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Book Reviews
Editorial: Reading Deuteronomy for God’s People Today

Stephen J. Wellum

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It is difficult to overstate the importance of Deuteronomy in Scripture and God’s unfolding redemptive plan. Positioned strategically at the end of the Pentateuch, concluding the incredible life and ministry of Moses, renewing and expanding the Sinai covenant for the post-wilderness generation, Deuteronomy serves as the covenant instruction (torah) for a new generation poised to enter the Promised Land. Finally, after thirty-eight years of delay and the death of the previous generation due to their rebellion in the wilderness, God’s patriarchal promises are now finally being fulfilled as the people of Israel are on the verge of entering the land. But Deuteronomy gives us more than a mere recounting of this unique episode in Israel’s history. Through Moses’ instruction, Deuteronomy also describes the future of the nation, which later biblical authors use as a template to interpret Israel’s history and to hold out hope for a new and better covenant (see e.g., Deut 29-30). Deuteronomy, rightly understood and placed in its location in redemptive-history, is far more than an ancient history book of Israel. In truth, it is a Gospel book which describes beautifully the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people, the deep and abiding problem of the human heart, and the only remedy for uncircumcised hearts, namely, God’s sovereign and gracious action to redeem by the provision of a greater and better Israel, the true obedient Son and servant King. Let us highlight each of these areas in turn.
First, Deuteronomy beautifully describes the covenant relationship between God and his people. There is no greater privilege for humans than to know, love, obey, and serve our glorious covenant Lord. For God to say to any people: “I am your God and you are my people” is the very reason and purpose for our existence as God's image-bearers. In the storyline of Scripture, Israel was privileged to be in this position, not because they were better or more numerous than the nations (Deut 7:7), but solely due to God's sovereign choice and his covenant loyalty to Abraham (Ex 19:4; Deut 7:8). In fact, given sin's entrance into the world, Israel's role in the world was not only to be the nation by which Messiah would come and reverse the effects of sin and death (see Gen 3:15; 12:1-3); they were also called to live as Adam and the entire human race was supposed to live—as obedient sons (Ex 4:22-23) and servant kings—in relationship to the Lord and the entire creation. Israel was to fulfill the role of Adam by living as a “kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:5-6), to serve as God's son and representative and thus display to this poor, fallen world what it means to be truly human.

In this regard, Deuteronomy's exposition of the law-covenant must be viewed as wholly positive: torah from the living covenant Lord who speaks and relates to his people on how to live life in the land and know God's blessing in their lives and in all of their relationships. In all of this instruction, Israel had the supreme privilege of learning the fear of the Lord (Deut 31:12). Even though Christians are not under the law-covenant as a covenant, we need to be reminded of the incredible privilege it is to be God's covenant people and take seriously Paul's admonition that all Scripture, including Deuteronomy, is for our instruction and admonition (2 Tim 3:15-17). No doubt, we have to apply carefully the old covenant to us in light of Christ, yet we must never forget that it is applicable to us as Scripture and thus we need to learn anew what God is teaching us today through this wonderful book.

Second, Moses in Deuteronomy does not “pull any punches” regarding the deep problem of the human heart. After all, he is speaking to the generation whose parents died in the wilderness due to their disobedience and rebellion (Deut 1-4). Now he addresses their children and commands obedience in them (Deut 4). Moses lays out the blessings which will result (Deut 28:1-14), but he also warms them that disobedience will result in judgment and exile from the land (Deut 28:15-68), which in fact, he predicts will occur. Even though the old and new generation have received innumerable blessings from the Lord, their hearts are hard. In fact, one of the purposed effects of giving the law to Israel was to reveal and intensify sin—to show
us clearly that apart from God’s grace and provision, we cannot change our hearts (Deut 30:6; cf. Rom 5:20-21; 7:13)—a lesson we must never forget.

Third, even though Moses predicts the future rebellion of this new generation and their children, he holds out hope, not due to them, but solely due to God’s unilateral action to redeem. Israel is called to be an obedient son, yet they have failed and will fail. What is needed is for the covenant Lord unilaterally to act and circumcise their hearts (Deut 30:6). By so doing they will become faithful sons, which wonderfully and gloriously, God promises to do in the future. In this way, Moses not only describes and predicts the future history of Israel, he also anticipates God’s future redemptive work by which he will circumcise the hearts of the entire community, thus creating a people who will be wholly devoted to him from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue. Ultimately, of course, this is what the OT prophets and the NT announces occurs in the dawning of a new covenant secured by the life, death, and resurrection of God’s own obedient Son (Rom 3:21-31; cf. Heb 2:5-18; 7-10).

In all these ways, Deuteronomy is a Gospel book and required reading for God’s people today. It is my prayer that the various articles and contributions in this issue of SBJT will lead us to a greater understanding of Deuteronomy and a renewed appreciation for our Lord Jesus Christ, the one whom the message of Deuteronomy ultimately points.
“[A] scholarly achievement that is unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future. . . . Every serious student of Acts owes it to herself or himself to carefully work through this significant contribution to scholarship.”—David E. Aune, University of Notre Dame

“Scholars of the New Testament, theologians, and classicists, but also laypersons, will want to consult and will benefit from Keener’s erudite, impressive work.”—Andreas Bendlin, University of Toronto

“Keener’s massive commentary on the book of Acts is a gold mine of valuable information. His socio-historical reading of the text demonstrates the crucial importance of interpreting Acts in the context of Greek and Roman historiography.”—Samuel Byrskog, Lund University
Has Any People Heard the Voice of God Speaking ... And Survived?

R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. serves as the ninth president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Joseph Emerson Brown Professor of Christian Theology. Dr. Mohler is the author of numerous books and articles, including *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Moody, 2008), *Words from the Fire: Hearing the Voice of God in the Ten Commandments* (Moody, 2009), *Culture Shift: The Battle for the Moral Heart of America* (Multnomah, 2011). In addition to his presidential duties, Dr. Mohler hosts two programs: “The Briefing,” a daily analysis of news and events from a Christian worldview; and “Thinking in Public,” a series of conversations with the day’s leading thinkers, and he also writes a popular blog and a regular commentary on moral, cultural and theological issues. All of these can be accessed through his website, www.AlbertMohler.com.

One of the great touchstone passages in all Scripture appears in Deuteronomy 4. Verse 33 contains a striking question—a rhetorical question, but a very real question: “Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?”

Just like the Israelites at Mount Sinai, we are summoned together as God’s people—to speak of God, to sing about God, to worship God. It is no small thing to dare to speak of God. We actually claim that we teach what God has taught.

There ought to be a bit of humility in recognizing the audacity of that claim. It would be a baseless claim—an incredible claim—if God has not spoken from the midst of the fire and allowed us to hear. On what authority do we speak? Is it the authority of the churches of our respective denominations? Such authority is no small thing, but is still...
not enough. To dare speak of these things, we invoke the authority of God, for he alone could reveal himself, speak these things, and tell us what we must know.

The great philosophical crisis of our day is an epistemological crisis—a crisis of knowing and a crisis of knowledge. It is a challenge for the Christian thinker, the Christian theologian, the Christian minister, the Christian preacher, and the Christian institution—the whole of Christianity. The crisis can be summed up in one question: How do we know and teach what we claim to know and teach?

Francis Schaeffer well understood the epistemological crisis and accordingly titled his most significant contribution, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. I first read this classic as a sixteen-year-old. To be honest, I think the greatest assurance I got from the book at that age was that some really smart person believed in God. But even at that age, lacking the vocabulary to understand what I was experiencing, I understood the epistemological crisis. How do we know anything? How would we speak of anything? Furthermore, how do we jump from the empirical knowledge of what we can observe to speaking of God whom we cannot see?

**A New Leap in Audacity**

The claim to know anything, certainly in terms of empirical and scientific observation and study and phenomenology, is audacious enough. But then to speak of the “immortal invisible God only wise”—that is a new leap of audacity altogether.

Dr. Schaeffer understood the epistemological problem that is silence—the claim and the implication that we can know nothing. And he understood that there is only one epistemological answer—revelation. Christianity depends upon a Christian epistemology, a Christian theory of knowledge based in revelation alone. There is no greater challenge than this—to make certain we know on what authority we speak, and know, and teach.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses reminds Israel of the authority by which they were to live. They heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived. This great sermon concludes the introductory section to Deuteronomy, and stands as a unit all to itself. The sermon begins and ends with a parallel structure, and in the midst is itself a large component of a suzerainty treaty. Such a treaty was a common form in the ancient Near Eastern world, giving the conqueror the right to set down the terms of the treaty. In the book of Deuteronomy, the conqueror is none other
than the Lord God Jehovah and the conquered is none other than his own chosen nation Israel. God sets down terms, and they are very easy to understand. It comes down to a very simple formula: hear and obey and live. Refuse to hear, disobey, and bear the wrath of God.

Looking back to the covenant at Horeb, it is clear that obedience led to blessing, disobedience led to God’s curse. The generations that survived, kept alive through forty years of wandering in the wilderness, witnessed the death of their own parents who disobeyed and did not trust the Lord.

And now, as the Lord prepares his people for the conquest of the Holy Land, they hear exhortation and memory mixed together. Lest they forget, they are being reminded that they heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived. They share in the memory of God’s great saving work in bringing Israel out of captivity to Pharaoh in Egypt, and his keeping the children of Israel alive through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They were led by smoke and by fire—Moses says, “Remember, and live!”

**These Ten Words**
Deuteronomy, *deuteron nomos*, means the second giving of the law, because Deuteronomy 5 again contains the Ten Commandments, *these Ten Words*. The theme is very clear. Israel, in terms of its elect status, is the chosen nation of God. The Torah serves as a constant reminder of their special status. In these Ten Words, the central truth is that the Lord God spoke to his people, they heard, and they survived. Looking backward to Deuteronomy 4:10–11, Moses says:

> Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, “Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.” You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom.

We must remind ourselves that the giving of the Ten Commandments cannot be separated from the narrative context from which it comes. The propositional truth so clearly there in the law, comes in the midst of a history of a people and God’s dealing with the people. *It is a relational revelation*, and it is a dramatic revelation. Israel is reminded not only of what they heard, but of the context in which they heard it:
The mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and wrote them on two tablets of stone (Deut 4:11–13).

“The Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire,” Moses said. “You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice.”

**The Silent Idols, The Speaking God**

As will be made clear in the Second Commandment—this is not a God who is seen, but a God who is heard. The contrast with the idols is very clear—the idols are seen, but they do not speak. The one true and living God is not seen, but he is heard. The contrast is intentional, graphic, and clear—we speak because we have heard. And the voice of God is not something Israel deserved, nor do we. It is sheer mercy.

We have no right to hear God speak. We have no call upon his voice. We have no right to demand that he would speak. We are accustomed to pointing to the cross of Christ and glorying in the cross of Christ—as we ought always to do—and saying of the cross, “There is mercy!” But at Mount Horeb, there too was mercy! There is mercy when God speaks. This is the mercy of God allowing us to hear his voice.

I think there is the danger that contemporary evangelicals think of the doctrine of revelation primarily as an epistemological problem. Even those who hold to a high doctrine of Scripture, affirming the inerrancy of Scripture, verbal inspiration, and propositional truth are still in danger of thinking of revelation primarily in epistemological terms. The reality is that revelation is mercy, a gift. As Professor Eugene Merrill has said more specifically, speaking of Deuteronomy 4:33, no people other than Israel has ever heard God speak out of the fire and lived to tell about it. The fact is, as Professor Merrill said, there are not even any other peoples that heard the voice of the Lord speak out of the fire and did not live to tell about it. The Lord God spoke uniquely and particularly to Israel, but knowing the speaker and understanding who he is, the miracle is that even those he would allow to hear his voice would survive.

The background, of course, is the paganism of that day. The idols were many, but the idols were silent. The silence of the idols is a pervasive biblical theme. Think of 1 Kings 18, and the battle of the gods. Think of Elijah
as he waits and watches the prophets of Asherah and Baal. Watch as the prophets of Baal jump around the altar and lacerate their bodies so that the blood flows down into the ground, and they leap to get Baal’s attention. But, as we are told in 1 Kings 18, there was no voice. No one answered, no one paid attention. Idolatry is contrasted with the religion of Israel on the basis of revelation. The idols do not speak. The Lord God of Israel does. The idols are seen but not heard. God is heard but not seen.

The background of this, of course, is the horrible thought that must be in the background of our thinking and in the foreground of our hearts. What if God had not spoken? What if we ourselves had not received this inheritance through Israel’s gift? A part of what it means to be engrafted upon the tree, the wild olive branch, is that this too is the word of God to us.

What if God had not spoken? If God had not spoken, the seminary I lead would not exist, at least not along the same lines. If God had not spoken, we might still have a school of religion. Human beings, in the blindness of trying to figure things out, would come to some notion of transcendence and even think up arguments for the existence of a deity. Pondering long enough on an argument from design, we could come to a “watchmaker” thesis, bringing an explanatory matrix to all we see.

Of course, we need not speak hypothetically about this. All we have to do is listen in on the cultural chatter, and we can hear the kind of conversation that would take place if God had indeed not spoken. Just visit some of the more liberal divinity schools, theological seminaries, and universities. There you will hear the kind of philosophical discourse, teaching, and worldview that would emerge everywhere if God had not spoken.

Such purveyors of so-called knowledge would lead us to ask: what if this is all really just a game we are playing, each using whatever language game is convenient and handy in terms of our social and cultural and linguistic system? They reason that if all this really is something of a smorgasbord of worldviews, then we can put it all together as best we see fit. If God had not spoken, then there is no end to that game. If God has not spoken, then there is no one who is right, and there is no one who is wrong. If God has not spoken, then all you have is the end game of postmodernism—nihilism without knowledge.

If God Has Spoken...

But if God has spoken, everything is changed. If God has spoken, then the highest human aspiration must be to hear what the Creator has said. And though the revelation of God is not merely propositions, it is never
less than that. Revelation is personal. Hearing the voice of the Lord God is not merely to receive information, but to meet the living God. We are accustomed to speaking and singing of the grace and mercy of God, and of our redemption in the cross of Christ. But we must also speak of the mercy of God in revelation.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we meet the speaking God. Again, in verse 33: “Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?” Mercy and grace meet here—also, as Moses makes clear, this text affirms accountability. This is, in its own way, a *protogospel*, a revelation of the law, a discontinuity or distinction, but a continuity all the same, law and gospel. Christopher Wright, commenting on what took place at Sinai, said that what really mattered there was not that there had been a theophonic manifestation of God, but that there had been a verbal revelation of God’s mind and will. Sinai was a cosmic audiovisual experience, but it was the audio that mattered. It is the audio that matters, for God has spoken.²

If God has spoken, let me suggest several realities that should frame our thinking. First, *if God has spoken, we do know.* As a matter of fact, if God has spoken, we must know. And what we know, because God has revealed himself to us, is the highest and the greatest knowledge that any human ear can ever hear. And having heard it, we cannot feign ignorance, acting as if we do not know. That is why Francis Schaeffer said that for the Christian who understands the doctrine of revelation, there is no real epistemological crisis. There is only a spiritual crisis. All that remains is whether you will obey.³ Also, because we know, there is a firm basis to our life and ministry. We have an authority for our preaching and our teaching. We are not making this up as we go along! Because we have heard, we cannot feign ignorance, and we are accountable for the hearing.

Second, *if God has spoken, we know only by mercy.* There is no pride in our knowing, because everything we know is known by mercy. Carl F. H. Henry describes this mercy of revelation, by speaking of it as, “God’s willful disclosure, whereby He forfeits His own personal privacy that His creatures might know Him.”⁴

We have no claim upon God and there is no way that we could ever figure him out. If we are to know him, he must speak—and he has! In the third volume of his magisterial *God, Revelation and Authority*, Henry said this:
If divine revelation in terms of speech means anything, it implies among other things that God need not have thus disclosed Himself. God might indeed have remained silent and incommunicative in relation to His creatures; His revelational speech to mankind is not an inevitability of the ultimate nature of things. God’s speaking is a venture of divine determination and initiative. It is not to be likened to the mathematically quite predictable spurting of the geyser Old Faithful; instead, like an enigmatic weather pattern, its performance cannot be charted in advance, and in crucial ways it is once-for-all rather than merely sporadic. Even God’s extended and ongoing speech in general or universal revelation is moment by moment, precept by precept, a matter of voluntary divine engagement, an address to mankind that carries ever and anon the utmost urgency.\(^5\)

God mercifully lets his people hear. Thus, intellectual pride is the enemy of any true knowledge of God, any real theological education. There is nothing we can figure out or discover. There is no “Aha!” moment where, in some theological laboratory, a new element of divine truth gets discovered. We know by grace and mercy.

Third, if God has spoken, we too must speak. There is a command here to preach and teach. Again and again, Israel receives this order to speak, and in like manner, the church also is under this standing order. We preach and we teach and we speak, because God has spoken. Because God has spoken, we dare not remain silent. There is a task here. There is urgency here. We are to be the speaking people of a speaking God. The people of God are not to be marked by their silence, but by their speech.

Throughout the warp and woof of Scripture, this teaching mandate is constant. If we skip two chapters forward to Deuteronomy 6, we see Israel being reminded of the responsibility of parents to teach their children. In Nehemiah 8, the importance of this was made clear as Ezra and his colleagues read the text aloud and explained its meaning to the congregation. For the church, the command is just as clear. We are to set forth the truth and make it plain, because if God has spoken, we too must speak.

Fourth, if God has spoken, then it is all about God, and it is all for our good. You see, God does speak words of judgment in the Scripture, and God does speak words of warning. Indeed, there are hard words in Scripture, but it is all for our good! God spoke to Israel even the words of warning, in order that Israel might hear the warnings, obey the word, and not
suffer the inevitable consequences of disobedience. It is all for our good, every single word. That is why in Deuteronomy 4 we are warned not to add to these words or take away from these words. They are all for our good, like medicine for the soul and food for the body.

Fifth, if God has spoken, it is for our redemption. When we think of the work of God in our salvation, we focus of course in the culmination and the fulfillment of God's saving work in the accomplished work of Christ on the cross. But to read the Scripture is to understand that God has been a redeeming saving God from the very beginning—taking Israel out of Egypt was redemption. Keeping Israel alive, even in the wilderness, was redemption. Speaking to Israel and letting Israel hear and survive was redemption.

Jonathan Edwards well understood this. Speaking of this passage, he says the following:

This was quite a new thing that God did towards this great work of redemption. God had never done anything like it before. “Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire and live? Or has God assayed to go and take Him a nation that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt?” This was a great advancement of the work of redemption that had been begun and carried out from the fall of man, a great step taken in divine providence towards a preparation for Christ’s coming in the world, in working out His great and eternal redemption. For this was the people of whom Christ was to come, and now we see, we may see how that plant flourished that God had planted in Abraham.

God allowing Israel at Horeb, and thereafter, to hear and to survive, was a part of his work of redemption—and revelation is for our redemption, we need to remember that. So often, I think even evangelical Christians speak of revelation at times as if it is something that witnesses to redemption, but it is also a part of God’s work of redemption in and of itself, for without revelation, we would not know. We would have no clue. But we do know.

Sixth, if God has spoken, we must obey. This is not a word submitted for our consideration. The living God allows us to hear the voice of God from the fire and survive. It is because he has demands to make of us, as Creator speaks to his creatures. And in the giving of the Torah, and the entire body of law and statute and command, there is the requirement of obedience,
and it is repeated over and over again. It is stated in principle form, as Israel is told, “If you obey, you will be blessed and you will live. You will prosper in the land that I am giving you.” It is in the negative. “If you disobey, you will be cursed. You will bear my wrath. The nations of the world will cast you out. You will go out before them, to be taken as their exiles. You will be cast out of the land.”

The demand of obedience is very clear, and it is central to Deuteronomy 4. Even as the Lord God through Moses is preparing his people to enter the Promised Land, and in order to prepare them is getting ready to recite again the law, these Ten Words—the Ten Commandments—he is saying to them, “Look, it is about obedience. I’m not giving you this information. I’m not letting you hear my voice for your intellectual stimulation. It is not so that you will have an epistemological advantage over the pagan peoples around you! I am allowing you to hear my voice so that you may hear and then obey.”

Seventh, if God has spoken, we must trust. “Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” We know that song, or at least some previous generations knew that song. But it really is a matter of trust. Because of the spirit of the age and because of the imperative of the health of the church, we must fashion a clear defense of Scripture in terms of its inspiration and authority and perfection. We must teach that truth, remind ourselves of that truth, and be accountable to that. But in the end, it all comes down to trust—a hermeneutic of trust, an epistemology of trust, a spirituality and theology of trust.

If God has spoken, we trust his Word because we trust in him. Woe unto anyone who would sow seeds of mistrust or distrust of the Word of God. To fail to trust this Word is, as Israel was clearly told, to fail to trust in God himself. Truth is the very foundation of a proper Christian apologetic. An apologetic of trust, understands that in the end, the character of God is what anchors, not only our epistemology, but our redemption. This is the hope we have not only in this life, but in the life to come. We heard his voice, we read his Word, and implied in Deuteronomy 4 is the inscripturation, the writing of this Word. It is very clear that this is to be now a word that, having been heard, is now written and is accessible to Israel through the reading of the Word, the Word we trust.

Eighth, if God has spoken, we must witness, declaring the revealed truth. Deuteronomy 4 has a counterpart in chapter 30 at the end of the book. As Moses now prepares to die, the Lord speaks, beginning in verse 11, and says the following:
For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it. See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him (Deut 30:11, 14–20).

Three points jump out at us here—love the Lord your God, obey his voice, and hold fast to Him. But look also in the New Testament at Romans 10:8–17, where the apostle Paul uses this very text from Deuteronomy and says:

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

So, faith in God comes from hearing the voice of God. Hearing and yet surviving. This too explains why we ourselves believe, for according to the formula and logic of Romans 10, somehow we have heard God’s
revelation. Not one of us was at Horeb, yet we have heard. Someone had to tell. God spoke, and someone had to speak to us. And as the Word of God makes so very clear, there is the mandate for us to go and to tell. If God has spoken, then we do know. If God has spoken, then we are accountable. If God has spoken, it is by mercy and for our good, and if God has spoken, it comes with a commission and a command, which makes a difference of course in the life of a Christian, who is not only the one who has been saved, but instrumentally and day by day, is the one who was heard.

The difference for the church is that we understand what it means to gather together as the ones who by the grace and mercy of God have heard. Under the authority of the Word we gather. We are not making this up as we go along. Our task is not to go figure out what to teach. Our task is not to figure out where to find meaning in life. It is to be reminded continually that we have heard the voice of God speaking from the fire and have survived, and thus we teach.

This is the mercy of God, to hear and yet survive. It is the mercy by which we live every day and experience every moment and evaluate every truth claim and judge every worldview and preach every sermon. We work and we live under that mercy. I cannot help connecting Deuteronomy 4 with Hebrews 1. The experience of Israel— hearing the Lord God speak from the midst of the fire and yet surviving—ties in so beautifully with the prologue of the book of Hebrews: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (vv. 1–2).

We are here because God has spoken, not only in the fire, but also in the Son—in whose name we gather as the church and in whose name we serve. The voice at Horeb points to its ultimate fulfillment in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate. For beyond the miracle of Israel hearing God's voice and surviving, we can now know the Word of God made flesh and be saved.

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5 Ibid.
The first mention of loving God in the Bible came in Exodus 20:6, which referred to “those who love” Yahweh and keep his commandments. But the idea of loving God is not elaborated upon until Deuteronomy. In Leviticus, Israel is urged to obey Yahweh’s commands on the basis of his identity, the assertion “I am Yahweh” often prefacing or following his commands. In Numbers, the God who is a consuming fire purges the wickedness of his people in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy, Moses prepares the people to enter the land.

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy review Israel’s history from Sinai to the plains of Moab. Deuteronomy 4–11 then seeks to motivate Israel to keep the law. Chapters 12–28 set forth the stipulations of the covenant, and in chapters 29–34 Moses gives his last will and testament. As Peter Vogt writes, “At the heart of the Deuteronomic world view is the supremacy of Yahweh. One of the primary goals of the book is to inculcate a sense of total loyalty to him.”
From Sinai to Moab

Forty years have passed since the exodus from Egypt (Deut 1:3). Deuteronomy describes its own contents as Moses’ attempt to explain the Torah (1:5). It is important to recognize that the historical review on which Moses takes the people in Deuteronomy 1–3 has the intention of motivating Israel to obey Yahweh. Moses recounts Israel’s history that they might learn from their past.

Reviewing the departure from Sinai (Deut 1:5–8), the appointment of leaders to help Moses (1:9–18), and what happened with the spies sent from Kadesh-barnea (1:19–28) gives Moses an opportunity to tell the new generation what he said at that time:

and I said to you, “Do not tremble, and do not be afraid of them! Yahweh your God is the one who goes before you. He will fight for you, as in all that he did with you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness which you saw, where Yahweh your God carried you just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you walked until you came to this place” (1:29–31).

Moses recounts Israel’s history so that he can remind Israel of both the way that Yahweh has worked on their behalf and the wrong response of the generation that fell in the wilderness: “But in this matter you did not believe in Yahweh your God” (1:32). The recounting of these events from Numbers 10–13 affords Moses the opportunity to teach Israel who Yahweh is on the basis of what he has said and done. These events angered Yahweh, and he swore that the evil generation would not inherit the land—Caleb and Joshua excepted (1:36, 38). The generation entering the land is also warned not to presume on Yahweh’s grace, for when the wilderness generation tried to repent and obey Yahweh’s command to go up and take the land, the LORD did not go up with them, their enemies defeated them, and Yahweh did not hear their prayers (1:41–45). Moses reminds Israel of the judgment that fell on the wilderness generation that they might learn from the mistakes of their predecessors—that they might be saved through the judgment that fell on them.

Yahweh’s authority to give Israel the land he has promised is stressed when he tells them not to contend with those whose land he is not giving them: the people of Esau in Seir (Deut 2:1–8), Moab (2:8–13), and, once the wilderness generation perished (2:14–16), Ammon (2:17–23). The narrative thus demonstrates that Yahweh is Lord of all lands. He has allot-
ted their portion to them. This should make Israel confident as they cross into the portion allotted to them by Yahweh, the Lord of all.

Moses recounts how Yahweh commanded Israel to rise and cross the Valley of Arnon, how he announced that he, Yahweh, had given Sihon, king of Heshbon, into Israel’s hand, and how he promised to put the dread and fear of Israel on all the peoples under heaven, making them tremble when they heard the report of Israel (Deut 2:24–25).

Just as Yahweh hardened Pharaoh at the exodus, so he hardened Sihon at the beginning of the conquest (Deut 2:30). As surely as Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt, he will bring them into the land he has promised them. Both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are affirmed here: Sihon, literally, “was not willing” to allow Israel to pass. He is responsible for his unwillingness. But there is something behind his unwillingness: Yahweh hardened him. Yahweh’s hardening does not remove Sihon's responsibility for his unwillingness.

There is also divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the taking of Sihon’s land. In Deuteronomy 2:31, Yahweh announces that he has given Sihon over to Israel—divine sovereignty. But it is also true that Israel must take possession and occupy his land—human responsibility. Similarly in 2:33, Moses relates, “And Yahweh our God gave him over to us, and we struck him and his sons and all his people.” Yahweh did the giving; Israel did the striking.

The striking and hardening of Sihon is reminiscent of the exodus. And the striking of Og, king of Bashan, reminds readers of the report of the spies (Num 13:28), because Og was a giant (Deut 3:1–11). Neither Pharaoh nor giants can keep Yahweh’s people from the land he is giving them. Moses presses home the historical lesson in Deuteronomy 3:21–22, “And I commanded Joshua at that time saying, ‘Your eyes have seen all that Yahweh your God did to these two kings; thus Yahweh will do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. Do not fear them, because Yahweh your God, he is the one who fights for you!’”

The rejected repentance of the wilderness generation (1:41–45) teaches Israel to obey the first time Yahweh commands, and Moses’ failed attempt to gain permission to enter the land (3:23–28) functions the same way. Yahweh has shown mercy in response to Moses’ prayers in the past, but he is not obligated to mercy anyone. With respect to entering the land, Yahweh does not show mercy to Moses, even though he appeals to Yahweh's incomparable greatness (3:24). There is a measure of mercy, though, for while the judgment that Moses not enter the land is upheld, he is allowed to go up to the top of Mount Pisgah and greet it from afar (3:27; cf. Heb 11:13–16).
Motivation to Obey
Before the exposition of the law in Deuteronomy 12–28, Moses seeks to motivate Israel to do the law in chapters 4–11.

Reasons to Obey
In Deuteronomy 4 Israel is urged to obey because of the way Yahweh judged their disobedience at Baal Peor (4:1–4), because of the good effects and matchless quality of the laws Yahweh has given (4:5–8), because of their frightful experience of Yahweh at Sinai (4:9–24), because of what Yahweh will do to them if they disobey (4:25–31), and because of the unique love Yahweh has shown them (4:32–40). Yahweh has dealt with them the way he has that they might know him. Yahweh wants them to know that he is God, that there is no other (4:35, 39), and therefore they should obey (4:40). As Vogt notes, “The emphasis is on Israel’s unique experience of Yahweh’s nearness and their status as recipients of *Torah* … it is through *Torah* that Yahweh’s nearness is experienced by Israel.” It would be difficult to imagine a more compelling case for love driven law keeping than the one made by Moses in Deuteronomy 4.

Out of the Midst of the Fire
The experience of Yahweh at Sinai is recounted in Deuteronomy 5. Yahweh spoke to Israel “face to face at the mountain, from the midst of the fire” (Deut 5:4). Moses stood between Yahweh and the people (5:5), and Yahweh announced his identity (5:6), then spoke the ten commandments (5:7–18, ET 7–21). Again, the most significant thing about the Ten Commandments is Yahweh himself. Moses reviews how the people confessed that they had seen Yahweh’s “glory and greatness” (5:21, ET 24), expressed fear that continual exposure to Yahweh would consume them (5:22, ET 25), and asked Moses to go hear everything Yahweh had to say and report back to them, promising obedience (5:24, ET 27).

Israel’s Heart Problem
Yahweh agrees to this arrangement (Deut 5:25, ET 28), and his response to the willingness of the people to obey (5:26, ET 29) picks up a key theme in biblical theology. Readers of the Bible see that something is wrong with the human heart as early as Genesis 6:5, where Yahweh, who knows the hearts of all men, sees that “every inclination of the reckonings of [man’s] heart is only evil all the time.” Knowing this, Yahweh responds to Israel’s professed willingness to obey with the words, “Who will give that their hearts might be like this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always” (Deut
Later in the canon, Yahweh will answer the question “who will give” through Ezekiel’s promise that Yahweh will give a new heart to his people (Ezek 36:26; cf. Jer 32:39). The theme of the heart problem in Deuteronomy is addressed almost immediately after this in Deuteronomy, when Moses tells the Israelites, “And these words which I command you today shall be upon your hearts” (Deut 6:4). Later in the canon, apparently in response to Israel’s inability to keep these words on their hearts, Yahweh promises through Jeremiah that he, Yahweh, will write the Torah on the hearts of his people (Jer 31:33).

The heart problem comes up again in Deuteronomy 10:16, when Moses calls on Israel, “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart and stiffen your neck no more.” The second phrase exposits the first—the call to circumcise one’s heart is a call to cease resisting the authority of Yahweh. But this is something that Israel cannot do to herself, which Moses recognizes in Deuteronomy 29:3 (ET 4), “To this day, Yahweh has not given to you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear.” Yahweh alone can remedy this problem: “Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Deut 30:6). Deuteronomy 30:6 makes plain that the circumcision of the heart enables one to love Yahweh. We saw above that Deuteronomy 10:16 indicated that the circumcision of the heart would make Israel willing to submit to Yahweh’s authority (“stiffen your neck no more”).

This indicates that heart circumcision equips people with a volitional ability to love and submit to Yahweh, a reality that seems to have been recognized by Jeremiah, who wrote, “To whom shall I speak and testify, that they may hear? Behold, they are uncircumcised of ears, and they are not able to listen. Behold, the word of Yahweh is for reproach to them; they do not delight in it” (Jer 6:10). Those who do not have circumcised ears are not able to listen, but they do hear—enough for the word to be a reproach to them. In other words, they hear the word physically, but “they do not delight in it.” They cannot hear it in the sense that they do not perceive its beauty: it is a reproach to them (cf. 1 Cor 2:14). These observations lead me to the conclusion that the ability provided by heart circumcision is equivalent to the ability provided by the new birth.

The verse that immediately precedes Deuteronomy 30:6, where Yahweh promises to circumcise the hearts of his people, indicates that this will happen after the nation is exiled. When Yahweh brings the people back from all the places he scattered them for breaking the covenant (Deut 30:5), then he will circumcise their hearts (30:6).
This means that Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 32:29, and Ezekiel 36:26 all point to a day in the future. Nevertheless, there is evidence that there were people under the old covenant who did delight in the law of the Lord (see Psalm 119), which indicates that there has always been “a remnant according to the election of grace” (cf. Rom 11:5).

**Life under Law**

A new direction is opened up when Moses begins to appeal to love as a motivation for obedience in his address to the nation on the plains of Moab. Again and again Moses urges Israel to love Yahweh and obey his commands. When we stop to ask whether anyone would love one of the fearsome deities described in other ancient Near Eastern texts, whether any Greek or Roman would love Zeus or any other member of the pantheon, we see that while those other deities are imagined as awe-inspiring, terrifying, even grand, there is none like Yahweh. What other god actually loves his people and instructs them to love him?

Obedience to Yahweh will result in blessing (Deut 6:1–3), and Israel is to love Yahweh alone, with his word on their hearts (6:4–6). Having the word on the heart is to issue in teaching it to the children in and through daily routines (6:7). The Torah is to guide Israel’s actions and function as the grid through which they view the world: “And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (6:8). The Torah is to adorn their homes (6:9).

When they enjoy the prosperity of the Promised Land, Israel’s adherence to Torah will show their devotion to him (Deut 6:10–13). If they go after other gods, Yahweh will destroy them (6:14–15). The terms are clearly set, and the warning of possible judgment is to lead them to salvation. They should not put Yahweh to the test, since they have seen his faithfulness to his word in the past (6:16–19). They are to remember their history (6:20–24), and their obedience to the law will produce a Phinehas like righteousness (6:25; cf. 9:4–6).

Yahweh chose Israel because they were unimpressive (Deut 7:6–7), because he loves them and will keep the oath he swore to their fathers (7:8). Therefore they are to know Yahweh, who is everything he declared himself to be in Exodus 34:6–7, which is alluded to in Deuteronomy 7:9–10. Faithfulness to Yahweh is the path to blessing and triumph (7:11–16). Israel is not to fear any of the peoples they will face in the land because Yahweh is with them (7:17–26).

This section of Deuteronomy seeks to motivate Israel to obey the To-
rah, and the strategy employed in chapters 8 through 10 is to remind Israel of their history of disobedience. Yahweh humbled Israel in the wilderness to know their hearts (Deut 8:2). He sustained them with manna, something they did not anticipate, to teach them to rely upon his word (8:3). As a father disciplines his son, so Yahweh disciplined Israel in the desert (8:5). The land promised to them is an edenic place of brooks and streams, milk and honey (8:7–9).

Israel is to bless Yahweh for this land (8:10). They are not to forget the way Yahweh saved them through the judgment he wrought against Egypt (8:11–14), nor are they to forget the way he saved them through his judgment on their wickedness, judgments of fiery serpents and thirsty ground where there was no water (8:15–16). If they exalt themselves in their own thinking and do not remember Yahweh, then just as Yahweh is judging the nations of the land, he will judge them (8:17–20). This threat of judgment is meant to preserve them in salvation.

Moses calls on Israel to know that Yahweh is a consuming fire who will destroy Israel’s most intimidating enemies (Deut 9:1–3), and they are to know that God is judging the wicked nations he is driving out before Israel (9:4–5). Israel is not receiving the land because they are righteous; they are stubborn (9:6). They are to remember the way they provoked Yahweh from Egypt to Moab (9:7). The incident with the golden calf at Sinai is recounted (9:8–21), as are Israel’s other rebellions (9:22–24). When Moses narrates the way he interceded for Israel (9:25–29), we see again that he appealed to Yahweh on the basis of Yahweh’s character: Yahweh must be faithful to the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (9:27); he must protect his reputation in Egypt (9:28); and he must hold fast his heritage, the people he redeemed through his mighty acts (9:26, 29).

After rehearsing God’s mercy in the second set of tablets (Deut 10:1–5, 10–11), the death of Aaron (10:6), the journey (10:7), and the setting apart of the tribe of Levi (10:8–9), the call to obedience to Torah culminates in one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible: Deuteronomy 10:12–22.

What Yahweh requires of Israel is summarized in Deuteronomy 10:12–13. They are to walk in his ways, love him, and serve him with all they are, and the way they are to do this is by keeping the commandments and statutes Moses is giving them for their good. Verse 14 asserts Yahweh’s authority to make these demands: “Behold, to Yahweh your God belong the heavens of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it” (Deut 10:14). Yahweh is the Lord of all, and he has chosen Israel “above
all the peoples” (10:15). On the basis of this, their unique position in Yahweh's cosmic purposes, Israel is called to circumcise their hearts and stiffen their necks no more (10:16), “for Yahweh your God, he is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and fearsome God, who shows no partiality and takes no bribes” (10:17). Knowing Yahweh as the one who does justice for the orphan and the widow, who loves and provides for the sojourner, should prompt Israel to do likewise (10:18–19). Israel is to fear Yahweh, serve him, cleave to him, and swear by his name (10:20). Yahweh is to be the central reality of their existence. He is to be the most relevant thing in their lives. He is their praise, their God, who has done magnificent and fearsome things for them, making a small tribe into a myriad of people (10:21–22).

