer, where the response depends on God's will.

Other magic involved direct contact with spiritual beings, enlisting their help in achieving certain goals. Hence magic is frequently connected with evil spirits and demons. These practices easily degenerated into idolatry and sacrificing to demons, which is strongly condemned (Deut 32:17). The teraphim were household idols sometimes worshiped in the cultures surrounding Israel (Gen 31:19) and were also used in magic and divination (Judg 17:5; Zech 10:2; *see* Idols, Idolatry, Teraphim, Household Gods).

#### 4. Theological Perspectives.

Numerous reasons are given for these many prohibitions. Divination and magic were integral to the religions of the nations surrounding Israel (Deut 18:9). They are wrong in and of themselves, thus leading to God's punishment of these nations (Deut 18:12). If Israel adopted these practices, they would become like those nations instead of remaining blameless before God (Deut 18:13). These practices entail rebellion against God (1 Sam 15:23), so God will turn his face from those who practice them and cut them off from the community (Lev 20:6). Divination and magic wreak havoc with one's relationship with God because at their root they are rival religions.

God acknowledged the human desire for spiritual knowledge and foresight. Immediately after prohibiting divination and magic, God promised to provide revelation, but at his initiative through his \*prophets (Deut 18:15-20). These prophets were to be tested by examining the accuracy of their predictions (Deut 18:21-22).

They were to be trusted by the reliability of their message compared to God's previous revelation, not because they worked wonders (Deut 13:1-5).

Uncritical acceptance of messages because they were received in a supernatural experience is unwise. Problems also occur when people demand special knowledge or answers from God. There are "secret things" that belong to God (Deut 29:29). Divination and magic are attempts to gain knowledge and control that God declares are not needed. When things do not make sense or the future looks anxiously uncertain, divination and magic are tempting rivals to trusting God. Even the means God gives people to legitimately communicate with and worship him can be used in magical ways (Ps 51:16-17; Acts 8:18-24). The distinction between illegitimate magic and true worship does not arise solely from the external manifestations of the practices. The state of a person's heart, and who or what is being pursued, are vitally important.

Divination and magic are dangerous because they bring people into contact with evil spiritual beings and forces. The Pentateuch demonstrates that these powers can be harnessed. But the power of God is always superior. Joseph interpreted \*Pharaoh's dreams when the Egyptian magicians could not (Gen 41; cf. Dan 2; 4). The Egyptian magicians and sorcerers changed staffs into snakes and brought plagues of blood and frogs (Ex 7:10-8:15), but they could not bring about (or counteract) the later signs and wonders that God brought through Moses. Balaam the diviner could not curse those whom God had not cursed (Num 23:8). These false gods and magical powers offer short-term benefits, but their abilities fade in comparison to God's power and provision (Deut 32:37-39). Israel's later history shows the tragedy of people turning to divination and magic and being led away from God into falsehood and evil (Is 47:13-15; Jer 14:14; Ezek 22:28-29). The choice is between deepening one's dependence on God or using impersonal, instrumental approaches in attempting to gain control of one's life.

*See also* BALAAM; BLESSINGS AND CURSES; DREAMS; IDOLS, IDOLATRY, TERAPHIM, HOUSEHOLD GODS; PROPHETS, PROPHECY; RELIGION.

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**DIVINE NAMES.** See GOD, NAMES OF.

**DIVINE PROMISES.** See PROMISES, DIVINE.

**DIVORCE.** See SEXUALITY, SEXUAL ETHICS.

**DOCTRINAL INTERPRETATION.** See HERMENEUTICS.

**DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS.** See AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH; PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM, HISTORY OF; SOURCE CRITICISM.

**DOMINION.** See BLESSINGS AND CURSES.

**DONKEYS.** See TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION; ZOOLOGY.

**DOUBLETS.** See HISTORICAL CRITICISM.

## DREAMS

The astute reader of the Pentateuch notices that relevant passages seem to vary on the subject of dreams as a legitimate means of divine revelation. One also notes that this approval and disapproval of dreams runs along genre lines. Narrative passages set in foreign contexts cautiously present dreams as valid revelatory experiences. Legal texts that promote the superiority of Mosaic \*prophets as the means of divine revelation forbid trusting dreams as revelatory. People in Mesopotamia, the putative patriarchal patrimony, left evidence of their struggles to un-

derstand the import of nocturnal visions. In its treatment of dreams the Bible fits within this broader ancient context.

