

# From Condemnation to Righteousness: A Christian Reading of Deuteronomy

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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).<sup>1</sup> 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).<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3</sup>

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 Thess 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.<sup>4</sup> 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).<sup>5</sup> 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).<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

### ***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).<sup>8</sup> The final form would have appeared during Israel's tenure in the land, probably during or just following the conquest (before 1000 B.C.).<sup>9</sup>

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 your 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);
3. It clarified for Israel how to enjoy lasting covenant relationship (6:4–9; 17:18–20; 30:9–10; 31:10–13; 32:44–47) and when that relationship would be secured (4:30–31; 30:1–14).

### **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.<sup>10</sup>

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 *Deutero-nomos*, “second law”).<sup>11</sup> 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).<sup>12</sup> 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).<sup>13</sup> 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**

Literary Structure	Suzerain-Vassal Treaty Echo in Deut 1–28
Superscription (Deut 1:1–4)	Title/Preamble (Deut 1:1–4)
Moses’ 1st Sermon: God’s Past Grace and Israel’s Covenant Future (1:5–4:43)	Historical Prologue (1:5–4:43)
Moses’ 2nd Sermon: The Nature of Lasting Covenant Relationship Defined (4:44–29:1[28:69])	Stipulations (4:44–26:19)
Moses’ 3rd Sermon: The Need and Nature of a New Covenant after Exile (29:2–30:20)	Document Clause (27:1–10)
Moses’ Arrangements for the Future, Including His Warning Song (31:1–32:47)	Public Recitation (27:11–26)
Moses’ Final Blessing and Death (32:48–34:8)	Blessings and Curses (28:1–68)
Postscript (34:9–12)	

### **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).<sup>14</sup> 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):<sup>15</sup> *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).<sup>16</sup> 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*

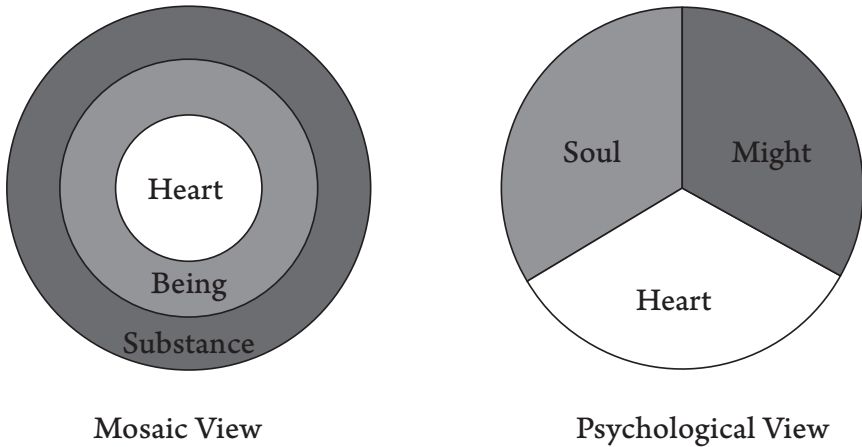
Deuteronomy suggests that "loving God" is the Supreme Command, the initial step in a Godward life (Deut 6:4–5): "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."<sup>17</sup> Noted first is the object 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.<sup>18</sup> 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).<sup>19</sup> Rather than detailing three distinct parts of a person (i.e., a "heart" 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).<sup>20</sup> "Heart" relates to all that is internal— one's desires, emotions, attitudes, perceptions, *and* thoughts (e.g., Deut



4:39; 6:6; 8:5; 10:12, 16; 11:18; 26:16; 29:4[3]; 32:46). “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.<sup>21</sup> 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).<sup>22</sup> 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).<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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).<sup>26</sup>

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**

<p><i>Rom 13:8–10</i>: “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.”</p>	
Criminal	<p>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.</p>
	<p><i>Exod 21:23–25</i>: “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.”</p>
Civil	<p><i>Deut 17:8–9</i>: “If any case arises ... within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that Yahweh your God will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge ..., and you shall consult them, they shall declare to you the decision.”</p>
	<p>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.</p>
Family	<p><i>Deut 11:18–20</i>: “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.”</p>
	<p>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.</p>