Israel is called to love Yahweh (Deut 11:1), consider what he did in Egypt (11:2–7), and obey the good law in the good land that they might enjoy the good life (11:8–15). If they follow other gods they will perish (11:16–17). As in Deuteronomy 6:6–9, Israel is urged to put these words Moses is giving them on their hearts, in their souls, on their hands, before their eyes. They are constantly to discuss them, adorn their homes with obedience to them, and enjoy the way that Yahweh will keep his promises (11:18–25). Before moving to the stipulations themselves, Moses makes clear what is at stake. He sets before Israel the consequence and the reward, the blessing and the curse. Blessing will follow obedience as cursing will follow disobedience. Therefore, Israel should obey (11:26–32).

The Covenant Stipulations

Yahweh is the supreme reality in the universe, and in Deuteronomy 12–26 he sets forth the stipulations to the covenant between himself and Israel. They will be blessed beyond anything they can imagine if they obey, frightfully cursed if they do not. The promise of the curse is meant to motivate obedience. Israel is to be saved through the promise of judgment for the glory of Yahweh. If they are not, they will be judged, and there will be a salvation that will come through the judgment of the exile, as Deuteronomy 4:25–31 and 30:1–10 indicate. In between are the laws by which Israel is to live.

There is a sense in which everything that follows the recital of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5 serves to exposit those ten words. Broadly speaking, all of Deuteronomy 6–25 can be understood as a development of the Ten Commandments, as Table 2.16 indicates.22
Yahweh is to be dearer to Israel than the convenience of worshiping where they please (Deut 12).23 Anyone who seeks to lead Israel away from Yahweh through false prophecy—be that person one’s brother or son or daughter or wife of one’s bosom or soul-mate friend—the person is to be stoned to death (Deut 13). Israel is to be distinct, set apart to Yahweh, and this will be reflected in what they do with their hair, their food, their money, and their calendar (Deut 14–15). They are to worship Yahweh as he has prescribed and no other way, appearing before him three times a year at the place he chooses to set his name (Deut 16–17). Israel’s leaders, judges, kings, priests, and prophets, serve at Yahweh’s pleasure and according to his instructions (Deut 16:18–18:22).24 Yahweh gives Israel cities of refuge (Deut 19), instructions for warfare (Deut 20–21), instructions concerning human sexuality (Deut 22), the regulations for keeping the camp clean (Deut 23), laws for marriage and divorce (Deut 24), instructions for levirate marriage (Deut 25), instructions for tithes and offerings (Deut 26), and many other things. Peter Vogt states, “at the core of Deuteronomy is a theology of the supremacy of Yahweh, expressed in the life of Israel through adherence to Torah.”25

Adherence to these laws will result in Yahweh’s protection and blessing. Transgression of them results in judgment. An intimate acquaintance with the laws of the Torah is assumed by later narrators of the Old

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**Table 2.16: Deuteronomy’s Exposition of the Ten Commandments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commandment</th>
<th>Exposition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No other gods</td>
<td>Deut 6-11, Love and Worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No idols</td>
<td>Deut 12-13, Central Sancturary and False gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Name</td>
<td>Deut 13-14, Holiness to Yahweh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sabbath</td>
<td>Deut 14-16, Periodic Duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents</td>
<td>Deut 16-18, Authority: judge, king, priest, and prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Murder</td>
<td>Deut 19-22 Life and Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Adultery</td>
<td>Deut 22-23, Regulations on Sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Theft</td>
<td>Deut 23-25, Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. False Testimony</td>
<td>Deut 24-25, Truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Coveting</td>
<td>Deut 25, Unselfish Levirate Marriage</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Testament. The Torah is the standard by which later narratives measure, whether they say that is what they are doing or not. The intellectual furniture of the Old Testament world view is built and arranged by the laws of Torah, revealed by Yahweh.

Deuteronomy 27–28 recounts the blessings and curses that attend the Torah. If Israel breaks the covenant, they will be exiled from the land, scattered among all nations (Deut 28:64). Moses is remarkably explicit about Yahweh’s emotions in this: “And it shall be that just as Yahweh rejoiced over you, to cause good for you and to multiply you, so Yahweh will rejoice over you to consume you and destroy you and pull you up from the land where you are entering there to possess it” (28:63). Once again, the intention of this frightful announcement of the pleasure Yahweh will take in doing justice is to promote obedience.

Moses’ Last Will and Testament

After all that was said to motivate obedience in Deuteronomy 4–11, and after the gracious giving of the Torah in Deuteronomy 12–26, obedience would seem to be a reasonable consequence. Reason alone, however, does not govern the human heart. Sin never makes sense. In order to obey, one must have a circumcised heart. Circumcision of the heart, however, is not something one does to oneself. One must be given what one needs by Yahweh himself, and Moses declares to Israel that Yahweh has not given to them the kind of heart they need (Deut 29:3 [ET 4]).

Moses reminds Israel of what Yahweh has done for them (Deut 29:4–8 [ET 5–9]), informs them that they are entering into sworn covenant with Yahweh (29:9–14 [ET 10–15]), and reminds them of how they lived in Egypt and the idols they have seen on the way to the land (29:15–16 [ET 16–17]). From there Moses warns Israel against apostasy and declares to them that Yahweh will bring on them “all the curses written in this book” (29:19 [ET 20], cf. 29:17–19 [ET 18–20]).

As Moses commences to tell Israel what will happen if they break the covenant, it is almost as though he is prophesying what will happen when they break the covenant (Deut 29:20–27 [ET 21–28]). Noteworthy here is the way that Moses describes the glory Yahweh will get from other nations when he judges Israel. The other nations will ask why Yahweh has destroyed his land, what has caused “the burning of this great wrath” (29:23 [ET 24]). The answer will be given that Israel broke the covenant and worshiped gods not allotted to them (29:24–25 [ET 25–26]). “And Yahweh’s anger burned against this land to bring upon it all the curses written in this book; and Yah-
weh uprooted them from the land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and he cast them to another land as it is this day” (29:27 [ET 28]). Other nations will understand that Yahweh is holy when he judges Israel. They will, as this text shows, confess the righteous judgment of Yahweh against covenant breaking Israel when he sends them into exile.

Remarkably, Deuteronomy 29:28 (ET 29) seems to acknowledge both the mysterious purposes of Yahweh with which the people are being confronted, as well as the opportunity to avoid the fate being promised to them if they disobey. I take the reference to “the secret things” that “belong to Yahweh our God” in the first half of Deuteronomy 29:28 (ET 29) to refer to Yahweh’s sovereign plan in which Israel will experience everything Moses is describing—this will become more clear in the first verse of chapter 30. The rest of Deuteronomy 29:28 (ET 29), however, states that the things that are revealed belong to Israel and the children of Israel that they may obey the law. In other words, the prophecy of what will happen if/when Israel transgresses the covenant is given in order to motivate Israel to keep the covenant.

It is not as though Israel has no chance. They are receiving fair warning. It is not as though they are robots. They will choose what they want. It is not as though they are being asked to do something that is beyond human capacity. The word is near them, in their mouths and hearts so they can do it (Deut 30:14). But they will not do it. They do not have the heart to do it (29:3 [ET 4]). In spite of all the history of what Yahweh has done for them (Deut 1–3), in spite of all of Moses’ rhetorical brilliance in seeking to motivate them to keep the law (Deut 4–11), in spite of the straightforward revelation of what it is they are to do (Deut 12–28), Israel will break the covenant. Yahweh knows this (31:16–21), and because Yahweh warns him of it, Moses knows it too (31:27–29).

But there is hope beyond the judgment. And here it seems that Yahweh’s secret things are the reasons he has—reasons only he knows—for working history such that he will get glory in salvation through judgment. We read in Deuteronomy 30:1–3,

And it shall be when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you and you return to your heart among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you, and you return to Yahweh your God, and you listen to his voice according to all that I am commanding you today, you and your sons, with all your heart and with all your soul, then Yahweh will return your captivity and have mercy on you, and he will turn and gather you from all the people where Yahweh your God scattered you.
Here the warning of punishment described in chapter 29 is treated as a prophecy, and Moses declares that after exile will come restoration to the land. This, however, will be a supernatural return, for the exiles will be gathered from the end of heaven (30:4), Israel will be more prosperous and more numerous than ever (30:5), and Yahweh himself will circumcise their hearts (30:6a). As a result of Yahweh's heart circumcision, the people will love Yahweh and live (30:6b). Through the judgment will come salvation.

Israel has a genuine choice between life and death, blessing and curse (Deut 30:11–18), and heaven and earth are witness to the covenant between Yahweh and his people (30:19). Israel is urged to choose life, to love Yahweh, to cleave fast to him (30:19–20). They have a real choice, but their choosers will always select sin because Yahweh has not given them the heart they need (29:3 [ET 4]). But they will make their choice, and they will be judged for the rightness or wrongness of the choice they make. The fact that Yahweh promises to change their choosers by circumcising their hearts does not remove their responsibility for the choice they will make. Nor does it make Yahweh unjust if he chooses not to change their choosers, or if he chooses only to change the choosers of those he chooses. People are responsible. And Yahweh is sovereign.

Yahweh will go before Israel (Deut 31:3), with them never to leave nor forsake (31:6). Joshua is charged to be strong and courageous (31:7–8, 14, 23). Yahweh appears in pillar of cloud and prophesies that Israel will whore after other gods and break his covenant (31:16). He declares that he will be angry, forsake them, hide his face, and evil will come upon them (31:17–18). He instructs Moses to teach a song to Israel as a witness against them (31:19).

The song of Moses calls heaven and earth to witness (Deut 32:1) and proclaims the name of Yahweh (32:3). Yahweh is the Rock who is faithful, just, perfect, and upright (32:4), but the people have dealt corruptly against him (32:5). Yahweh's love to Israel is recounted (32:6–14), as are the abominations with which Israel repaid his kindness (32:15–18). Yahweh will judge Israel, and part of the judgment is the promise to provoke Israel to jealousy by those who are no people (32:21, cf. 19–26). Yahweh's concern for his own reputation, and his concern that Israel's enemies not boast over him, will prompt him to mercy (32:27). Israel will be saved through judgment for the glory of God. Israel's folly is announced, the folly of failing to respond appropriately to Yahweh (32:28–
Like the secret things that belong to Yahweh (29:28 [ET 29]), this too is stored up with Yahweh, sealed in his storehouse (32:34). Vengeance is Yahweh’s, the foot of those who disregard him will slide in due time (32:35), and Yahweh will judge his people and be satisfied on his servants (32:36). He will taunt the folly of worshiping other gods (32:37–38), and he declares that he alone is God, none beside him; he kills and makes alive, wounds and heals, and none can deliver from his hand (32:39).

Yahweh raises his hand and swears that he will judge (Deut 32:40–42), but after the promise of judgment is a promise to avenge the blood of his children and atone for their land (32:43). Through the judgment comes salvation. All of this is a warning from Moses to Israel (32:46). Through this word—and the fear of Yahweh it engenders—they will live long in the land they are crossing the Jordan to possess.

Yahweh then commands Moses to go up on Mount Nebo and die because he acted unfaithfully against Yahweh and did not treat Yahweh as holy (Deut 32:48–51). The death of Moses functions as a seal on all that he has announced to Israel. Yahweh will keep his word, and Moses’ own death outside the land is proof of it.26 Israel is to understand that Moses died outside the land because he did not believe Yahweh’s word and treat Yahweh as holy, and they should learn from his death. Their salvation is to come through the judgment that falls on Moses.

Moses blesses the twelve tribes of Israel (Deut 33), ascends Mount Nebo, sees the land, and dies (34:1–5). Yahweh buries him (34:6), Israel mourns him (34:8), and though Joshua is full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses laid his hands on him (34:9), no prophet like Moses has arisen when the closing words of Deuteronomy are put down (34:10–12).27

The Center of the Theology of Deuteronomy
Yahweh’s glory is the central reality of Deuteronomy. It is Yahweh who has saved Israel through the judgment of their enemies (Deut 1–3). It is ultimately Yahweh whose compelling existence is to motivate obedience (Deut 4) to the law he revealed when Israel heard his voice out of the midst of the fire on the mountain top (Deut 5). It is Yahweh that Israel is to love (Deut 6–11), Yahweh Israel is to serve (Deut 12–28), and it is Yahweh who must give them the heart they need (29:3 [ET 4]; 30:6). Yahweh has the secret things to himself (29:28 [ET 29]), laid up with him, sealed in his storehouses (32:34). Israel will break Yahweh’s
covenant (30:1; 31:16–32:42), but Yahweh will restore them through the judgment he visits upon them (30:2–10; 32:43). There is none like Yahweh, God of Jeshurun (33:26), who is glorified in salvation through judgment in the manifestation of his justice and his mercy.

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3 See Lev 11:44–45; 18:2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30; 19:3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, etc.

4 Cf. Peter T. Vogt, Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah: A Reappraisal (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 108: “Their relationship with Yahweh will change upon their entry into the promised land ... Deuteronomy, then, addresses the people at a crucial turning point in the way in which they live out their lives as the people of Yahweh.” Similarly J. Gary Millar (Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy [NSBT; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998], 145) describes Deut 12–26 as “a new application of the revelation at Horeb ... for the new situation which Israel is about to face in Canaan.”

5 This description of the contents of Deuteronomy is based on the content of the chapters, and it roughly corresponds to the following statements:

   “These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel” (1:1);
   “This is the Torah that Moses put before the sons of Israel” (4:44);
   “This is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments, which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you” (6:1);
   “These are the statutes and the judgments that you shall keep to do in the land” (12:1);
   “These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to cut with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he cut with them at Horeb” (28:69 [ET 29:1]);
   “This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the sons of Israel before his death” (33:1).

6 See the excellent discussion of the various ways to describe the structure—and how these influence one’s reading—of Deuteronomy in Vogt, Deuteronomic Theology, 15–31.

7 Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 3 notes a chiasm in Deut 1:1–5 (I have modified his description of the verses):

   A. 1:1, beyond the Jordan;
   B. 1:2, eleven days journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea (cf. Deut 1:19–2:1);
   C. 1:3, first day, eleventh month, fortieth year, Moses gives Deuteronomy;
   B’. 1:4, defeat of Sihon and Og (cf. Deut 2:24–3:11);
   A’. 1:5, beyond the Jordan.

8 Vogt, Deuteronomic Theology, 227.

9 Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 3 notes a chiasm in Deut 1:1–5 (I have modified his description of the verses):

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   B’. 1:4, defeat of Sihon and Og (cf. Deut 2:24–3:11);
   A’. 1:5, beyond the Jordan.

12 Vogt, Deuteronomic Theology, 129.

13 Ibid., 159 writes, “In Deut 5:1–6:9 the supremacy of Yahweh as creator of the people of God is stressed and demands for total loyalty are made,” and again (227), “The supremacy of Yahweh is also evident in the fact that it is Yahweh who commands. He dictates the terms of the covenant relationship between himself and Israel.” Cf. also Millar (Now Choose Life, 105: “The biblical laws are theocentric in essence and expression.”

14 Modern English translations all take the phrase יִתְנְשֶׁה as an idiom to mean something like “Oh that their hearts would be this way,” and in their defense, the phrase does appear to function as an idiom meaning “would that it were” elsewhere (see, e.g., Exod 16:3; 2 Sam 19:1; cf. also Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew
See the helpful discussion of the prophet like Moses in Deut 18:15–20 and 34:10–12 in O. Palmer Robertson, Deuteronomy [vol. 3, 2nd ed.; Septuagint Vetus Testamentum Graecum; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2006], and the Vulgate has "quis det" (who gives? See Robertitus Weber et al., ed., Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatum Versionem [4th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994]). On this phrase, Jouon (§163d) writes, "In some cases the sense to give etc. is fully retained, whilst in other cases it is weakened or even lost." He cites Num 11:29 as an instance where "give" is retained, but takes Deut 5:26 as "an optative formula" meaning "Oh that they had kept this attitude!" The analysis in GKC §151a–d is similar, and cf. HALOT, 733. Because Yahweh's own promise to give Israel a new heart (Ezek 36:26; cf. Jer 32:39) looks like a direct answer to this question, it seems as though Yahweh is provoking thought by saying in Deut 5:26 (ET 29), "Who will give that their hearts might be like this," only to answer later by saying "I will!" as Ezekiel and Jeremiah promise that Yahweh will give his people new hearts. Even in Deuteronomy Yahweh later promises to circumcise the people's hearts (Deut 30:6). As a side note on translation, the more one moves toward the "dynamic equivalent" end of the translation spectrum, the more one sacrifices these kinds of inter-textual connections. There is no word for "mind" in Hebrew, but some English translations render the Hebrew word "heart" as 'mind' when they think "mind" is in view. Rendering "heart" as "mind" in Deut 5:29, however, obscures inter-textual connections. Perhaps this is simply more evidence for the absolute necessity of learning the biblical languages.

Tigay suggests that this verse should be rendered, "But the Lord did not give you a mind to understand ... until today," going on to say that the other translation "implies that even now Israel lacks the capacity to understand its experiences properly. If that were Moses' meaning, his appeal that Israel observe the covenant would be hopeless" (Deuteronomy, 275). Neither the ancient Greek (cf. Wevers, Deuteronomy) nor modern English translations follow Tigay in this understanding, and Paul does not seem to have read Deut 29:3 (ET 4) the way Tigay does. Paul combines words from Deut 29:3 (ET 4), Isa 6:9–10, and 29:10 in Rom 11:18 to say, "Just as it has been written, 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to see and ears not to hear, until this very day.'" In the wider context of Romans 11, Paul seems to understand Deut and Isa to be pointing to an eschatological renewal of Israel, while Deut is most naturally taken to indicate that the people do not have the heart necessary to obey.

Millar (Now Choose Life, 179) writes, "Deuteronomical theology ultimately rests on the conviction that human nature is deeply flawed, and can be transformed only by God. This basic conviction underwrites all the ethical teaching of the book." See further James M. Hamilton, Jr., God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments (NACSB; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006).


On the Shema, see Waltke and O'Connor, Hebrew Syntax, 135 §8.4.2g.

For a discussion of the point that Israel did not choose God, God chose Israel, see David Novak, The Election of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 20, 58, 64; Millar, Now Choose Life, 55.

There is some variety in the way scholars divide and group the material, and there are some items that do not fit. In general, however, viewing the material this way seems legitimate. See Millar (Now Choose Life, 107–108), who discusses the seminal proposals of S. A. Kaufman and G. Braulik.

As Millar (Now Choose Life, 103) writes regarding Deut 12:1–5, "The primary motive for going to the place is not simply conformity in worship, but to meet with Yahweh himself."

Vogt (Deuteronomical Theology, 226) writes, "This section of Deuteronomical theology, then, highlights what I believe is at the heart of the Deuteronomical program. The supremacy of Yahweh is firmly established, because it is he who gives Torah, commands its obedience, enforces its terms, and chooses king and prophet."

Vogt, Deuteronomical Theology, 5–6.

So also Millar, Now Choose Life, 178.

See the helpful discussion of the prophet like Moses in Deut 18:15–20 and 34:10–12 in O. Palmer Robertson, The Christ of the Prophets (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 59–65. John Sailhamer understands Deut 34:10 to mean "A prophet like Moses never did arise in Israel ..." and concludes "Clearly, the author who made this statement knows about the entire line of prophets who followed Moses" (John H. Sailhamer, The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 31, emphasis added). I agree with Sailhamer that Deut 34:10 sheds light on the prophecy in 18:15–18, but it does not exclude the office of prophet as he claims (ibid., 18). Nor, in my judgment, does the content of Deut 34:10 demand that the author of the statement be aware of every prophet who arose in Israel's history. It seems that the phrase in question, יַעֲקֹב לֹא יָדַע לֹא יָדָע אֶלָּלִים לֹא יָדַע, could just as well be interpreted to mean, "And a prophet like Moses has not arisen yet in Israel," which leaves open the possibility that the one making the statement might not be at the end of the line of prophets. Sailhamer's rendering is possible, but it is not the only way the text can be taken.
The Relationship of Deuteronomy to the Covenant at Sinai

Peter J. Gentry

Peter J. Gentry is Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to this, he served on the faculty of Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College for fifteen years and taught at the University of Toronto, Heritage Theological Seminary, and Tyndale Theological Seminary. The author of many articles, Dr. Gentry is currently editing Ecclesiastes and Proverbs for the Göttingen Septuagint Series, is co-author of Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants (Crossway, 2012), and he provides leadership for the Hexapla Institute.

Differing interpretations of the relationship between the Old Covenant/Testament and the New Covenant/Testament are at the heart of all divisions within the Christian church, both past and present. Part of clarifying this relationship is determining the relationship of the book of Deuteronomy to Exodus 19–24 which is called the Book of the Covenant in Exodus 24:7. R. N. Whybray describes as common ground among the critics the view that in relation to Genesis–Numbers, the Book of Deuteronomy is “an alien block of material.”

What are we to make of this claim?

In broad strokes there are two or three main views of the relation of the Book of Deuteronomy to the earlier material: (1) that it is a renewal and expansion of the Sinai covenant (covenant/Reformed theologians), (2) or that is a renewal and expansion of the Abrahamic covenant (dispensational theologians), or that it is a completely new covenant (some Medieval Jewish exegetes).

The name Deuteronomy (τὸ δευτερόνομον) comes from the Septuagint, the Greek Translation of the Old Testament made around 280 B.C. This term is derived from two words, δεύτερος meaning “second,” and νόμος meaning “custom” or “law,” i.e., a “second law.” The translators in the Third
Century B.C. used this word as a mistranslation of the “copy of the law” that the king was to write out for himself in 17:18. The important issue, however, is not explaining our tradition, but understanding what Scripture actually says about the relation of these two sections of Torah. As Columbanus stated, “the truth which drives out error is older than every tradition.”

Here we will examine the use of kārat bĕrît for covenant renewal ceremonies and re-analyse the literary structure of Deuteronomy, showing the structural significance of Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20 for understanding the book as a whole.

In *Kingdom through Covenant (KTC)*, I claimed that the expression in Hebrew kārat bĕrît, literally “to cut a covenant,” means to initiate, inaugurate, or make a covenant, while the expression hēqîm bĕrît, literally “to confirm a covenant,” means to uphold a commitment or covenant inaugurated previously. Since I am committed to following the data of Scripture, I claimed that except for my uncertainty over the instances in Ezekiel 16:60, 62, the distinction was valid everywhere in the Hebrew Bible. Closer analysis of Ezekiel 16:60, 62 revealed a better interpretation of this text and also one where the meaning of the expression conforms to all other uses. The distinction between kārat bĕrît and hēqîm bĕrît, then, holds true, and in fact, even in the later Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The first major review of *KTC* was presented online by The Gospel Coalition. The book was reviewed by Darrell Bock from a Progressive Dispensational perspective, by Michael Horton from a Covenant Theology perspective, and by Doug Moo from a perspective in between the first two. Doug Moo was the only scholar of the three who actually addressed any of the exegesis presented in almost 500 pages. He noted the problem in Ezekiel 16 which seems to use the expression hēqîm bĕrît in regard to the inauguration of the New Covenant, and he also wondered why the expression kārat bĕrît, “cut a covenant” was used in the Book of Deuteronomy, when the covenant was already inaugurated at Sinai in Exodus 19–24. This was a constructive critique which I took to heart.

We know that God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai. We know that the people of Israel violated the covenant in the middle of the proceedings—while it was being inaugurated. We know that the relationship between God and Israel was maintained only by forgiveness on the part of Yahweh. The Book of Deuteronomy appears to be a reaffirmation and restating of the covenant instruction (tôrâ) just before entering the land of Canaan. Why then, is the expression “to cut a covenant” used in Deuteronomy 29:1 (28:69 MT)? Or is the distinction claimed in *KTC* invalid?

Before turning to consider the evidence in Deuteronomy in a renewed
way, it ought to be noted that the expression kārat bĕrît, “cut a covenant” can be used in covenant renewal ceremonies. Quite a number of scholars who have commented on the expressions in Hebrew are confused about how this works. Let us look briefly at Joshua 23 – 24 as an example.

**Covenant Renewal in Joshua 23–24**

Chapter 23 reports that toward the end of his life, Joshua summoned all the tribes of Israel to Shechem. He notes that Yahweh has kept his promises. Some land remains to be taken, but the Lord will continue to drive out the Canaanites if the Israelites continue to be faithful to the covenant and do not mix with the Canaanites or serve and worship their gods. According to Joshua 23:16, serving and worshipping the gods of Canaan is equivalent to transgressing the covenant of Yahweh. This must be a reference to the covenant made at Sinai and renewed in Deuteronomy.

In chapter 24, Joshua summons Israel to a covenant renewal at Shechem. Verses 1-13 describe the faithfulness and grace of Yahweh towards Israel in bringing them to Canaan and giving them the land. Then in a challenge by Joshua answered by the people of Israel that is repeated twice, Joshua stresses that choosing to serve Yahweh means excising all idols and removing all worship of alternative deities. We pick up the thread in v. 24:

> And the people said to Joshua, “Yahweh our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” So Joshua made a covenant for the people that day, and put in place a decree and a judgment for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the Torah of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORÐ. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORÐ that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance⁸ (Josh 24:24-28).

What is actually happening here is that the people are making a covenant to keep the Covenant at Sinai. Their commitment to Yahweh is divided. They need to put away the idols and give complete commitment and devotion to Yahweh alone. They are renewing their original commitment and solemnizing this renewal as a covenant. So, in fact, they are making a covenant to keep an earlier covenant.⁸ This is different from upholding a covenant by acting to fulfill an obligation specified in an earlier agreement and fully justifies the expression “to cut a covenant.” Linguistically, then, “cut a covenant” is
always used of making a covenant (for the first time), but can be used of covenant renewals since people make covenants to keep earlier covenants.

This past summer close friends of my wife and I in Germany celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary. It was a service of worship in the local church with family and friends, exactly as on their wedding day. This is a covenant renewal in the sense that they make an agreement to keep the original agreement. Such is the human condition that we constantly fall away from our position of complete loyalty so that a solemnizing of a renewed commitment is possible.

Scholars have confused the matter by attempting to correlate the expressions *kārat bĕrît* (to cut a covenant) and *hēqîm bĕrît* (to uphold a covenant) with covenant making and covenant renewal. This is not how these expressions are used. The expression *kārat bĕrît* (to cut a covenant) is normally used for making a covenant and in a few instances, for renewing a covenant. The reason why *kārat bĕrît* (to cut a covenant) is used for covenant renewals is that humans tend to lag in their loyalty over time. Then they realize that they have lost something of their original commitment and devotion and make a covenant, a promise, a vow, or simply a statement, that they intend to keep the original covenant. This is not the same thing as a person who has never lagged in their commitment and loyalty acting at some time after the original covenant making to uphold their commitment or obligation. The expression *hēqîm bĕrît* (to uphold a covenant) is used for this stepping into the situation to fulfill a commitment and is never used for a covenant renewal in Scripture.

Something else is noteworthy in Joshua 24:26. The words of this agreement to renew commitment in terms of exclusive and total loyalty to the original covenant are written in the book of the *tôrâ* of God. If I am correctly grasping the meaning of the text, it seems that the renewed commitment becomes part of the instruction in the original covenant, like a codicil added to a will.

The Literary Structure of Deuteronomy

When I co-authored *Kingdom through Covenant* with Stephen Wellum I devoted an entire chapter to the book of Deuteronomy as I attempted to come to grips with what this book represents and what the nature of its relationship is to the Covenant at Sinai. Naturally I did some work on the literary structure, but my attention was restricted to chapters 1–28. I have realized since that this was an error. I ought to have paid more attention to the structure of the whole book.

At that time I focused attention on the fact that chapters 1–28 had the
form or literary structure of a suzerain–vassal treaty from the late Fourteenth/early Thirteenth Century B.C.:

Deuteronomy as Suzerain-Vassal Treaty (Gentry)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Title</th>
<th>1:1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Historical Prologue</td>
<td>1:6-4:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stipulations</td>
<td>4:44-11:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Basic</td>
<td>12-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Detailed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.a. Deposition</td>
<td>27:1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.b. Public Reading</td>
<td>27:9-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Witnesses)</td>
<td>30:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessings and Curses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Blessings</td>
<td>28:1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Curses</td>
<td>28:15-68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an alternative analysis, I provided an outline from the doctoral research by Steven Guest:

Deuteronomy as Suzerain-Vassal Treaty (Guest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Preamble</th>
<th>1:1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Historical Preamble</td>
<td>1:6-4:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stipulations</td>
<td>4:45-11:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. General</td>
<td>12:1-26:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Appeal to Witness</td>
<td>27:11-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solemn Oath Ceremony</td>
<td>29:1 (EV 29:2) - 30:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guest sees Deuteronomy 29-30 as a Covenant Ratification Ceremony, and I believe he is right. The difference between his literary structure and mine seems slight, but has greater significance than at first glance. Let us briefly look at the evidence together.

First of all, although the book of Deuteronomy is structured as a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty, in reality the book consists of a series of three speeches or sermons given by Moses. This can be determined by noting first that the narrative sections are extremely limited—most of the book is, in fact, direct speech, and second that the speeches are marked by four headings.
Verses Bearing Narrative Sections (in Deuteronomy)

1:3-5
5:1
27:1, 9, 11
29:2 [29:1 MT]
31:1, 7, 9-10, 14-16, 22-25, 30
32:44-46, 48
33:2, 7, 8, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24,
34:1-12

Four Headings: Deuteronomy 1:1; 4:44; 29:1 [28:69 MT]; 33:1

1. 1:1-5: These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan.
2. 4:44: And this is the Torah which he place before the sons of Israel
3. 29:1: These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to cut with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab in addition to the covenant which he cut with them at Horeb.
4. 33:1: And this is the Blessing with which Moses, the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before he died.

Not all scholars observe these four headings. A major problem is 29:1 (28:69 MT). What is debated is whether Deuteronomy 29:1 is a superscript for what follows or a subscript for what precedes. Does it open a new section or close the previous one? Indeed, there are scholars who attempt to have it both ways and speak of it as a hinge verse.

Deuteronomy 29:1 [28:69 MT] Subscript or Superscript?

Today, a majority of scholars argue that this verse is a conclusion or subscript to chapters 1-28. The arguments provided by Tigay represent this position well:

This subscription concludes the covenant made in the land of Moab, whose terms and consequences are presented in 4:44-26:19 and chapter 28. It is comparable to the subscriptions in Leviticus 27:34, Numbers 36:13, and elsewhere. Abravanel and some modern scholars argue that the verse is really an introduction to the third discourse (chaps. 29–30), in which Moses prepares the people to enter the covenant and warns them about violating it. However, the phrase “terms of the covenant” refers to specific legal obligations and their stated consequences, and applies to the laws, blessings, and curses of the preceding chapters much more readily than it does to the
exhortations of chapters 29–30. Literarily, too, this verse belongs with the
second discourse, since it echoes Moses’ opening words there (5:2); togeth-
er the two passages form a frame around that discourse (see introductory
Comment to 4:44-28:69). The Masoretic and Samaritan parashah divisions
agree that this verse refers to what precedes it.\footnote{11}

Tigay summarizes well the arguments of a major study by H. van Rooy in
1988 in which he sought to prove that the verse was a concluding statement
to chapter 28.\footnote{12} Nonetheless, Norbert Lohfink provided a convincing re-
sponse to H. van Rooy that is not well known.\footnote{13} Lohfink’s arguments deal
with the literary features and structures of the text. The four main points of
his response can be briefly summarized as follows:

First, Deuteronomy 29:1 [28:69 MT] belongs to the system of four titles
which divide the Book of Deuteronomy as narrated sections (i.e., they are
employed to identify the literary structure of the book). Note that there is a
pattern to these headings in terms of sentence structure:

A  1:1  These are the words...
B  4:44  And this is the Torah
A’ 29:1  These are the words...
B’ 33:1  And this is the Blessing

Deuteronomy 29:1 belongs to a group of headings which have a definite
pattern of sentence structures. It may be true that in the majority of occur-
cences in the Old Testament, the expression “the words of the covenant”
refer to covenant stipulations, but here it is a reference pointing forward to
the ceremonial or ritual words of a Covenant Conclusion or Ratification and
cannot be eliminated as such.

In Deuteronomy 29:1, the covenant is carefully described, to identify it
precisely and to distinguish it from the Horeb Covenant. Now in Deuteron-
omy, all instances of the word “covenant” referring to relationship with God
before Deuteronomy 29:1—viewed from the perspective of the patriarchal
promises—refer concretely to the Covenant at Sinai: to the Decalogue or
First Offer. A Moab Covenant does not occur, neither is one referred to be-
fore Deuteronomy 29:1. By contrast, the covenant “in the land of Moab” is
explained by “covenant” in 29:12 and 14 as current and unconsummated.
The parallel with “oath” (דַּעַת; “sworn covenant” ESV) in both places may be
observed. So in respect to the use of the word, the term “covenant” in refer-
ence to a Moab Covenant concluded by Moses, occurs in Deuteronomy only
after and not before Deuteronomy 29:1 in the sermon(s).
Second, another observation strengthens the argument. Deuteronomy 29:10–15 is in no way, as van Rooy thinks, merely an admonition. Here we have more than just an admonition “to keep the Covenant” (221). What we have is a lot more in performative speech that will define the community that concludes the covenant: note the Address, the Participial Forms, and the Purpose Clauses. Twice (29:12, 14) in chapter 29 we have the participial construction: “I am cutting/making this covenant.” The participial construction (which only occurs four times in the Old Testament: Exod 34:10, Deut 29:12, 14, Neh 10:1) always marks the present tense and speaks of a ceremony or ritual in progress. Indeed, we do not have a narrative of covenant conclusion. Deuteronomy 29:1 announced, in fact, no narrative, but rather “words” of a covenant. Also without a narrative statement by the book’s narrator is the place, i.e., Moab, of which Deuteronomy 29:1 speaks, where Moses concludes the covenant actually stated. So Deuteronomy 29:10-15 is not simply an exhortation. If it is not a closing ceremony, then there is none. This must be the concluding ceremony of the Moab Covenant of which Deuteronomy 29:1 speaks. In other words, what we have in Deuteronomy 29:10-15 are not the words of a parent admonishing a child, but rather the words of a couple saying their vows in a wedding ceremony. The words “I do” and “I will” constitute performative speech that create the marriage covenant.

Third, further observations may be added about the arrangement of the words. In the laws in Exodus through Numbers, also in Deuteronomy 12–26, occurrences of “covenant” (ברית) are quite rare. There is, de facto, only one single instance in Deuteronomy 12–26: 17:2. Throughout Deuteronomy 27–28, there is absolutely no instance. On the contrary, instances of the word “covenant” in Deuteronomy 29 are frequent: 29:9, 12, 14, 21, 25. This directs our view to a larger pattern of speech arrangement: the marking of catch phrases and words. Often repeating important words in the literature of the Old Testament is what binds material together. Variation of references as well as of meaning between the repeated words are thereby given elegance and significance. In our case, the declaration of Deuteronomy 29:1, mentioning “covenant” twice clearly points forward to the five-fold repetition of the word “covenant” (ברית) which previously occurred so seldom.

This becomes even more clearly marked by the fact that “covenant” occurs precisely seven times: 29:1a, b; 29:9, 12, 14, 21, 25. The center of this series makes 29:12 the hub of the matter. In Deuteronomy, a count of
seven often binds together things that belong together. Braulik describes a number of patterns of seven. As examples, the expression “the statutes and the rules” (החקים והמשפטים) occurs precisely seven times (5:1, 5:31, 6:1, 6:20, 7:11, 11:32, 12:1) and the word command in singular fourteen times = 7 x 2 (מִצְוָה; 5:31, 6:1, 25, 7:11, 8:1, 11:8, 22, 15:5, 17:20, 19:9, 26:13, 27:1, 30:11, 31:5). The word “covenant” is consciously used in Deuteronomy 1-30 so that it occurs precisely a total of 21 times = 3 x 7; the division between the first two groups of seven is marked by the rare compound expression “covenant and hesed” occurring twice (7:9,12).

Fourth, and finally, occurring before Deuteronomy 29:1 for the matter to which the expression “the words of the covenant” (דברי הברית) in 29:1 refers, (and here I agree fully with van Rooy) is apparently another terminus: “the words of this tôrâ” (דברי התורה הזאת; 17:19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58). This expression also sweeps on from the end of chapter 29 afresh (29:29; 31:12, 24; 32:46). Was perhaps in 29:9, instead of the common terminus “the words of this tôrâ,” the expression “the words of the covenant” inserted only because in this section of text a seven-count incidence marks off a covenant conclusion ceremony? That one actually ought to expect “the words of this tôrâ” in 29:9 is shown by 17:19; 28:58; 31:12, 32:46, where likewise both the verbs “to keep” and “to do” (שמר andעשה) stand. The expression “the words of the covenant,” however, is located in 29:9 only to arrive at the count of seven. Thus it is more clear with what section 29:1 with its two instances of ‘covenant’ is aligned.

To argue as we have, that Deuteronomy 29:1 is a heading for what follows and does not function as an ending to 28 does not contradict the fact that the Ritual Words of the Covenant Conclusion in Deuteronomy 29–30 constantly allude back to Deuteronomy 5–28, the Covenant Text proper: cf. 29:9, 21, 27, 29; 30:1, 2, 7, 10, 11 (16). The Ceremonial/Ritual Text of Deuteronomy 29–30 as such can in no way be spoken if the Covenant Text itself is not also reported in the same ceremony. Various other allusions to the Covenant Text of Deuteronomy 5–28 can be found in the Concluding Ceremony of Deuteronomy 29–30. I mention only the allusion to the Covenant-Formula in Deuteronomy 29:13, (cf. 26:17-19, 27:9; 28:9) and to the Circumcision of the Heart in 30:6 (cf. 10:16). Thus Lohfink’s four observations on the function of 29:1 show that in all probability it is a heading and not a colophon as van Rooy and other scholars suspect.

Once the role of Deuteronomy 29:1 is clearly grasped as a heading for
Deuteronomy 29–30, and 29–30 is understood as a Covenant Conclusion/ Ratification Ceremony, we can focus attention on the literary structure of the whole work. In the outline I provided in KTC, no account was taken for chapters 29–30.