1. Dreams and Their Interpretation in Mesopotamia
2. Dreams and Their Interpretation in the Pentateuch

### 1. Dreams and Their Interpretation in Mesopotamia.

According to Mesopotamian texts, deities communicated with humans by direct means, such as dreams, or by indirect means, such as omens. Ample cuneiform sources document both types of revelation.

For almost fifty years, scholars investigating dreams and visions in the Bible have looked to A. L. Oppenheim's seminal 1956 volume *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book*. Oppenheim noted three types of dreams: (1) auditory message dreams; (2) symbolic message dreams needing the services of a professional interpreter; and (3) psychological status dreams requiring use of a dream book. He believed that divination by dreams was a marginal component of Mesopotamian society.

With the aging of Oppenheim's manual and the publication of numerous texts in the interim, students of oneiromancy have desired an updated study on this subject. S. A. L. Butler's recent *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams and Dream Rituals* provides such a reexamination of Mesopotamian oneirology. In it she considers how the Mesopotamians regarded dreams and their rituals. Noting the enduring human fascination with dreams, Butler asserts,

For centuries Man has been convinced that his dreams (however weird) contain a message, which often requires interpretation; hence the existence of Dream-Books and, in recent times, psychoanalysts. People are reluctant to accept that anything so personal and vivid as a dream might be insignificant. Ancient and "primitive" peoples believed that dreams were divine communications, while psychoanalysts claim that our subconscious is trying to express itself while the conscious censor is dormant. Even if one derides the idea that dreams are applicable to reality, these subjective experiences affect one's mood, and nightmares are impossible to ignore. (Butler, 2)

This presumption of meaning underlies both ancient and modern attempts to grapple with these nocturnal illusions.

Nearly all genres of the vast array of Mesopotamian texts refer to dreams and their illumination. Within these texts, one recognizes “a fundamental separation between the significant/true dreams originating from the gods, presenting a message concerning the future (prognostic dreams); and the irrational/false dreams, either nightmares sent by hostile deities or evil powers, or merely pleasant dreams, neither having any mantic import (symptomatic dreams)” (Butler, 6). In actual human experience, however, the practice of oneiromancy would be limited naturally, since a person would no doubt see more symptomatic than prognostic dreams over the course of a lifetime (Butler, 6).

## 2. Dreams and Their Interpretation in the Pentateuch.

Dreams structure accounts by threading together disparate narrative elements. J. M. Husser writes:

The Joseph story is the best biblical example of a story in which dreams have this narrative function: the short story runs from a crisis towards its resolution, even though the latter is announced from the start in Joseph’s dreams (Gen. 37), which also play a part in the origin of the crisis. As regards the epic genre, Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Gen. 28), set as it is against his struggle by night at the ford across the Jabbok (Gen. 32), has a similar structuring function in the Jacob cycle. These two events parallel each other symmetrically at two significant points in the cycle, and make the patriarch’s coming and going into a veritable initiatory journey, extending from a promise to its realization, from the initial conflict between the twins to the exchange of a blessing, hard won. (Husser, 103)

### 2.1. Positive Assessment.

**2.1.1. Abimelech’s Acquisition.** According to Genesis 20, when \*Abraham journeyed toward the Negev, King \*Abimelech of Gerar acquired \*Sarah for his harem. In a curt dream God scolded Abimelech for this careless action. God declared, “You are about to die because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a married woman.” Before reporting Abimelech’s assertion of Abraham’s complicity in this event, the writer emphasizes that Abimelech had not

approached Sarah (Gen 20:4). In fact, Genesis 20:6 notes that God himself had prevented Abimelech from touching Sarah. This pair of sentences reveals the importance of the dream for the Abraham and Sarah story. God had announced that Sarah and Abraham would have a son within the year (Gen 18:10), but they chortled at the chance of this happening. Genesis 21 records that Sarah bore a son. Abimelech’s acquisition of Sarah stands between these two reports. The dream significantly results in Sarah’s salvation, but the notices about Sarah’s stay in the harem are the key to this narrative. Though Sarah was available, Abimelech did not avail himself of her. The only man who approached Sarah in the interim between God’s \*promise and God’s provision of the heir was Abraham. In contrast, after Abraham received the initial promise of family, fame and favor, he went to \*Egypt. In circumstances almost identical to the Abimelech events, \*Pharaoh acquired and then freed Sarah. Significantly, however, the author says nothing about Pharaoh foregoing his right to have Sarah (Gen 12:10-20). The general promise had been given, but the particular moment for the arrival of the son was delayed. By the time of the sojourn in Gerar, \*Isaac was on the way. In this way the author establishes that Isaac’s paternity was legitimate.