Ceremonial / Cultic	<i>Lev 20:25–26</i> : “You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me, for I Yahweh am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.”
	Laws governing the visible forms and rituals of Israel’s religious life. SAMPLE ISSUES: The sacred sacrifice, the sacred calendar, and various sacred symbols like the tabernacle, priesthood, and ritual purity that distinguished Israel from the nations and provided parables of more fundamental truths about God and relating to him.
Compassion	<i>Deut 24:17–18</i> : “You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.”
	“Laws” dealing with charity, justice, and mercy toward others. SAMPLE ISSUES: Protection and justice for the weak; impartiality and generosity; respect for persons and property.
Prepared by Jason S. DeRouchie and Kenneth J. Turner and originally found in Jason S. DeRouchie, ed., <i>What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible</i> (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 95. The categories are taken from Christopher J. H. Wright, <i>Old Testament Ethics for the People of God</i> (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 288–301, which he adapted from Anthony Phillips, <i>Ancient Israel’s Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue</i> (New York: Schocken, 1970), 2, 13. For an expanded version of this material that includes biblical texts with the sample issues, see DeRouchie, <i>What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About</i> , 466–67 (Appendix 1, Fig. A.2.).	

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.<sup>27</sup>

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).<sup>28</sup>

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).<sup>29</sup> 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).<sup>30</sup> 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).<sup>31</sup> Thus the old covenant bore a ministry of condemnation so that the new covenant might bear a ministry of righteousness (2 Cor 3:9).<sup>32</sup>

### ***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).<sup>33</sup>

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 Deuteronomical 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.<sup>34</sup> 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).<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

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).<sup>37</sup> “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)<sup>38</sup> 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).<sup>39</sup> 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).<sup>40</sup> 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).<sup>41</sup>

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 statutes* [*ton dikaiomaton*, pl. of *dikaioma*] 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* [*en tois dikaiomasin mou*, pl. of *dikaioma*] 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).<sup>42</sup>

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),<sup>43</sup> 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:

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

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).<sup>44</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from the ESV © 2011, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Brian S. Rosner helpfully synthesizes the NT’s approach to OT law as “repudiation, replacement, and reappropriation” (*Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* [NSBT; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013]); for reappropriation of the law as prophecy and wisdom, see chs. 5–6. For more on the lasting relevance of the Mosaic law for believers, see Zaspel’s insightful discussion of Matt 5:17–20 and the enduring relevance of the Mosaic law in Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 77–160, esp. ch. 9. See also Douglas Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian* (ed. Wayne G. Strickland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 319–82; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010); and Jason S. DeRouchie, “Making the Ten Count: Reflections on the Lasting Message of the Decalogue,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block* (ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, Kenneth J. Turner; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 415–40, esp. 439–40.

<sup>4</sup> 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

group devotional reading of Scripture. For other helps, including audio lectures and exegetical notes on the OT books, see [www.derouchie-meyer.org/resources/derouchie-old-testament-survey/](http://www.derouchie-meyer.org/resources/derouchie-old-testament-survey/).