We return to the fact that there are four headings which divide the book into four parts as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>1:1</th>
<th>These are the words...</th>
<th>1:1-4:43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4:44</td>
<td>And this is the Torah that</td>
<td>4:44-28:68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>29:1</td>
<td>These are the words...</td>
<td>29:1-32:52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B’</td>
<td>33:1</td>
<td>And this is the Blessing that</td>
<td>33:1-34:12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note further that the third section is divided into three parts by the narrative statements (31:1, 7, 9-10, 14-16, 22-25, 30; 32:44-46, 48) as follows:

2. Appointment of Joshua as Moses’ Successor 31:1-30
3. Song of Moses 32:1-52

Thus the narration in the third person clearly sets off chapters 29-30 from chapters 31-32.

After KTC was published, a work by Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence appeared entitled Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East. This magisterial piece comprises three volumes and 1,642 pages in which every covenant, law, and treaty known in the ancient Near East from the Third Millennium B.C. to the time of Jesus Christ is presented in original text and English translation and analyzed exhaustively. In general, this massive work vindicates the thesis presented in KTC that Deuteronomy is laid out in literary structure according to the pattern of a Hittite Treaty from the Fourteenth to Thirteenth centuries B.C. In recent study the best correlation of the formulary parts of a Hittite treaty with the different sections or units of Deuteronomy is by S. Guest as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hittite Treaty Formulary</th>
<th>Corresponding Text Unit in Deuteronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preamble</td>
<td>1:1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Historical Prologue</td>
<td>1:6-4:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. a. Stipulations - General</td>
<td>4:45-11:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. b. Stipulations - Specific</td>
<td>12:1-26:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Appeal to Witness</td>
<td>27:11-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solemn Oath Ceremony</td>
<td>29:1 [Eng 29:2]-30:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We can improve upon the analysis by Guest by observing that the “Solemn Oath Ceremony” actually begins in 28:69 [EV 29:1] as argued above for the understanding of this verse. Nonetheless, the analysis by Guest is superior to the one I proposed in *KTC* in that chapters 29-30 are included as part of the literary structure. In addition, my proposal in *KTC* allowed no adequate place for “Appeal to Witness” since I indicated that Israel could not appeal to any witnesses greater than Yahweh himself. There are no other gods to appeal to, period! Nonetheless, Guest has put forth a convincing case that Deuteronomy 27:11-26 actually does function as the “Appeal to Witness” section. When Israel enters the land, half of the tribes are to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people and half are to stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce the curses. As Guest notes, “the repeated call can be understood as a plea from the community to Yahweh for the separation from its midst those who are acting in violation of the stipulations of the covenant. In other words, the community is entreating Yahweh to act as the enforcer of the covenant.”

We can revise our outline of Deuteronomy as an International Treaty as follows:

*Deuteronomy as Suzerain-Vassal Treaty (Revised)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Preamble</th>
<th>1:1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Historical Prologue</td>
<td>1:6-4:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stipulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. General</td>
<td>4:45-11:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Specific</td>
<td>12:1-26:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Appeal to Witness</td>
<td>27:11-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solemn Oath Ceremony</td>
<td>28:69 (EV 29:1)-30:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Function of Deuteronomy 29-30: Why the Moab Covenant was “Cut.”

Now that we have a better grasp on the literary structure of Deuteronomy 1-30 as the Three Sermons of Moses, some exposition of chapters 29-30 is relevant to discuss the relationship of this material to Exodus 19-24. This may seem to be a fool’s errand for R. N. Whybray averred, “The significance of, and the necessity for, this second covenant has never been satisfactorily explained,” but we will give it a try.

The Literary Structure of Deuteronomy 29-30

Let us first lay out the literary structure of Deuteronomy 29-30.
I. Heading 29:1 [28:69 H]
II. Narrative Introduction 29:2a [29:1 H]
III. Third Sermon 29:2b-30:20
   A. Past (hesed and ’emet) of Yahweh 29:2b-9
   B. Covenant Inauguration Ritual Language 29:10-15
   C. Reminder of Curses for Covenant Disloyalty 29:16-28
   D. Secret Things – Revealed Things 29:29
   E. Future Curse Followed by Blessing 30:1-10
   F. Circumcised Heart: Reason for Future Blessing 30:11-14
   G. Final Warning RE: Life and Death 30:15-20

The proposed outline divides this section into seven paragraphs based on grammatical markers in the text. These ought to be noted briefly as follows.

Deuteronomy 29:1 (MT 28:69) is a nominal sentence that is introduced by asyndeton, i.e., there is no clause-connector or conjunction. This macrosyntactic pattern either marks the beginning of a section or a comment on the previous sentence. Here it marks the beginning of a new section. Deuteronomy 29:2a begins with a waw-consecutive Imperfect, but this is narration as opposed to direct speech. 29:2b, “You have seen...” commences the direct speech. This first paragraph is concluded by a waw-consecutive Perfect functioning as a Command which might be rendered “so therefore keep the words of this covenant.” Asyndeton in the midst of 29:5 denotes an aside or comment and the waw-consecutive Imperfect in 29:7 resumes the speech from this aside.

Note that Deuteronomy 29:10 also commences with asyndeton and is a nominal sentence. This marks the beginning of the second paragraph. The causal conjunction ki in Deuteronomy 29:16 marks the beginning of the third paragraph. Deuteronomy 29:29 again begins with asyndeton and is another nominal sentence. This not only sets off this one verse as a paragraph by itself but marks this statement as a meta-comment or explanatory summation that directly addresses the major tension in the flow of thought in these two chapters. We will come back to this in a moment.

Deuteronomy 30:1 begins with a temporal clause after the meta-comment in Deuteronomy 29:29. The beginning of a second paragraph is signalled in Deuteronomy 30:15 by an Imperative introduced by asyndeton. Another causal conjunction ki marks off the beginning of the last paragraph just as the conjunction ki marked the beginning of the last paragraph in the first set of three paragraphs.
Exposition of Deuteronomy 29-30

Deuteronomy 29-30 contains six paragraphs arranged in two sets of three with an additional paragraph containing a meta-comment at the center. The significance of this will become plain shortly. There is a clear flow of thought throughout the six paragraphs.

The first paragraph bases the commitment of the people on the grace of Yahweh in his dealings with them in the past. This idea is identical to what we see in Exodus 19:4. Then comes the oath or vow, a performative speech act that actually creates the covenant on the human side. After these ritual words, the third paragraph is a warning about covenant disloyalty—much like the sermon in a wedding after the vows.

The first paragraph in the second set of three deals with the distant future. Those who see this as referring to the present fail to allow Paul to guide them in their exegesis of the OT. Moses assumes covenant disloyalty on the part of the people and subsequent exile as Yahweh is true to his Word in bringing the covenant curses on Israel. The second paragraph deals with the gift of a circumcised heart in the future as an act of divine grace. The people will then keep the covenant and be blessed. Finally, the third paragraph in the second set, like that in the first, ends with a warning to maintain covenant loyalty. The covenant sets before Israel the offer of life or death.

There is not sufficient space here for a full discussion and explanation of this significant text. For our purposes, it is important to actually cite Deuteronomy 29:1-15 before we make a few brief observations regarding the text.

These are the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb. And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle,
but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. “You are standing today all of you before the Lord your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the Lord your God, which the Lord your God is making with you today, that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and with whoever is not here with us today (ESV).

The key to understanding Hebrew literature is grasping the function and role of repetition. An author will go round a topic at least twice, each time discussing that topic from a different angle or perspective so that hearing in succession the two treatments is like listening to the left and right speakers of stereo system playing music. This gives the hearer a “well-rounded idea” similar to a holographic image or surround sound. Therefore statements made in a fuller treatment of a topic may be referred to by means of abbreviated statements in a parallel or repeated section (or sometimes vice-versa). Much of what is treated in chapters 29-30 is developed at greater length in chapters 4:45-11:32. Here I borrow an outline of 4:45-11:32 from the essay by John Meade in this same issue of SBJT to show that the flow of thought there is identical to the flow of thought in chapters 29-30.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Stipulation: 4:45-11:32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Basic Principle of Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Measures for Maintaining Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Implications of Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Warnings against Forgetting Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Failures in Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Restoration to Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Choices required by Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Basic Stipulation in the covenant is complete devotion and loyalty to Yahweh, their covenant lord and suzerain, as expounded in Deuteronomy 6:5ff. and demanded in the oath-taking in 29:10-15. This central command (see above on the occurrences of “command” in the singular in Deuteronomy) is supported by both the means and the implications of covenant relationship in sections B and C of Meade’s Outline. Then, exactly as in chapters 29-30, comes the warning against disloyalty and unfaithfulness creeping into the relationship in D followed by the assumption in E that this will happen and hence a prediction of eventual restoration. Then both 4:45-11:32 and chapters 29-30 end with the choices provided by the covenant relationship. Interestingly enough, the only two instances in the book which refer to the “circumcision of the heart” are in 10:16 and 30:6, both at exactly the same location in the flow of thought in these parallel sections, i.e., at the point noting eventual covenant violation and the future gift from God of a circumcised heart that will make possible human faithfulness and restoration in the covenant relationship.

The observation that Deuteronomy 4:45-11:32 and 29:1-30:20 are parallel sequences in treating the same topic along with a grasp of how Hebrew literature works can help to correctly interpret ambiguous statements in Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20.

Deuteronomy 29:1b-2 begins with noting the fact that those hearing Moses’ sermon actually heard and saw the miracles and tests that resulted in the Exodus. This is hyperbolic since those in the audience hearing Moses at this point who actually remembered these things would only be those over fifty years old. Observe that a similar point is made in 4:33, 5:3b-5, and 11:1-7. This is a rhetorical device to help the generation listening to Moses identify with the Israel that entered the covenant at Sinai and commit to its renewal in the covenant at Moab. Notice in Deuteronomy 29:14-15 Moses affirms that the human party committing to the covenant at Moab are those here today and those not here today. The folks listening to Moses could say, “Well we were just kids back when the covenant at Sinai was made. That covenant was made with our parents and not with us. We are not responsible for this covenant at all.” Moses wants not only to close the door to this argument concerning the covenant at Sinai but also to prevent any and all future generations in Israel from making such an argument in regard to the covenant at Moab.

After affirming that the people presently standing with Moses to enter the covenant at Moab had observed and seen “the great testings and those great signs wonders,” he contrasts this with the fact that Yahweh
has not given them a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear to this point (29:4). On a crassly literal level of interpretation this could mean that the testings, i.e., the plagues which determined the difference between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt, and the signs and wonders, i.e., the miracles occurring to deliver Israel as a nation from slavery in Egypt and bring them through the desert, had not been properly understood by the people— these miracles were like the signs in the gospel of John, but the people had not grasped the message. This, however, is an entirely shallow interpretation. Instead, the statement is, according to the normal pattern of Hebrew literature, an alternative way of referring to “the circumcision of the heart” in Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6.

What Moses is saying is this: incredible displays of supernatural power in miracles and physical deliverance from slavery were insufficient to bring the hearts of the people to be completely devoted and loyal to Yahweh. God rescued them from Egypt, but the moment he arranged to solemnize an agreement of loyalty between them, i.e., a covenant, they were faithless, fickle, and treacherous, engaging in idolatry.

As a matter of fact, Isaiah makes the same point in Isaiah 29:14. During the crisis created by the rise of Assyrian power and the pressure put on Judah by the anti-Assyrian coalition of Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, both king and people wanted to make deals with the Assyrians or the Egyptians, and not to believe the Word of Yahweh given to Isaiah. In rejecting the prophetic message calling them back to covenant loyalty, God confirms them in their rejection by pouring upon them a spiritual blindness and stupor. So when Isaiah says in 29:14, “therefore I shall deal with them in completely extraordinary / supernatural ways” this does not mean simply that Yahweh will bring physical rescue by killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. Admittedly this is an extraordinary act, but it means far more than this. It means that unless God acts supernaturally to circumcise their hearts, Israel as a community/nation will not give their full loyalty and trust to Yahweh. The miraculous deliverance from Assyria in Hezekiah’s time cannot of itself engender covenant loyalty. An “extraordinary act of extreme extraordinariness” (so Isa 29:14) is needed to generate trust in the Lord that represents covenant loyalty.

In Deuteronomy 29:5-6 Moses draws attention (in an explanatory note marked by asyndeton) to the miracles in the desert journey: their clothes and shoes did not wear out. He adds in v 6, “bread you did not eat and wine and beer you did not drink in order that you may know that I am Yahweh your God.” This correlates with the longer parallel passage in Deuteronomy 8:1-10 which explains more fully the purpose clause “that
you may know that I am Yahweh your God” in 29:6. In Deuteronomy 8:3 it says, “He gave you manna to eat, which you and your fathers had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (HCSB). So the miracles in the desert are designed to bring the people to complete trust in the word of Yahweh—exactly what happens in a covenant relationship. Yet the miracles by and large do not achieve this goal: the hearts of the people remain uncircumcised.

We are now in a position to appreciate the major tension in the plot structure of chapters 29–30, and in fact of the entire book of Deuteronomy: on the one hand, Moses is laying out for the people the direction or instruction, i.e., the tôrâ, encoded in a covenant made at Moab that is separate from, but considered an addition to and expansion of, the covenant at Sinai (29:1). Note how Deuteronomy 30:10 brings to a conclusion the opening statement in 1:5 “Moses began to explain this tôrâ.” Within chapters 1-30 there are $2 \times 7 = 14$ instances of tôrâ (1:5; 4:8, 44; 17:11, 18, 19, 27:3; 27:8, 26; 28:58, 61, 29:20, 28; 30:10). At the end of the exhortation to be completely devoted and loyal (4:45-11:32), the summary in 11:26-32 claims that this revelation sets blessing and cursing before the people. The parallel section in Deuteronomy 29–30 ends with exactly the same theme: blessing and cursing leading either to life and prosperity or adversity and death (30:15-20). Indeed, the end of the Covenant Text is Deuteronomy 28:1-68 which puts blessings and curses before the people. In great tension with this is the fact that Yahweh has not given them a circumcised heart—Deuteronomy 29:4. In both sections, Deuteronomy 4:45-11:32 and 29:1-30:20 at the exact same spot in the flow of thought circumcision of the heart is actually mentioned and described as a future event.20 This tension is described by the meta-comment on the whole section in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The hidden things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this tôrâ.” According to this meta-comment, there is a tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Israel is called to absolute loyalty to Yahweh in the Covenant, but the plot-structure to this point in the OT shows that the human partner is incapable of faithfulness, something that will be given by divine grace at a future time. Here Moses sums up his entire ministry.

A major part of correctly grasping the tension in the plot structure is interpreting the time of Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Is it present or future?
For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it (ESV).

Frequently commentators view it as present. The most obvious pointer to this is the expression “I am commanding you today” (participle plus יָמָּה). Nonetheless, all of the clauses or sentences in these verses (11-14) are nominal sentences and have no explicit tense. Recently Steven Coxhead has argued that Deuteronomy 30:11-14 refer solely to the future. He considers the fact that there is no finite verb in the text and as a result the tense is determined by the previous text in vv 1-10. Both positions are anchored in the data of the text. How do we decide?

The ancient Near Eastern epic of Gilgamesh relates how in the face of the death of his closest friend he sought answers to the issues of death and life by going across the ocean. Moses, by contrast is saying that the issues of death and life are not that far away. The issues of death and life entail two matters: divine instruction and the loyalty of the heart. In the covenant at Moab, the divine instruction has already been given to them. The only issue preventing blessing and life is the loyalty of the human heart. So the answer is not very far away: it is in our own hearts. The answer is not out there; it is in us. According to Deuteronomy 30:1-10, Israel will obtain a circumcised heart at a future time, and that is why 30:11-14 refers to the future and not to the present. Paul in his exposition in Romans 10 was right. Yet when is that future time? In God’s providence, Moses thinks it might be today, i.e., his present, and hence the force of his appeal for the present. Let us remember Deuteronomy 29:29, the meta-comment and the tension in this text: there is a tension in chapters 29-30 between divine sovereignty (i.e., the secret things), when God will give the circumcised heart at a future time, and between human responsibility (i.e., the revealed things), and therefore Moses’ urging in his present, hence today. This, in fact, turns out to be the tension of his entire ministry.

Before summing up the argument of this paper, let us briefly review the use of the word בָּרֵית or “covenant” in the book of Deuteronomy. The research in this paper has resulted in a new perspective on the literary structure of the book and will require, therefore, minor revision of the
exposition given in *KTC*.

The analysis of Lohfink is easy to verify: all instances of “covenant” (*bĕrît*) before Deuteronomy 29:1a (aside from a foreign treaty in 7:2) refer to the covenant at Sinai (4:13, 23; 5:2, 3; 7:9; 9:9, 11, 15; 10:8; 17:2; 29:1a; 33:9) or the Abrahamic covenant on which it is based (4:31, 7:12, 8:18). All the instances of covenant after 29:1a in chapters 29-30 refer to the covenant at Moab (29:1b, 9, 12, 14, 21, 25). After chapters 1–30 we find six occurrences of covenant: the instance in 33:9 and in the phrase “the ark of the covenant” refer to the covenant at Sinai (31:9, 25, 26). Note carefully in 31:25-26 that the book of Deuteronomy (chapters 1-30) is written as a single text and placed beside the Ark of the Covenant just as Deuteronomy 29:1 specifies that it is a covenant beside the covenant at Sinai.

Finally, the two instances in Deuteronomy 31:16, 20 are clearly passages where the covenant at Sinai and the covenant at Moab are fused as one in the author’s mind. When I wrote *KTC* I struggled to find a correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 5:1-6, a significant text. I concluded that the covenant at Sinai and the covenant at Moab may have been fused as one in the author’s mind there. Now a better interpretation may be suggested.

> And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. The **Lord** our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the **Lord** make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. The **Lord** spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the **Lord** and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the **Lord**. For you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said: ‘I am the **Lord** your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery’” (Deut 5:1-6, esv).

This passage reviews the covenant material from Exodus 19–24 before presenting the main stipulation of the covenant (Deut 6:5) followed by the detailed stipulations. Verse 2 of Deuteronomy 5 says, “the **Lord** our God made a covenant with us in Horeb” (esv) and employs the standard terminology, *kārat berît*, i.e., cut a covenant. This is a clear reference to the Israelite covenant made at Sinai, i.e., Exodus 19–24. Then Moses says, “Not with our fathers did the **Lord** make this covenant, but with
us, who are all of us here alive today.” The question arises here, what does he mean by “our fathers”? Does this refer to the generation at Sinai that have now passed away, or is it a specific reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—a normal referent for “fathers” in Deuteronomy? Part of the problem is also the referent of “this covenant” in the same sentence, which has been construed to refer to the book of Deuteronomy, apparently reinforced by the statement at the end of verse 3, “but with us, who are all of us here alive today.”

If we bear in mind the general usage of the word “covenant” in the book as a whole and the literary structure, a simple solution may be found: “the fathers” in v 3 are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant referred to in v 3 is the covenant at Sinai which is being distinguished from the Abrahamic covenant. The language at the end of v 3 is part of the rhetorical device in the book where Moses seeks to connect the people listening to him at Moab with the events in Egypt and at Sinai, even though they were children (under 20) at the time. This cuts the Gordian knot of this verse satisfactorily, at least to my mind.

**Conclusion**

We are now in a position to conclude. The question before us is this: why was an addition (codicil?) to the covenant at Sinai necessary and why was the expression “cut a covenant” employed for this?

First, an addition to the covenant at Sinai was necessary, because the directions or instruction (tôrâ) encoded in the covenant at Moab cover more adequately the situations of life in Canaan than the directions or instruction (tôrâ) encoded in the covenant at Sinai. Thus the instruction in Deuteronomy reshapes the Covenant at Sinai for life in the land. There is a whole new context and situation even though it is the same covenant.

Second, we must put the covenant making at Moab in perspective with what comes before and what comes after. In referring to the covenants that precede it, I shall not appeal as does David A. Dean to terminology imposed from the outside such as covenant obligations versus regulations, conditional versus unconditional, or bilateral versus unilateral covenants. Rather, we can grasp the important points from the metanarrative and from sensitivity to the statements in the biblical text. Creation entails a covenant between God and man on the one hand and between man and the world on the other. Though the humans violate the covenant by failing to show hesed and ’emet and disobey the command in the garden, the commitment of the Creator to his creation is
reaffirmed and upheld in the covenant with Noah. Second, God makes a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15). This entails commitments and promises to Abraham and requires Abraham to be an obedient son and servant king. Though Abraham is less than a satisfactory ambassador and agent for Yahweh, God reaffirms and upholds his covenant in Genesis 17. Then at Sinai Yahweh offers to the nation the role of kingdom of priests and holy nation. They will be bound to Yahweh by covenant and will act as obedient son and servant king in the world. Israel’s disloyalty and treachery in worshipping the golden calf violate this covenant. Here there is a difference from the earlier covenants: the fulfillment of the covenant rests on the human partner’s loyalty. Although God forgave Israel in Exodus 33–34, that entire generation, i.e., that entire Israel was wiped out in the desert as a judgement for their unbelief in Numbers 14. The covenant needs to be renewed, but the expression hēqîm bĕrît, literally “to confirm or uphold a covenant” is entirely inappropriate. God has no commitment to uphold that which he has not already upheld. And the human partner that made the covenant is dead. It is a brand new Israel that has replaced the earlier one that needs to affirm loyalty to Yahweh in the face of earlier faithlessness and covenant violation. The expression hēqîm bĕrît is never used in a situation where a partner fails and now needs to uphold a commitment made previously. No, they need to renew the covenant by making a covenant to keep the earlier one, just as we see in Joshua 23–24. Then the content or instruction of this covenant can be added to the earlier one and can be kept beside the ark of the covenant. Earlier we saw that Joshua 23 and 24 indicates a continuity between the Book of Joshua and the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 29–30 indicates that in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is adding something in continuity with the Covenant at Sinai. Moses is making a covenant to keep the Covenant at Sinai. This is why only the expression kārat bĕrît, “to cut a covenant,” is the only one appropriate for this situation. And this time the covenant is made not only with the Israel present but with all future generations of Israel so that the children cannot argue that covenant at Sinai was with their parents, and not with them.

Deuteronomy is best seen as a renewal and expansion of the Sinai Covenant. The exposition given here of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 coheres completely with Deuteronomy 4:25-31 and Leviticus 26:39-45 where even the idea of uncircumcised heart is found and repentance in exile.

This, then, best explains the relation of Deuteronomy 1–30 to Exodus 19–24 and the terminology used to describe that relationship. It is clear
from this analysis that there is no such thing as a Palestinian Covenant in Deuteronomy 29-30 as proclaimed by dispensationalists. This is a complete misunderstanding of the literary structure and the function of chapters 29–30 as a Covenant Conclusion Ceremony and of the relationship of the Moab Covenant to that of Sinai.

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1 I would like to thank Stephen Dempster for his feedback on this article.
2 “Testament” is simply the Latin word for covenant.
4 Recently some Christian scholars have interpreted Deut 29–30, understood separately from Deut 1–28, as referring to the New Covenant, i.e., in Jeremiah. John Sailhamer suggested that Deut 30:11-14 should be taken as conjoint with the new covenant prophecy of Deut 30:1-10 and that Deut 30:11-14 explains the nature of the new covenant by comparing it to the Sinaiic covenant (see John H. Sailhamer, The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009]), 349, 399-415, and idem, The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 473. This view has been furthered by Peter Link, “A Composition Criticism of Deut. 28:69–30:20: An Analysis of the Pericope’s Intentional Repetition as a Part of the Pentateuch with the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Writings,” (Ph.D. diss. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012). See also Steven R. Coxhead, infra.
6 Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).
9 2 Kings 23:3 is to be interpreted in exactly the same way.
10 All translations of the Bible are the author’s, unless otherwise noted.
11 Gentry and Wellum, Kingdom through Covenant, 357-388.
21 Translation mine. The Holman Christian Standard Bible also has a fairly good translation here.
22 In 10:16, circumcision of the heart is used with a verb in deontic modality, while in 30:6 it is used with a verb in assertive modality. What we can say, then, is that circumcision of the heart is actually mentioned and described as unfulfilled with the second instance promising that Yahweh will fulfill it.
E.g. the recent work by Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 673.


See Jerry Hwang, “The Rhetoric of Remembrance: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation into the “Fathers” In Deuteronomy” (Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College, 2009). No doubt Hwang is right to see the different ways in which the term “fathers” is used in Deuteronomy is a rhetorical device to connect the present generation to the past. He is also right to see the covenant at Sinai and the covenant at Moab fused as one in the mind of Moses. Nonetheless, he argues that 29:1 is a colophon rather than a superscript and hence his view of the literary structure leads to differences in interpretation in particular passages with that of the present author.


Circumcision of the Heart in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: Divine Means for Resolving Curse and Bringing Blessing

John D. Meade

Introduction

Circumcision, both inside and outside the Bible, has raised no small discussion in the literature. This study seeks to contribute to this discussion in two ways: (1) the meaning of the biblical rite of circumcision will be explained against the background of the ancient Near East. Although a complete discussion of circumcision in ancient Near Eastern cultures is outside of the purview of this paper, the results of a previous study on this topic can be summarized. (2) Once the significance of circumcision has been understood, then how the theme of circumcision of the foreskin is developed in Leviticus and Deuteronomy with respect to heart (un)circumcision will be set forth. In the Torah, heart circumcision is predicted to be the resolution to Israel’s covenant infidelity (and accompanying curse) and to bring blessing accompanying the return from exile.
Summary of the History and Significance of Circumcision

Circumcision is first mentioned in the Bible at Genesis 17 at the confirming/upholding of the Abrahamic covenant, previously initiated in Genesis 15. After rehearsing the promises for seed (v. 6; cf. 15:4) and land (v. 7; cf. 15:18), verse 9 introduces further information about the already existing covenant relationship. Yahweh commands Abram to keep (שָׁמַר) “my covenant.” Verse 10 clarifies that the covenant Abraham shall keep is the circumcision of every male of his. The text includes several details concerning the rite: (1) the act of circumcising the flesh of the foreskin (v. 11a), (2) circumcision will be a sign of the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham and his descendants (v. 11b), (3) every male (including offspring and anyone bought with money from a foreigner) shall be circumcised on the eighth day (v. 12a), (4) Yahweh’s covenant in Abraham’s flesh will be an eternal covenant (v. 13b), and (5) lastly, the one who has not undergone circumcision shall be cut off from the people; he has broken Yahweh’s covenant (v. 14). Although much information can be gleaned about the Abrahamic covenant sign of circumcision from this text, one omission remains clear: the significance of circumcision is nowhere delineated in this text or any other in the OT. For an answer to this question, one must appeal to a wider knowledge of the use of circumcision in other ancient cultures contemporary with the time of Abraham and Israel. The following is an abbreviated survey and assessment of this data.

Concise Survey of Circumcision in the Ancient Near East

Based on the biblical text, where exactly does one locate the religious-cultural milieu of a sojourner such as Abraham? From the biblical account of Abraham’s sojourning, there are only three possible places where one could locate Abraham’s background for understanding circumcision: “Ur of the Chaldeans,” his sojourning in the land of Canaan, and Egypt. Of these three possibilities, the land of Canaan can be safely set aside since its evidence of circumcision is quite late (13th century B.C.). Although the North Syrian evidence of three circumcised warriors from 2800 B.C. is the earliest evidence for circumcision, it is probably not the proper background for understanding Abraham’s and Israel’s circumcision.

The evidence from North Syria requires further investigation. Since one does not know the significance of circumcision in North Syria, it is impossible to draw comparisons between it and Abraham’s circumcision. The technique of full removal of the prepuce exhibited by the
North Syrian evidence indicates a true comparison with the later Hebrew technique. However, there are three reasons to reject an exclusively North Syrian background for Israel’s circumcision. First, the temporal proximity of the Egyptian evidence of circumcision to the time of Abraham favors Egypt rather than the temporal remoteness of the evidence of circumcision from North Syria. The evidence from North Syria is too isolated to know certainly whether the rite was actually practiced during the time of Abraham, since there is no evidence of the rite in this location within a millennium of Abraham’s life. Lack of evidence is not evidence of absence, but there are serious obstacles to overcome for the one who would argue that Israel’s circumcision is best interpreted in light of North Syrian evidence.

Second, if the rite travels from north to south (as is probable given the evidence), there is no way of knowing whether the meaning and significance of the rite changed from culture to culture, if it even changed at all. If the rite of circumcision signified an initiation into the devoted service of the king and cult (as I will suggest) then the significance of the rite would not necessarily change in its journey from north to south. Nevertheless, many scholars maintain that circumcision was primitively a fertility rite or a puberty rite related to marriage, even in the absence of any clear ancient evidence for this position. One does not know whether the Egyptians altered the significance of circumcision or preserved the same significance as North Syria. The formal operation differed (see Egyptian operation below), but this does not necessarily indicate a change in significance.

Third, and most important, an Egyptian background logically accounts for both Abraham and Israel, since Israel comes exclusively from Egypt. The other alternative milieu for Abraham cannot account for Israel’s Egyptian milieu. Given these factors, God revealed the sign of circumcision most probably to Abraham and Israel against the background of circumcision in Egypt.

**Egyptian Circumcision**

Evidence of circumcision in Egypt exists from various periods of Egypt’s history from the 4th millennium B.C. to the Roman period. Specialists have examined this evidence seeking answers to the following questions: circumcision technique, age of the subject, the subject of the rite, and the meaning of the rite. These aspects will be compared and contrasted with Israel’s circumcision.
In Egypt, circumcision technique was not the complete removal of the prepuce as was the case in Israel, but concerning Egypt Franz Jonckheere says, “Thus we conclude that everything converges to establish that, in Ancient Egypt, the surgical rite of circumcision consisted of an elementary maneuver: the liberation of the glans, obtained by making a facile dorsal splitting of the prepuce.”

In Egypt, the age of the subject of circumcision is difficult to reconstruct with certainty. The evidence from mummies is irrelevant for this question. Textual evidence for circumcision in Egypt indicates that circumcision was performed on males sometime during adolescence but is not specific. Therefore one can only make generalizations based on pictorial and textual evidence. The plastic representations do advance our knowledge at this point, even though this evidence may not be as conclusive as one might presume. The evidence from Egypt points to an age range of 6-14, leading scholars such as Jonckheere and Sasson to conclude that the rite may have two possible meanings: 1) a prenuptial or marriage rite, or 2) puberty rite or rite of passage into manhood. Both of these scholars favor the second option, but further evidence of circumcision in Egypt leads one to a different conclusion.

In Egypt, the subject of circumcision is a matter of debate. Space constraints permit only room for a broad outline of the discussion. The question of the subject of circumcision concerns whether the rite was specifically reserved for the priestly and royal classes or whether it was a general rite for every Egyptian male between the ages of 6-14. The clearest textual evidence adduced in the articles by Maurice Stracmans indicates that circumcision was reserved and obligatory for the king and those serving in his court (i.e., priests and royal family members). Mummy evidence is conflicting, but one fact remains: there is evidence of uncircumcised lower-class Egyptians from the early period, a discovery that one would not expect to find if circumcision was a general rite imposed on all Egyptian males entering puberty and adulthood. Certainly, the later Greco-Roman period prescribes circumcision for the priestly class. Therefore, the probable conclusion is that circumcision in Egypt was not a general rite for all males entering puberty and adulthood, but rather it was a rite reserved for the royal and priestly classes.

In Egypt, if circumcision did not indicate passage into adulthood, then what did it signify for the one who underwent it? In light of the previous point, circumcision is best described as an initiation rite for royalty and clergy. The one who underwent circumcision was inducted into and was
marked out for the service of the king and his cult. The king-priest was also circumcised and there is also a text which describes the circumcision of Rā himself. Foucart says:

Being thus led by a process of elimination to see in circumcision the idea of a mark of submission to a god, a sign of initiation into a god, or alliance with a god, we may now state that the obscure passage, already quoted, in which mention is made of ‘Rā mutilating himself,’ may have a value far beyond thought. Circumcision would then be an imitation of the action of Rā ... It would be a sign of admission into the company of those who belonged to the family and household of the god” (emphasis added).

Foucart states that circumcision is not a mark of slavery, since the king and priests were considered sons and relatives of the god. In this way the physical sign of circumcision would be an identification mark, similar to tattooing or other cuttings that a particular family or tribe might do (676b). Therefore, in Egypt circumcision was an initiation sign for those who belonged and were devoted to service of the deity. It marked out or identified the royalty and clergy as ones who belonged to and were devoted to the deity and served him.

**Summary Conclusions**

Many aspects of Egyptian circumcision can be compared and contrasted with Israel’s practice of circumcision.

**Comparisons.** The technique of circumcision is applied to the male prepuce in both cultures. Since mutilations of the body could occur in a number of different places, it is significant that both cultures circumcision the same part of the body.

**Contrasts.** First, each culture used a different technique for circumcision. Second, while in Egypt circumcision was applied to males between the ages of 6-14, in Israel the rite of circumcision was applied to males at eight days old. Third and most significant, the rite was specifically reserved for royalty and clergy in Egypt, while it was applied generally to every male in Israel.

**Conclusions.** The similarities and differences between the cultures provide grounds for understanding the theology of circumcision in Israel. First, from her origins Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6), that is, Israel was specially called to be devoted to Yahweh and his rule and reign. Therefore, given the Egyptian background of circumcision of royalty and clergy, it was fitting for
every Israelite male to undergo the general rite of circumcision, which
now identified them as devoted priests to the service of Yahweh (cf. Gen
17:12). The sign of circumcision matched and reinforced the identity
they subsumed at Sinai. Second, every Israelite male underwent circum-
cision at eight days old indicating that from birth each son of Abraham
was devoted to the service of Yahweh.

In the OT, there are also important references to the “uncircumcised
ear” (Jer 6:10), “uncircumcised lips” (Exod 6:12, 30), and “uncircum-
cised fruit trees” (Lev 19:23). These three uses of “uncircumcised” imply
that the foreskin is an impediment or obstacle to hearing, speaking, and
producing good fruit. That is, the state of being uncircumcised impedes
something, which, if it did not have the foreskin, would otherwise be pre-
pared for true function and vitality. But since it has the foreskin, it is im-
peded and will die. Therefore, circumcision also has a negative aspect—
the one who is uncircumcised will be cut off from his people (cf. Gen
17:14)—and a positive aspect of signifying that one is devoted to God.\textsuperscript{20} I
now turn to an examination of what both the positive and negative aspects
of circumcision mean for circumcision of the heart in the three texts em-
ploying the metaphor in the Torah.

Circumcision of the Heart in the Torah
Heart (un)circumcision occurs three times in the Torah: Leviticus 26:41
and Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6. I treat these texts in order.

Heart Circumcision in Leviticus
The reference to heart uncircumcision in Leviticus 26:41 occurs near the
end of the book in a section typically designated as part of the epilogue (Lev
26-27) to the Holiness Code (Lev 17-27). Before considering the mean-
ing of “uncircumcised heart” in Lev 26:41, it is first necessary to consider
the broad outline of the book and the structure of chapter 26 specifically.

Outline of Leviticus
Most commentators see four sections in the book of Leviticus:\textsuperscript{21}
1. Description of Sacrifices 1-7
2. The Priesthood 8-10
3. Impurity and its Resolution 11-16
4. The Holiness Code 17-27

The Holiness Code, the Holiness Source,\textsuperscript{22} or Prescriptions for Practical
Holiness\textsuperscript{23} refer to the part of Leviticus in which there is a concentration
of prescriptions for governing human relationships according to the justice and righteousness in the Torah.

Milgrom holds that the Holiness Code/Source (H; 17-27) is distinct from Leviticus 1-16 (P) in structure, vocabulary, style, and theology. These differences do not necessarily indicate different sources representing diachronic development in the history of Israel’s religion as Milgrom and others suppose. There is a progression in Leviticus from “outward” holiness to “inward” holiness or better, from the holiness symbolized in sacrifice, cult, and purity laws to holiness exhibited in the obedience of a prepared and consecrated people which Leviticus 17-27 envisions. Therefore, the holiness described in Leviticus 1-16 consecrates the people and the holiness in 17-27 emphasizes just and righteous living on the basis of that holy and devoted status. The command and motive clause, “Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy” (Lev 19:2) harks back to God’s holiness in 1-16 (cp. 11:44-45) and now forward to this necessary consecration to justice which should characterize all human relationships flowing from a devotion to God. Kiuchi states, “Therefore the shift in emphasis in P and H need not be explained by the alleged different concepts of holiness in P and H; it is just that ch. 18 onwards stresses the demand for holiness on the basis of the holiness in chs. 1-16.” Therefore, the uncircumcised heart in Leviticus appears in the context of the Holiness Code, which is emphasizing a demand for an inward holiness out of an already outwardly consecrated relationship to Yahweh.

The Context and Structure of Leviticus 26
According to Kiuchi, Leviticus 17-27 contains two sections: 17-22 and 23-27. Kiuchi presents the structure of 17-22 as follows:

1. Introduction 17
2. A  Prohibition of Canaanite Practices 18
3. B  Be Holy 19
4. A’ Punishments for Violations 20
5. B’ Holiness of Priests and Offerings 21-22

The A sections pertain to Canaanite practices and the punishments for engaging in them, while the B sections pertain to holiness, first to all Israelites in chapter 19 and then outwardly to all consecrated priests and the holy offerings they bring in 21-22. For chapters 23-26, Kiuchi proposes the following structure:
Chapters 23 and 25 correspond to one another. The Sabbath and appointed feasts in Leviticus 23 are expanded in 25 to include the sabbatical year and year of jubilee. The connection between chapters 24 and 26 hinges on the symbolic rituals for eternal blessing and the laws for divine punishment in 24 and their historical outworking in the blessing and the curse in chapter 26.

Drawing on the imagery of the lampstand and cherubim, Kiuchi suggests that the work of the priests in the Holy Place in chapter 24 presents a picture of the original situation in the garden though with some difference. The “eternal statute” of the lampstand (v. 3), its perpetual burning (v. 3, 4), the perpetual shewbread ritual (v. 8), “the eternal covenant,” (v. 8), and the “eternal statute” (v. 9) together with the reimagining of the garden’s Tree of Life from which mankind would live forever (Gen 3:22) indicate that the rituals symbolized eternal blessing in the presence of God. The blessings in Leviticus 26:3-13 indicate that had the people kept the covenant with Yahweh, they would have partaken of the Edenic experience forever.