**2.1.2. Jacob’s Ladder.** Genesis 28:10-17 reports \*Jacob’s dream after he left Beer-sheba to go to \*Haran. Along the way, he camped in Luz/Bethel, where he dreamed of a ladder extending to heaven, with messengers of God ascending and descending on it. This “ladder,” a term unique to this biblical passage, may relate to a Mesopotamian word (*simmiltu*) for steps, ladders or siege ladders. Given the link between heaven and earth and the frequent associations between the Bible and \*Babel, Jacob’s “ladder” may connect to the stepped towers, or ziggurats, of Mesopotamia.

Additionally, within this broader ancient Near Eastern context, some have supposed that Jacob’s dream represents an incubation type of dream experience, since he slept and offered a sacrifice, suggesting that he helped to hatch this vision by magical means. This supposition is misguided, however, because it appears that the vision came without encouragement by Jacob.

Some provocative parts of the dream are superfluous to the point of this event for the Jacob story. This seems to subvert the idea that dreams

alone were revelatory events. The angels on the steps were not directly involved in the announcement, and Jacob did not need to seek out an oneiromancer. The dream was an auditory message dream with significant visual appeal. Yahweh, without resorting to any expert, identified himself as the God of Jacob's ancestors and promised that Jacob's offspring would eventually inherit the foreign \*land where this dream was occurring. God also promised that Jacob's offspring would become both numerous and a \*blessing to others. Finally, God vowed to be present with Jacob, protecting him wherever he might go and returning him to this land of promise. The prognostic dream message was sealed, not with an image or an act but with the solemn phrase "I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen 28:15).

*2.1.3. Jacob's Leaving.* Genesis 31:10-13 reports a chimerical conversation between Jacob and a divine messenger. The messenger provided a means by which Jacob, whom Laban had cheated, could recoup some of his losses. This dream connects Jacob's return to Palestine and the staircase dream he had at Luz/Bethel. The same God contacted him in each instance.

*2.1.4. Joseph's Story.* Six visual-symbolic, prognostic dreams occur in the \*Joseph cycle. Symbolic dreams (such as Gen 37—41) "remain the closest to our common experience of dreams, and illustrate best the positive attitude of biblical authors towards them. In Gen. 41:25, the divine origin of this kind of dream is clearly affirmed, but if these authors allow for the possibility that such dreams are sent by God, they also underline the essential role of the interpreter, without whom the divine message would remain enigmatic" (Husser, 91). Two dreams (Gen 37) depicted Joseph's promotion over his brothers. Also, Pharaoh's butler and baker each dreamed (Gen 40) about how Pharaoh would lift their heads. Finally, Pharaoh had two dreams regarding the future of Egypt. Thus, these symbolic dreams occur in three pairs. This doubling of messages may have enabled the mantic to decode the message more easily (Gnuse, 34).

All six dreams accurately portray the future and are set in a foreign venue. The last four dreams happened in Egypt. The first two occurred in Palestine, the land that was almost, but not quite, Israel's home. The particular events portended seem secondary to the larger narrative intent, which is to outline the eventual rise

of Joseph, the quintessential dream analyst, to a position from which he would preserve his family. Joseph's emerging facility in unscrambling dreams demonstrated his acumen to rule Egypt by divine wisdom and by Yahweh's blessing.

*2.1.4.1. Joseph's Dreams.* A triad of notices regarding Jacob's family situation introduces Joseph's dreams. First, teenaged Joseph returned from the flock with a bad report about his brothers (Gen 37:2). Second, Jacob favored Joseph over his brothers and made his preference public with a special garment (Gen 37:3). Finally, the family fractured. In light of these slights, the brothers hated Joseph (Gen 37:4).

In the context of this disheartening background, the naive and perhaps wily Joseph detailed his dreams. First, Joseph summoned his brothers to describe how a group of sheaves representing the family members bowed down to a sheaf representing him (Gen 37:5-8). With Joseph's disclosure, predictably his brothers' hatred for him was sealed. In the second case (Gen 37:9-11), Joseph envisioned celestial bodies bowing down to him, a dream that caused even Jacob to rebuke him. Understandably, Joseph's relationship with his brothers deteriorated further.

According to both stories, Joseph would better his brothers. The denouement of these prognostic dreams occurred when Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to obtain food and fell down before their brother in confusion and contrition (Gen 42:6; 43:26, 28).