- <sup>5</sup> Against the clear statements of the biblical text, an increasing number of professing evangelical scholars are affirming the Mosaic *authority* or *voice* but not necessarily the Mosaic *origin* of the Deuteronomic sermons, asserting that divinely authorized tradents (i.e., preservers of oral tradition) schooled in the traditions of Moses gave us Deuteronomy even centuries after the prophet's death. For two recent examples of this reasoning, see James Robson, "The Literary Composition of Deuteronomy," in *Interpreting Deuteronomy: Issues and Approaches* (ed. David G. Firth and Philip S. Johnston; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 19–59; Christopher B. Ansberry and Jerry Hwang, "No Covenant Before Exile? The Deuteronomic Torah and Israel's Covenant Theology," in *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* (ed., Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry; London: SPCK, 2013), 74–94. For a recent conservative evangelical rejoinder to the dating and authorship of Deuteronomy with a bibliography of more thorough responses, see Eugene H. Merrill, "The Book of Deuteronomy," in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 251–57; cf. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 357–63. For a helpful overview of the shaping of the OT over time with a discussion on editorial updating, see Michael A. Grisanti, "The Composition of the Old Testament," in *The World and the Word*, 79–92; cf. idem, "Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture," *JETS* 44.4 (2001): 577–98; Peter J. Gentry, "The Text of the Old Testament," *JETS* 52.1 (2009): 19–45.
- <sup>6</sup> For more on the shaping of Deuteronomy, see Daniel I. Block, "Recovering the Voice of Moses: The Genesis of Deuteronomy," *JETS* 44 (2001): 385–408, esp. 400–3; repr. idem, *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 21–51.
- <sup>7</sup> See Deut 1:1–5; 2:10–12, 20–23; 3:9, 11, 13b–14; 4:1–5:1a; 10:6–7; 27:1a, 9a, 11; 28:69–29:2a[29:1a]; 31:1–2a, 7a, 9–10a, 141, 14c–16a, 22–23a, 24–25, 30; 32:44–46a, 48; 33:1–2a; 34:1–4a, 5–12. Block actually counts 64 verses ("Recovering the Voice of Moses," 392), but this includes 10:8–9, which I believe return to Moses' speech in light of the second masculine singular suffix on "the LORD your God" (see Jason S. DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5–11* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007), 257 with note 55.
- <sup>8</sup> 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 full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees 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.
- <sup>9</sup> 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], 18–19, 24). 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).
- <sup>10</sup> For the influence of Deuteronomy on later biblical books and thought, see Maarten J. Menken and Steve Moyise, eds., *Deuteronomy in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, Kenneth J. Turner, eds., *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 223–412 = Part 2.
- <sup>11</sup> 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.
- <sup>12</sup> 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], xlv, 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 “Hazereth” (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* (Siphut 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).
- <sup>13</sup> That is, until the true “prophet like Moses” would arise as mediator of a new covenant, teaching, working signs and wonders, and supplying pardon, pattern, and fresh promise (Deut 15:15, 18; 34:10–12). For Jesus as this prophet, see Mark 9:2–13, esp. v. 7; Luke 7:16; 9:35; Acts 3:22–26; 7:37. See also Daniel L. Akin, “The Prophet Who Is Like and Greater Than Moses: A Sermon on Deuteronomy 18:15–22,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, 485–93.
- <sup>14</sup> 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.
- <sup>15</sup> Daniel I. Block, “The Grace of Torah: The Mosaic Prescription for Life (Deut 4:1–8; 6:20–25),” *BSac* 162.1 (2005): 3–22, with a comparable pattern listed on 15; repr. idem, *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 1–20.
- <sup>16</sup> For studies on the numbering and lasting significance of the Ten Words for Christians, see my following two studies and the works cited there: Jason S. DeRouchie, “Counting the Ten: An Investigation into the Number of the Decalogue,” in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, 93–25; idem, “Making the Ten Count,” 415–40. For more on the influence of the Ten Words in the OT, see Daniel I. Block, “Reading the Decalogue from Right to Left: The Ten Principles of Covenant Relationship in the Hebrew Bible,” in *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 21–55. Block argues that Deuteronomy rather than the Ten Words bore highest influence on later biblical thought. For a broader perspective that includes studies on the Decalogue's influence not only within Scripture and the early church but also on Thomas Aquinas, Moses Maimonides, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Owen, Lancelot Andrewes, John Wesley, Christina Rossetti, Karl Barth, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, see Jeffrey P. Greenman and Timothy Larsen, eds., *The Decalogue through the Centuries: From the Hebrew Scriptures to Benedict XVI* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012).
- <sup>17</sup> 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” (NRSV); (e) “The LORD is our God; the LORD is one” (NASB); (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 (98.7%; 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 *lebaddo* (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.
- <sup>18</sup> 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).