In Leviticus 24:10-23, the text portrays the reality concerning the lack of holiness in the camp. The reader is led to believe that a mixed marriage between an Israelite wife and an Egyptian husband probably led to a son who blasphemed the name of Yahweh (vv. 10-12). The punishment and talionis laws ensue from such an action (vv. 13-23). This scene illustrates that although the people were outwardly holy, they still had stubborn hearts which led to their punishment. The people’s heart problem led to their blasphemy of the Name which results in their punishment. The presence of blasphemy in the camp and the talionis laws in 24:10-23 show that the institutional rituals of the Holy Place in 24:1-9 were unable to devote the heart to the service of Yahweh. Their inability to be inwardly holy led to their cursing the name of Yahweh and the historical outworking of the covenantal curses in 26:14-46. The divine punishment for cursing the name (24:11, 14, 15, 23) results in being cursed by God—the lex talionis or the punishment fits the crime. It is in the context of the covenant curses that our reference to heart circumcision occurs in Leviticus 26:41, revealing that Israel had an internal heart problem which led them to curse God and therefore undergo his covenant curses.
The general structure of Leviticus 26 is straightforward:

1. Introduction: Fear Yahweh and Reject Idols 1-2
2. Blessings 3-13
3. Curses and Restoration 14-45
   a. Curses 14-38
   b. Restoration 39-45
      (1) Confession of Guilt 39-40
      (2) God’s Remembrance of Covenant 41-45

The opening verses of the chapter make clear that this section is a call for total allegiance to Yahweh and rejection of idols. If Israel walks in these commands, then Yahweh will bless them (vv. 3-13). If Israel does not obey Yahweh, then they will experience curses (vv. 14-38). The curses may be grouped into five sections, each marked with הֶם “and/but if” (cf. 14, 18, 21, 23, 27).31 The last section is the longest and contains the most devastating curses. Verses 27-33 comprise the protasis (“if”), while verses 34-45 contain the apodosis. However, the apodosis contains a mixed message. It predicts destructive curses in verses 34-38 upon disobedience. However, verses 39-45 contain an almost sudden turn in the unfolding of events. Destruction gives way to even a glimmer of hope in verses 39-45.

The syntax (x yiqtol) and tenor of the unit changes at verse 39-40. The Hebrew verb צָרָה Niphal means “to rot” or “to decay” when describing wounds (Ps 38:6) or eyes and tongue (Zech 14:12). In some texts, it is used metaphorically with the meaning “to dissolve” or “to melt” referring to the hills in Isaiah 34:4 or to a penalty for people in Ezekiel 4:17; 24:23; 33:10. In the context of covenant curses, the verb has this meaning in Leviticus 26:39. This verse summarizes the punishments that have come upon them in the lands of their enemies because of their guilt and the guilt of their fathers. The waw-consecutive perfect in v. 40 (וְהָתַודּוּ) continues the possibility that the people will confess their guilt and the guilt of their fathers. There is no new conditional clause in verse 40 as in the ESV and NIV. Rather this verse is part of the same apodosis, which began in v. 39. These verses highlight the people’s improbable repentance if they break the covenant.

Verses 41-45 are introduced by a non-sequential verbal clause (x yiqtol) in verse 41, which marks a distinct unit of discourse within the apodosis. The focus is on Yahweh (אַף־אֲנִי “even I”) and his remembrance of the covenant with the patriarchs (vv. 42, 44-45). Verse 41a rehearses Yahweh’s resisting of the people and his bringing them into exile (cf.
verses 34-38). There is a difficulty in the text at the opening of 41b (נָא). The LXX has a simple “then” (τότε). However, the LXX appears to be facilitating a difficult reading in the Hebrew text. The usage of נא is difficult in this context. The expression נא נא “or if” introduces an additional condition such as in Exod. 21:33 and Isa. 27:5. Infrequently נא is omitted and only נא remains as in Exodus 21:36 (נָא נָא; cf. נא “when/if” in v. 35) and Leviticus 25:49b. In these cases, נא has the meaning “or if” and that is its meaning in Leviticus 26:41b. In verse 40, the confession of guilt appeared natural. Here, the humbling of their uncircumcised heart is represented as a condition, even though the Niphal passive probably indicates that Yahweh will fulfill it. The apodosis of this condition is 41c-45 marked by “and then” (וְאָז). Thus if their uncircumcised heart be humbled, then they will pay for their guilt and Yahweh will remember his covenant with the patriarchs. The verb יָכַּנע cannot be analyzed with certainty. The Niphal stem could indicate either a passive (their heart will be humbled) or a reflexive (their heart will humble itself). Werner Lemke asserts that the context points to the divine passive “in light of God’s unilateral and unconditional promises in vv. 42 and 44-45.” This conclusion is probable in light of the overall context.

The setting of the first instance of heart circumcision deserves comment. Leviticus 26 describes the outworking of the blessing, curse-exile, and return from exile. Although the discourse is presented in terms of conditionals, the passage ultimately predicts what will happen to Israel. She will experience life in the land, curse-exile, and blessing-future restoration. Within this scheme, Leviticus presents the humbling of the foreskin of the heart as the resolution to the stubborn heart which brought the people into exile. Heart circumcision will bring the blessing of restoration. This same pattern will resurface in Deuteronomy.

Summary Conclusion in Leviticus

Given this analysis of Leviticus and of 26:41 in particular, this book presents God as the one who both brings them into exile and humbles the foreskin of their hearts, which leads to their return from exile. The foreskin of their heart was the cause of their stubbornness in 24:10-23, which led to God’s curse coming upon them in exile. They became as the “foreskinned fruit trees” in Leviticus 19:23 that were unable to yield fruit. Their hearts still had the foreskin, the impediment or obstacle which prevented them from vital covenant faithfulness and ensuing blessing. They were holy outwardly according to ritual (24:1-9), but they were in
need of inward holiness—heart circumcision. As one continues through the canon, the next occurrences of heart circumcision are in Deuteronomy, significantly a loyalty covenant.

**Heart Circumcision in Deuteronomy**

In this section I first analyze the genre of Deuteronomy in order to understand its message properly. Second, I describe the deuteronomic vision of a loyal people who are covenantally faithful to Yahweh from a devoted heart. Third, I place heart circumcision in the context of a loyalty covenant expecting faithfulness from a devoted heart.

**The Literary Form of Deuteronomy**

The book of Deuteronomy shares the literary form of a covenant or treaty, particularly, the form employed by the Hittites from the 15th-13th centuries B.C. The covenant form of Deuteronomy is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Preamble</td>
<td>1:1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Historical Prologue</td>
<td>1:6-4:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stipulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>4:45-11:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>12:1-26:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Document Clause</td>
<td>27:1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Appeal to Witness</td>
<td>27:11-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Blessings and Curses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Blessings</td>
<td>28:1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Curses</td>
<td>28:15-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Solemn Oath Ceremony</td>
<td>28:69 (EV 29:1)-30:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This form has clear comparisons with the Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty as many recognize. Discerning Deuteronomy as a vassal treaty is crucial because literary form and poetics contributes to the overall meaning of the text. The actual form of the book reveals that Yahweh is the Great King and Israel is the vassal, who is swearing loyalty and allegiance to Yahweh alone. Therefore, Deuteronomy is fundamentally about Yahweh's covenant faithfulness to Israel and Israel's faithfulness or loving loyalty to Yahweh. The book details a loving, loyal covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The book of Deuteronomy envisions a relationship in which the people are devoted to Yahweh from the inside out, that is, from the heart.
The Deuteronomic Vision for Covenant Loyalty from the Heart

The word “heart” (לב/לבב) is used 858 times in the OT according to the study by Hans Walter Wolff.38 His study concluded that the word is used in six different ways: (1) placement of the organ of the heart (e.g., Jer 23:9), (2) feelings (e.g., Prov 15:13, 17:22), (3) wish as desire or longing (e.g., Ps 21:2 (EV 21:3)), (4) reason (e.g., Deut 29:3 (EV 29:4)), (5) decisions of the will (e.g., Prov 16:9), and (6) heart of God (e.g., 1 Sam 2:35). Of these usages, it is interesting to note that Wolff analyzes that 400 of these occurrences refer to the reason and intellect of man, that is, what one would call the mind. The heart is the control center of the human being according to the OT. It is not simply the place where one feels but more often it is the place where one understands and wills. If one’s heart was devoted to Yahweh, the whole person—intellect, dreams, and emotions—would then be devoted to him.

1. Devotion from the Heart. As a covenantal text, Deuteronomy exhorts and commands its readers to be loyal to Yahweh from the heart because of the grace shown to them in the past and the future blessing of life in the land.39 In Deuteronomy, the texts which contain לב as an object of the preposition ב “in, with,” when describing the verbs “to love” (6:5; 13:4; 30:6), “to serve” (10:12; 11:13), “to do” (26:16), “to obey” (30:2), and “to seek” (4:29) demonstrate the goal for a people to be devoted to Yahweh with all their heart.

In addition to these verbs modified by ב, Moses also calls the people “to set” “my words” (11:18) or “all the words” (32:46) on (על) their heart. The Qal waw consecutive perfect 2mp of שים functions as a command in 11:18 and the Qal imperative 2mp of שים in 32:46 communicate that it is desirable for the people to place or set Moses’ instructions on their heart and soul, that is, for them to internalize the torah or instruction of Moses. In 6:6, the Qal waw consecutive perfect 3cp of היה “to be” indicates that the words which Moses commanded the people shall be upon (על) their heart.41 These exhortations to have Moses’ words on the heart call the people to internalize the torah. They are to place the torah on the part of them, which controls their feelings, reason, desires, and will. Moses envisions nothing less than a people fully constrained and controlled by the torah from the heart. The vision is a good one. But how does Deuteronomy expect the vision to be realized in the day to day lives of the people?

2. Heart Circumcision Attains the Deuteronomic Vision. Deuteronomy presents circumcision of the heart as important means for attaining the Deu-
teronomic vision of loyalty from a devoted heart. The root מָלַל to circumcise occurs only twice in Deuteronomy and both instances relate to circumcision of the heart (10:16; 30:6). עַרְלָה foreskin occurs only once as the object of מָלַל in 10:16. We will treat the matter systematically as follows: (1) interpret the metaphor in 10:16, (2) interpret the metaphor in 30:6, and (3) synthesize the inner deuteronomic development and draw preliminary conclusions.

Deuteronomy 10:16
Deuteronomy 10:12-22 is a unit of discourse contained in the General Stipulation section of Deuteronomy (4:45-11:32; see the covenant structure above). This whole section is unified by the central theme of loyalty to Yahweh in covenant relationship. The basic outline of the General Stipulation is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Stipulation: Deuteronomy 4:45-11:32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Basic Principle of Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Measures for Maintaining Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Implications of Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Warnings against Forgetting Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Failures in Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Restoration to Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Choices required by Covenant Relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dissertation by Steven Guest analyzed 10:12-22 as an independent unit and he applied the heading “Restoration to Covenant Relationship.” Immediately before this unit, Moses rehearsed many of the failures of covenant relationship in 9:1-10:11, including the provocation of Yahweh in the wilderness (9:7), the incident of the golden calf (9:8-21), and the stations of the wilderness wandering where the people rebelled (9:22-24). These acts of treachery and rebellion against Yahweh led to Moses’ intercessory activity in 9:25-10:11. In 9:6 and 9:13 the people are described specifically as עַרְלָה “stiff-necked people” or “stubborn people.” This section then prepares the way for Moses’ exhortation to maintain covenant loyalty or to restore covenant relationship with the present generation (וַעֲתָה “and now” in 10:12 and 10:22).

In Deuteronomy 10:12-22 Moses exhorts the people to maintain covenant loyalty by balancing exhortations with statements about the
character of Yahweh in episodic fashion. The statements about Yahweh’s character become the grounds for the earnest pleas to be devoted to Yahweh, their God, and it is the theme of loyal devotion, which prompts the origination of the reference to heart circumcision. The literary structure of 10:12-22 establishes heart circumcision as the central concern in Deuteronomy:

| B1    | Yahweh is Praised: Sovereign Creator and Redeemer           | 14-15 |
| A2    | Exhortation to Loyal Devotion: Circumcise and Do Not Stiffen | 16    |
| B2    | Yahweh is Praised: Supreme God and Faithful to Weak         | 17-18 |
| A3    | Exhortation to Loyal Devotion: Love, Fear, Serve, Cling, Swear | 19-20 |
| B3    | Yahweh is Praised: Faithful God of the Patriarchs and Exodus| 21-22 |

The praise sections (B) function as the grounds of the exhortations (A) for the people to be loyal to Yahweh. The fact that Yahweh loved them (v. 15, 18) becomes the ground for them to love the marginalized (sojourner in v. 19) and to be loyal to Yahweh himself (v. 12-13, 20). The literary artistry of the unit is particularly acute at v. 16, the verse under investigation. The *center* of the exhortation sections (A²) contains the only positive command which calls the people to an *internal* action, i.e., to circumcise their hearts. The literary structure itself indicates that the *central* concern is the *internal* condition of the human heart. The second half of the verse (v. 16b) confirms this interpretation since it contains a negative command which further clarifies the positive one. It commands the people to cease stiffening their necks, the very rebellion Moses just rehearsed with them (cf. 9:6, 13).

The meaning of circumcision in this context is very important to the interpretation of the verse and therefore the whole section. I have suggested that circumcision positively devotes and identifies a person to loyal service of God, i.e., signifies one is a priest. If this meaning is correct, then it would also be true in this context where now circumcision is applied internally to the center of the human being’s thoughts, volition, reason, and desires. A circumcised or devoted heart would then control and influence the actions and behavior of the whole person. The circumcised heart devoted to Yahweh would manifest itself in covenant loyalty as outlined by the external sections of the unit (A¹ and A³). Furthermore, because the foreskin negatively signifies an obstacle or impediment to some vital function, the removal of the foreskin of the
heart in this context indicates that the heart circumcised people would be a vital and flourishing people in covenant relationship with Yahweh. If the people had successfully obeyed the first part of verse 16, then they would have fulfilled everything God asked of them in verses 12-13 and 19-20, that is, they would have been completely loyal to Yahweh from a devoted heart.

In his article from 2003, Werner Lemke has cast doubt on the originality of Deuteronomy 10:16. He defends his own suggestion that 10:16 with its reference to circumcision of the heart was a later interpolation to the text and therefore it is not the starting point for the biblical metaphor but a later development to Deuteronomy, probably to be attributed to Jeremiah in the late 7th century B.C. He provides two reasons: (1) “First, the omission of v. 16 would cause no disruption of flow of the narrative, either in terms of syntax or content” and (2) “A second reason for questioning the authenticity of the originality of v. 16 has to do with the appropriateness or fit of the two metaphors used in a Deuteronomic context.” I will discuss each of these objections.

Lemke’s first reason is that verse 16a contributes nothing to the context in which it is situated and therefore it is not original to this context but was interpolated in a later redaction of the book of Deuteronomy. He argues that, although the presence of כְּ "for, because" in verse 17 could provide a motivation clause for the commands in v. 16, it functions better as a motivation or rationale for God’s election of Israel out of all the nations in v. 15. Perhaps the first part of verse 17, “God of gods....,” could be construed as an explanation for the election of Israel in v. 15, but it would be awkward then to add that God “does not show partiality” as part of the explanation of God’s particular election of Israel from all the nations. Rather, if verse 17 with its description of the sovereign and just character of Yahweh is the ground or motivation for the people to circumcise their hearts and not to be stiff necked any longer, then the commands in v. 16 are calling the people to be devoted and faithful to—not stubborn against—their covenant Lord and his Torah. Furthermore, the literary structure proposed above provides an internal reason for concluding that verse 16 is authentic to the immediate unit of discourse, since v. 16 is actually necessary for the inner logic and rhetoric of the paragraph.

Lemke’s second reason for viewing v. 16 as a secondary insertion is that neither metaphor in the verse is characteristically deuteronomic and therefore they are not appropriate to the context. He presents a case which attempts to show that the prohibition in 16b “you shall no longer stiffen your neck” (וְעָרַפְּכֶם לֹא תָּקִשׁוּ עָד) is not indigenous to Deu-
teronomy. Rather, Deuteronomy borrows the old idiom “stiff necked people” (הָּרֶעֶר כֹּּשֶׁת תְּעָזִּּּזֶּּּ) 2x (9:6, 13) from the golden calf incident in Exodus. He also lists “your stiff neck” (הַּרְּעֵּר כֹּּשֶׁת) (9:6, 13) from the golden calf incident in Exodus. He also lists “your stiff neck” (הַּרְּעֵּר כֹּּשֶׁת) in Deuteronomy 31:27. However, Lemke considers the verbal expression in 10:16b as foreign to Deuteronomy and not dependent or alluding to the older narrative of the golden calf incident. Three responses are in order: (1) Deuteronomy 2:30 does use the Hiphil of the verb רָעֶר “to harden” with a different object. (2) On Lemke’s view of verbal parallels, he would have to conclude that רָעֶר כֹּּשֶׁת “your stiff neck” in 31:27 is also foreign because it is not identical in wording to Exodus, but for some reason this instance is permitted to be authentic. (3) Jason Meyer points out that 10:16b uses the adverb “still” (עֹד), which assumes the usage of “stiff neck” in 9:6, 13. Given these reasons, one can safely set aside Lemke’s objections to the authenticity of 16b based on רָעֶר terminology.

Regarding heart circumcision, Lemke states, “A further difficulty with 10:16 is the seemingly unmotivated and isolated appearance of the circumcision metaphor in it.” After asserting that Deuteronomy 30:6 belongs to the latest redactional layers of the book, he then argues that 10:16 is isolated and unmotivated. Setting aside the question of 30:6 for the moment, Lemke’s objection still misses the mark. Heart circumcision is not “unmotivated” if one adequately understands the linguistic data. First, the literary structure of the passage reveals that v. 16 is necessary for the logic of the passage to cohere. The central obligation in 10:16 is internally focused on the heart, indicating that if the center or heart is circumcised the outward actions of the people will manifest a covenantally faithful relationship with Yahweh. Second, Lemke is unaware of the positive meaning of circumcision, that it signifies one is devoted to loyal service of Yahweh. Therefore, in a context full of loyalty language such as love, serve, cling, et al. why would the author not invoke the one image that would guarantee devoted, loyal service of Yahweh—heart circumcision. Rather than concluding circumcision of the heart as foreign to the context and as a secondary interpolation, the reference to it here reveals a redemptive-historical development for creating a covenant people who would be loyal to Yahweh and love him from a devoted heart brought about by circumcision. The second reference to heart circumcision in Deuteronomy 30:6 confirms this conclusion.
The second instance of circumcision in Deuteronomy comes at 30:6: “And Yahweh will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants (lit. “seed”) in order that you might love Yahweh, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul so that you might live.” The covenant curses end at 28:68, and 28:69 (EV 29:1) begins the Solemn Oath Ceremony (29-30). This section marks the agreement and entrance into the covenant made at Moab with the new generation (28:69 [29:1]). They emphasize the actual entering into the Moab covenant (28:69 [EV 29:1]) in 29:8, 11 (EV 9, 12). Peter Gentry’s outline of the Solemn Oath Ceremony is followed here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Heading</th>
<th>29:1 [28:69 H]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II. Narrative Introduction</td>
<td>29:2A [29:1 H]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Third Sermon</td>
<td>29:2B-30:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Past (hesed and ’emet) of Yahweh</td>
<td>29:2B-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Covenant Inauguration Ritual Language</td>
<td>29:10-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Reminder of Curses for Covenant Disloyalty</td>
<td>29:16-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Secret Things – Revealed Things</td>
<td>29:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Future Curse Followed by Blessing</td>
<td>30:1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Circumcised Heart: Reason for Future Blessing</td>
<td>30:11-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Final Warning RE: Life and Death</td>
<td>30:15-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Solemn Oath Ceremony rehearses the covenant form in brief: historical prologue, covenant inauguration, curses, and blessings. Chapter 30 predicts the curse, the blessing, the future blessing ensuing from the circumcised heart, and ends with a warning for the people to choose life. These chapters focus on covenant loyalty, for the people are entering into the covenant even now. The reference to heart circumcision in 30:6 as the response to impending covenant treachery (29:16-28) mirrors the usage in 10:16 where it functioned as the central response to covenant infidelity (9:1-10:11). Therefore both units (4:45-11:32 and 29:1-30:20) utilize heart circumcision as the key to resolving covenant infidelity and exile and thus heart circumcision is a theme that binds the book together.

Deuteronomy 30:1-14 expounds the blessing and the curse with an emphasis on the blessing that will accompany the return from exile. The syntax and structure of verses 1-10 are notoriously difficult, and the relationship of verses 11-14 to what precedes and follows is a crux for any interpretation of this chapter. First, my analysis of verses 1-10 is pre-
sented. Second, I attempt to relate verses 11-14 back to 1-10. Based on discourse grammar, the following structure for 30:1-14 emerges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Temporal Scheme of Return</th>
<th>1-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Protasis: The people return</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Apodosis: Yahweh restores the people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Scope of Return</th>
<th>4-7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Protasis: Difficult Circumstances</td>
<td>4a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Apodosis: Yahweh's Power to Restore</td>
<td>4b-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A¹ Geographical Return</td>
<td>4bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B¹ Blessings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A² Internal Transformation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B² Blessing: Safety from Enemies</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Results of Return</th>
<th>8-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A¹ Obedience</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B¹ Blessings</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A² Obedience</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV. Explanation of Return</th>
<th>11-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Hebrew literature works in both a kaleidoscopic and recursive manner, that is, it examines a topic from one angle, then sets it down in order to pick up the same topic again and examine it from a different and complementary angle. After all angles or passes at the same topic are heard one can correctly interpret the text. Verses 1-10 describe the return from exile from three different but complementary angles. Verses 1-3 provide a broad temporal scheme of return from exile. Verses 4-7 treat the scope of the return from exile and as such provide the second pass on the same topic of return from exile. Verses 8-10 treat the results of the return from exile and contain the third and final pass on the matter. Verses 11-14 are the explanation ("for" כִּי) of the blessing of the return from exile. Verse 11 resumes the theme of future obedience of the command given by Moses ("which I am commanding you today" אֶשֶר אֹנִכי ְמַצְוּךָ ַהֹיּום) when the people return from exile.

The כִּי ("when" or "if") of verse 1 probably introduces the protasis of a temporal clause (an interpretation as old as the LXX [ὡς ἄν]) in verses 1-2, while verse 3 functions as the apodosis. These three verses provide the general temporal framework for Israel’s return from exile. In verses 1-2, the focus is on the initiative of the people to return to Yahweh and in verse 3 Yahweh’s subsequent restoration of the people.
This first section functions as the opening to the entire unit and as such it provides the broadest of parameters for the people’s return to Yahweh and Yahweh’s restoration of the people. Zechariah summarizes this theme in 1:3: Return [Israel] to me and I [Yahweh] will return to you.

The division between the first unit and the second unit is determined by discourse grammar. Verse 4 opens with מֵאֲלָה יִקְּתֹל and therefore signals a break in the discourse sequence. In this verse, מֵאֲלָה imperfect marks the protasis of a conditional clause. This clause opens a new protasis, syntactically distinct from verse 1, and its apodosis consists of verses 4b-7. These verses are unified around the theme of Yahweh’s efficacious power to return the people from exile. The protasis (4a) sets the stage in hyperbolic terms by describing the outcast of Israel as at the outermost part of the heavens. Verses 4b-7 then describe Yahweh’s powerful return of the outcast from the outermost part of heaven in an A1 B1 A2 B2 structure. A1 describes the physical return from exile, while B1 describes the blessings associated with the return in Abrahamic covenantal terms (שַׁלְיָה נַעֲרָה “to possess” Gen 15:7 et al.; פָּרָה “to multiply” Gen. 17:2 et al.). A2 further interprets the return from exile in terms of Yahweh’s circumcision of the people’s hearts. B2 resumes the theme of blessing by describing a safety for the people, which results from Yahweh setting curses on their enemies. This theme alludes to Gen. 12:3, where Yahweh promised Abraham that he would curse the one who cursed him. That heart circumcision is juxtaposed to allusions to the Abrahamic covenant suggests a development to the theme of circumcision within the canon. In other words the OT canon—within the Abrahamic and Israelite covenants—is already showing that circumcision in Genesis 17 was an external type or pattern of the greater internal circumcision to come.

Regarding the structure, the A sections mark two stages in the return from exile, while the B sections mark the blessings associated with return from exile. A1 details the geographical return from exile, while A2 expounds the spiritual return from exile employing circumcision of the heart to explain the internal transformation which will devote the people to a loyal love of Yahweh. Although there are two distinct stages of the return in Deuteronomy, the time frame for each stage is not clearly delineated in this text. Later in redemptive history and in the canon, Isaiah will delineate two returns from exile, the geographical return to be accomplished by the servant Cyrus, and the spiritual return to be accomplished by the Suffering Servant. Therefore Deuteronomy
30:1-10 is at the headwaters of a major theme to be developed by the prophets. The people will return from exile but they will not undergo spiritual return from exile until sometime later.

The division between sections two and three depends on the discourse feature in verse 8 (x yiqtol), which indicates a sequential break from the previous waw consecutive perfects in verses 5-7. This section is unified around the central theme of the results of the return from exile. Verses 8 (A¹) and 10 (A²) portray the returned people as an obedient people to Yahweh. Verse 9 (B) pronounces the blessings for covenant faithfulness. Therefore an A¹ B A² structure emerges from the final three verses, which focus attention on the main theme of return from exile present throughout verses 1-10.

There are two interpretive options regarding Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and its relationship to the preceding section: (1) Verses 11-14 return the reader to the present and teach that the Torah is not too difficult for Israel to keep. (2) Verses 11-14 continue the eschatological force of verses 1-10 and therefore the ease of keeping the Torah accompanies heart circumcision upon the second stage of the return from exile. The present exegesis supports the second option: the circumcision of the heart in 30:6, which the people could not do themselves (10:16), will free the people to love Yahweh. When the prophets describe the heart change to occur in the new covenant, they typically include a description of the people keeping the Torah or God’s commands (Ezek 36:27; Jer 31:33-34). In Deuteronomy, the connection between internal transformation and obedience of the Torah is not made explicit in 30:6. However, if 30:11-14 continues the thought in 1-10 as a subordinate clause explaining the future implications of the circumcised heart, then 30:11-14 clarifies that the internal transformation of heart circumcision leads to keeping the Torah commanded by Moses in Moab. The ease of keeping the Torah was not a reality tied to the circumcision of the Abrahamic and Sinai covenants; rather, it was a reality predicted to accompany the circumcision of the heart and the new covenant at the second stage of the return from exile. At this time, the exile is ended and the blessed restoration commences.

Synthesis of Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6

Heart circumcision appears twice in Deuteronomy and a comparison and contrast of the two texts and their contexts is illuminating. First, these texts and contexts share a number of parallels. Jason Meyer has
noted linguistic parallels between the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to love him 10:12</th>
<th>to love Yahweh 30:6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with all your heart and all your soul 10:12</td>
<td>with all your heart and all your soul 30:2, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to keep Yahweh’s commands and his statutes 10:13</td>
<td>to keep his commands and his statutes 30:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which I am commanding you today 10:13</td>
<td>which I am commanding you today 30:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for good 10:13</td>
<td>for good 30:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your fathers 10:15, 22</td>
<td>your fathers 30:5, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circumcise the foreskin of your heart 10:16</td>
<td>Yahweh will circumcise your heart 30:6</td>
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The parallels are deeper when the previous context of each passage is considered. As we noted in the case of 10:12-22, 9:1-10:11 recount the many failures in covenant on the part of the people. 10:12-22 functioned as the response to those covenant failures. In the face of covenant breach and Yahweh’s grace, 10:12-22 instructed the people to devote themselves anew to Yahweh’s covenant, which was pointedly summarized by heart circumcision in 10:16. In the case of 30:6, the previous context in Deuteronomy 29:16-28 (EV) focuses on Israel’s impending plunge into exile. The curse is coming upon the people. Deuteronomy 30:1 confirms this interpretation since both the blessing and the curse will come upon Israel. But curse and exile are not the final word. As we have seen from 30:1-10, Yahweh had planned a grand return from exile, which included the circumcision of the people’s hearts. Therefore, both heart circumcision texts appear in contexts which are solutions to the plights caused by failure in covenant. Heart circumcision is one theme that glues the book of Deuteronomy together.

Although there are many similarities between the passages, there is one major difference. In 10:16 Moses commands the people to circumcise their own hearts and to cease being rebellious. Given the full scope of redemptive history, this command is tantamount to telling a kleptomaniac to stop stealing without giving him or her any power to overcome the extreme desire to steal. In 10:16, Moses’ command to circumcise one’s heart is similar to his prayer for them in Numbers 11:29, “But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!’” (ESV). The bare command to circumcise one’s heart will not accomplish heart circumcision. In contrast, 30:6 uses the assertive
modality and not the deontic. Part of the second stage in the return from exile includes Yahweh circumcising the hearts of the people. This circumcision will devote the people to him. Indeed, they will love Yahweh with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might.

**Conclusion**

Circumcision of the foreskin marked one for devoted service to Yahweh and therefore it is a fitting sign for Israel who was called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). Abraham’s family bore the sign which marked them as a holy priesthood and devoted them to the service of Yahweh. But Israel’s history contradicts the sign they bore. Rather than being a royal priesthood, they were stubborn and rebellious (cf. Deut 9:4-6; 29:3). A people bearing the sign of circumcision of the flesh was a type, a picture of a people devoted to Yahweh and his kingdom within a covenant relationship. However, redemptive history reveals that the type underwent development from as early as Deuteronomy 10:16 and the OT was already anticipating the reality to which the type pointed: internal circumcision of the heart. Deuteronomy 30:1-14 and the rest of the OT witness reveals that this heart circumcision was to take place at the second stage of the return from exile, the stage when Yahweh would finally act to bring Babylon out of the hearts of the people. Therefore, heart circumcision resolves the curse of exile and becomes the ground for the blessing through obedience to the Torah.

The heart circumcision theme introduced in the Torah undergoes development through the canon. The Prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, continue to refer to heart (un)circumcision and widen it to include the reality of heart change (e.g. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:27). The NT confirms that this eschatological hope dawned in Christ and through him extends to the church (cf. Rom 2:28-9; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11-12). The three texts within the Torah set an early trajectory that God’s people would one day experience his eternal blessing by worshipping and serving him from a devoted heart. They would ultimately have what Israel as a nation lacked—circumcised hearts.

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1 I wish to thank Peter Gentry for reading an earlier draft of this paper. His comments saved me from many errors and stimulated my thinking on this topic in significant ways.


3 I am currently in the process of submitting for publication a paper entitled “The Meaning of Circumcision in Israel: A Proposal for a Transfer of Rite from Egypt to Israel,” which treats exhaustively the matter of circumcision in ancient Near Eastern cultures, especially Egypt.

4 For the argument that God made one covenant with Abraham, which was upheld with him in Gen 17 and the rest of the patriarchs, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Biblical Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 275-80. Henceforth, this work will be referred to with the abbreviation KTC. See also Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “God’s Covenant with Abraham,” *JETS* 56.2 (2013): 249-71. Niehaus’ argument rests on the observation that the patriarchal narratives only refers to a singular “covenant” when referring to the covenant made with Abraham and never refers to covenants with the patriarchs.

5 On Ur as the old Ura in North Syria, see Cyrus H. Gordon, “Abraham and the Merchants of Ura,” *JNES* 17 (1958): 30-31. See also Cyrus H. Gordon, “Abraham of Ur,” in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to G. R. Driver* (eds. D. W. Thomas and W. D. McHardy; Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 77-84. More recently Hershel Shanks has defended this proposal in Hershel Shanks, “Abraham’s Ur: Is the Pope Going to the Wrong Place?” *BAR* 26/1 (Jan/Feb 2000): 16-19, 66-67. See Shank’s map on page 19 for the contrast between the two proposed locations. Gordon handles the seeming linguistic discrepancy between the two names as an inter-Semitic difference. The -a in Ur may be long (Aramic definite article “the City or Station,” cf. LXX) or short in which case it would be indicating the oblique case of a diptotic place name. Either way, this ending is not part of the root and would be dropped in later Hebrew. This view accounts for some of the geographical problems with the southern Ur, such as the crossing of the Euphrates (e.g. Josh 24:2-3) and the mention of the Kesed (Kasdim; “Chaldeans”) in Gen 22:22 shortly after Aram. The new Ur on the south west side of the Euphrates cannot account for the details in geography, and there is no evidence of circumcision in all of eastern Mesopotamia.


7 This assertion regarding the origin of circumcision is prevalent in the literature, but this writer could not find evidence which supports it. See the examples of Fox, “Sign of the Covenant,” 591-2. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 47. Adolphe Lods, *Israel: From its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century* (trans. S.H. Hooke; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1932), 198. Paul R. Williamson, “Circumcision,” in *DOTP*, 122. Propp, “Origins of Infant Circumcision,” 355 n. 1. Fox attempts to give anthropological evidence, which reveals that some tribes perform circumcision before marriage today, but although anthropological studies have a crucial role in answering this question, one must, as Fox does, remember the tenuous nature of such evidence, when attempting to establish ancient practice and significance (Fox, “Sign of the Covenant,” 591).

8 Jonckheere, “Circumcision,” 228. Jonckheere indicates that two procedures of incomplete circumcision existed in Egypt: either 1) to longitudinally split the prepuce on the medial line, or 2) to make immediately an excision taking away a triangular scar (225; for comparison see Fig. 3, 226; see Fig. 4 and 5 for the evidence of both procedures). See Sasson, “Circumcision,” 474; Steiner, “Incomplete Circumcision,” 503; and DeRouchie, “Circumcision,” 187, who also accept the conclusions of Jonckheere’s study. For a dissenting opinion see Paul Ghalioungui, *Magic and Medical Science in Ancient Egypt* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 96-97. Ghalioungui’s reason for doubt comes from the Greek historian Strabo, who may indicate two parts to the circumcision operation: 1) the longitudinal cut on the medial line, and 2) then a circular one, around the base of the first. However, even Ghalioungui recognizes that one must be cautious with Strabo’s statements. In the final analysis, Jonckheere’s primary evidence
Though using different section headings but agreeing on the main section breaks, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Circumcision*,” 231. He says, “It [age] must be decided by interpreting the age attained by the individuals reproduced on the two reliefs speaking of circumcision. Now, do we need to recall that in Egypt the representation of the human figure is very often conventional? The man is generally reproduced without taking account of his age and without always taking care to endow him with an express fullness of physique.”

Ghalioungui, *Magic and Medical Science in Egypt*, 150.

Jonckheere, “Circumcision,” 232. Sasson, “Circumcision,” 474. Sasson says, “In Egypt, however, texts, sculptures, and mummies seem to support, the conclusion that babies never underwent the operation; it was reserved for either a period of prenuptial ceremonies or, more likely, for initiation into the state of manhood.” The evidence confirms the first part of Sasson’s statement concerning babies, but the evidence does not confirm his positive proposal.


Foucart, “Circumcision (Egyptian),” 674a-b, 675b. Stracmans, “Encore un texte peu connue relative à la circoncision des anciens égyptiens,” 11-12. Unfortunately, most scholars have either overlooked the research of Stracmans, or they have not presented his ideas fully enough for others to appreciate his work. Sasson is an example of the latter, for he mentions the work of Stracmans, but he does not give the reader a lucid presentation of his evidence or his arguments. See Sasson, “Circumcision in the Ancient Near East,” 474 (esp. n. 10).


Foucart, “Circumcision (Egyptian),” 676a. Foucart concludes, “Among the numerous explanations suggested for circumcision in general, we must first of all, for reasons given above, exclude those that connect it, directly or indirectly, with puberty.”

Stracmans, “Encore un texte peu connue,” 14. Other texts which describe circumcision describe games and other aspects of an initiation ceremony. See Maurice Stracmans, “Un rite d’initiation a masque d’animal,” 427-440. Stracmans examines the bas-relief from the Ancient Empire n˚ 994 in the British Museum, and discerns an animal mask, games (or dances?), and a separation aspect to the ritual. Stracmans posits that this scene depicts events consecutive to circumcision and not, as with Ankh-ma-hor, to a representation of the circumcision proper (432).


Foucart, “Circumcision (Egyptian),” 676b.


I am grateful to Stephen Dempster for drawing my attention to these “uncircumcised” texts and suggesting that the foreskin blocks the flow of life and therefore the uncircumcised one will die or be cut off. For more on the negative aspects of circumcision, see *KTC*, 274-275 and the other literature cited there. For the view that the foreskin was viewed as a barrier to fruitfulness see also Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 218-9 n. 26. Although the authors mistakenly claim circumcision was a fertility ceremony practiced on adolescents in Egypt, their assessment of the foreskin as a barrier to life is correct given the biblical texts. Furthermore, circumcision was not necessarily removing a barrier for Abram to sire a son, for he had already had a son with Hagar in an uncircumcised state. This shows less of a focus on fertility and more of a focus on a sign which indicates devotion to Yahweh in covenant and now the negative effects of non-circumcision, which does not result in lack of fertility but results in being cut off from vital covenant relationship with Yahweh (Gen 17:14). This conclusion corroborates what has been suggested about heart circumcision. Not only is the heart devoted to the service of God, heart circumcision also ensures that a person will have a vital and faithful covenant relationship with Yahweh.

On the expectation of "wholehearted" loyalty in Hittite treaties, see Beckman, Adele Berlin, Werner E. Lemke, "Circumcision of the Heart: The Journey of a Biblical Metaphor," in Kiuchi, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), 17, states, "In simpler words, poetics makes us aware of how texts achieve their meaning. Poetics aids interpretation. If we know how texts mean, we are in a better position to discover what a particular text means."

For these themes in the Hittite texts see Gary Beckman, Hittite Diplomatic Texts (2nd ed.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 2.