We note that these first two dreams lack a precise interpretation, contrasting with the structure of the remaining four dreams in the Joseph story. Husser explains:

The absence of an interpretative phase in the economy of the dream account fulfils a precise narrative function here: to underline the naivety of the youngest brother as he confronts his kin. Scandalized, they understand only too well what his dreams announce. Similarly and inversely, the emphasis placed on the interpretative phase in the narratives of Genesis 40—41 has an equally precise function: to highlight the fact that dream interpretation is a special charism, a prophetic act inspired by God, by contrast with the methods of diviners. The presence or absence of interpretation, therefore, is not just a question of literary form, a form that may be more or less complete, but

relates directly, in these precise cases, to the significance and function of the dream narratives. (Husser, 113)

**2.1.4.2. *Butler and Baker.*** The prognostic dreams of the cupbearer and baker demonstrated that Joseph's gift of oneiromancy was not limited by geography. The God who gave him interpretations was able to reveal meanings to him in prison in a completely foreign land. In fact, Joseph was able to interpret the dreams even though the dreamers had been unable to find a native interpreter (Gen 40:8). The cupbearer's dream of the vine, grape clusters and cup was a sign that Pharaoh would lift the cupbearer's head in honor within three days (Gen 40:9-15).

Seeing the good news his cellmate had received, the baker shared his vision of bread and birds. Joseph relayed that Pharaoh would lift the baker's head in horror (Gen 40:16-19). These two dreams and their interpretations brought Joseph near to Pharaoh's household, the place where he would demonstrate one last time his ability to understand what God was saying through nocturnal messages. This prison story demonstrates Joseph to be superior to those in close contact with the Egyptian throne.

**2.1.4.3. *Pharaoh Frets.*** After Joseph languished in prison for two years, Pharaoh saw a pair of symbolic, prognostic dreams. Both dreams are reported without any intervening interpretation. First, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile and witnessed seven thin cows devour seven fat cows (Gen 41:1-4). Second, Pharaoh dreamed that seven thin ears of grain swallowed up seven plump ears of grain (Gen 41:5-8). The narrative delays the interpretation of the dreams until Joseph is recalled from prison. The fulfillment of the dream's intent is seen in the need for Joseph's care of the land during the years of famine. Genesis 41:15 is the key verse in the narrative. Pharaoh related to Joseph that he had had dreams that no one could interpret. Joseph, however, had gained a reputation as a dream interpreter and was presented as superior even to Pharaoh. But though Joseph had knowledge superior to Pharaoh, he could not supplant Pharaoh. Becoming Pharaoh-like, second in command, a virtual king, still he could not replace the Egyptian king (Gen 44:18).

**2.2. *Negative Assessment: Deuteronomy.*** Not surprisingly, given its anti-other perspective, the book of Deuteronomy denigrates dreams, some-

thing the other nations might use, in favor of Mosaic prophecy. After establishing that the worship of the nations should be destroyed to prevent apostasy (Deut 12), Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (MT 13:2-6) demands that the people should be ever vigilant against the reestablishment of these spiritual enticements in the future. A prophet or dream-diviner who suggested that Israel follow a god other than Yahweh, even if this person was skilled in his or her craft, was to be ignored. Because Yahweh might be testing the loyalty of his people, the instigator was to be killed for urging disloyalty to Yahweh. Though it is not clear from the context whether the dreamer and the false prophet were legitimate functionaries in the past who had become corrupt or were new arrivals on the religious landscape, they are certainly rejected by Deuteronomy. Their crime was inciting disloyalty against Yahweh. The writer does not hint that the techniques of these persons could not work but rather that they had the wrong message for the people.

Deuteronomy also describes the proper kind of messenger for Israel, prophets in the Mosaic mold (Deut 18:9-22). The book, however, does remain silent regarding dream-diviners. Perhaps the very personal nature of dreams renders them suspect in a society in which prophecy for the community took precedence. By means of a process of desacralization, dreams were finally reduced to "natural phenomena belonging to the realm of deceptive illusion" (Husser, 95). By virtually ignoring them, it appears that Deuteronomy considered dreams as symptomatic and personal but not as the prognostic and public channels of divine conversation recorded in Genesis. Since the dream carried no real message from the outside, by definition the dream could not be revelatory. According to Deuteronomy, when God wanted to speak to his people, he used not dreams but prophets.

*See also* DIVINATION, MAGIC; PROPHETS, PROPHECY; THEOPHANY.

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**DUST.** *See* CREATION.

**DWELLING, DIVINE.** *See* TABERNACLE.