

THE PENTATEUCH IV: DEUTERONOMY

WEEK 2

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OUTLINE

HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

Kadesh-Barnea Summary
Miscellaneous Issues

ALLEGIANCE TO YHWH

Covenant Qualifications
Shema

THE PUZZLE OF POGROM

Broader Theological Considerations
An Ally in the Text

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REVIEW LESSONS FROM KB

1. The fundamental problem echoed through Scripture was the people's unbelief. By now they had the following evidence:
 - ▶ The Exodus Episodes: ten plagues, parting of the Re(e)d Sea, plundering of Egypt
 - ▶ The Pre-Sinai Episodes: God leads via pillar, Water from Rock, Mana, Quail
 - ▶ Sinai Covenant: God descends, delivers law, judges Nadab, Abihu
2. They rebelled against godly leadership (Caleb, Joshua and Moses pled urgently with them.)
3. They plan to return to Egypt—place of slavery. Later (Num. 16:13), they even refer to it as “the land of milk and honey.”

TEXTUAL DIFFERENCES

For each of these differences, suggest some possible resolutions:

1. Deuteronomy 1:22 indicates that people requested the spies to survey the land; Numbers 13:1 indicates that the Lord ordered the spies.
2. Deuteronomy 1:29-31 indicates that Moses challenges the people's unbelief; Numbers 13:30 suggests that it was Caleb who attempted to dissuade them.
3. Deuteronomy 1:37-38 places Moses' discipline during the Kadesh-Barnea incident; Numbers 20:12 presents it as a later event.
4. Deuteronomy 1:44 claims that the Amorites defeated Israel; in Numbers 14:45, the Amalekites and Canaanites defeated them.

Differences are taken by source critics to mean different sources (often separated by time). To (real) historians, incidental differences but crucial commonalities are signals of authenticity.

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WANDERINGS AND NATIONS

One noteworthy piece in this section is God's continued commitment to Shemites, specifically Sons of Terah.

- ▶ Edomites (Esau)—“do not provoke them”
- ▶ Moabites—“do not harrass Moab, nor provoke them to war”
- ▶ Ammonites—“do not harrass them nor provoke them”

Even problematic tribes are allotted a portion of land (Cf. Acts 17:26). There is even detail concerning their dispossession of Canaanites (Cf. Gen 9:25-27).

THE CANON

A persistent theme in Deuteronomy is that the Law is canonical. We will see this more as we read. But here is a beginning note.

Deuteronomy 4:2,7-8—Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you . . . 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? 8 Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

Some implications:

- ▶ This is from God. (Cf. To other religious texts.)
- ▶ What Moses is giving is a special foundation that should be untouched.

LITERARY COMMENTARY

Brief Literary Remark:

Another reason to support the Decalogical structure of Deut 6-26 is that the historical prologue (Deut 1-5) finishes with a description of the Sinai episode, including an explicit recitation of the Decalogue!

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FOR ISRAEL OR EVERYONE?

As with any portion of Scripture, we are reading something written to a particular group of people at a particular time.

Name some clues to determine whether something in Deuteronomy is meant only for Israel or should also apply to us.

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1. *Progressive Revelation*—Some of these can be answered by using the New Testament.
 - ▶ Dietary laws do not apply (Mark 7:19, Acts 10:15, Acts 15:)
 - ▶ Circumcision does not apply (Acts 15, Galatians 5:6)
 - ▶ “Love your neighbor” does apply (Gal 5:14, Romans 13: 8, James 2:8).
2. Anything necessarily related to the land of Canaan or the historical situation is clearly exclusive:
 - ▶ Blessings for success, curses for failure
 - ▶ Land “ownership” and distribution
 - ▶ Civil law, historically specialized laws
3. Ask yourself, *What are the underlying moral or theological principles? Do those apply to me?*

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LOVE THE LORD

Here is the famous Shema (titled after the first word):

*4 Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your might.*

This passage exhibits two signals of emphasis:

- ▶ The phrase “Hear, O Israel!” is a mark of emphasis. It’s comparable to, “Listen up!”
- ▶ The exact phrase, “Love the LORD your God” is repeated 3 times in chapter 11:1,13, 22 and 4 more times throughout Deuteronomy. The call to love the LORD is implied in other passages as well (not in so many words).

THE LAW AND THE HEART IN OLD TESTAMENT

This emphasis on *Shema* implies God's *never* been merely interested in mere legal obedience.

Deut 10:12-16—Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? 14 Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 15 Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. 16 So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.

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FOUR THESES IN TENSION

1. God is good, loving and just.
2. The Scriptures bear faithful witness to God.
3. Both the concept and the practice of *herem* (consecrate a population to total destruction) are morally revolting.
4. The Scriptures show God not only permitting but commanding *herem*.

The skeptic will probably attack 1: the God of the Bible isn't good, loving or just (or maybe isn't at all.)

There is no doubt that these passages are puzzling. For the sake of brevity, I'm going to simply assume 2 and interact with all the other assumptions.

GOD'S CHARACTER

1. God is good, loving and just.

For any of this to have grip, one must also assume that the Canaanites do not deserve this treatment. Here are some passages that seem to repudiate that:

- ▶ *Doctrine of Hell*—If we are all guilty and deserve judgment, then isn't anything short of that mercy? (Cf. Matthew 10:28)
- ▶ *Canaanite Guilt*—Leviticus 18 claims the inhabitants of Canaan were guilty of extreme sexual deviance and child sacrifice to Molech (see also Lev 20). This implies that these people groups were extraordinarily bad.
- ▶ *Age of Accountability*—Children under a certain age seem exempt from God's eternal judgment. (II Sam 12:23, Numbers 14:31, I Kings 14:13)

HEREM AND MORAL REVULSION

3. Both the concept and the practice of *herem* are morally revolting.

Moral revulsion is an affective notion and if that's all this means, then arguably, God agrees:

Ezekiel 18:23—“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord God, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?”

If 3. has cognitive features and it's carried out with purely nationalistic motives, then, again we can agree. If the premise is boiled down to the claim that God may not judge, only then is there a conflict requiring a rejection of premise 3.

Generally, we should work hard to find common ground.

WORD OF GOD

4. The Scriptures show God not only permitting but commanding *herem*.

Three possible strategies for interacting with 4:

- A. Some authors have noted that we don't find God explicitly commanding this, only Moses. (Big problems with this—why?)
 - B. God primarily commands dispossession (33×) more than *herem* (11×).
 - C. God is using Israel as an agent of judgement on the 7 nations and he is free to do that at any time and by any means (Cf. Deut 9:1-6).
- B. only blunts the force of the charge. Unless one opts for some form of C., he/she will probably get caught in a game of cat and mouse with the skeptic.

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GOD'S PATIENCE

Here are two episodes in Genesis showing God's patience:

- ▶ Gen 15:16b—the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.
- ▶ Genesis 34—Dinah's Rape and Israel's Deceit. Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi for slaughtering Shechem:

Genesis 49:5-7—Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.

The Israelites are not free to slaughter these nations at will.

RACE OR OBEDIENCE?

Again, we find that this is not *genocide*, but judgment. God favors the obedient not specific racial groups:

- ▶ Shechemite episode (again) demonstrates this priority.
- ▶ Compare Achan (disobedient Israelite) and Rahab (obedient Canaanite): one is judged, the other is saved. (Joshua 6-7)
- ▶ Compare Caleb (Kenizzite; Num 32:12) who settled in Canaan and the whole (adult) nation of Israel that was judged.

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