On the helpful distinction between "outward" and "inward" holiness as the book of Leviticus progresses see Kiuchi, Leviticus, 45. One does not need to accept his definition of holiness.
Further evidence that the waw-consecutive perfect is an imperative comes from the use of  {...} (cf. Deut 7:7-8). These references usually contain the full phrase: “with all your heart and with all your soul” though 6:5 contains the additional הָנַּה שְׁמַעְתֶּם usuall translated “with all your might.” In the course of my research, I was glad to see a similar study done by Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 239.

Discourse grammar marks the verb in 6:6 as an imperative in a long chain of commands beginning with the imperative in 6:4 (שָׁמַע, “Hear”) and ending with a Qal waw consecutive perfect 2ms + 3mp in verse 6:9 (וָשִׁמֵּהוּ; “Write them”).

Deuteronomy also emphasizes the role of teaching for attaining covenant faithfulness, but this topic will have to be set aside at present (e.g. Deut 6:6ff).

Adapted from Steven W. Guest, “Deuteronomy 26:16-19 as the Central Focus of the Covenantal Framework of Deuteronomy.” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 56.

Ibid., 56.


Ibid., 307.

Ibid., 301-302.

Lemke does not supply a reason why a later redactor would insert this verse into the narrative flow. On his reasoning, the verse does not fit the present context, therefore it cannot be original to it. However, why would a later redactor add a verse into a context in which it did not fit previously? Because the verse is “isolated” and “unexpected” and contributes no meaning to the overall unit, Lemke has made his own suggestion of a later interpolation all the more improbable. It will not do to push the perceived “problem” on to a redactor unless Lemke can supply a reason for that redactor to add this verse into a context where it still has no semantic or syntactic reason for being there. Is this simply an instance where Lemke and others praise the redactors of the Pentateuch for such a great feat as joining the compositions together consistently and at the same time charging them with incompetence to insert such a theologically loaded verse into a completely alien context? He nowhere explains this move on the part of the redactor. R. N. Whybray pointed out that the redactors were necessary for the Documentary Hypothesis, but their work was not clearly delineated by source critics. Specifically, one is at pains to discern what is an addition from a redactor and what is original to the source. See R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 120-126, esp. 122-123.

Lemke, “Circumcision,” 301.

Further evidence that the waw-consecutive perfect is an imperative comes from the use of הָנַּה “since” in verse 14. This particle anticipates an imperative by providing the ground for the imperative. Therefore, the use of הָנַּה in v. 14 and ֵי in v. 17 suggests the imperative in v. 16 is original. For this use of הָנַּה see Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 203.

Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9* (2nd ed.; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 202. Christensen provides the following, alternative chiasmic structure: A “the great commandment”—fear YHWH your God (10:12-13) / B YHWH owns the whole universe but he has chosen you (10:14-16) / B’ YHWH is “God of gods” and he loves the sojourner (10:17-19) / A’ Fear YHWH, for he is your God (10:20-22). Although this analysis appears simpler, it ignores verse 16, the crux of the unit, and it does not fully integrate it with verses 14-15 in the commentary. בָּאָהוּ (waw-consecutive perfect) in v. 16 is not sequential to verses 14-15 (v. 14 is a verbless clause, marking a digression from the main even line; v. 15 uses an x qatal + wayyiqtol to indicate past time) but rather it continues the deontic modality initiated by the question “What does Yhwh, your God, demand from you?” Verse 12a is further explained by four infinitive constructs + כִּי in v. 12 (fear…walk…love…serve) and these are further explained by the modal infinitive + כִּי in v. 13 (by keeping…). Given the strong emphasis on loyal obedience in verses 12-13 it is more logical to take the waw-consecutive perfect in v. 16 as sequential with these verses and to understand verses 14-15 as a digression from the main event line, providing the initial ground for being loyal to Yhwh. Similarly, verses 19-20 (v. 19 כַּחְבָת֬ הֵן [waw-consecutive perfect]; v. 20 כַּחְבָת֬ הֵן) is not understood as sequential with verses 17-18 (v. 17 is a verbless clause marking a digression from the main event line; v. 18 is also a verbless clause, containing two participles indicating concurrence but digression to verse 17b “not showing partiality” and “taking no bribe”) but rather these verses continue the deontic modality initiated in vv. 12-13 and continued in v. 16. Verse 21 contains two verbless clauses and are also digressive to the main event line. These clauses provide
more grounds for Israel to be loyal to Yahweh. Verse 22 contains two verbal clauses (x qatal + x qatal), which mark the end of the section. Interestingly, the verbs in 11:1 switch from 2mp forms to 2ms forms, perhaps indicating the beginning of a new unit.


53 Lemke notes that the expression is used in several “later texts” such as 1 Kgs. 17:14; Jer. 7:26 et al, and therefore relegates Deut 10:16b to this later date. Ibid., 302. This begs the question and appears to rule out any chance for Deuteronomy to stand at the headwaters of the metaphor.

54 The Hebrew of 2:30 is close to the construction in 10:16b. כִּי־הִקְֺשָה יְהׄוׇה אֱלׂהֶיךָ אֶת־רוּחוׄ וְאמֵּץ אֶת־לְבָבוׄ רִמְּנָהשׁ אֵלֶּיךָ אֶת־לְבָבוֹת בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁם יְהֹוָה כִּי־כָּל־בָּשָׁר לִפְנֵי יָהְウェָה שֵׁמְנָהשׁ בָּשָׁר. Yahweh stiffened the spirit of Sihon and hardened his heart. The meaning is the same as stiff necked. These expressions describe the stubborn and obstinate.


56 Lemke, “Circumcision,” 302. Lemke later expands on this reason, “Circumcision [in connection with Abrahamic covenant in Gen 17] plays no role in the book of Deuteronomy, and where the ancestors are mentioned at all, it is usually collectively and with reference to God’s love of or oath and promise to them, rather than the covenant of circumcision.” Ibid., 302. Lemke then appeals to source critical theory which designates Genesis 17 to P, a later source than D as the argument goes. But what is interesting here is that Lemke is arguing against Moshe Weinfeld, who concludes in his commentary that 10:16 is authentic because of the numerous appeals to the patriarchs in Deuteronomy and the specific reference to “your fathers” in Deut 10:15, 22. Due to source critical theory, Lemke was unpersuaded by Weinfeld’s argument and concludes that if one wants to hold the priority of D over P and the originality of 10:16, then the introduction of the metaphor “is a rather isolated and unexpected invention by the author of Deuteronomy, who used it essentially as a synonym for the more commonly known metaphor of the stiff neck.” Ibid., 303. For Weinfeld’s contribution see Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1-11 (AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 437.

57 Lemke, “Circumcision,” 299-300. Lemke posits that circumcision related to initiation and/or marriage rites. He also notes that circumcision became primarily associated with inclusion into the covenant community. All notions of a positive sign of devotion or consecration are absent from his short discussion which points to the ABD article by Hall. For interaction with Hall, see the discussion on the background of circumcision above.


59 The singular “outcast,” even though representative of the whole community, may still emphasize the fact that Yahweh is concerned to return each individual from exile.

60 Cf. KTC, 437-439 (for Isaiah), 538-541 (for Daniel).

61 This is the majority opinion. J. Gordon McConville, Deuteronomy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002) 429. Although McConville believes the perspective reverts “to the present time,” he does allow for the tension created by this paragraph which indicates the ease of keeping the Torah and the deuteronomistic theme of Israel’s inability to keep it (cf. Deut 9:4-6). But he decides that “the appeal to the Moab generation has its own integrity” even though he also sees that “ultimately the realization of an obedient people will depend on Yahweh’s new act in compassion.”


63 Space constraints prohibit further probing of this passage. Baker does answer several objections regarding this view. Chief among these objections include: how did those under the old covenant like Caleb and Josiah keep the Torah? Baker answers, “Those like Caleb and Josiah who seem to have ‘circumcised hearts’ should be seen as trusting in God’s future promises of total redemption. Their hope in a future actualization of new covenant benefits has produced present godliness, but this should not be seen as any kind of internal circumcision of the heart that happens apart from the actualization of the new covenant itself” (Baker, 7). I point out along with Coxhead and Baker that there are only verbless clauses in verses 11-14. These clauses depend on the context for their temporal aspects. Cf. Ellen van Wolde, “The Verbless Clause and Its Textual Function,” in The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches (ed. Cynthia Miller; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999) 333.

64 Meyer, The End of the Law, 247-8. The list has been slightly revised and adapted.

The apostle Paul asserted that the Mosaic or old covenant bore “a ministry of condemnation,” whereas the new covenant in Christ bears “a ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor 3:9). The author of Hebrews added that Jesus’ new covenant mediation “makes the first one [i.e., the old covenant] obsolete” and “does away with the first in order to establish the second” (Heb 8:13; 10:9). The new covenant supersedes the old, yet in a way that the old retains and in fact increases its use as a prophetic witness to Christ (Rom 1:1–3; 3:21; 16:25–26; 2 Cor 3:14; cf. Luke 1:70; 24:26–27, 44–47; John 5:39, 46; Acts 26:22–23). Furthermore, when appropriated in light of Christ’s fulfillment, the old serves as a lasting indirect ethical guide for Christians (Matt 5:17–19; 2 Tim 3:16; cf. e.g., 1 Cor 9:8–12; Eph 6:2–3; 1 Tim 5:18; 1 Pet 1:14–16). Thus Paul says that the old covenant prophets wrote “for us” as new covenant believers (Rom 4:23–24; 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; cf. Heb 6:18).
In asserting this, he marks the lasting value of the Mosaic law-covenant this side of the cross and the fulfillment of Moses’ prediction that those inwardly transformed in the new covenant age would hear and heed all that he was speaking in Deuteronomy (Deut 30:6, 8; cf. Jer 12:16; 30:33; Ezek 36:27).³

The NT uniformly stresses that Christ’s teaching through the apostles provides the essence of Christian instruction (Matt 7:24–27; 17:5; 28:19–20; John 16:12–14; 17:8, 18, 20; 2 Thes 2:15). It also contends that doctrine and preaching that is truly Christian must work through the lens that the apostles provide and in light of the fulfillment Jesus brings (Matt 5:17–20; Acts 2:42; Eph 2:20; Heb 1:1–2). These truths regarding the superseding nature of the new covenant do not, however, minimize the significance of the OT for Christians. Indeed, the OT was Jesus and the apostles’ Bible, and Deuteronomy was one of the books they most often cite in their preaching (along with Genesis, Isaiah, and Psalms) in order to clarify what Christ was about and the nature and place of the church in redemptive history. Why was Deuteronomy so important to the early church, and what importance should it have for us today? This essay seeks to synthesize the lasting message of Deuteronomy for Christians.⁴ After tackling the “Who? When? Where? and Why?” questions, I will use six sections to overview the book’s treatment of the nature and possibility of covenant relationship:

- **The charter of relationship**: A constitution for guiding Israel’s relationship with God.
- **The context of relationship**: The importance of taking God and his Word seriously.
- **The essence of relationship**: The centrality of love in one’s relationship with God.
- **The foundation and perpetuation of relationship**: The perils of sin, the pleasures of surrender, and the promise of grace.
- **The purpose of relationship**: The goal of love as God-exalting influence on the nations.
- **The Lord of relationship**: The supremacy of Yahweh over all.

I will then conclude considering the relationship of Deuteronomy to the work of Christ.

**Introductory Matters**

**Who?**

Deuteronomy consists largely of Moses’ final sermons, which he spoke (Deut 1:3, 5; 4:44; 5:1; 29:1) and transcribed (31:9, 22, 24; 32:45) for the Israelites who would live in the Promised Land (1:3, 35, 39). Later bibli-
cal figures affirmed the book’s Mosaic origin (Josh 8:32; John 5:46–47), nature, and authority (e.g., Josh 1:7–8; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 23:25; Mark 10:3–5; Acts 3:22–23; Rom 10:19). Furthermore, Joshua—Moses’ successor (Josh 1:7–8; 8:32; cf. Deut 3:38; 34:9)—and King David (1 Kings 2:3; cf. Deut 17:18) had written copies of something called “the Book of the Law (torah)” or “the Law of Moses,” the former title of which is the label Moses gave to his Deuteronomic material (29:21 [Hebrew 20]; 30:10; 31:26).

All this stated, someone other than Moses, living in the Promised Land, finalized the book’s form. Supplementing Moses’ three sermons (1:6–4:40; 5:1–26:19 + 28:1–68; 29:2[1]–30:20), warning song (32:1–43), and death-bed blessing (33:2–29), this narrator introduced the whole (1:1–4), clarified geo-historical data (2:10–11, 20–23; 3:9, 11, 13b–14; 10:6–7), and seamed together Moses’ messages (e.g., 1:5; 4:41–43, 44–5:1a; 29:1[28:69]). He then commented on the prophet’s death and succession (34:1–9), concluding, “there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses” (34:10–12; cf. 18:18). Because the narrator lets his voice be heard in only 62 of the total 959 verses in Deuteronomy (6.4%), his clear intent was to place Moses’ voice in the foreground.

When and Where?
Moses delivered and wrote his final messages around 1406 B.C. at the end of Israel’s forty years in the wilderness—just before his death and Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land west of the Jordan River (Deut 1:1–4; 4:1–5; 31:1–3, 9, 14, 24). The final form would have appeared during Israel’s tenure in the land, probably during or just following the conquest (before 1000 B.C.).

Moses gave his final words east of the Jordan River near Beth Peor in what was formerly the territory of Moab (1:1, 5; 3:29; 4:46; 29:1; cf. Num 21:26); from here, people viewed the Promised Land to the west “beyond the Jordan” (Deut 3:20, 25; 11:30; cf. Num 32:19). In contrast, the final editor of Deuteronomy was within the Promised Land, viewing Moses and Israel’s placement in Moab as “beyond the Jordan” (Deut 1:1, 5; 3:8; 4:41, 46–47, 49).

Why?
The collection of Moses’ messages in Deuteronomy supplied Israel with a charter for governing their lives in relation to God and his world within the Promised Land. Moses also intended that it provide clarity on the nature and fruit of covenant love for believers this side of ultimate restoration, for he claimed that those living in the age of heart circumcision would heed his words from Deuteronomy: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD you God with all your heart and with all
your soul ... And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today” (Deut 30:6, 8; cf. 6:4–5; 10:16–19; cf. Jer 12:16; 30:33; Ezek 36:27). As “the Book of the torah,” Deuteronomy served as God’s manual of “instruction” in at least three ways:

1. It reminded Israel of Yahweh’s greatness by stressing his uniqueness and his past and future grace toward them (e.g., 4:32–40; 6:20–25; 7:9–10), including ultimate restoration after exile;
2. It provided a lasting witness against Israel’s sin (31:26–29; cf. 28:58–63; 29:19–21);

**A Constitution for Guiding Israel’s Relationship with God**

Perhaps no other book influences biblical thought like Deuteronomy. Standing climactically as the final installment in the Pentateuch and concluding the account of Moses’ life, it clarified for the post-wilderness generation the significance of all that preceded it, and it provided them with a constitution for guiding their covenant relationship with Yahweh in the Promised Land. It also supplied the Bible’s later writers with a lens through which to interpret Israel’s covenant history and clarified what humanity’s response to Yahweh should be in this sometimes challenging world.10

Why did Deuteronomy have such influence? A key reason is that Moses set forth the book as a document of covenant reaffirmation for all who would live in the Promised Land during the leadership of Joshua and beyond (thus the title Deuteronomos, “second law”).11 As part of the fulfillment of his covenantal promises to the Patriarchs (Deut 1:8; 7:8; cf. Gen 15:18; 17:7) and in alignment with what he started with the exodus generation at Sinai (Horeb) (Deut 5:2–3; 29:1), Yahweh in Deuteronomy reaffirmed and developed his special covenant relationship with Israel just prior to their entry into Canaan (29:1, 12–15).12 While their entrance was thirty-eight years delayed (1:2–3; 2:14), for all who would dwell in the land, Deuteronomy’s exposition of the earlier covenant materials was to guide life in relationship with Yahweh until he fulfilled the promises he gave to Abraham (see Gal 3:23–29).13 According to the revealed teaching, to heed the instruction would result in sustained life and blessing; to ignore would result in curse and ultimately death (Deut 11:26–28; 30:15–18). In Paul’s words, “the very commandment that promised life” could in the end “be death to me” (Rom 7:10; cf. Deut 8:1).

Moses termed his Deuteronomic sermons, song, and blessing “the Book of
the *torah* (29:21 [20]; 30:10; 31:26)—God’s manual of “instruction” governing life in the Promised Land (for the structure, see Fig. 1). In it Moses clarified the nature and possibility of pursuing lasting covenant relationship and pleaded as a pastor on behalf of a loving covenant “father” who was calling for the sustained love of his “sons” (6:5; 14:1; 32:5–6; cf. Exod 4:22). Israel needed to listen to Moses’ teaching so they could “learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law” (Deut 31:12). Later, the prophet stressed, “It is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess” (32:47). He also emphasized that in the age of restoration following the curse (i.e., the new covenant), when God would do a love-enabling work in the hearts of his people (30:6), the teachings of Deuteronomy would still be important: “And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today” (30:8; cf. 4:30–31; Isa 2:2–3; 42:1–3; Jer 12:16; 31:33; Mic 4:1–3; Matt 5:17–19).

**Figure 1. Deuteronomy at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Structure</th>
<th>Suzerain-Vassal Treaty Echo in Deut 1–28</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superscription (Deut 1:1–4)</td>
<td>Title/Preamble (Deut 1:1–4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses’ 1st Sermon: God’s Past Grace and Israel’s Covenant Future (1:5–4:43)</td>
<td>Historical Prologue (1:5–4:43)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postscript (34:9–12)</td>
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**The Importance of Taking God and His Word Seriously**

Throughout his messages, Moses emphasized that Israel would enjoy life in the Promised Land only in a context of surrender to, dependence on, and
trust in Yahweh and his revelation. The people were to keep God and his Word central, for “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut 8:3; cf. Matt 4:4).

Moses believed a person could enjoy life only when he closely follows God, for turning away would be to choose death over life (Deut 30:15–20). The prophet stressed both that “[the LORD] is your life” (30:20) and his words are “your very life” (32:47), thus showing the amazing grace of God in disclosing his will to his people. From this perspective, Deuteronomy does not portray law as burden. God is the initiator, graciously giving directions; having experienced grace, his people respond by following his lead and thus sustain their experience of life that can be found only in relationship to him. This structure of grace is comparable to what God works in the new covenant, and some old covenant members like the worshipper of Psalm 119 celebrated this pattern of life: “I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life” (Ps 119:93). Moses charged Israel to “hear” and “follow” “the statutes and rules ... that you may live” (Deut 4:1) and then emphasized that, in contrast to the tragic deaths of all who had followed Baal of Peor, “you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today” (4:4).

A willingness to follow implies surrender to the leader (reverence/fear) as well as dependence on and trust in the leader’s readiness to guide one to the promised destination (faith). Within the biblical framework, obeying God (following) is rightly understood only as an outgrowth of a proper inner disposition toward Yahweh’s awe-inspiring nature (fear) and promises (faith).

The Bible emphasizes that in both the old and new covenants fearing the Lord generates holy living (Exod 20:20; Prov 1:7; Jer 32:39–40; Phil 2:12). It also stresses that a lack of such fear results in judgment (Matt 10:28; Rom 3:18). In line with this canonical perspective, Deuteronomy teaches that true obedience grows out of a heart that reveres Yahweh’s supremacy. This is clear from the book’s stress that fearing God must precede and give rise to following his ways. As seen most clearly in Deuteronomy 6:1–3; 17:19–20, and 31:11–13, the full pattern is as follows (see also 4:10; 5:23–29; 6:1–2; 10:12–13; cf. John 5:24–25; 6:44–45): The Teaching or Reading of God's Word → Hearing God's Word → Learning to Fear God → Obeying God = Life.

The old covenant portrayed obedience as the fruit of a heart-encounter with God. Furthermore, the progression teaching → hearing → fearing → obeying emphasizes that the Godward fear that produces dependent and productive living results only from God’s gracious disclosure of himself and his will in a way that captures the hearts of his people. Without God speaking, enabling hearing, and inciting fear, there is no obedience or life. Markedly, in Deuter-
onomy Moses not only called for commandment keeping as a fruit but also emphasized that Israel as a nation was spiritually deaf (never receiving the gift of “hearing”) and would therefore never follow God (Deut 29:4[3]; 31:16, 20, 27, 29) until the day he would overcome their disability (4:30–31; 30:6, 8, 11–14). In echo of both Moses and Isaiah, Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ... Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (John 6:44–45).

Along with urging a proper fear of God, Deuteronomy highlights the need for faith. Faith in the God of promise is a natural outgrowth of fearing Yahweh, for a true encounter with the living God proves both his believability and the desirability of lasting relationship with him (Heb 11:1, 6). Throughout the Bible, faith is future-oriented in that God’s people trust him to accomplish for them what they cannot do on their own (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:18–22; Heb 11:1, 6). A heart of God-dependence rather than self-reliance is the root; obedience is the fruit (Deut 29:18–19; cf. 1 John 3:7). Just as there is no true faith without obedience (1 Cor 13:2; James 2:17, 26), so also there is no true obedience without faith (Rom 14:23; Heb 11:6).

Deuteronomy’s commitment to what Paul termed the “obedience of faith” (Rom 1:5; 16:26; cf. 6:17–18) is clearly evident in the way Moses addressed Israel’s initial failure to enter the Promised Land. After affirming that Israel rebelled against God’s Word (Deut 1:26), the prophet asserted that Israel’s ultimate failure was in not “believing” God (1:32–36; 9:23; cf. Num 14:11; 20:12). The generation that first sought to enter the land lacked faith overflowing in obedience, and this lack of persevering surrender ultimately resulted in their ruin. In the words of the writer of Hebrews, Moses preached “good news” to the wilderness generation, but “the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened” (Heb 4:2; cf. Rom 9:32; Jude 5). While there was a remnant that trusted God (e.g., Joshua, Caleb), the majority rebelled. The writer then added, “Those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience” (Heb 4:6).

“Following the leader” is more than a kids’ game; it should be the pattern of our lives in relationship to God. We follow not to establish a relationship but to enjoy it. The lasting relevance of Moses’ call is seen in Jesus’ use of Deuteronomy 8:3 in his own battle with the devil: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4; cf. Luke 4:4). In both the old and new covenants, real obedience to the Lord flows out of a heart that is awed by his greatness, takes seriously his Word, is surrendered to his ways, trusts in his promises, and looks to him for help.
The Centrality of Love in One’s Relationship with God

What should one expect such God-centered, faith-filled, Bible-saturated living to look like from Moses’ perspective? Some may respond, “Keeping the Ten Commandments!” This is a reasonable assertion, in view of the foundational place of the Ten Words both in the Law (Exod 20:2–17; Deut 5:6–21) and in the rest of Scripture (e.g., Hos 4:2; Jer 7:8–11; Matt 19:18; Rom 13:9). However, in Deuteronomy and elsewhere, the Ten Words illustrate a more fundamental call—to love God and neighbor. As Jesus stressed, these two commands uphold “all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 22:37–40; cf. Mark 12:29–31). Similarly, Paul wrote that all other commandments are “summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Rom 13:9; cf. Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). Moses appears to have held the same view.

A Call to Covenant Love

Deuteronomy suggests that “loving God” is the Supreme Command, the initial step in a Godward life (Deut 6:4–5): “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Noted first is the object of one’s love—Yahweh our God, who is one. Moses here highlights both the personal relationship his audience had with Yahweh (he is “our God”) and the absolute sovereign status of Yahweh himself (he is “one”) (cf. 4:35, 39; 10:17; 32:39). As is stressed in the first of the Ten Words (“You shall have no other gods before me,” 5:7), the fundamental principle of the Shema highlights that Yahweh, Israel’s God, stands as the only sovereign; he acts alone, not as the head of a pantheon of rival deities but as the sole and ultimate power of the universe. This truth bears massive implications for human ethics. Because God is over all (6:5), we must love him with all—all one’s heart, all one’s soul, and all one’s might (6:5)! Jesus saw the charge to grasp God’s oneness so tightly linked with the call to love that he treated them together as one “most important” commandment (Mark 12:28–30).

So what is the nature and scope of this love? The immediate context of Deuteronomy 6 suggests that “love” for Yahweh is an affection-filled, life-encompassing, community-impacting, exclusive commitment to the Sovereign One. Deuteronomy 6:5 first suggests this definition by its call to love Yahweh with all one’s heart, soul (being), and might (substance). Rather than detailing three distinct parts of a person (i.e., a “hearty” part, a “souly” part, and a “mighty” part), these elements appear to characterize three expanding, yet overlapping, spheres of personhood, all of which are to proclaim God’s supremacy (see Fig. 2). “Heart” relates to all that is internal—one’s desires, emotions, attitudes, perceptions, and thoughts (e.g., Deut
“Soul” refers to one’s entire being or life—all facets of the “heart” plus everything outward: one’s body, words, actions, reactions (e.g., Gen 2:7; 9:5; Lev 21:11; 26:11). Finally, “might” points not only to physical strength but also to all that one has available for honoring God, which would include one’s spouse, children, house, land, animals, wardrobe, tools, toys, etc. All that we are and have should ring out, “My God is Yahweh!”

**Figure 2. The Spheres of Covenant Love in Deuteronomy 6:5**

The verses that follow further support this interpretation of the call to holistic covenant surrender to the Lord. Not only are the hearers to have Moses’ call to love the sovereign God impressed on their hearts (Deut 6:6; cf. Jer 31:33), but also they are to impress the words upon their children at all times (in pleasure and pain) and in all settings (at home and abroad), spreading a passion for God’s supremacy on to the next generation (Deut 6:7; cf. 6:20–25; 11:19). Furthermore, an allegiance to God above all else is to govern both the nature of one’s actions (“as a sign on your hand”) and the object and manner of one’s focus (“as frontlets between eyes”) (6:8; cf. 21:7; Exod 3:9, 16). Finally, all that takes place in the home (“on the doorposts of your house”) and community (“in your [city] gates,” author’s translation), in private and in a crowd, is to proclaim that God is truly the king (Deut 6:9).

Covenant love for Yahweh is indeed a whole-hearted, life-encompassing, community-impacting, exclusive commitment that calls us to open every closet of our lives and to fill all with radical God-centeredness. In using the familial language of “love,” the Lord appears to have adopted and adapted international treaty language for his own purposes. In a world where suzerain “fathers” (i.e.,
big kings) committed to “love” their vassal “sons” (i.e., small kings) and where vassal “sons” were called to “love” their suzerain “fathers” and their fellow vassal “brothers,” Yahweh approached Israel as the covenant Lord who sought to make a people his treasure. In accordance with the “love” he had for the patriarchs (4:37; 10:15), he set his affections on Israel, electing them (7:6; 14:2), redeeming them (7:8), becoming their covenant “king” (33:3, 5), and protecting them through the wilderness (23:5). As such, he was Israel’s “father” (32:6), and they were his adopted “sons” (14:1) in order that they might become God’s “inheritance” (4:20; 9:26, 29; 32:9), “treasured possession,” and “holy people” (7:6; 26:18–19; cf. Exod 19:5). In response to such grace, Israel was called to “love” Yahweh (Deut 6:5), the effect of which included loving their “brother” (10:19; cf. 14:27–29; 15:11; Lev 19:18)—a title representative of everyone (male and female) in the covenant community (Deut 15:12), unless specified otherwise (13:6). Like the faith that produces it, love for God and one’s neighbor is a human response to God’s covenant initiating and sustaining grace.

The Implications of Covenant Love
Immediately after calling God’s people to covenant love, Moses developed the nature of and need for this God-centered existence (Deut 6:10–8:20) and then unpacked how to enjoy lasting relationship with God (9:1–11:32). To love God necessitates (1) remembering Yahweh amidst the pleasures of life (6:10–25) and (2) removing all obstacles that could hinder a God-centered existence (7:1–26). Unless God’s people celebrate this life of radical dependence, destruction will come (8:1–20). Indeed, Israel must recognize their stubbornness and God’s sufficiency (9:1–10:11), and they must surrender to him in radical love to enjoy sustained blessing (10:12–11:32). They must in turn prove their love for God by loving their neighbor (Deut 10:12, 19; cf. Lev 19:18)—a love that flows from a transformed heart (Deut 10:16), overcomes idolatry (10:17a), images the love of God (10:17b–18), and gives as one has received (10:19).

Chapters 12–26 further develop the fruits of the Supreme Command, as Moses described “the statutes and rules” the Israelites were to heed in the Promised Land (12:1; 26:16), pursuing “righteousness and righteousness alone” (author’s translation) in every area of life (16:20). While some have unhelpfully titled these chapters the “Deuteronomic Law Code,” all of the instruction is pastoral. This is a sermon, giving hands and feet to the Supreme Command. Moses notes that love would include three spheres: righteousness in community worship (12:1–16:17), righteousness in community oversight (16:18–18:22), and righteousness in daily community life (19:1–26:15). As one skims over this material, what becomes clear is that Yahweh’s guidance ad-
dressed all aspects of human existence, whether criminal offences, civil cases, family relationships, community worship, or societal norms (see Fig. 3). Most instructions were themselves concrete expressions of love for others, whereas some were symbolic, filled with pageantry that pointed to heart realities that Israel herself was to recognize. The Sovereign One is passionate about right order in his world, and only when he is taken seriously is true righteousness manifest (cf. 6:25; 24:13; cf. Rom 2:13; 1 John 3:7–10).

Figure 3. General Content Distinctions of Old Testament Laws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Distinction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal</strong></td>
<td>Laws governing crimes or offenses that put the welfare of the whole community at risk; the offended party is the state or national community, and therefore the punishment is on behalf of the whole community in the name of the highest state authority, which in Israel meant Yahweh. SAMPLE ISSUES: Kidnapping and homicide; false prophecy and witchcraft; adultery and rape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exod 21:23–25</strong></td>
<td>“You shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil</strong></td>
<td>Laws governing private disputes between citizens or organizations in which the public authorities are appealed to for judgment or called upon to intervene; the offended party is not the state or national community. SAMPLE ISSUES: Accidental death and assault; theft and destruction of property; limited family issues like premarital unchastity, post-divorce situations, and the mistreatment of slaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deut 11:18–20</strong></td>
<td>“You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>Non-civil, domestic laws governing the Israelite household. SAMPLE ISSUES: Marriage and inheritance; the redemption of land and persons; family discipleship and care of slaves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rom 13:8–10:* “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments ... are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”
How gracious of God to spell out for his people the right way to live (see Deut 4:5–8)! The psalmist recognized the significance of this gift (Ps 19:9–10): “The rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.” Nehemiah too praised Yahweh for his “right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh 9:13), and Paul celebrated God’s law as “holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12; cf. 2:20). And because all scriptural commands are about loving our neighbor (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14), the apostle even drew from Deuteronomy’s wisdom to challenge Christians in their life of love (Deut 25:4 in 1 Cor 9:7–10; cf. 2 Tim 3:16; Eph 6:1–3; 1 Peter 1:15–16)—a pastoral appropriation of Deuteronomy in the
new covenant age that Moses and the later prophets anticipated (Deut 30:6, 8; Jer 12:16; 31:33; Ezek 36:27).

**The Prospect of Covenant Love**

Love for God and neighbor is the essence of covenant relationship. Horizontal and vertical love summarizes what God’s people were to do; the Ten Words (the “testimonies”) and all the additional “statutes and rules” clarify how God’s people were to do it (see Deut 4:45; 12:1; 26:16). This love is one that springs from the heart—an internal surrender that goes public through outward loyalty to God and care for the needy (Deut 4:39; 6:5–6; 8:5; 10:12–13, 16; 11:18; 26:16; 32:46).

While this is what the old covenant called for, Deuteronomy is also clear that most of Moses’ audience would never love this way, for their hearts would remain calloused in obstinacy, their lives sickened by spiritual disability (29:4[3]). Israel was not righteous but stubborn (9:6), which meant they needed heart surgery in order to love rightly (10:16). While this heart circumcision that gives rise to Godliness was rare in the old covenant age (but see Pss 37:31; 40:8; 119:10–11; Isa 51:7), Moses anticipated and the rest of the prophets affirmed that God would one day empower every member of the new covenant to love him and others rightly—not perfectly yet, but truly: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 30:6; cf. 30:8; Jer 31:33–34; Ezek 36:26–27; cf. Rom 2:25–29; 8:4–9, 13; 13:8–10).

**The Perils of Sin, the Pleasures of Surrender, and the Promise of Grace**

Throughout the book, the main challenge to a God-centered, fulfilled existence is the deceitfulness of sin manifest in two overlapping contexts: prosperity and paganism. As Israel entered the Promised Land, they needed to recognize how quickly riches or success can lead to self-reliance and to forgetting God as the ultimate provider (Deut 6:10–12; 8:10–18; 9:4; 29:19; 32:15). They also needed to be aware how easily the wrong crowd or an immoral setting can pull people away from God (7:3, 4, 16, 25; 11:16; 17:17). All members of the community, therefore, needed to be intentional to sustain their surrender and Godward focus. God takes sin seriously, and his people should too!

**Motivation: Perils, Pleasures, and Future Grace**

In Deuteronomy, Moses motivated Israel to battle sin and to love God by reaffirming the blessings and curses of Leviticus 26. Yahweh pledged to continue
to protect his people and to provide for them, given they continue to live as his people—remaining loyal to him from the heart (Deut 28:1–14; 30:3–10). However, he also warned against trading joy for pain and rest for discipline through faithless, self-exalting rebellion (11:16–17; 28:15–68; 29:19–21).

Promises motivate people by creating either desire or dread. In the words of Peter, “He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desires” (2 Pet 1:4; cf. Rom 4:18–21). In both the old and new covenants, believers come to look more like God and to battle the deceitful allurements of the evil one by focusing on what is more desirable—God’s promises! We will make different choices in the present if we truly believe that the outcome of one decision over another will produce more satisfying results. Believing God’s Word creates hope, and what we hope for tomorrow changes who we are today.27

The covenant promises of blessing, curse, and restoration blessing in Deuteronomy 27–32 (and Lev 26) address both spiritual and physical well-being, but the focus is on the latter (e.g., national security and influence, personal health and fertility, productivity, etc.). If Israel, with humble, God-honoring hearts would “not go after other gods” (Deut 28:14) but would carefully “do all his commandments” (28:1), God would remain with them (Lev 26:11–12), and they would always enjoy bountiful food, successful pregnancies, victory in battle, and more (esp. 28:1–14; cf. Lev 26:3–13). Not only this, obedience would result in the fulfillment of their mission to the nations (Deut 4:5–8; cf. Gen 12:2–3; Exod 19:4–6).28

Nevertheless, Deuteronomy is clear both in its explicit statements and in its inclusion of longer lists of curses than blessings (27:15–26; 28:15–68) that, while Israel would enjoy sporadic communal blessings (e.g., Israel’s victory over Jericho and Ai in Josh 5:13–8:29), the general pattern for them would be sin and the experience of curses. Israel was hard-hearted and would remain hard, resulting in their ruin. As Yahweh declared to Moses: “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day... I know what they are inclined to do even today” (Deut 31:16–17, 21). Similarly, Moses asserted, “I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death! ... For I know that
after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I commanded you. And in the days to come [lit. ‘in the latter days’] evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands” (31:27, 29; cf. 4:25–28). Israel’s rebellion, like Adam’s before them, would bring about the just judgment of God, resulting in exile (see 2 Kgs 17:14–18) and climaxing ultimately in the curse-bearing work of Messiah Jesus (Gal 3:13–14). In God’s intention, the old covenant bore a ministry of condemnation (2 Cor 3:9).

Nevertheless, as Moses anticipated (Deut 30:3–10; 32:34–43; 33:26–29; cf. 4:29–31) and the prophets clarified, the Eden-like, utopian picture of joy portrayed in the blessings and restoration blessings will come to full expression in the new creation (Isa 51:3; 65:17; Ezek 36:35; Rev 21:1–4; 22:1–5). Christ has already inaugurated this reality in his resurrection (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), but what has begun will be consummated on the last day. In contrast to the prosperity gospel, for Christians now, physical health, wealth, and safety are a future hope (1 Cor 9:25; Rev 21:4; cf. Isa 65:17–25) and not something that should be expected in this life. For while the obedience of Jesus has won us every spiritual blessing today (Eph 1:3; 2 Cor 6:16), the old age still continues and with it suffering, which identifies the believer with Christ (e.g., Luke 9:23; Rom 8:17) and is necessary for sanctification (Rom 5:3–5; 1 Tim 3:12; Jas 1:2–4; 1 Pet 1:6–8). However, in the day of consummation, God’s wrath and curse will be no more (Deut 30:7; 32:43; Rev 22:3), and believers, who now enjoy every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3; 2 Cor 6:16), will then receive their full inheritance (Eph 1:14; 1 Pet 1:4).

**Foundation: Perils, Pleasures, and Past Grace**

The promises in sight, Moses was also intentional to clarify the foundational reasons why Israel must continue to take seriously God, his Word, and his promises. Specifically, Deuteronomy spends much time reminding Israel of their past failure and experience of divine power, judgment, and grace (Deut 32:18) in order to nurture confidence in God’s promise of future grace and judgment (11:26–28; 30:15–18). Moses asserted that Yahweh’s past grace to Israel through both revelation and forgiveness was the basis for their future-oriented faith and the obedience that was to flow from it.

Moses devoted most of his first sermon to recalling Yahweh’s power and faithfulness during the thirty-eight years of wilderness discipline in order to challenge Israel’s present trust in God. The sheer power and size of “the sons
of the Anakim” (1:28) had incited the first generation’s rebellion, murmuring, and unbelief at Kadesh (1:26–27, 32; cf. Num 14:11; Deut 9:23), resulting in God’s punishing them (1:35). But both Moses (2:33, 36; 3:3, 18, 22, 24) and the narrator (2:10–12, 20–23; 3:11) highlight Yahweh’s superiority over these strong peoples, thus proving the need to be on God’s side in any battle. The one who originally promised to fight for Israel, just as he had against Egypt (1:30), and the one who carried Israel through the four decades of punishment (1:31; cf. 8:2–5; 29:5[4]), would now take them into the Promised Land. Yet would the new generation treasure God above all else, or would they, like their parents, doubt his ability?