- <sup>19</sup> 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 Ralph 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 *lebab*; 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 23:3, 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 *lebab* “heart” in Deut 6:5 (so C. J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 99). The frequency of “heart and soul” together throughout Scripture is probably what forced the placement of “mind” after the word pair rather than having “mind” adjacent to “heart.”
- <sup>20</sup> So S. Dean McBride Jr., “The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Exposition of Deuteronomy 6:4–5,” *Interp* 27 (1973): 304; Daniel I. Block, “How Many Is God,” 202–4. Without any exegetical supporting arguments, Duane L. Christensen takes the unwarranted psychological approach, asserting that the pairing of “heart” and “soul” suggests a distinction “between mental and emotional energy and activity,” whereas “might” points to “self-discipline” (*Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9, Revised* [WBC 6A; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001], 143).
- <sup>21</sup> 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.
- <sup>22</sup> For more on bearing Yahweh’s name well, see DeRouchie, “Making the Ten Count,” 426–28; cf. Daniel I. Block, “Bearing the Name of the LORD with Honor,” *BSac* 168 (2011): 20–31; repr. idem, *O How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy*, 61–72; idem, “No Other Gods: Bearing the Name of YHWH in a Polytheistic World,” in idem, *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 237–71.
- <sup>23</sup> 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).
- <sup>24</sup> More accurately, geo-political treaties 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, “Dynastic Covenant,” *WTJ* 23.1 (1960/61): 1–15; idem, *Treaty 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.
- <sup>25</sup> For reflections on the historical context of Deuteronomy’s language of “covenant love,” see William L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87.
- <sup>26</sup> 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).
- <sup>27</sup> For more on this topic, see John Piper, *Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God* (Rev. ed.; Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2012); cf. Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith: Understanding the Heart of the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).
- <sup>28</sup> 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, 705–06.

- <sup>29</sup> For an exceptional treatment of Deuteronomy's theology of exile that shows how it sets the stage for the coming of Christ, see Kenneth J. Turner, *The Death of Deaths in the Death of Israel: Deuteronomy's Theology of Exile* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); idem, "Deuteronomy's Theology of Exile," in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, 189–220.
- <sup>30</sup> See Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, "Christ or Family as the 'Seed' of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16," *SBIT* 14.3 (2010): 40–43.
- <sup>31</sup> 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).
- <sup>32</sup> 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).
- <sup>33</sup> See DeRouchie and Meyer, "Christ or Family as the 'Seed' of Promise?" 36–48; Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Seed of Abraham and the Nations: Some Old Testament Roots to New Covenant Ecclesiology," in *Progressive Covenantalism* (ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker; Nashville, TN: B&H, forthcoming).
- <sup>34</sup> 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).
- <sup>35</sup> 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.
- <sup>36</sup> As John Piper asserts, "Missions exists because worship doesn't" (*Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* [3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010], 15).
- <sup>37</sup> See note 31.
- <sup>38</sup> 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 *ki* "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. Coxhead, "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. Fesko, 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: InterVarsity, 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 lasting relevance of his present message for those in the new covenant age, and the *ki* 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.

<sup>39</sup> 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).

<sup>40</sup> On the fact that Isa 53:13–53:12 speaks of penal substitutionary atonement that includes double imputation—our sins placed on the Servant and his righteousness counted to us, see Thomas D. Petter, “The Meaning of Substitutionary Righteousness in Isa 53:11: A Summary of the Evidence,” *TrinJ* 32.2 (2011): 165–89.

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

<sup>42</sup> For this reading of Romans 2, see A. B. Caneday, “Judgment, Behavior, and Justification according to Paul’s Gospel in Romans 2,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1.2 (2011): 153–92.

<sup>43</sup> 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.”

<sup>44</sup> 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).