For the Israelites to persevere with God in the present, they needed to look back, remembering their unworthiness to receive God’s affection (7:7; 9:6–8, 22–24) and the seriousness with which he had taken their past sins (1:35). They also needed to remember Yahweh’s vowed commitment to the patriarchs and to their offspring (1:8; 9:5; cf. Gen 12:1–3; 15:18; 17:7; 22:16–18), the freedom Yahweh alone gave them from slavery (Deut 5:15; 6:22–23), the gracious provision that Yahweh alone supplied them through the wilderness (2:7; 8:3–4; 29:5–6), and the fact that they alone among all the nations of the world were set apart to be Yahweh’s people (7:6; 14:2; 26:18; cf. Exod 19:5–6). Israel’s redeemer, therefore, deserved their allegiance, and out of obligation, gratitude, and anticipation, they needed to live for him alone.

Israel’s Problem: Hard Heartedness

Yet Israel was “stubborn” (Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27), “unbelieving” (1:32; 9:23; 28:66), and “rebellious” (1:26, 43; 9:7, 23–24; 21:18, 20; 31:27), and in God’s eternal purposes climaxing in Jesus, he did not change their hard hearts: “To this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear” (29:4[3]; cf. Isa 29:10; Rom 11:8, 10)! As such, the people’s doom was sure, and Moses himself declared that Israel would enter the Promised Land and break the covenant by rebelling against Yahweh (Deut 30:1; 31:16, 20, 27, 29). In turn, Yahweh, who is always just and upright in his actions (32:4), would bring upon Israel the curses, climaxing in their exile from the Promised Land (4:25–28; 29:18–28; 31:16–21; cf. Dan 9:11). Like Adam and Eve before them, they would be separated from God’s life-giving presence, all because of the hardness of their hearts (see Rom 8:7–9; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:18).

Deuteronomy’s redemptive-historical perspective clarifies how Paul could assert that “the law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12) and “is not laid
down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient” (1 Tim 1:9). Elsewhere the apostle rightly observes that the law was a temporary reality added after the Abrahamic covenant “to increase the trespass” (Rom 5:20) and “because of transgressions, until the offspring (i.e., Messiah Jesus) should come to whom the promise had been made” (Gal 3:19; cf. vv. 16, 29). God’s instruction given through Moses “is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12), “the embodiment of knowledge and truth” (2:20). However, where God’s law is given to an unbelieving and disobedient people, death can be the only result. And this was God’s purpose, in order to clarify for all in the world their need for Messiah Jesus. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4). Thus the old covenant bore a ministry of condemnation so that the new covenant might bear a ministry of righteousness (2 Cor 3:9).

**God’s Solution: Salvation through Judgment**

As he had done with the entire world in Adam, God would curse Israel. However, God’s curse was not the final word: “When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice. For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them” (Deut 4:30–31).

In what we now call the new covenant, complete restoration after exile would ultimately come about because of the unchanging, unrelenting mercy of God (see Exod 34:6; cf. Gen 15:17–18; 22:16–18). Yahweh’s revealed purpose of the covenant curses was disciplinary and did not signal the end of the relationship on a corporate scale (Deut 30:1–3; cf. Lev 26:44; Judg. 2:1–2; Jer 33:20–26). As stated explicitly in Leviticus 26:18, 21, 23, 27, 40–45, the curses were ultimately blessings in disguise for all who would learn from them—the gracious disciplining hand of a loving covenant “king” (Deut 33:5) or “father” (1:31; 32:6) designed to shake Israel out of their ignorance and to draw them back to the Lord (8:5; cf. Heb 12:5–11). Hope would still exist for any who would repent and return to God (Deut 4:29–30; 30:2; 32:36), and ultimately the mercy of God would cause this to be.

Specifically, while Yahweh had not yet induced covenant love (29:4[3]), he promised that one day he would. Indeed, a time was coming when God would appease his wrath, end the curse, generate repentance, grant forgiveness, and initiate an unending period of restoration blessing (4:29–30; 30:3–
10; 32:43). Amazingly, this blessing would include a divine heart-transformation that would empower God’s people to love just as they should, thus ensuring the perpetuation of the covenant relationship: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (30:6; cf. Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27).

Paul considered the work of God’s Spirit in Christians (Rom 2:28–29; 8:4; 2 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:6, 22) to be a fulfillment of Moses’ “heart circumcision” (Deut 30:6), Jeremiah’s new covenant “heart infusion” (Jer 31:33), and Ezekiel’s “heart transplant” and “Spirit indwelling” (Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27). The apostle also clarified that the restoration day anticipated in Deuteronomy found its ultimate fulfillment in the redemptive work of Christ. Jesus’ death and resurrection not only provided an answer to humanity’s curse through Adam (Rom 5:19; 1 Cor 15:21–22) but also stood as the climax of Israel’s covenantal judgment and restoration anticipated in Deuteronomy (Gal 3:13–14 with Deut 21:23; chs. 29–30). Jesus is the true offspring of Abraham through whom the world is blessed (Gal 3:14, 16, 29; cf. Gen 12:2–3; 22:17b–18). As the servant representing God’s people (Isa 49:3, 5–6), Jesus stands as Israel’s substitute, bears the curse (52:13–53:12), and becomes the channel through whom believing Jews and Gentiles alike are brought back to God, experiencing the blessing of life forevermore (Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:8, 13–14, 16, 29; Eph 2:11–18).33

Any relationship between Yahweh and a sinful humanity demands reconciliation through an atoning sacrifice, for which the sacrifices of Leviticus provided only a shadow (Heb 8:5; 10:1). Because of this fact, Messiah Jesus’ redeeming and purifying work on the cross supplies the only decisive ground for anyone’s right standing with God—past, present, and future (8:6; 10:10, 14, 18; Rom 3:24–26; 5:19; 2 Cor 5:21). Christ’s atoning work is also the foundational grace upon which all Christian living is based, and it alone secures the promise of all future grace (Rom 15:8; 2 Cor 1:20; Gal 3:29). As Paul proclaims, because God gave us his Son, we can be sure he will also meet all our needs (Rom 8:31–32), and because we have experienced such mercy, we should live lives surrendered to him (12:1). In fulfillment of Deuteronomistic anticipation (Deut 30:6; cf. Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26–27), such love-filled living is a result of a divinely generated new birth (John 3:5–8; 6:63) or heart surgery (Rom 2:15, 29)—a fruit of Christ’s Spirit in us (8:4, 9–11; Gal 5:6, 22), which ultimately will result in Christ-honoring witness (Acts 1:8), lasting life (Rom 6:22; 8:13; Gal 5:25; cf. John 6:63), and the exaltation of God’s name in the world (Ezek 36:22–23, 27; Heb 13:20–21; 1 Pet 4:11).
Lasting Covenant Relationship: Grace from Start to Finish

Before Yahweh’s people ever exert future-oriented faith that creates hope resulting in love for God and others, God graciously initiates the relationship and graciously makes amazing promises that stimulate a different kind of living. Deuteronomy testifies that God’s choice of Israel and his initial working on their behalf had everything to do with the promises he had made to the patriarchs and with his unmerited love for his people and had nothing to do with any greatness of Israel (Deut 7:7–8) or any greatness in Israel (9:5–6)—they were stubborn, not righteous (9:6, 13; 31:27)! Furthermore, the surrendered, dependent following (i.e., the obedience of faith) that God demanded would be experienced only because of this same divine grace, for God was not only the gracious promise maker but also the one who would make the promises desirable to a divinely reshaped heart. In the end, therefore, the perpetuation of covenant relationship would ultimately be grounded in, motivated by, and dependent on the experience and hope of divine grace and only secondarily and responsively on the obedience of faith. Faith, hope, and love are merely human responses to God’s covenant initiating and sustaining grace. So as believers we say with Paul, “Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (Rom 6:17; cf. 15:18; 1 Cor 15:10; Eph 2:8–10).

The Goal of Love as God-Exalting Influence on the Nations

Deuteronomy portrays the goal of Israel’s love to be God-exalting witness in the world. Yahweh, the only God (4:35, 39; 6:4), holy (26:15; 32:51), sovereign over all things (10:14), the creator of mankind (4:32) and Israel (32:6), and the overseer of nations (32:8), must always act for his own exaltation, for to make anything else more important than himself would render him not God. Because Yahweh is God, he must be jealous for his people’s affections (4:24; 5:9; 29:20; 32:16, 21) and must act to maintain right order (righteousness) in the world (4:8; 16:20; 32:4), wherein he is recognized as supreme. In separating Israel for himself, he created them with mission. Their fearing and obeying God would bear the missional purpose of seeing the worship of Yahweh reestablished on a global scale.

Back in Genesis, God’s sovereign rest—kingdom peace—was aggravated through humanity’s rebellion and its resulting curse (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25). The gracious creator of all, however, set in motion the solution to the problem, initially through the first statement of gospel in Genesis
3:15 and then by focusing through Abraham and his offspring this promise of the defeat of evil and reversal of the curse (12:2–3; 22:17b–18). In Exodus, God re-stressed Israel’s mission of imaging his supremacy and of standing as a mediator between God and the rest of humanity (Exod 19:5–6).

Deuteronomy expressed this same goal of God-exaltation by blending a call to covenant love with the unique treasure of God’s presence and the necessity of worldwide impact for the glory of God. The most explicit text is Deuteronomy 4:5–8, where, after calling Israel to heed Yahweh’s commands (Deut 4:5–6a), Moses clarified the reason why obedience (i.e., love in action) was imperative—namely, a godly witness in the world (4:6b–8)! If Israel would live wisely, their lifestyle would attract the attention of the nations (4:6b), who would stand amazed at God’s nearness to Israel (4:7) and at the uprightness of his revelation (4:8). Israel’s heeding of God’s commands would result in the display of God’s greatness in the sight of the world (cf. Matt 5:16). Similarly, in the context of fulfillment, Peter drew on imagery found in Deuteronomy when he emphasized that the church’s identity and mission is the realization of what OT Israel was to be and do: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Similarly, Jesus declared, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

The rest of Deuteronomy affirms Israel’s mission mindset. The people’s God-centered living would result in international renown (Deut 26:19; 28:1), with the world standing in awe of Yahweh’s people in light of his favor toward them (28:9–10). The global jealousy directed at Israel, however, would in time be turned on its head. For “in the latter days” (31:29, author’s translation), after Israel had disobeyed God’s Word, receiving both destruction and shame at the hands of the nations (28:25, 37) and profaning God’s name through bad witness (29:24[23]; cf. Ezek 36:20), Yahweh would act on behalf of his “servants” (i.e., those that had [re-]surrendered to God’s supremacy, Deut 32:36). In light of the jealousy that Israel’s disloyalty caused God, Yahweh would cause them to be jealous toward the nations (32:21; cf. Rom 10:19–11:26), would avenge his enemies (Deut 32:35, 41, 43; cf. Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30), would atone for the polluting effects of sin (Deut 32:43), and would have compassion on his servants (32:36). From the perspective of at least some OT manuscripts and Paul, this last move would result in worldwide joy, a feature that suggests the inclusion of the nations (Gentiles) in the people of God (32:43, KJV, NASB, NIV, HCSB; cf. Rom 15:10).
The Supremacy of Yahweh over All

The governing truth at the core of Israel’s worldview was Yahweh’s supremacy over all things: he alone is God (Deut 4:35; 6:4; 33:26). God’s people are on mission because a global recognition of this fact needs to be awakened.36

Yahweh alone is God—a rock (32:4, 15, 18, 30–31), a great (5:24, 7:21, 10:17; 11:2; 32:3) and consuming presence (4:24; 9:3; 33:2) that stands unique in his perfections. With respect to his character (32:3–4), Yahweh is perfectly merciful (4:31; 13:17; 30:3), loving (5:10; 7:8, 13; 10:15, 18; 23:5), loyal (5:10; 7:9, 12), faithful (7:9; 32:4), holy (26:15; 32:51), eternal (33:27), impartial (10:17–18), and just (32:4). He is fully distinct from his creation (7:21; 10:17) yet fully present and active in it (4:7; 6:15; 7:21; cf. 1:45; 31:17). With respect to his power (3:24; 32:39), he is the creator of humanity (4:32), the overseer of nations (32:8), the universal judge (9:4; 18:12; 32:41, 43), and the sole controller of all things in heaven and on earth (4:39; 10:14; cf. Heb 1:3). “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deut 32:39).

Yahweh alone is Israel’s “father” (32:6), their redeemer (4:20; 4:34; etc.), covenant maker (29:1), warrior (1:30; 3:22), protector (33:26–29), guide (1:33; 8:2; 32:12), instructor (1:3; 4:2; 6:1–2), prayer answerer (4:7; 9:19; 10:10), provider (2:7; 8:16–18), disciplinarian (8:3, 5; 11:2), tester (13:3), judge (1:17; 5:9; 7:10), restorer (4:40–31; 30:1–10; 32:34), and savior (4:31; 33:29). Because he is God, he is jealous for his people’s love (4:24; 5:9; 32:16, 21) and deserves their whole-hearted, life-encompassing, community-impacting, exclusive commitment (6:4–5). Because he is God and is by nature both good and just (32:4), he must hate and punish sin (7:4; 8:19–20; 9:8, 19, 20, 22; 29:20; 31:17). He must detest all influences that subvert his rule and all satisfactions that do not ultimately result in humility, gratitude, and praise (7:25–26; 12:31; 32:16). God’s people must tenaciously battle against all forms of idolatry (5:7; 6:14), for the preeminent one from whom, through whom, and to whom all things exist demands respect (Rom 11:36; Col. 1:16).

Yet this respect is a natural response for those who have truly experienced the covenant initiating and sustaining grace of this amazing God. Consider his grace, believe his promises, walk in love, and find your heart satisfied in him. Moses declared such “good news” for those who would respond in faith, hope, and love! “There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his majesty ... Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the
shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs” (Deut 33:26, 29).

**Deuteronomy and the Work of Christ**

Deuteronomy is all about the nature and possibility of pursuing a lasting covenant relationship with God. Moses treated his messages as a charter (or constitution) for guiding life in relation to Yahweh, both for those who would dwell in the Promised Land pre-exile (Deut 12:1) and for those whom God would reconstitute as a people in the days following initial restoration (30:6, 8). Within Deuteronomy’s pages Moses detailed the relationship’s context (taking God and his Word seriously), essence (the centrality of love), foundation and means of perpetuation (grace), purpose (God-exalting influence), and Lord (Yahweh God).

Significantly, Moses, not Paul, was the first to recognize that the old covenant bore a “ministry of condemnation” (see 2 Cor 3:9). While this prophet *pled* for the old covenant community to love God with all, he also identified their *problem* of hard-heartedness and its resulting punishment. Yet he also *promised* that God would one day change hearts, generate real love, and secure a transformed relationship. Condemnation would move to righteousness.

**The Plea: Love and Pursue Righteousness**

Moses pled for the right things: “Love the LORD your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your might” (Deut 6:5), and “love the sojourner” (10:19; cf. Lev 19:18). Jesus said that these are the first and second “most important” commandments (Mark 12:29–31). Moses even urged, “These words that I command you today *shall be on your heart*” (Deut 6:6)—a charge that sounds remarkably similar to what is promised in the new covenant (Jer 31:33). Loving from the heart would lead to righteousness, which would result in life: “And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us” (Deut 6:25). “Righteousness, and only righteousness, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you” (16:20, author’s translation; cf. Rom 9:30–32).

**The Problem: Israel’s Hard-Heartedness**

Nevertheless, there was a problem, for as loud or as long as Moses preached, the Israelites refused to listen. At the core of their being was obstinacy—a spiritual disability in need of heart surgery (Deut 10:16). Rather than be-
ing “righteous,” they were “stubborn” (9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27), “unbelieving” (1:32; 9:23; 28:66), and “rebellious” (1:26, 43; 9:7, 23–24; 21:18, 20; 31:27). And while Moses implored for love-saturated hearts filled with faith in God that overflowed in obedience, the majority of Israel would have none of it. Indeed, they could not, and Moses knew this.

Deuteronomy 29:2–4[1–3] reads, “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.” Though the old covenant community knew a lot about God, the majority did not really know him. Though they had seen God at one level, at a deeper level they remained blind. They had heard God’s voice, but in reality, they were deaf. Their hearts were hard, their senses dull, resulting in no affection, no commitment, no surrender, no love. They remained stubborn, unbelieving, and rebellious; they were undisciplined, impure, and condemned. And they could not change it.

That is what is amazing. Deuteronomy 29:4[3] says that a knowing heart, seeing eyes, and hearing ears are all gifts of God. According to his purposes, in order to show us our need for Jesus, God created a covenant where he called for the right things but did not overcome the rebel spirit of the majority (Isa 29:10; Rom 11:7–8). At the end of Deuteronomy, both Yahweh and Moses stress how the old covenant relationship, weakened as it was by the fleshly, hardheartedness of the people (see Rom 8:3), would result in Israel’s ruin. Yahweh explicitly proclaimed that Israel’s sin would climax in exile (Deut 31:16–17), and Moses predicted the people’s latter-days destruction (31:27, 29). Both Yahweh and Moses knew that the old covenant was temporary, bearing a ministry of condemnation. That is, as Paul later noted, “The law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12). While the old law covenant did call for faith, the working out of the covenant in redemptive history proved that the age of law was not characterized by faith, for the majority of covenant members remained faithless, disloyal, and un-surrendered. The revealed purpose of the law was to lead to life (Deut 8:1; Rom 7:10–12), but God’s sovereign purpose for the law as revealed through Moses and others was that it would multiply sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20) and by this condemn Israel (2 Cor 3:9, 14) and establish their need and the world’s need for Jesus (Rom 3:19). “But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:20–21).
The Promise: Divine Transformation and Lasting Relationship

Moses was not only convinced of the death-dealing nature of the old covenant. He also anticipated a life-giving new covenant that would replace the old—a covenant that would include divine enablement, allowing the world to read God’s law in human lives (see 2 Cor 3:2–3; cf. Jer 17:1 with 31:33). Within Deuteronomy, the superseding of the old by a greater covenant is signaled in at least two overlapping ways, both of which make much of Jesus: (1) the prediction of a prophet like Moses whose word would be heeded, and (2) the explicit promise of new covenant relationship following the exile and return to the land.

As for the first, Moses perceived obedience to Yahweh’s law to be a fruit of truly hearing God’s Word (e.g., Deut 31:12). Therefore, the prophet regularly called his audience to “hear/listen” (e.g., 5:1; 6:3–4; 9:1; 20:3), though he knew that, in accordance with God’s sovereign purpose, most would remain spiritually deaf (29:4[3]; cf. Isa 29:10; Rom 11:7–8). Yet he and the narrator who finalized the book foresaw a future day when God’s people would heed God’s Word (Deut 30:11–14; cf. Rom 10:6–8) and when another influential prophet would rise, whose teaching of God’s words would effect change (Deut 18:15, 18). Like Moses, but unlike all other OT prophets, Yahweh would know this prophet face to face, and like Moses, this covenant enforcer would perform great signs and wonders before the people (34:10–12). Because the narrator, in an age of prophetic activity, highlighted at the end of the book that this prophet had yet to arise (34:10), it is clear that Moses and his readers were looking for someone distinct—someone so much like Moses that he too would serve as a covenant mediator, but now of a covenant better than the one Moses oversaw (Heb 9:15; 12:24; cf. 1 Tim 2:5). Within the book, the way this hope of a prophet parallels the promises of restoration and inner-transformation (e.g., Deut 4:30–31; 30:1–14) suggests that the prophet would in fact be part of this eschatological work of God, perhaps even bringing it about. In Malachi’s day, at the close of the OT age, Moses was still the prophet to whom all were to listen (Mal 4:4 [3:22]), but the hope still existed for the prophet “like Moses” (John 6:14; 7:40), whose ministry would be pointed to by God’s “messenger,” the new “Elijah,” who would “restore all things” (Mal 3:1; 4:5–6[3:23–24]; Matt 17:11; Luke 1:17). Jesus said that John the Baptist was this Elijah (Matt 11:7–15; 17:9–13), and Jesus is the prophet like Moses (Mark 9:2–13, esp. v. 7; Luke 7:16; 9:35; Acts 3:22–26; 7:37), who overcomes the age of condemnation and initiates the age of fulfillment—the age of righteousness (Matt 5:17–18; Rom 10:4). His teaching through his apostles now provides the essence of all Christian instruction (Matt 7:24–27; 17:5;
28:19–20; John 16:12–14; 17:8, 18, 20; 2 Thess 2:15); it is his voice to which we must listen (Matt 17:5; John 5:24–25; 6:45; 10:27).

The second way Deuteronomy signals the temporary nature of the old covenant is through Moses’ promise that after God’s wrath was appeased and the curse paid, “The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul for the sake of your life” (Deut 30:6). This would come about solely because of Yahweh’s “mercy” (4:30–31; cf. Exod 34:6). Earlier Moses equated Israel’s stubbornness with both unrighteousness (Deut 9:6) and uncircumcised hearts (10:16)—all qualities that help characterize the old covenant age as one of condemnation (2 Cor 3:9). However, in the era now known as the new covenant, God would supply what he commands, circumcising hearts and generating love (Deut 30:6). This means that he would replace stubbornness and condemnation with righteousness and thus see fulfilled Deuteronomy’s summarizing charge to pursue righteousness (16:20). How would this occur? The answer hinges solely on Jesus.

The Bible teaches that, in the great exchange of redemptive history, Christ takes on the sins of the many, bearing the curse of all who believe, and his righteousness is in turn accounted to all the elect (Isa 53:5, 11; 2 Cor 5:21). Central in this teaching is Christ’s perfect obedience of faith, climaxing in the cross, which meets the law’s demands on our behalf, thus allowing him to stand as our unblemished substitute. He receives God’s wrath in our stead and secures for all who believe the blessing promised to Abraham—righteousness that leads to life (Gal 3:8, 13–14; Col 2:13–14; Phil 3:8–9). “As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification of life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:18–19; cf. Gal 3:13–14; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8).

Significant here is Christ’s “one act of righteousness” (Greek dikaioma), for this is a common term used in the old covenant for what the Israelites were to follow in order to enjoy lasting life. “And now, O Israel, listen to the statues and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live” (Deut 4:1; cf. 8:1). Yet as was true for Paul and all other Israelites, “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom 7:10). Nevertheless, in echo of both Moses and Jeremiah’s new covenant promises (Deut 30:6; Jer 31:33), Ezekiel predicted: “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:27).
Whereas the old covenant community failed in statute-keeping and was thus condemned, the new covenant community would succeed and enjoy life. Paul points to this fulfillment when he envisions a Gentile believer who “keeps the precepts of the law [ta dikaiomata tou nomou, pl. of dikaioma]” in light of his circumcised heart and the power of the Spirit (Rom 2:26–29). 42

Within Romans, the believer’s righteous living is explicitly manifest in loving one’s neighbor and is a direct effect of Jesus’ preceding perfect obedience. Through Christ’s righteous act [dikaioma], believers are “justified from sin” (Rom 6:7), 43 and “now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life” (6:22). Here a Christian’s thanks-be-to-God obedience (6:17) embodied in the term “sanctification” is a “fruit” of the statute-keeping, justifying work of Christ. Elsewhere Paul put it this way: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For . . . by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law (to dikaioma tou nomou) might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. . . . For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (8:1, 3–4, 13). When paralleled with Romans 5–6, the structure is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rom 5:18; 6:22</th>
<th>Christ’s statute-keeping</th>
<th>Our justification</th>
<th>Our progressive sanctification</th>
<th>Our eternal life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rom 8:1–4, 13</td>
<td>Christ’s sin-condemning act</td>
<td>Our freedom from condemnation</td>
<td>Our statute-keeping</td>
<td>Our life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because Christ himself kept the law’s “righteous requirement” and by this assured the believer’s justification (Rom 5:18; 8:1–3), the comparable “righteous requirement” of the law, embodied in the law of neighbor-love, can now be fulfilled (pleroo) in all who walk by the Spirit (8:4; 13:8–10; cf. Gal. 5:13-14)—the Spirit of the resurrected Christ (Rom 8:9, 13). 44 I believe this is what Moses meant in Deuteronomy when he declared that, in the age of heart circumcision, God’s people would hear and obey the essence of his messages in the book (30:8).

In conclusion, six points are important to remember when considering Deuteronomy’s lasting relevance for Christians:

1. God gave the Mosaic law manifest in Deuteronomy for a specific purpose in
redemptive history—to condemn Israel in order to show their need for Jesus.

2. Moses himself saw both the temporary nature of the old covenant and the lasting significance of the call to love God overflowing in love of neighbor.

3. The life promised by the law was, by Christ’s perfect obedience, secured for all identified with Jesus by faith alone.

4. The faith that alone justifies is never alone, but always overflows in a life of love for neighbor, which is itself the fulfillment of the law.

5. While the Mosaic law is, in one sense, obsolete and we are not under it, the written code provides a lasting blueprint for wise living (an expression of God’s eternal law) that provides Christians an example of how love for God is to overflow in love for neighbor.

6. While our Spirit-empowered life of love is real, it is not perfect; Christ’s work alone provides the ground for our eternal justification, and the fruit of love that he alone produces in us is only proof of our justification en route to eternal life.

Deuteronomy testifies to the move from condemnation to righteousness. Let us thank God in Christ that we are beneficiaries of this redemptive-historical shift.

1 Scripture quotations are from the ESV © 2011, unless otherwise noted.

2 At a number of points the OT authors assert that their readers would fully understand their words only in the latter days associated with the new covenant and the Messiah. For example, Israel’s oracles were “sealed” from the bulk of his audience (Isa 29:9–12), Jeremiah understood his writings as principally for the new covenant age (Jer 30:2–3, 8–9, 24; 31:1, 33), and Daniel’s revelation associated with the global reign and atoning work of the messianic son of man (Dan 7:13–14; 9:24–27) was sealed in a book until the right time (12:4, 9–10). All this was part of God’s intended “partial hardening” of Israel connected with the “mystery” Paul claims was disclosed only in Christ (Rom 11:7–8; 2 Cor 3:14). See D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 2—The Paradoxes of Paul (ed. D. A. Carson et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 393–436.


4 Much of the body of what follows in sections 1–7 is reproduced or adapted from my “Deuteronomy” in What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible (ed. Jason S. DeRouchie; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013), 140–62. For comparable message-driven essays on every book of the OT, see this gospel-saturated, thematic, OT survey, written specifically for college and seminary students and local churches as a guide for personal or small


Some evangelicals still posit a date around 1250 B.C., usually asserting that the archaeological evidence of a mass-Israelite intrusion into Canaan is non-existent for the period directly following 1406 B.C. However, Deuteronomy testifies that we should not expect mass-destruction layers, for Israel was to enjoy “great and good cities that you did not build, and houses of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive threes that you did not plant” (Deut 6:10–11). Furthermore, Israel would only “clear away these nations before you little by little” (7:22), and though they set ablaze cities like Jerusalem (Judg 1:8; cf. 18:27; 20:48), Joshua completely burned only three cities on mounds: Jericho, Ai, and Hazor (Josh 6:24; 8:28; 11:13). All this means that we can follow the natural reading of the biblical text that the exodus took place in 1446 B.C. (see esp. 1 Kgs 6:1 with Judg 11:26), thus placing Moses’ Deuteronomic sermons and death and the start of the conquest in 1406 B.C. For an intriguing, fresh argument for the early dating of the exodus and thus of Moses’ Pentateuchal materials, see Rodger C. Young, “When Did Solomon Die?” JETS 46.4 (2003): 599–603; idem, “Evidence for Inerrancy from a Second Unexpected Source: The Jubilee and Sabbatical Cycles,” Bible and Spade 21.4 (2008): 109–22.

While some suggest Deuteronomy was finalized as we have it just prior to the exile (before 586 B.C.) or during the period of initial restoration (after 538 B.C.), these scholars usually do not attribute to Moses the writing role he and the narrator give him. Furthermore, the fact that Joshua’s generation already considered Moses’ “Book of the Law” a canonical document (Josh 1:7–9) and the fact that Deuteronomy’s narrator is himself attentive to the geographical and political concerns of the conquest generation (e.g., Deut 1:1–4; 2:10–12, 20–23; 3:11; 10:6–7) suggest a very early provenance for the book’s final form. While I affirm John H. Sailhamer’s messianic reading of Deuteronomy as a whole and of the “prophet like Moses” texts in particular (Deut 18:15, 18; 34:10–12), I do not agree that the narrator’s comment that “there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses” in Deut 34:10 requires a post-exilic, post-prophecy dating for the final form of the Pentateuch (The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 18–24, 44). Figures like Joshua or Samuel could have written such a statement, for God had long established the prophetic office in Israel (Exod 15:20; Num 12:6; cf. Gen 20:7; Exod 7:1; Num 11:25–29; Deut 13:1–5; Judg 4:4; 6:8; 1 Sam 3:20; 9:9; 10:5, 10–12). This stated, because Malachi (ca. 400 B.C.) charged the returnees to “remember the law of my servant Moses” (Mal 4:4[3:22]), it is clear that those at the end of the OT age continued to affirm the statement penned at the end of the Pentateuch. Yet the time of eschatological fulfillment was at hand (see note 13 below).


This title derives from the LXX of Deut 17:18, which misinterprets the Hebrew “a copy of this law” as “this second law.” Nevertheless, we can read the LXX as merely and appropriately pointing to Deuteronomy as a covenant reaffirma-
tion document and not necessarily as a law completely different from that given in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

12 Moses most likely gave earlier versions of his Deuteronomic messages to the first generation prior to their faithlessness at Kadesh. This is suggested by the fact that, while Tophel, Laban, and Dizahab are otherwise unknown, the other toponyms listed in Deut 1:1 where Moses spoke the words in Deuteronomy are all locations associated with Israel’s initial journey from Sinai to Kadesh (see Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy [JPSTC; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996], 3, 3–4). The “Arabah” was the land of Israel’s journey to Canaan (Deut 1:7; cf. 2:8); “Suph” is related to the title given to the Red Sea (Num 14:25; 21:4; 44:10–11; Deut 1:40; 2:1; but see “Suphah” in Num 21:14, which is associated with the Arnon, east of the Jordan and just south of Moab); “Paran” (Num 10:12; 12:16; 13:3, 26) and “Hazeroth” (Num 11:35; 12:16; 33:17–18) were both known stopping points for Israel. For reflections on how this fact supports the trans-generational nature of Moses’ message in Deuteronomy, see Michael Littell, The Mighty Deeds of God and a People Yet Unborn: Trans-Generational Contemporaneity in the Rhetoric of Deuteronomy (Th.M. Thesis, Bethlehem College and Seminary, 2013), 16–19, 21–23; cf. Jerry Hwang, The Rhetoric of Remembrance: An Investigation of the ‘Fathers’ in Deuteronomy (Siphrut 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).


14 While the structure of grace is comparable between the old and new covenants, the nature of grace is quite different, the latter being fully eschatological and internal. For more on this distinction, see Jason C. Meyer, The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology (NAC Studies in Biblical Theology; Nashville, TN: B&H, 2009), esp. 6 n.19; 277–78.


17 A quick perusal of English translations of Deut 6:4 reveals differences of opinion on how one should render the verse—e.g., (a) “The LORD our God, the LORD alone” (The Message); (b) “The LORD our God is one LORD” (ASV; KJV); (c) “The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (NIV, ESV, HCSB); (d) “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (NASB); (e) “The LORD is our God; the LORD is one” (NRSV); (f) “Our God is the LORD, the LORD alone” (CEB). At least four arguments suggest that option (c) best captures the meaning of the Hebrew: (1) Of the 308 occurrences of “God (‘elohim) + suffix” directly preceded by “Yahweh” in Deuteronomy, all but four are clearly appositional to the divine name (96.7%; see Deut 5:6, 9; 6:4; 29:6[5]). (2) While there are four instances where ‘elohim + suffix may stand as the predicate complement to a pronoun referring to Yahweh (5:6, 9; 10:21; 29:6[5]), there are no instances where ‘elohim + suffix stands in predicate relationship with the proper name itself. (3) While “oneness” can be either quantitative (i.e., one in number) or qualitative (i.e., unique or distinct) in the Scripture (see Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, 1:179–81; The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, 11; BDAG, 291), all citations, allusions, or echoes of the Shema in Scripture suggest the former is in view (e.g., Ezek 34:23; 37:22, 24; Zech 14:9; Mal 2:10; Job 31:15; Eccl 12:11; Matt 19:17; 23:9; Mark 2:7; 12:29; John 10:16; Rom 3:29–30; 1 Cor 8:4–6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:4–6; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:11; Jas 2:19; 4:12). (4) There are no convincing examples where the adjective “one” (‘ehad) can serve as an adverbial modifier meaning “alone”; the more common way to express the latter is through lehabido (see 2 Kgs 19:19; Isa 2:11, 17). For two recent, helpful studies of the Shema (Deut 6:4–5), though with conclusions somewhat different than my own, see Daniel I. Block, “How Many Is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4–5,” JETS 47.2 (2004): 193–212; repr. idem, How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy, 73–97; J. Gordon McConville, “‘Keep These Words in Your Heart’ (Deut 6:6): A Spirituality of Torah in the Context of the Shema,” in For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block, 127–44.

18 I am stating that the base meaning of the first of the Ten Words and the Shema speaks not of Yahweh’s having highest priority or rank among many (though this is a justified implication of the quantitative reading) but rather of his
sole authority over all things. One argument in favor of this reading is that whenever the prepositional phrase rendered “before me” in 5:7 bears a personal object in the OT, the meaning is always special, meaning in this instance that Yahweh has no peers in his presence (see John H. Walton, “Interpreting the Bible as an Ancient Near Eastern Document,” in Israel—Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention? Archaeology, Ancient Civilizations, and the Bible [ed. Daniel I. Block; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008], 305–9; cf. DeRouchie, “Making the Ten Count,” 422–23).

The NT explicitly cites the Shema three times, all of which use a term not found in original the trilogy: Matt 22:37—“heart” (kardia), “soul” (psyche), “mind” (dianoia); Mark 12:30—“heart,” “soul,” “mind,” “strength” (ischys); Luke 10:27—“heart,” “soul,” “strength,” “mind.” John William Wevers believes the original LXX included dianoia “faculty of thinking, mind,” psyche “life, soul, being,” and dynamis “power, strength” (Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy [Septuagint and Cognate Studies 39; Atlanta: SBL, 1995], 115). The majority text that Ralpah follows, however, replaces dianoia with kardia, and it is possible that the NT authors include each term simply to align with the various traditions. Both dianoia and kardia are frequent renderings for the Hebrew leb or lehab; however, kardia and psyche occur as a word pair throughout the OT (Deut 4:29; 6:5–6 [v. 6 only LXX]; 10:12; 11:13, 18; 13:4[3]; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; Josh 23:14; 1 Sam 2:35; 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:48; 2 Kgs 23:23, 25; 1 Chr 22:19; 28:9; 2 Chr 6:38; 15:12; 34:31; 35:19 [only LXX]). Regardless of what the original Greek was, the NT authors most likely included both “heart” and “mind” in Greek in order to include the full expression bound up in the Hebrew term lehab “heart” in Deut 6:5 (so C. J. H. Wright, Deuteronomy [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 99). The frequency of “heart and soul” throughout together is probably what forced the placement of “mind” after the word pair rather than having “mind” adjacent to “heart.”


The term rendered “might” in the ESV occurs 300 times in the OT: 298 times as an adverb meaning “very” (e.g., Gen 1:31—“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good”) and 2 times as a noun, the second of which in 2 Kgs 23:25 is merely an echo of Deut 6:5 that declares King Josiah turned to Yahweh with all his heart, soul, and “very-ness.” The Septuagint translated the Greek with a term meaning “power,” and the Aramaic Targums used a word meaning “wealth,” both of which may point in a similar direction. If Moses’ call to love Yahweh with all starts with the heart and then moves out to one’s being, it seems likely that one’s “very-ness” is one step bigger, including all one's substance or resources.


The ESV does not distinguish the prepositions in the Hebrew text: “on the doorposts” but “in your gates.” Evident here is a multi-chambered city gate within the city wall that served as the center for justice, politics, and commerce (e.g., Deut 17:5; 21:19; 22:15, 24; 25:7; cf. Ruth 4:1, 11; Prov 31:23). More accurately, geo-political items on earth are fruits and reflections of the proto-typical covenantal relationship God initiated with mankind in the garden of Eden, which itself is an overflow of YHWH’s own eternal intra-Trinitarian covenantal agreement and decree, which are worked out through redemptive history (e.g., Eph 1:4–14; (see Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “Covenant: An Idea in the Mind of God,” JETS 52 [2009]: 225–46, esp. 228–29, 233; Gentry and Wellum, Kingdom through Covenant, 60). Building off past studies, Stephen Ward Guest has recently rekindled the question of the nature and significance of Deuteronomy’s relationship to ancient suzerain-vassal treaties, Deuteronomy 26:16–19 as the Central Focus on the Covenant Framework of Deuteronomy (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009); cf. Meredith G. Kline, “Dyonic Covenant,” WTJ 23.1 (1960/61): 1–15; idem, A Treat of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Kenneth A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1966), 96–68; idem, The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archaeology Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 80–84; idem, The Historical Reliability of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 283–89. For a helpful synthesis and evaluation of Guest’s argument that interacts with others, see Gentry and Wellum, Kingdom through Covenant, 357–63.


The rest of Deuteronomy highlights how this love is only enjoyed as a miracle of divine grace (cf. v. 16 with 29:4[3] and 30:6).


In the progression of biblical covenants leading up to the new, there is an intentional and necessary tension between
unconditional/unilateral promises and real bilateral conditions. Scripture's cumulative result is a stress on how the covenant purposes of God are brought to fulfillment not only through a faithful covenant father but also through a faithful covenant son, whose active obedience meets all necessary conditions and secures blessing for all identified with him. For a helpful unpacking of this biblical truth, see Gentry and Wellum, Kingdom through Covenant, 643, 666, 705–6.


In Romans 3:19, Paul asserted, “Now we know that whatever the [Mosaic] law says it speaks to those who are under the law [i.e., the Jews], so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.” If even with their special privileges (9:4–5), the Jews only gained knowledge of sin from the law, what hope did the Gentiles who never received such privileges have (3:20)? The Jewish failure to keep the law proved to the whole world that “by works of law no human being will be justified in [God’s] sight” (3:20). As such, the only hope for Jew and Gentile alike is “the righteousness of God . . . manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus for all who believe” (3:21–22; cf. 9:30–32; 10:4).

Paul recognized that most of old covenant Israel did not follow God but “were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day’” (Rom 11:8; cf. Deut 29:4[3]). But ethnic Israel’s rejection opened the door for salvation to reach the Gentiles (Rom 15:10; cf. Deut 32:43). And this, in accordance with Deuteronomy 32:21, is designed to make the elect of Israel jealous and ultimately turn to God (Rom 10:19; 11:11–12, 25–26).


For more on this theme, see John Piper, The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God’s Delight in Being God (Rev. ed.; Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000).

For a development of this theme, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Blessing-Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the Toledot Structure of Genesis,” JETS 56.2 (2013): 219–47. Also, for a development of how the mission of Israel relates to the reconstitution of the sovereign rest of Sabbath on a global scale, see idem, “Making the Ten Count,” 428–32.


Unlike the ESV, I read Deut 30:11–14 as referring to future, not present, realities for Moses’ audience. At least three reasons support my choice: (1) Moses has already made clear that the majority of Israel’s hearts are dull and ears deaf to his word (10:16; 29:4[3]); the truths of 30:11–14 are not present realities in Moses’ day. (2) The “today” of v. 11 picks up on the use of “today” in vv. 2, 8, where the future hearing and heeding of God’s people, in the day of heart-circumcision, will align with the teaching Moses is giving “today.” (3) The conjunction "because/for" at the head of v. 11 most likely marks verses 11–14 as providing the logical ground for why a transformed Israel will indeed follow God in the future—it will be because “this commandment will not be too hard for you, neither will it be far off ... But the word will be very near you. It will be in your mouth and in your heart, so that you will be able to do it.” I believe Paul’s citation of this text in Rom 10:6–8 marks this promise as fulfilled only in light of Christ’s law-ending, righteousness bringing work. For more on this reading of Deut 30:11–14, see Paul A. Barker, The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy (PBM; Waynesboro, GA, 2004): 168–90; Stephen R. Cookhead, "Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ," WTJ 68 (2006): 305–20; B. D. Estelle, Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” in The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant (ed., Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Pesko, and David VanDrunen; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 123–37; cf. John H. Sailhamer, The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 473; idem, The Pentateuch as Narrative, 290; J. G. Millar, Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy (NSBT 6; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1998), 94, 174–75. Douglas Moo has recently asserted, “I wish I could interpret Deut 30:11–14 this way: it would, indeed, considerably diminish the apparent dissonance between this text and Paul’s application” (“Paul’s Reading of Deuteronomy: Law and Grace,” in For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block, 408 [389–412]). His only expressed hesitancy in adopting the reading is that “most interpreters of Deuteronomy argue that the characteristic language of ‘today’ in v. 11 suggests that the implied tense in vv. 11–14 shifts back to the present.” However, as already noted, Moses uses “today” in vv. 2 and 8 in order to show the lastling relevance of his present message for those in the new covenant age, and the "because/for" conjunction in v. 11, which
Moo does not address at all, suggests that vv. 11–14 are linked not with what follows but with what precedes and that the “today” is therefore functioning exactly like it is in the preceding context.

39 The ESV renders the ending of Deuteronomy 30:6 “that you may live,” in alignment with other texts where life is promised as the fruit of dependent obedience to all God’s commandments (e.g., Deut 4:1; 5:33; 8:1; 16:20; 30:19; cf. 11:9). However, in this text, Moses alters the wording in a way that suggests Yahweh’s initiative in changing hearts and enabling love is “for the sake of your life”—a life that could not be secured through personal obedience. That is, God will grant by grace through faith what could not be gained by personal effort. From the perspective of biblical theology, the perfect obedience of Christ is the means by which God justly grants believers life and righteousness (Rom 5:18–19; cf. Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8).


41 In Rom 5:18, the ESV reads “justification and life,” but the Greek retains the genitive of result: “justification of life.”


43 Romans 6:7 is the only place in Romans where the ESV renders a term in the dik-word group with something other than “justification” or “righteousness” language, choosing instead to translate dedikaiotai apo tes hamartias as “set free from sin.”

44 For this interpretation of Romans 8:4 and 13:8–10, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 404–08, 690–95. Kevin W. McFadden, “The Fulfillment of the Law’s Dikaiōma: Another Look at Romans 8:1-4,” *JETS* 52.3 (2009): 483-497. McFadden helpfully clarifies how our imperfect loving of others today truly fulfills the law but only because the Spirit’s liberating work will become completed at the resurrection, at which time we will fulfill the law’s righteous requirement perfectly (see esp. 491-494).
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“Anyone Hung Upon A Pole Is Under God’s Curse:”
Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in Old and New Covenant Contexts

A. B. Caneday

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Introduction

That we might remember his sacrificial death upon the Roman cross in our place the Lord Jesus instituted a simple meal with symbolic bread and wine with instructions to “do this in remembrance of me” and to observe this until he comes (1 Cor 11:24-26). Despite the Lord’s directives concerning this meal, one that inseparably binds together both gospel message and symbol, the stigma of the cross has faded for many western Christians due partly to historical distance from and banishment of...
ancient Rome's form of capital punishment. Religious freedom and the ubiquitous presence of the cross as a ceremonial symbol embedded into church and cathedral architecture, etched into jewelry, or hanging as a pendant upon a chain tends to mask its horrors and repugnance. Offended activist “vampires” who file lawsuits to banish the cross from public buildings and lands ironically suppress the offensiveness of the cross, because Christians who take the bait become preoccupied with rights as citizens of this world. To the degree that our responses allow the cross of Christ to become trivialized, our hearing Jesus’ call to bear our own cross is equally muted (cf. Mark 8:34-38; Matt 16:24-27; Luke 9:23-27). Consequently, apart from our daily taking up of our crosses and our regular and mindful ceremonial remembrance (1 Cor 11:27-29), the scandal of Christ’s cross in both symbol and substance is at risk of becoming trite, not unlike a dead metaphor.

Until recently, the only images of crucifixion most had seen were artistic renderings of Christ’s death by the great masters or were photographs of enacted rituals of reified crucifixions staged as part of Good Friday and Easter observances as in the Philippines. Now graphic photographs of crucified bodies may be seen readily on computer screens. For members of the violent Islamic State in Iraq and the ash-Sham (ISIS) reportedly crucified eight men in Raqqa, Syria. Yet, accounts indicate that these men were first executed and then their bodies were hung upon poles for three days as warning deterrents, with some poles resembling Roman crosses. These recent events recall reports of Turks of the Ottoman Empire who crucified Armenians in 1914. Greater media access now exposes the practice to a horrified world.

Though repugnant, contemporary hanging of corpses, whether of defeated foes or of condemned criminals, whether guilty or not, resembles an ancient Israelite practice that restricted exposure until evening as in the case of Israelite men who engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite women (cf. Num 25:4). Joshua hung defeated kings upon poles. He hung the king of Ai upon a pole until evening (Josh 8:23-29), and he did the same with five Amorite kings (10:16-27). Because Saul violated a covenant Joshua had made with the Gibeonites David granted the Gibeonites seven male descendants from Saul whom they killed and hung for exposure on a hill before the Lord.

An obscure passage does not prohibit Israel from hanging corpses of executed covenant breakers upon poles but regulates the practice.
If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving as an inheritance (Deut 21:22-23).

Despite this text’s inconspicuousness, several allusions or partial quotations of the passage occur in the New Testament (Matt 27:57-59; Mark 15:42-45; John 19:31; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24). The crucifixion narratives of three Gospels allude to the passage but the most explicit is in John’s Gospel—“Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.” The allusions in Acts reflect the Septuagint translation with the phrase “hanging upon the pole” (κρεμάσαντες ἐπὶ ξύλου, 5:30; 10:39; κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, LXX) or “taking down from the pole” (καθελόντες ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου, 13:29).1 In his letter to the Galatians, at a critical point in reasoning through his gospel against the Judaizers’ message, Paul quotes the passage, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse in place of us, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung upon a pole’” (Gal 3:13).2

Why do the New Testament writers appeal to Deuteronomy 21:22-23, an inconspicuous passage that associates Jesus with covenant breakers who were under God’s curse? How can they appropriate this passage as fulfilled in Christ’s crucifixion? The Lord Jesus was hung upon a Roman cross to die; the covenant breaker was hung upon a pole after being put to death. So, what warrants the New Testament writers, especially Paul, to indicate that this Old Testament passage is fulfilled in the sacrificial death of Christ Jesus? How does Jesus Christ “fulfill” a law that puts a time restriction upon exposure of a covenant breaker’s corpse? Do Paul and other New Testament writers arbitrarily use a passage that had no connection to the Coming One until they creatively appropriated it?3 When Paul cites Deuteronomy 21:22-23 to support his argument that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13), does he simply assume “without demonstration, this Scripture applies to Jesus,” does Paul transform the passage into prophecy concerning the Christ?4

The basic thesis I will argue is that though Paul’s appropriation of Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in Galatians 3:13 entails slight grammatical ad-
aptation, his use of the verse is not arbitrary, does not yank it out of context as a prooftext, does not twist its meaning, nor does it reflect clever creativity on his part that his readers cannot follow or reproduce. Paul does not appropriate the verse merely because it fits conveniently due to verbal associations with his use of Deuteronomy 27:26 in Galatians 3:10. Instead, the apostle uses the passage because now that Christ Jesus has opened his eyes to understand the unfolding mystery of the gospel revealed in advance throughout the Scriptures, we call the Old Testament (Gal 1:12-15), Paul recognizes that God endowed Israel’s experiences with typological significances and had them inscribed by prophets so that even obscure actions, including hung corpses of executed covenant breakers, foreshadowed things to come in the time of Messiah (1 Cor 10:1-11). As the symbolic bronze serpent hung upon a pole foreshadowed the raising up of Messiah upon a pole (Num 25:8, 9; John 3:14), so also the raising up of covenant breakers upon poles to bear the law’s curse and to propitiate God’s anger from Israel typified righteous Messiah’s becoming a curse, to bear the curse of the law once for all time. Thus, the Faithful One, condemned as a criminal, effected redemption by propitiating God’s wrath and turned his being cursed into blessing for his own people, both Jews and Gentiles, by bestowing the Spirit and the full blessing promised to Abraham (Gal 3:13-14).

**Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in Law Covenant Context**

Deuteronomy 21 consists of a sequence of various case laws that concern making atonement for an unsolved murder (1-9), taking a female captive of war as a wife (10-14), inheritance rights of the firstborn son when polygamy is involved (15-17), and the stoning of an obstinate and rebellious son (18-21). Though a common theme throughout the chapter is difficult to identify, 21:15-23 seems to cohere as a unit, and the concluding words—“the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance”—forms an inclusio with 21:1—“in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess” (cf. 19:2). The lot of a firstborn son of the unloved wife in a polygamous family stands in sharp contrast to the lot of a stubborn and rebellious son who refuses to obey his parents. To the one belongs the right of the firstborn. The lot of the other is death by stoning, not privately but publicly, by all the men of the city for three apparent purposes: (1) to purge the evil of rebellion from their midst (cf. 21:9); (2) to deter all in Israel by observing and duly fearing to rebel against the Lord, and (3) to bear God’s wrathful curse. Given the
requirement of death by stoning for the rebellious son that entails public exposure, restriction upon that exposure aptly follows in 21:22-23. After the Israelites purge the evil from their midst by putting the rebellious son to death, the lifeless body of a covenant breaker would be hung upon a pole for public exposure as a deterrent for others to take note that anyone hung upon a pole is under God’s curse (cf. Num 25:4; Josh 8:29; 10:26-27; 2 Sam 4:12; 21:6-9).  

According to the text, to be hung upon a pole or tree was not the method of executing a covenant breaker but was done following that one’s death. The corpse was hung for exposure before humans as a warning deterrent concerning the consequences of violating covenant laws but also hung before Lord as one cursed by God. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 imposes a limitation upon the practice of hanging a lifeless body upon a pole. After being hung upon a pole on the day of execution, the corpse is to be removed and buried by sunset lest the promised land be defiled by a decaying body which signifies the greater decay, the spiritual wasting of Israel whose divine blessings are correlated with the prospering of the land (cf. 2 Sam 21:1-14). “You must not desecrate the land the L ORD your God is giving you as an inheritance” recalls the covenant promise of land to be given to Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:6; 24:7; etc.). 

The text indicates that “anyone who is hung upon a pole is under God’s curse.” This prompts some to query, “Is the body accursed due to the fact that it is hanging and thus a public example to be reviled, or is it hanging exposed because of its accursed state as the corpse of a criminal?” Craigie’s response seems correct, that the hanging of a corpse is inseparable from the reason for the execution following due process. After execution the body of the covenant breaker is hung upon a pole to signify graphically that it is under God’s curse. It is under divine curse on account of unrepentant rebellion which incurs and warrants execution. To rebel against one’s parents is to dishonor them, which is the second of twelve specific breaches of the covenant that incurs the Lord’s covenant curse (Deut 27:16).  

Hanging a covenant breaker’s corpse upon a pole recalls the bronze likeness of a poisonous serpent hung upon a pole to which the Lord had Moses instruct the Israelites to look in order that they might be healed from their snake bites and live (Num 21:8-9). This is instructive concerning the hanging of an executed covenant breaker’s body upon a pole, for both are divinely authorized means for deliverance from a divinely imposed curse because of Israel’s disobedience. Repugnant as it is to
human sensibilities, the corpse of a convicted covenant violator hung upon a pole is not human sacrifice, unlike the sacrifice the Lord instructed Abraham to make of Isaac, his (Gen 22:2) or Jephtah’s sacrifice of his virgin daughter (Judges 11:29-40). Though not human sacrifice, the hung human corpse is associated with propitiating God’s wrath and averting further defilement of the land in keeping with this dictate.

Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the Lord, dwell among the Israelites (Num 35:33-34).

When King Saul violated a covenant that Joshua had made with the cunning Gibeonites to let them live (Josh 9:3-17), for three years Israel suffered lack of rain that brought about famine. Upon inquiring of the Lord, David learned the reason for the famine: “It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death” (2 Sam 21:1). So, David queried the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? How shall I make atonement so that you will bless the Lord’s inheritance?” (2 Sam 21:3). The atonement price was seven of Saul’s male descendants whom the Gibeonites killed and hung for exposure on a hill before the Lord. These seven, cursed before God, functioned as substitutes for Israel by propitiating the Lord’s wrath. Atonement for bloodshed was made, so the curse was removed and once again the Lord sent rain upon the land.

David’s action to propitiate God’s anger is in keeping with an earlier event in Israel’s history. During the days of Moses, Israelite men indulged in sexual immorality with Moabite women apparently linked with idol worship, including the eating of a sacrificial meal of the Baal of Peor and bowing down in worship. The Lord instructed Moses, “Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the Lord’s anger may turn away from Israel” (Num 25:4). So, Moses obeyed the Lord by instructing Israel’s judges to slay all who united themselves to the Baal of Peor and to expose them (25:5). Those covenant breakers accursed by God hung for exposure to bear the law’s curse in place of Israel as her representatives, thus turning God’s wrath away from Israel. Propitiation accomplished by the hanging of a covenant breaker’s body had no more enduring effect than atonement realized by the sacrifice of an animal.
For as Numbers 35:33-34 states, “atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it.”

Thus, within the framework of the law covenant, the practice of hanging upon a pole the lifeless body of an executed covenant breaker, though repugnant and rather obscure, holds a significant and instructive role in the life of Israel. The practice had significance in Israel’s covenant with the Lord, for at crucial times in the nation’s history, Israel’s and the land’s blessing or cursing hung upon those whose corpses were placed upon a pole for exposure before the people as a deterrent and before the Lord to bear the law’s curse and to propitiate the Lord’s wrath on behalf of the covenant people. The association becomes clear. Hanging upon a pole is not a form of execution, for the law stipulates that it is the corpse that is to be hung upon a pole not the live person. Thus, the association is the covenant breaker who hung upon a pole vicariously bore the curse on behalf of Israel, averting the Lord’s wrath and restoring the land’s blessing. At least on one occasion the Lord’s anger was averted and his curse of the land with famine came to an end by implementing this practice. Yet, integral to the regulation of the practice is the prohibition of leaving a dead body suspended upon a pole past sunset lest the land be desecrated.

**Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in New Covenant Context**

A law covenant breaker’s lifeless body hung upon a pole for exposure, accursed by God under the law’s condemnation and thus averting his anger was abhorrent. How much more so is a guiltless man hung live upon a pole as a covenant breaker to propitiate God’s wrath for others not only by taking upon himself the covenant’s curse for others but because of his righteousness, by removing once for all time that curse on behalf of those for whom he hung accursed. Understandably, the pole upon which Christ Jesus was hung is the gospel’s primal offense according to the apostle Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-25). For Paul features the pole of the accursed covenant breaker as the place of divine transaction and the turning point of the ages. It was there that Christ, the guiltless one, was hung as a covenant breaker as the substitute for real covenant breakers. Thus, the righteous one “became a curse in place of us” (Gal 3:13). He became a curse, unjustly due him, in order that others, who were justly under the law’s curse, might be released from that curse and might be blessed, not by receiving the law’s blessing, which Israel forfeited, but the blessing of Abraham (3:14).17

Thus, Paul affirms, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the
law by becoming a curse in our stead,” which he authorizes with Scripture by explaining, “for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung upon a pole,” an obvious appeal to Deuteronomy 21:23. What warrants Paul’s use of this Old Testament passage? On what basis does “cursed is everyone who is hung upon a pole” authorize his claim, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse in our place”?

It has long been observed that Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 21:23 is not an exact match of neither the Hebrew nor the Septuagint, though it derives from the latter with only two adaptations. First, Paul conforms the citation to the covenant curse formulation—“cursed is everyone”—governed by his use of Deuteronomy 27:26 three verses earlier. He adjusts the LXX by substituting “cursed” (ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς), an adjective, for “is cursed” (κεκαταραμένος), a participle. By adapting his citation of 21:23 to read “cursed is everyone,” Paul unmistakably links 27:26 and 21:23 as speaking of the same curse. Second, Paul omits “by God” (ὑπὸ θεοῦ) after “cursed” whereas the LXX reads, “everyone hung upon a pole is accursed by God.” This omission hardly indicates that the law cursed Jesus independently of God. The progression of Paul’s arguments suggests two plausible reasons for this omission. Accenting the law’s curse fits with his later accent upon angelic mediation in the giving of the law (3:19). God gave the law through intermediaries, angels and Moses, unlike the promise. Also, Paul’s adaptation of the text features the law covenant by sustaining his juxtaposing of two historically sequential covenants with antithetically diverse outcomes, one curses, the other blesses. Succinctly stated, the blessing of Abraham belongs to “us,” who are of Christ (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ εὐλογοῦνται, Gal 3:9), not the “them,” who are of the law (ὁσοὶ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσίν, ύπὸ κατάραν εἰσίν, 3:10).

By accenting the law’s curse (3:10-12) over against the prior blessing motif anchored in God’s promise to Abraham (3:7-9), Paul amplifies one question and raises another. The question he intensifies concerns the blessing of the Gentiles, for he cites God’s promise written in Scripture (Gen 12:3; 18:18) as proof that he intended to bless the Gentiles “in Abraham,” but thus far, Paul has not shown how they can be blessed as Abraham’s seed apart from accepting circumcision and adhering to the law as the Judaizers contend. Now, given his foreboding argument concerning the “curse of the law”
(Gal 3:10-12), Paul prompts a second question. If the law has no power to bless with justification (2:1-16) or to constitute anyone Abraham's seed, then what hope does a Jew have whose descent is bound to the law (cf. ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, 2:15)? The resolution of both problems is "Jesus Christ crucified," the central theme of Paul's argument and the one with which he begins his series of interrogatives (3:1-6) and which he features in 3:13-14.

Paul addresses these two questions in reverse order, for with its curse, the law serves God's purpose (cf. 4:4) as an impediment to the fulfillment of his sworn oath to Abraham (3:6, 8) until Messiah, Abraham's seed, should come (3:15-26). Prominent among the law's multidimensional roles is its impedimentary function that is bound up in its powerlessness on account of human sinfulness to make good on its promise to give life (3:12) or to justify (cf. 3:19-21). The law has power to stir up sin (cf. 1 Cor 15:56; Rom 7:7-11; Gal 3:19) and to curse on account of unfaithfulness (3:10), but it has no capacity to bless, to give life, or to justify, though it promises that all who persevere in obeying the law will receive these. The law promises blessing for obedience, but imposes a curse because it commands but cannot secure obedience of its demands.

So, as a divinely designed impediment to fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, the law itself in all its aspects functioned in the life of Israel as a type that presaged its own fulfillment and termination in Messiah. For the law covenant bore within itself a variety of instruments for making atonement for sin and for breach of the covenant, but every divinely provided means was only an earthly shadow of the full measure required to make atonement before the Lord of the covenant. For with each transgression, atonement had to be repeated. By their repetition each means of atonement simultaneously signaled the need for divine propitiation and foreshadowed the sacrifice that would end all sacrifices (cf. Heb 10:1-4). In so doing, the law prophesied the coming of Messiah by way of its multiform foreshadows and prefigurements, anticipating his bearing of the curse, his sacrifice.

Because the law's imposed curse could not be bypassed it had to be removed, for the blessing of Abraham stood at an impasse. Fulfillment of the promise, which was followed by the law covenant 430 years later (3:17), stood at bay until the law with its curse
would be fulfilled by the one it foreshadowed with all its types, copies, and shadows. For the law prefigured the Coming One who would bear the curse of the broken covenant just as executed covenant breakers of old bore God’s wrath in place of Israel. The desolate and repulsive figure of a covenant breaker’s lifeless body hung upon a pole to bear the curse of God’s anger, to lift the law’s curse from Israel, and to deter Israelites from violating the covenant was not a dominant symbol upon Israel’s and the law’s landscape. Nonetheless, this is the type or foreshadow Paul features as fulfilled in Christ’s sacrificial curse bearing. By becoming “a curse for us” when he was “hung upon a pole,” Messiah accomplished redemption from the law’s curse as a substitute for others.

Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 21:23 is the keystone of his antithetical juxtaposing of two contrasting covenant affiliations which he begins in 2:15-16 by setting origin from Christ antithetically to origin from Torah. In 2:15, Paul commences his sustained argument concerning who constitutes the seed of Abraham and climaxes with his provisional conclusion, “For as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus have put on Christ. Therefore, there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor is there slave or free, nor is there male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. Now if you are of Christ, then you are of the seed of Abraham, heirs according to promise” (3:27-29). Here, as throughout his argument, Paul’s uses of genitive phrases, “if you are of Christ then you are the seed of Abraham,” defines the true lineage of Abraham. Paul’s reasoning inverts the argument of the Judaizers who try to compel Gentiles to subject themselves to the deeds required by Torah in order that they might become the seed of Abraham. So, Paul’s argument climaxes just as it begins in 2:15-16 by contrasting origin from Torah and origin from Christ. Essential to his argument is the enthymeme of 3:10—“For as many as are of the deeds required by Torah are under a curse, for it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all that is written in the book of Torah to practice them.’” It seems reasonable to infer the unstated premise that accounts for Paul’s argument to be the undisputed historical record of Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness and exile with hope of restoration, all prophetically sketched in Deuteronomy 27-30.

The turning point of Paul’s argument is at 3:13, which fea-
tures the cross of Christ Jesus as the pole on which he became the
cursed covenant breaker to bear Torah’s curse once for all time.
By becoming the cursed one, Jesus terminated Torah’s curse for
us and granted the blessing of Abraham to us, to those of faith (οἱ
ἐκ πίστεως [Χριστοῦ] εὐλογοῦνται, 3:9). For Paul contends that
all who trace their lineage to Abraham from affiliation with the
law covenant have no claim upon God’s promises made to Abra-
ham. Theirs is the curse of the law; theirs is not the blessing of
Abraham because the law is powerless to secure the obedience it
requires in order to grant the blessings it promises. Not those who
are of the law but those of Christ receive the blessing of Abraham,
which is the Spirit and justification. For by becoming the curse,
Christ redeemed us from the law’s curse because cursed is every-
one who is hung upon a pole.

So, when Paul uses the graphic expression, “before whose eyes
Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as the crucified one” (οἳς
κατ’ ὀφθαλμοὺς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προεγράφη ἐσταυρωμένος, 3:1),
his rhetoric seems to anticipate the visual imagery in 3:13 of the
curse bearer hung upon a pole which Israelites saw on several oc-
casions. For Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 21:23 in Galatians 3:13
features Christ as curse bearer; he does not accent the mode of
Christ’s death. For the correlation his citation envisages is not
“hung upon a pole”/“crucified alive upon a cross” but rather
“hung upon a pole”/“vicariously bearing a curse.” Accordingly,
Jesus fulfilled redemption from the law’s curse which was typo-
logically prophesied each time the carcass of a covenant breaker
was hung upon a wooden pole, several of which occasions were
written down for our instruction that we might acknowledge Je-
sus as our curse-bearer and know God who is propitious, who
justifies and grants the Spirit to both Jews and Gentiles without
distinction (3:13-14).

It has been argued that the apostle Paul uses Deuteronomy 21:23 not
arbitrarily as a prooftext yanked from its literary and covenantal context
because of clever verbal connections, but he appropriates the passage be-
cause it entails a prophetic foreshadowing of the Messiah. So, what was
ture false concerning those of the old covenant who were hung upon poles aids
understanding of Christ’s being hung upon a pole. By itself, Paul’s expres-
sion, “by becoming a curse in our place” (θενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα),
need not mean more than “on our behalf.” Thus, some attempt to explain Jesus’ act of bearing the curse in terms of representation only without substitution. Others contend that “in our place” is a proper translation of ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν in view of the curse bearing imagery drawn forward from the Old Testament. For Jesus acted “both in our place and for our benefit (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν) when he was ‘hung on a pole.’ . . . There was a transference of liabilities from sinners to Christ (cf. 2 Co 5:21).” Even so, Smiles insists that “It is difficult to know for sure how, in Paul’s view, Christ’s death broke the power of the curse. It does not seem to be a matter of propitiation or vicarious substitution.” Similarly, Brondos sweeps aside every interpretation of Galatians 3:13 that entails participation, representation, or substitution by claiming that such concepts are read back onto Paul’s text from “doctrines of atonement found in later Christian tradition.” Brondos rejects translating ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν with “in our stead” or “in our place,” for he is convinced that Paul did not embrace “the idea of vicarious satisfaction or penal substitution” within his gospel concerning Christ’s death.

However, it is difficult to take ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν in any sense other than “in place of” in some verses (e.g., Philem 13; John 11:50), and the phrase most likely bears the same sense elsewhere (2 Cor 5:14, 21; and 1 Tim 2:6). Likewise, the old covenant backdrop of Galatians 3:13 renders it difficult to take the phrase as indicating anything other than the concept of substitution, with Christ Jesus taking upon himself the curse of the violated covenant in order to redeem his own from the law’s curse. This is how early Christians understood Paul’s text, for Peter Martens demonstrates that “what is often considered a typically Protestant idea—penal substitution—actually played a significant role in early Christian reflection on Jesus’ death,” and that substitutionary atonement derives in part from Paul’s wording in Galatians 3:13. For example, concerning Justin’s use of Deuteronomy 21:23 in Dialogue with Trypho (mid 2nd cent.), Martens concludes that his use of the Old Testament was shaped by Paul’s use of it in Galatians 3:13 so that “Jesus (the sinless one) vicariously accepted the curses of others who were legitimately under a divine curse. In this way he was at the same time God’s Messiah and the subject of God’s condemnation.”

Conclusion
The significance of the violator of the old covenant who was executed and then hung upon a pole for exposure is not unlike the mere two mentions of Melchizedek in the Old Testament (Gen 14:18; Ps 110:4). Thus, the theo-
logical magnitude of the regulation concerning the practice of hanging the corpse of a covenant breaker is disproportionately greater than its apparent obscurity, being tucked away in a series of case laws in Deuteronomy 21. No prior bearer of the law’s curse could effect permanent removal of that curse, but each one presaged the Coming One who would end both the law and its curse. Thus, the repugnant practice foreshadowed the Coming One. Use of Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in Galatians 3:13 is the keystone of Paul’s argument because it explains how Jesus Christ, who as the Righteous One, would be hung upon a pole as though he were a covenant breaker. Thus, he became a curse in the place of others in order that he might redeem his people from the “curse of the law” and in place of the curse bring blessing, the blessing of Abraham and the giving of the Spirit. By taking the law’s curse upon himself, Jesus removes the law’s sanction, putting an end to the law’s jurisdiction (cf. 4:4). The law as broken covenant required satisfaction; the curse needed to be removed in order that the blessing of Abraham, which entails justification and the Spirit, might be given to Jew and Gentile believers without distinction.

1 Among uses of Deut 21:22-23 in the NT, use in 1 Pet 2:24 is the most obscure because the accusative instead of the genitive follows the preposition, ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον. On this, see J. Ramsey Michael, 1 Peter (WBC 49; Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 148.

2 The NIV translates ξύλον in Gal 3:13 and ἔσ in Deut 21:22 as “pole,” but each of the other NT allusions as “cross.”

3 On the notion that the apostles arbitrarily use the OT in an ad hoc manner, see Barnabas Lindars, “The Place of the Old Testament in the Formulation of New Testament Theology,” NTS 23 (1976): 59-66. He reasons, “Believing that Christ is the fulfilment of the promises of God, and that they are living in the age to which all the scriptures refer, they employ the Old Testament in an ad hoc way, making recourse to it just when and how they find it helpful for their purposes. But they do this in a highly creative situation, because the Christ-event breaks through conventional expectations, and demands new patterns of exegesis for its elucidation” (p. 64). Peter Enns, a contemporary whose view approaches that of Lindars, explains that his view is not to be confused with what others call a “Christological” or “Christocentric” reading of Scripture. He explains, “A Christotelic approach is an attempt to look at the centrality of Christ for hermeneutics in a slightly different way. It asks not so much, ‘How does this OT passage, episode, figure, etc., lead to Christ?’ To read the OT ‘Christotelically’ is to read it already knowing that Christ is somehow the end (telos) to which the OT story is heading; in other words, to read the OT in light of the exclamation point of the history of revelation, the death and resurrection of Christ” (“Fuller Meaning, Single Goal,” in Three Views of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament [ed. Kenneth Berding & Jonathan Lunde; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008], 214; see also idem, Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 154). In a critique of Inspiration and Incarnation, D. A. Carson observes that the view advocated by Peter Enns makes his “sound disturbingly like” that of Lindars whose thesis is simple, that “the New Testament writers came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he had been crucified and raised from the dead. They then ransacked their Bible, what we call the Old Testament, to find proof texts to justify their new-found theology and ended up yanking things out of context, distorting the original context, and so forth” (Collected Writings on Scripture, compiled by Andrew Naselli [Wheaton: Crossway, 2010], 282-283).


5 See A. B. Caneday, “Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured: ‘Which Things are Written Allegorically’” (Galatians
The six questions posed by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson guide this study. Given Paul’s argument that all “who are of the law are under a curse” (ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσίν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσίν), within the context, the actions of Phineas are also instructive. The Hebrew word for “make atonement” is σημεῖον (θὲς ἐπὶ σημείου/ἔστησεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ σημείου). Likewise, ξύλον (LXX) can refer to a tree, a pole, or an object made from wood.

Given Israel’s role as God’s son, the first and second curses seem linked in that the rebellious son typifies rebellious Israel. To dishonor one’s parents is akin to dishonoring God by making an idol. Don Garlington observes, “That the son is ‘stubborn’ and ‘rebellious’ is instructive in itself, because these are terms characteristic of Israel’s resistance of and apostasy from Yahweh’s lordship in the wilderness and afterwards. Thus, while the son’s behavior was in the first instance confined to a household, its implicit threat would be against the security and continuity of the covenant community at large. His deportment is more the all encompassing because of its specific nature, that is, disobedience to parents, which, according to Deut. 27.16, ipso facto incurs Yahweh’s curse” (“Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.10-13,” JSNT 65 [1997]: 104-105).

The Hebrew word for “make atonement” is רכש and the LXX translation is ἐξιλάσατο. David understood that his actions entailed propitiating the Lord’s anger away from Israel.

Rizpah, the mother of two who were killed by the Gibeonites and hung for exposure protected all the exposed bodies from birds and wild animals. Apparently she acted better than King David, for it seems that he permitted the bodies to be hung for exposure until the rains fell and the famine ceased, against the regulation of Deut 21:22-23, that forbids leaving bodies exposed after sunset lest the land be defiled. When King David learned of Rizpah’s actions more honorable than his own, he ordered the bodies to be taken down and buried together with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, whom the Philistines had killed and hung for exposure, were moved from Jabesh Gilead and buried them in the tomb of Saul’s father Kish. Then the Lord answered Israel’s prayers on behalf of the land and sent rain (2 Sam 21:10-14).

The Hebrew and LXX phrases respectively are כָּרֵשׁ נֵס and ἐξιλάσατο περὶ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ—that the Lord’s anger “may turn away from Israel.” Also see the Lord’s commendation of Phineas, whom “made atonement for the sons of Israel” (ἐξιλάσατο περὶ τῶν νόμων τοῦ Ἰσραήλ; Num 25:13).

Within the context, the actions of Phineas are also instructive.

Given Paul’s argument that all “who are of the law are under a curse” (δοκεῖ εἰς ξύλον νόμον εἶναι, ἐπὶ κατάραν εἶναι, Gal 3:10), and given his statement, “in order that the gentiles might receive in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham” (Gal 3:14), it is curious that C. Marvin Pate states, “Thus, Christ on the cross took the Deuteronomistic curses so that the Galatians could receive the Deuteronomistic blessings” (“The Reverse of the Curse: Paul, Wisdom, and the Law” [WUNT 114; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 178).

The six questions posed by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson guide this study. (Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007], xxiv-xcvx). (1) What is the NT context? (2) What is the OT context from which the quotation is drawn? (3) How is the OT passage used in Second Temple literature? (4) Does the NT draw upon the MT, the LXX, a Targum, or some other translation form? (5) What is the nature of the connection between the NT citation and the OT passage? (6) What is the NT writer’s theological use of the OT passage?

See, e.g., Crawford Howell Toy, Quotations in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1884), 192-193. Paul’s citation is brief: ἐξιλάσατο παῖς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, whereas the LXX reads, ὅτι κατάραμεν ἐπὶ θεόν παῖς κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου.

For fuller discussion, see Caneday, “Redeemed from the Curse of the Law,” 196-197. The LXX reads ὅτι κατάραμεν ἐπὶ θεόν παῖς κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, but Paul’s text is ἐπὶ κατάραμεν παῖς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου.

David Brondos takes an unusual if not mechanical reading to argue, “It is important to note that two different curses are spoken of here: the curse that the law pronounced on those who disobeyed it (Deut. 27.26), and the curse pronounced against those who hung on a tree (Deut. 21.23). Many exegetes have assumed that the curse under which God’s people lay and the curse suffered by Christ are the same curse. This may be the result of reading a penal
substitution or participatory understanding of atonement into this passage: Christ undergoes our curse in our stead, or we undergo the same curse by his participation in his death” (“The Cross and the Curse: Galatians 3:13 and Paul’s Doctrine of Redemption,” JSNT 81 [2001], 22). He posits his notion of two different curses because Paul’s second instance of κατάρα (ὑπὸ θεοῦ κατάρα, 3:13), does not include either a definite article or demonstrative pronoun. Such is a much too mechanistic and prescriptive view of grammar.


23 For engagement with and critical response to those who wrongly extrapolate Torah’s independence from omission of ὑπὸ θεοῦ, see Thomas R. Schreiner, Galatians (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 217.

24 Paul’s shorthand expressions, ὁ Ισραήλ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (3:10) derive from his longer formulation in 2:15-16, ἀνήρ Φαραώ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and διὰ πίστεως θεοῦ Χριστοῦ/ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, respectively. Cf. Garlington, “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10-13,” 94.

25 Of course, mention of the resolution of two problems, also of Torah as an impediment to the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, and implication of the need for divine satisfaction in order for the curse to be removed does not suggest that there is any flaw or weakness in God as if he had become subject to forces greater than himself. These obstacles to fulfillment of God’s promise are entirely owing to God’s holy character and divine purpose as well as God’s designed limitations concerning Torah’s jurisdiction, atoning function, and duration. Nevertheless, because he assumes that such descriptions subject God “the Almighty” to “the influence of Greek philosophy,” David Brondos inveighs against exegetes who contend that, given Israel’s unfaithfulness to Torah and subjection to its curse, Torah’s curse required satisfaction. He targets Garlington, Dunn, and Wright. See Brondos, “The Cross and the Curse,” 27-28.

26 On the issue of fully obeying Torah, see Garlington, “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture,” 87, 97, 100, 102, 104, 10-110; also Don Garlington, Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans (WUNT 79; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 67-71.

27 As Schreiner points out, “We ought not to interpret Paul simplistically here. He knew that a person could be devoted to God and end up being crucified. As a Pharisee Paul was presumably sympathetic to the eight hundred people crucified by Alexander Jannaeus (Josephus, Ant. 13.380). It is likely that he viewed at least some of these people as righteous” (Galatians, 217).


29 Ibid. “Israel’s incurring the curse of the Law because of unfaithfulness to the Law covenant, as narrated in Scripture, is the source of Paul’s theology that provides focus upon the polarity: (1) the curse of Torah belongs to ‘as many as are of the works required by the Law (διὸ οἱ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσίν, 3:10), and (2) the blessing of Abraham is for ‘those of faith/faithfulness’ (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, 3:7, 9). Galatians 3:1-14 develops this dual focus upon the curse of the Law that has fallen upon Israel and the blessing of Abraham held at bay by Torah and its curse” (pp. 197-198). See also Frank Thielsch, From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul’s View of the Law in Galatians and Romans (NovTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 65-72; N. T. Wright, “Curse and Covenant: Galatians 3:10-14,” in The Climax of the Covenant (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 144-148; Joseph P. Braswell, “‘The Blessing of Abraham’ Versus ‘The Curse of the Law’: Another Look at Gal 3:10-13,” WTJ 53 (1991): 75-77; James M. Scott, “‘For as Many as are of Works of the Law are under a Curse’ (Galatians 3:10),” in Paul and the Scriptures of Israel (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 187-221; and Garlington, “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10-13,” 95-99.

30 The participle, γενόμενος functions adverbially, describing how Christ Jesus redeemed his people from Torah’s curse—by becoming a curse for us. David Brondos incorrectly contends that because the participle is aorist, it should be translated “having become” and should be taken to “indicate a point in time previous to the main verb ἐξηγόρασεν, so that, in a strict grammatical sense, Christ’s redeeming ‘us’ from the curse of the law follows upon his ‘having become a curse for us’ (“The Cross and the Curse,” 22). His “strict grammatical sense” reflects a mechanical view of grammar, for aorist participles do not invariably function temporally to signify action prior to the main verb. See Stanley Porter, Idioms of the Greek New Testament, second ed. 1994 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 187-190. Brondos reasons, “The temporal force of the aorist participle has often been called into question, but this may be because it would rule out the penal substitution reading and many of the readings that revolve around the notion of participation” (idem). How this is so he does not explain.


32 On the use of προγράφω as setting forth for public notice, showing forth or portraying publicly or placard publicly, see BDAG 867.2. On meaning, see also Douglas J. Moo, Galatians (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013),
Among several convictions that have changed since writing my thesis, (“The Curse of the Law and the Cross: Works of the Law and Faith in Galatians 3:1-14 [PhD dissertation; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992]), my understanding of references in Paul’s uses of pronouns in 3:13-14 has shifted. Formerly, I tracked with T. L. Donaldson (“The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:13-14,” NTS 32 [1986]: 105-106) and others by understanding first person uses to refer to Jewish life under the law and second person uses to refer to the Galatians. More plausible is the contrast Paul draws between himself with the Galatians versus the Judaizers with cursed Israel. For my former understanding, see Caneday, “Redeemed from the Curse of the Law,” 203-204.

See also Wright, “Curse and Covenant,” 140.

See, e.g., Ronald Fung, The Epistle to the Galatians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 149.


Murray J. Harris, Prepositions and Theology: In the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 214.


Brondos, “The Cross and the Curse,” 32. A few exegetes and theologians with whom Brondos explicitly disagrees are John Calvin, J. Christian Beker, N. T. Wright, James D. G. Dunn, T. L. Donaldson, Don Garlington, and Richard B. Hays. He insists that “foreign to Paul’s thought in Gal. 3.13 is the idea that Jesus’ death had the ‘purpose’ of effecting some . . . change in the human situation, satisfying some condition necessary for divine forgiveness or acquittal, laying down an example to be re-enacted, moving human beings to greater love, or providing participation in his death to sin” (p. 28).


Peter W. Martens, “Anyone Hung on a Tree is under God’s Curse’ (Deuteronomy 21:23): Jesus’ Crucifixion and Interreligious Exegetical Debate in Late Antiquity,” Ex Auditu 26 (2010): 71. He states his thesis: “My central concern in this paper is to trace the reception of Paul’s condensed, and perhaps even cryptic, use of Deut 21:23 through several late antique authors [Justin Marty; Augustine; Theodore Abu Qurrah]. . . . These authors provide us a glimpse into the emergence of the early Christian doctrine of Jesus’ vicarious atonement and how it was shaped by a Pauline retrieval of Deut 21:23” (p. 70).

Ibid., 75. Martens observes concerning Justin’s reply to Trypho, “While he never refers to Paul’s letter by name in this work, the circumstantial evidence in this section strongly points to Justin’s engagement with Gal 3. First, when he cites Deut 21:23, he tellingly offers a non-Septuagintal reading that coincides with Paul’s rendering of this verse in Gal 3:13 (96.1). Second, Justin retracts the steps in Paul’s argument in Gal 3 by citing, with the apostle, Deut 27:26. For both authors this verse immediately precedes and sets the stage for the difficult claim that Jesus died under a curse” (p. 74).
Book Reviews


In recent Evangelical scholarship, scholars have discussed much the biblical covenants. This is especially true in regard to how the covenants should be interpreted in relation to covenant and dispensational theology. _Covenant Theology: A Baptist Distinctive_ is one such example written from a Reformed Baptist viewpoint. The book’s main purpose is to demonstrate from Scripture and church history that Baptists, at least until recent days, have embraced covenant theology without accepting Reformed theology’s commitment to paedobaptism (7-8). With the renewed emphasis on the “doctrines of grace” within evangelicalism, the authors are concerned that people will mistakenly think that there are only two options available: either paedobaptist covenant theology or a rejection of covenant theology for some form of dispensationalism. However, the authors insist on a third alternative: namely a Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology. The book seeks to describe and promote this alternative position as the biblical view.

Given its size, the book is not a complete exposition and defense of the Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology position. Its five chapters and three appendices function more as a primer than as an exhaustive defense of the authors’ position. Pastors and informed lay Christians are the book’s primary audience, which is why a detailed analysis of the relevant complex issues is absent in the book. The chapters and appendices were originally lectures, articles, and blog posts, all of which have now been compiled into one book in order to commend to a wider audience the authors’ respective view.

Chapter 1, “Covenant Theology Simplified,” by Earl Blackburn, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, serves as an overview of the basic tenets of covenant theology. This chapter nicely describes differences between Reformed Baptists and their paedobap-
tists. Blackburn argues that covenant theology “is the view of God and redemption that interprets the Holy Scriptures by way of covenants” and that “there is only one way of salvation: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone” (17). After an introductory discussion, Blackburn gives a review of covenant theology’s understanding of the covenant of redemption, works, and grace. He also seeks to unpack the unity and diversity of the biblical covenants as they culminate in the new covenant. Unsurprisingly, a major focus in the chapter is on how the new covenant is different from the old, especially in regard to children (50-51), thus highlighting the Baptist distinctive that each member of the new covenant is a professing believer in Christ.

Chapter 2, “Biblical Hermeneutics and Covenant Theology,” by Fred Malone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Clinton, Louisiana, describes basic and crucial hermeneutical principles to a proper interpretation of Scripture. After describing the major agreements between evangelicals and Reformed interpreters of Scripture, Malone discusses differences between a dispensational and a Reformed interpretation. Finally, he addresses the main ecclesiological differences between Reformed Baptists and Reformed paedobaptists. Throughout the chapter, Malone insists that Scripture is best interpreted within the framework of covenant theology by arguing that the OT covenants are best viewed as “progressive covenants of the promise fulfilled in the effectual and unbreakable new covenant” (81).

Chapters 3-5 are written by Walter Chantry, retired pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and well-known leader in Reformed Baptist circles. Chapter 3, “The Covenants of Works and of Grace,” describes and defends a traditional “covenant of works” and then sets it over against the “covenant of grace.” He contends that preaching must include both the “law and gospel,” which are reflected respectively in the “covenant of works and grace.” In addition, Chantry defends the tripartite division of the old covenant and the abiding demand of the Ten Commandments as the summary of God’s eternal moral law, first written on Adam’s conscience and later re-written on the believer’s heart. Throughout the chapter, Chantry also argues that covenant theology undergirds a consistent Calvinism while dispensational theology sows the seeds for an embrace of Arminianism (99-110). In chapter 4, “Imputation of Righteousness and Covenant Theology,” Chantry argues for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness based on the covenant of works-grace framework. In chapter 5, “Baptism and Covenant Theolo-
gy,” Chantry defends believer’s baptism over against infant baptism in order to demonstrate that even though Baptists reject paedobaptism, they ought to embrace fully covenant theology.

Three appendices conclude the book. Justin Taylor, vice-president of book publishing at Crossway, authors the first one. He answers the question “Was There a Covenant of Works?” in the affirmative. Taylor contends that without it, the gospel is ultimately compromised since the basis for the imputation of Adam’s sin and Christ’s righteousness is undercut. Ken Fryer, a staff member at Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, writes the second appendix, “Covenant Theology in Baptist Life.” With discussion of church history, Fryer does a fine job demonstrating that Baptists have embraced covenant theology despite their rejection of infant baptism. In the third appendix, “How is the New Covenant not like that which has come before?” Kenneth Puls, the editorial director of Founders Press, gives a helpful chart which contrasts the covenants in the Old Testament with the new covenant.

Given the book’s purpose, aim, and audience, the authors provide a helpful introduction to Reformed Baptist theology. If one is looking for a quick read and resource which describes this particular variety of Reformed Baptist theology, this book is a good place to begin. However, at least three weaknesses are evident.

First, as is often the case in this kind of book, a description of contrary positions are mostly unhelpful. This is especially evident when dispensational theology is in the crosshairs. The book largely discusses dispensationalism as a monolithic movement. For example, the authors appear to assume that all dispensationalists are classic dispensationalists. Thus, the book asserts that dispensational theology teaches that God operates on the basis of contingency plans since God’s original plan failed for the Jews (20), that dispensationalism denies that Jeremiah’s new covenant applies to the Church (76), and that dispensational theology sows the seeds for Arminianism (99-100). These assertions are caricatures that misrepresent the multifaceted and complex nature of dispensationalism. This misrepresentation is especially evident in light of the developments within dispensationalism. Straw man arguments ought to be avoided. They do not enhance your position; they only detract from it and they lack charity in theological discussion.

Second, although this book only serves as a primer, it makes strong assertions without substantiation on disputed points of theology: e.g. the tripartite division of the old covenant (45-47) and the continuing validity
of the Sabbath in the Lord’s Day (30). On the one hand, given both the page limitations and the purpose of the book, one can understand why the authors are unable to defend many of their assertions. But, on the other hand, this reviewer thinks that the authors should have been more tentative and charitable with some of their assertions about opposing positions, especially on issues which are widely disputed.

Third, what is lacking in the book is not a description of the biblical covenants, but a sense of how the covenants progressively unfold and how each covenant contributes to the overall plan of God fulfilled in Christ. Blackburn mentions each biblical covenant, but Chantry simply conflates them into the “covenant of grace,” especially when he discusses Old Testament covenants (92-98). Chantry argues that “when God makes a covenant it is here to stay!” (100), without attempting to engage the question of how the new covenant is the telos, terminus, and fulfillment of all of the biblical covenants? This book lacks a presentation of the beauty of God’s glorious plan of redemption, how that plan unfolds in its various twists and turns, and ultimately how that plan finds its fulfillment in Christ.

In this reviewer’s view, the biblical covenants are the foundation of the metanarrative of Scripture. This book tries to capture the Bible’s grand story. As a result, there is a lot to commend in this book. For example, the book clearly describes and explains the position of the authors, but in the end, it left this reviewer with a lot of unanswered questions and wanting much more.

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A. Andrew Das is the Donald W. and Betty J. Buik Endowed Chair-holder and Professor of Religious Studies at Elmhurst College in
Elmhurst, IL. His recent Galatians commentary has made yet another important contribution to New Testament Studies in general and to Pauline Studies in particular. This commentary combines rigorous exegesis with seasoned acumen to produce a work that is accessible to scholars, students, and learned pastors. Das’ commentary on Galatians follows the structure of the Concordia Commentary Series. As a Lutheran confessional series, one of its goals is to provide a lucid scholarly commentary, immersed in the scholarship of a particular book, but accessible to the non-specialist. Das’ work successfully accomplishes the series’ goals with both scholarly rigor and pastoral sensitivity.

First, he summarizes the major introductory issues in Galatians in the opening section of the commentary (e.g., mirror-reading, the identity of Paul’s opponents, the law, justification, etc.) (1-89). The introduction is long, but it does not overwhelm the reader and should be very helpful to the student and pastor. Second, Das simplifies a fairly technical discussion about the Northern versus Southern Galatians hypotheses at the beginning of the commentary (20-30). An exceptional helpful feature in this section is Das’ summary of all of the major arguments for each position and his responses to them. Third, Das cites and interacts with (what he thinks is) the most important scholarship about the most important issues in the text (e.g. the law and justification in Galatians 2:11-21 [204-275]). His detailed interaction with scholarship is lucid, precise, and does not overwhelm the reader with gratuitous footnotes.

Fourth, throughout the commentary, Das provides many helpful text-critical comments on every major textual problem in Galatians. These text-critical comments offer helpful insights to scholars, students, and pastors alike. Fifth, Das provides many helpful excurses throughout the commentary without overshadowing his analysis of individual verses in their Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts. In fact, some of Das’ most helpful sections in the entire commentary are his excurses that explain the social, historical, or theological content of a particular text in more detail than he is able in the exegetical sections of the commentary. To cite one example, Das devotes an excursus to social identity intercourse as it pertains to Galatians 2:11-14 (216-32), which is especially illuminating. He lists the major scholarly interpretations of the social situation at Antioch and in Galatia; he carefully responds to them, and he argues his interpretation of the situation at Antioch with clarity.

Sixth, Das interacts with relevant Second Temple Jewish texts throughout his exegetical discussions in the commentary. This is a method that
helps him set and keep Paul’s argument in Galatians in his 1st century Greco-Roman and Jewish context without locking the message of Galatians in the 1st century Greco-Roman and Jewish world away from 21st century readers. Related to this, Das’ discussions of the relevant apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts, the relevant Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), and his explanation of a number of relevant, multifarious Greco-Roman and Jewish texts enlighten his explanations of the law, justification, and Paul’s problem with his opponents in Galatia (337-426).

Seventh, readers of this commentary within the Protestant tradition especially owe a great debt to Das for his masterful combination of careful grammatical-historical exegesis with pastoral and spiritual sensitivities. On the one hand, his successful attempt of grounding his interpretation of Galatians within a 1st century Jewish and Greco-Roman context should enable (not limited to but especially) Lutheran and Reformed readers to avoid racist, anti-Semitic, un-historical, and incorrect readings of Galatians that still continue to argue the tired thesis that Galatians was a response to a 1st century version of Luther’s Roman Catholicism. On the other hand, Das’ careful grammatical-historical exegesis also attempts to show that the Reformers’ expositional and polemical defense of justification by faith actually has an exegetical and historical foundation on which to stand and that Luther’s justification theory originated with Paul himself and not with the Reformer (239-75).

Eighth, related to the above point, Das puts his exegetical skills on full display as he summarizes the complex post-E. P. Sanders revolutionary readings of Paul with an informative discussion of reactions to the old Lutheran interpretations of Galatians and 1st century Judaism. Beginning with scholarly contributions before Sanders (e.g., Krister Stendahl) and continuing until N. T. Wright, Das manages to navigate through the complex forest of both Sanders’ sympathizers and his opponents without becoming lost within the polemical trees. Consequently, at the end of his summary of the New Perspective of Paul (NPP), which is and has been for some time the New Old Perspective (OPP), his own Lutheran understanding of the NPP versus the old Lutheran version of the OPP becomes apparent.

Ninth, page after page offers an insightful and robust exegesis of the text under discussion with a concern for understanding Galatians in its 1st century Greco-Roman and Jewish context and with an awareness of its modern day relevance. For example, Galatians 2:11-21 and 3:10-14 are probably two of the most difficult sections in the entire letter. Yet,
Das clearly summarizes the major argument of each text, states each text's contribution to the larger argument in the letter, and engages in a concise exegesis of the passages while discussing the different interpretive options in a way that both the specialist and non-specialist can grasp (e.g., see 196-275 for commentary of Gal 2:11-21 and 310-336 for his commentary of Gal 3:10-14).

Das' new commentary is a great contribution to New Testament Studies in general and to Pauline scholarship in particular. Many readers will certainly complain about Das' Lutheran reading of Paul. Others may quibble because he does not discuss this issue or that issue in more detail, and still others may complain about his exegesis of this text or that text. Nevertheless, Das' commentary is an exegetical tour de force that must be reckoned with by scholars, students, and pastors regardless of whether they embrace an Old, a New, or a Newer Perspective reading of Galatians! I highly recommend this work!

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Douglas J. Moo serves as the Kenneth T. Wessner Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School in Wheaton, IL. He is an established Pauline scholar, who has written several monographs—including a major commentary on Romans. His most recent contribution to Pauline Studies is his highly anticipated Galatians commentary in the competent Baker Exegetical Commentary series. This review will briefly survey the content of the commentary and highlight a few of the commentary's many insightful contributions.

In keeping with the high standard of the preceding commentaries in the Baker Exegetical series (e.g. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans, Ephesians, and 1 Peter to name a few), Moo's Galatians commentary combines rigorous grammatical-historical exegesis and rich theological
reflection with a strong Evangelical tone. Moo manages to do this while making his work accessible to the non-specialist.

First, Moo begins his commentary with a lucid and informative introduction (1-63). His introduction discusses important issues like the Northern versus Southern Galatian theories and the dating of the letter (2-18). One of the most insightful and preparatory parts of the introduction is Moo's discussion of selective theological themes in Galatians (31-61). For example, Moo offers a detailed and fruitful theological discussion of key Pauline themes such as salvation history and apocalyptic (31-32), the gospel (32), Christ (33-34), the Spirit (34), the law (35-37), faith in versus faith of Christ (38-47), and justification (48-61) that prepare the reader for the careful exegetical analysis and the rich theological reflection to come later in the commentary of individual texts.

Second, Moo has a widespread reputation among New Testament scholars for being a strong and careful exegete. As Tom Schreiner states in his endorsement on the back of the commentary, “Douglas Moo’s expertise as a commentator is well known, and his skill is on display in this outstanding commentary on Galatians.” Every single section of Galatians is carefully but succinctly explained with good old-fashioned grammatical-historical exegesis. In addition to Moo’s impressive exegesis of each text in Galatians, he helpfully discusses relevant grammatical issues that affect interpretation (e.g., faith in versus faith of Christ=objective versus subjective genitive) minus gratuitous grammatical information (38-48, 160-63).

Third, Moo successfully grounds his interpretation of Galatians in its first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish polemical context. As he does this, he discusses both the relevant Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish texts that aid one’s interpretation of the text in Galatians. Although, as an Evangelical scholar, Moo certainly has pastoral concerns in mind throughout the commentary, his fundamental concern is to explain the meaning of Paul’s letter to the Galatians to the original audience to whom he wrote it. Moo is keenly aware of the various alternative interpretations made by various readers of Galatians throughout the history of interpretation, evident by his footnotes, his endnotes, and his bibliography, but his primary focus from beginning until the end of his commentary is to explain Galatians in light of Paul’s first century social and polemical setting.

Fourth, Moo points out the strengths of certain New Perspective readings of Paul, while noting the dangers of radical Newer Perspective
readings of Paul (145-73, 201-16). Moo’s understanding of the text is not eclipsed by his discussions of the readings of Paul that diverge from his own reading, but his discussions of competing views insightfully inform the reader of current issues in certain texts.

Moo’s commentary on Galatians is another significant contribution from the pen of a world class Evangelical New Testament scholar. The commentary’s combination of grammatical-historical exegetical rigor, rich theological reflection, and pastoral sensitivities make this work both another welcomed addition to the now famous Baker Exegetical series in the Evangelical community and a must read for scholars, students, and pastors who are working through Galatians. This work is especially a must read for pastors who approach Galatians from a traditional Evangelical faith-tradition—although all readers could profit from the commentary. Moo’s detailed discussion of justification is alone worth the price of the commentary. As I write my own commentary on Galatians for the New Covenant Commentary series and as I teach and preach through Galatians in the classroom and in the church, I will look often to this fantastic addition to the Baker Exegetical commentary series. I have some exegetical disagreements with Moo here and there, but my biggest complaint about his commentary is that it sadly ends too soon. I could gladly read another 406 pages about Galatians from the pen of Moo. Scholars, students, and pastors should purchase this commentary and watch a master exegetical craftsman do his work with excellent scholarly precision and careful exegetical skill!

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Before his death in November 11, 2013, Jerome Murphy-O’Connor was one of the world’s leading authorities on the writings of Paul. He served as a professor of New Testament at the École Biblique of Jerusa-
lem from 1967 until his death in 2013. In his collected essays on Galatians, Murphy-O’Connor offers his perspectives on selected neglected areas in the letter. In this review, I will summarize the contents of the book and offer a brief critical interaction.

In Murphy-O’Connor’s collected essays on Galatians, he offers contributions to years of scholarship on an old (and in his view, a very old) letter. The book has 10 chapters. Since the book is a collection of essays previously delivered in lectures or published in separate journals, he does not advance a singular thesis. But each chapter develops its own thesis.

In chapter 1 (Missions in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia before the Jerusalem Conference), Murphy-O’Connor discusses Paul’s early missionary work before the Jerusalem conference (1-36). This chapter reexamines “the chronological presuppositions which, consciously or unconsciously, serve as the basis for all reconstructions of Pauline theology” (1). Here Murphy-O’Connor offers a detailed evaluation of the contributions of recent works on Paul’s 14 years, which Galatians 2:1 states separated Paul’s first trip to Jerusalem as a Christian and the Jerusalem conference (1).

Chapter 2 (Paul in Arabia: Gal 1:17) discusses Paul’s trip to Arabia mentioned in Galatians 1:17 (37-47). In this chapter, Murphy-O’Connor reframes the question from “where was Arabia” to “what would the term Arabia have suggested to a Jew who lived in first-century Judea” (37)? Based on references to Arabia in Josephus, Murphy-O’Connor argues that a 1st century Jew would have understood Arabia to refer to the “Nabataean territory” (37-38). He further suggests that Paul went there to make converts since after his departure from Arabia, the Nabataean authorities continued to take his life (e.g., 2 Cor 11:32-33) (38-39). By means of a concise historical reconstruction, Murphy-O’Connor argues that Arabia was hostile to Paul’s preaching upon his arrival due to the conflict caused by Jews and led by Herod Antipas (40-42). Accordingly, the Nabataeans would have thought Paul (a Jew) was preaching another form of Judaism. Nabataean locals would have perceived converts to Paul’s preaching as a weakness to the Nabataean kingdom, which had experienced much bloodshed years earlier at the hands of Jewish force.

Chapter 3 (Names for Jerusalem in Galatians) discusses the different Greek names for Jerusalem in Galatians 1:17-18 and 4:25-26 (48-53). He argues that Paul uses different names for Jerusalem as a polemic against his opponents (50). Chapter 4 (To Run in Vain) focuses on Paul’s remarks in Gal 2:2 about presenting his gospel to the apostles lest
he ran in vain (54-60). He argues that Paul’s remarks in 2:2 are a rhetorical statement against the opponents who accused Paul of operating independently of the Jerusalem apostles (59).

Chapter 5 (Nationalism and Church Policy) discusses Galatians 2:9 (61-77). He argues that “Gentile hostility to Jews is the key to understanding the apparently conflicting decisions of James” (64-73). Chapter 6 (Whose Common Ground?) discusses Galatians 2:15-16a (78-87). He develops the thesis of earlier scholars that “in Gal 2:15-16 Paul attributes to Christian Jews a theological position that they should have defended, not the one they actually maintained” (81). Chapter 7 (The Irrevocable Will) discusses Galatians 3:15 (97-114). He argues that Paul’s purpose in making this statement is to “clarify the relationship between the promise to Abraham and the Mosaic law by insisting that the latter cannot annul or significantly modify the former” (97).

Chapter 8 (Galatians 4:13-14 and the Recipients of Galatians) discusses Galatians 4:13-14 (115-22). Here Murphy-O’Connor argues for the Northern Galatian theory while rejecting older arguments in favor of this thesis (116). Chapter 9 (The Unwritten Law of Christ) discusses Gal 6:2. Murphy-O’Connor argues that the phrase “law of Christ” refers to Christ who is the law (143). Chapter 10 (The Origins of Paul’s Christology: From Thessalonians to Galatia) discusses Paul’s Christology (144-74). This chapter argues that Paul’s Christology in the Thessalonian correspondence is different from that in Galatians. The difference, Murphy-O’Connor says, pertains both to Paul’s own perception of the Messiah before he converted and to external conflict after he was converted (148-72).

Murphy-O’Connor was a giant (although he was very small in physical stature) in the field of New Testament scholarship. His numerous monographs and articles on Paul established him and set him apart as one of the foremost leading authorities in the field. In these essays on Galatians, he demonstrates a masterful handling of primary source material and exegetical precision in his explanation of minor points of Galatians. Although I disagree with his exegesis and conclusions at a few points, I recommend this book to New Testament scholars and doctoral students who are working in the areas of early Christian Origins or Galatians. This book features a seasoned biblical scholar’s ability to use extra-biblical literature and geography to illuminate the text of Galatians. The book is well-written, saturated with precise exegetical and historical analyses, and it provides postscripts at the end of each chapter wherein Murphy-O’Connor responds to his detractors.
In addition to scholars and doctoral students, graduate students in an advanced Greek exegesis course of Galatians would profit from the book. The average pastor without formal theological training and without a working knowledge of Greek and extra-biblical literature would find very little use for this book because of its scholarly audience and its narrow scope. Murphy-O’Connor writes about narrow aspects of the letter as a scholar to scholars, and he attempts to correct (what he thinks are) scholarly misinterpretations of certain aspects of the letter.

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Charles L. Quarles serves as professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. In his new book on the life of Paul, Quarles introduces readers to the Jewish Paul, who grew up in Tarsus, studied in Jerusalem, advanced in Judaism, converted to Christianity, and advanced the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth until his martyrdom.

Quarles provides a concise, accessible, and user friendly introductory text on the life of Paul. His work is different from many of the previous books about Paul in that he focuses primarily on his cultural context without overwhelming the reader with specialist language or with large swathes of primary literature. Instead, this presentation of Paul largely uses Acts, and certain Pauline letters, as the most important historical source, while also responsibly using Josephus and certain Greco-Roman authors to fill in the historical gaps. In addition, the book provides professional pictures of ancient sites, primary source material, and lucid comments of the topics and cities under discussion.

The book has 9 chapters. In chapter 1, Quarles provides a short introduction to the book (1-2). In chapter 2 (The Background of Saul of Tarsus), Quarles discusses Paul’s Greco-Roman and Jewish background
Chapter 3 (Damascus Road) discusses Paul's Damascus Road conversion (17-41). Chapter 4 (The First Missionary Journey) focuses on Paul's first missionary journey (42-67). Here Quarles discusses some of the content of Paul's preaching in various Gentile cities, and he offers a discussion of historical facts related to these cities that illuminate Paul's first missionary journey. Chapter 5 (The Jerusalem Conference) considers the historical significance of the Jerusalem conference (68-77). Chapter 6 (The Second Missionary Journey) takes up a discussion of Paul's second missionary journey (79-136). Chapter 7 (The Third Missionary Journey) focuses on the third missionary journey (137-92). Chapter 8 (From Jerusalem to Rome) focuses on Paul's final trip to Jerusalem, his arrest there, and his appeal to journey to Rome (193-248). Chapter 9 (Paul's Last Years) highlights Paul's final days, including a discussion of his prison letters, continued ministry in his final days, and martyrdom (249-70).

Each chapter attempts to paint a picture of the historical Paul by taking seriously Acts as the most important primary historical source and secondly by appealing to relevant extra-biblical sources.

Quarles has provided a concise, accessible, and up to date book on the life of Paul for students. The book is easy to read and well written by a clear master teacher, New Testament scholar, and minister of the gospel. Quarles writes as a scholar to students and to ministers in training. The most admirable contribution of this book in this regard is the fact that Quarles takes seriously the historical reliability of Acts and the Pauline letters for reconstructing the life of Paul. Readers will clearly see throughout this book that Quarles thinks the most important historical source for reconstructing the life of Paul is the New Testament. From reading this book, students and pastors will gain confidence in the New Testament as both the word of God and as a reliable historical source.

However, I have a couple of picky criticisms about the book. First, I wonder if the book could have benefited from a chapter on historical method since the work is an historical project, written for the student and pastor instead of for the specialist, and since the extra-biblical sources, to which Quarles appeals to help his historical reconstruction of Paul, present their own host of text-critical and historical problems (e.g., Josephus). Many students who will read this book may only know enough about Josephus or Philo to be dangerous if they have any knowledge of them at all. In addition, even fewer students may have knowledge of the various Greco-Roman authors (e.g., Suetonius) whom Quarles cites along with Acts to reconstruct the historical Paul. An introductory
chapter on historical method would help the non-specialist understand both why Quarles cites extra-biblical sources alongside of biblical (inspired) material and how one ought to use responsibly ancient historical sources when engaging in historical reconstruction of inspired scriptural texts. Of course, Quarles wisely relies primarily upon the New Testament itself for his historical reconstruction. Still, I wonder if the audience to whom Quarles wrote the book would need a short introduction explaining the difficult task of historically reconstructing the life of an ancient historical figure from ancient texts.

Second, unless I have overlooked something, the book cites few references from Second Temple Jewish texts apart from Josephus and Philo. A discussion about the law in 1 Baruch, 1 Maccabees, and in other Jewish texts would have illuminated why Paul's gospel proclamation of Gentile inclusion and of justification by faith in Christ (the crucified and resurrected Lord) apart from works of law was so radical to (and was so radically opposed by) 1st century Jews and Gentiles. Based on Quarles' many publications in New Testament studies, I know that he is thoroughly saturated in the literature of the Second Temple period. This makes me wonder why he primarily relies on Josephus, Greek and Latin authors, and a few texts from the Mishnah instead of also making use of the mammoth amount of additional Jewish literature to aid his historical reconstruction of Paul, the Jew, and to illuminate even more Paul's Jewish heritage. Although Josephus and Roman and Greek historians perhaps paint a better picture of the geographical context within which Paul lived and ministered than other Jewish texts, many Second Temple Jewish texts would have provided the reader with a clearer understanding of Paul's Jewish theological framework (e.g., works of the law in Dead Sea Scroll 4QMMT, life in the law in 1 Baruch, and zeal for the law in 1 Maccabees), especially his soteriological framework.

Still, Quarles' new book on Paul gives students and pastors an excellent introductory text to the life of Paul written by an Evangelical scholar who loves the gospel and who loves the church. His book will be an excellent primary text for an undergraduate course on the life of Paul. This text will also be a good supplemental text for a seminary introductory course on the New Testament, especially alongside of a textbook that does not emphasize backgrounds. Biblical and theological students, pastors, and Sunday school teachers will greatly benefit from this text, even those who simply want to become better bible readers for the sake of their own bible study. Quarles' lucid writing style, his precision, and
his scholarly acumen make this book a gem for any bible teacher’s study. In addition, the numerous maps, pictures, side-bars, and archeological artifacts within the book will shine a bright ray of light onto the ministry of the apostle Paul for many bible teachers who have transformed the 1st century Jewish-Christian missionary into a 21st century Western philosopher. Readers of Quarles’ book will become intimately familiar with the 1st century Jewish-Christian missionary, who loved his Lord and who worked fiercely to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the complex Greco-Roman and Jewish world of the 1st century. As a seminary professor and as a minister of the gospel, I am thankful to Quarles for writing a book that I can now use both in the classroom and in the church!

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Among historians, the narrative is a familiar one. It’s the tale of how Reformed theology helped construct the worldview of the southern planter class in the early republic, forging a devilish bond between slavery and religion, ensconcing both firmly within a rigid hierarchical society. But Christopher Cameron’s new monograph suggests that the role of Reformed theology within the construction of race in America may have been more complex than often assumed.

A whole generation of black antislavery activists has been largely forgotten in the national mind, including among historians. And Cameron intends to change that. While he gives credit to and builds on the work of historians of abolitionism, Cameron contends that the roots of the movement are found in Revolution-era Massachusetts. He interacts with—and sets out to correct—the work of Richard Newman, Margot Minardi, and David Brion Davis. While these historians have all
explored various facets of abolitionism in antebellum America and the transatlantic world, Cameron indicts them for their neglect of the role of African American activists.

Cameron does a good job of explaining the racial views of New England’s Puritan leaders, noting how their theology animated an evangelistic concern for the conversion of slaves. As he documents, African Americans were added in rapid number to the membership rolls of Congregational churches during the peak years of the Great Awakening. The book benefits from solid work in the primary sources. Cameron has done good work in mining a broad range of church records, pamphlets, books, and treatises from these early black abolitionists, bolstering his argument that they eventually fused Reformed theology with republican political ideology.

The book is at its strongest from chapter 2 onward. Here Cameron begins to lay out the intellectual history of black abolitionist writers, including Phyllis Wheatley and Caesar Sarter. He notes how they appropriated Calvinist categories and ideas toward a mounting critique of slavery and racial inequality in the Revolutionary period. Perhaps even more importantly, Cameron’s work reestablishes a line of continuity, showing how black abolitionists were vitally significant to the evolving form of the movement and the dialectic between proponents of gradualism and immediate emancipation.

Cultural memory, as well as scholarly attention, has often focused on the roles of prominent white leaders within the abolitionist movement. However, Cameron offers a valuable corrective in that he underscores the ways in which the national abolitionist movement of the antebellum period was dependent on a longstanding tradition of black abolitionism centered in Massachusetts. While Americans may be more familiar with William Lloyd Garrison, Cameron reminds his readers that white abolitionists were heavily influenced by black leaders such as Lemuel Haynes, Prince Hall, and John Marrant.

The place of the black jeremiad is also prominent in Cameron’s narrative. According to him, black abolitionists during the Revolutionary era appropriated the Puritan jeremiad for their own use. Even more precisely, he locates this with Caesar Sarter’s 1774 essay on slavery, warning of God’s sure wrath on the colonies for the peculiar institution. Readers interested in New England Puritanism will find much of interest here. Not only does Cameron persuasively make his case regarding the Puritan origins of the black jeremiad—a tradition in black preaching that continues today—but he also explores the broader implications of Reformed theology within these early strains of abolitionism. For example, he effectively places David Walker’s famed 1829 An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World within this tradition, implying that
the pamphlet was not a prototype of later liberal Protestantism, but discourse that employed longstanding Reformed theological ideas.

Some readers will question Cameron's broad application of the term “Reformed theology.” In fact, at times it does seem that he may have tried a bit too hard to force all kinds of Protestant theological ideas into this singular category. For example, he appears at times to miss the nuanced differences between traditional Puritan theologies of the 17th century and the diverse—and fractured—expressions of Calvinist revisions in the 18th century, especially in the New Divinity. Elsewhere, Cameron takes Puritan theological categories and asserts their presence within early black abolitionist discourse. For example, he relies heavily on the idea of covenant, contending that abolitionists relied on Puritan understandings of a covenant between God and New England to call for emancipation and abolition. However, this connection feels a bit forced at times. Warnings of divine judgment do not in themselves denote the presence of Puritan covenant theology. Besides, they have historical precedent throughout the history and development of Christian theology.

These minimal concerns aside, Cameron's book remains a valuable contribution and merits attention from a broad readership. One can also hope that it might prompt a wave of young scholars to give further attention to the ways in which theology—one might even call it a type of black theology—shaped both the experience and form of the African American religious experience. Cameron's work will be of interest not only to historians of race in early America, but should also be noted by religious historians. It reflects a promising new vista breaking in that connects theology and religion to the African American experience in the early national period.

Recent scholarship has drawn needed attention to the role race played in shaping colonial New England religion and culture. In addition to Richard Bailey’s work (*Race and Redemption in Puritan New England*), *To Plead Our Own Cause*, Cameron’s work, continues a welcome and needed effort on the part of scholars to understand the ways that ideas of race and religion shaped one another in colonial New England, often in ways that had lasting effects on broader American culture and society.

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When one takes a course in a Religions Studies department of a university, chances are very good that the following narrative is taught and expected to be believed *de rigueur*: in the mists of time, homo sapiens originally believed in a kind of inchoate mystical animism which later evolved into some variety of polytheism, and at last found the apex of its development in the pinnacle of monotheism. Of course, a plain reading of the first eleven chapters of Genesis tells the opposite story.

Winfried Corduan sets out to make the case that based on historical evidence, the biblical story of the history of religion is the accurate version. Corduan critically revives the groundbreaking work of Wilhelm Schmidt’s *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*. Schmidt’s work argued for original monotheism, but it was basically marginalized and virtually ignored by mainstream scholarship. A significant contribution of Corduan is his analysis of the role that both presuppositions play in “objective scholarship” and how important method is in analyzing historical data and building a case.

He argues that the notion of original monotheism was never refuted but was basically rejected, because it did not fit in with the dominant *zeitgeist* of the times. Specious, but rhetorically compelling, critiques over-rode the careful detailed analysis of the historical data. In chapters 1-6, Corduan gives an overview of the “history of religions” common approach. In chapter 6, he discusses and attempts to rehabilitate the “cultural-historical” method of Wilhelm Schmidt and Fritz Graebner. He argues that the arguments that these men make in defending original monotheism were never defeated, but rather ignored because of certain scholarly assumptions and methods. Corduan does scholarship a great service by challenging the assumptions and methods of mainstream scholarship, thereby reversing the outcome of the paradigm. In chapter 9, Corduan shows how scholars like Eliade, Otto, and Durkheim attempted to skirt the historical by “demythologizing” the ancient stories.

In chapter 10, Corduan examines the stories of the great ancient civilizations of China, Egypt, African cultures, Indo-European (India), and Semitic peoples. He concludes that from the global testimony, “there appears to be ... a memory of a supreme being.” The last chapter addresses the question of what has been learned from this exercise. What
are inferences for apologetics? In his own words, “We have shown that Wilhelm Schmidt’s conclusions still stand, and that, consequently, it is more reasonable to believe that the original religion of humanity was monotheism rather than some other alternatives, such as animism.”

Corduan’s status as a specialist in history of religions and comparative religions has only been enhanced by this careful and detailed work. It has been a labor of love for scholarship in general and the church in particular. Christians interested in apologetics should read this book.

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