

# The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment in Deuteronomy<sup>1</sup>

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The first mention of loving God in the Bible came in Exodus 20:6, which referred to “those who love” Yahweh and keep his commandments. But the idea of loving God is not elaborated upon until Deuteronomy.<sup>2</sup> In Leviticus, Israel is urged to obey Yahweh’s commands on the basis of his identity, the assertion “I am Yahweh” often prefacing or following his commands.<sup>3</sup> In Numbers, the God who is a consuming fire purges the wickedness of his people in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy, Moses prepares the people to enter the land.<sup>4</sup>

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy review Israel’s history from Sinai to the plains of Moab. Deuteronomy 4–11 then seeks to motivate Israel to keep the law. Chapters 12–28 set forth the stipulations of the covenant, and in chapters 29–34 Moses gives his last will and testament.<sup>5</sup> As Peter Vogt writes, “At the heart of the Deuteronomic world view is the supremacy of Yahweh. One of the primary goals of the book is to inculcate a sense of total loyalty to him.”<sup>6</sup>

## From Sinai to Moab

Forty years have passed since the exodus from Egypt (Deut 1:3). Deuteronomy describes its own contents as Moses' attempt to explain the Torah (1:5).<sup>7</sup> It is important to recognize that the historical review on which Moses takes the people in Deuteronomy 1–3 has the intention of *motivating* Israel to obey Yahweh.<sup>8</sup> Moses recounts Israel's history that they might learn from their past.

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

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

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

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

ted their portion to them. This should make Israel confident as they cross into the portion allotted to them by Yahweh, the Lord of all.

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

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

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

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

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

## **Motivation to Obey**

Before the exposition of the law in Deuteronomy 12–28, Moses seeks to motivate Israel to do the law in chapters 4–11.

### ***Reasons to Obey***

In Deuteronomy 4 Israel is urged to obey because of the way Yahweh judged their disobedience at Baal Peor (4:1–4), because of the good effects and matchless quality of the laws Yahweh has given (4:5–8), because of their frightful experience of Yahweh at Sinai (4:9–24), because of what Yahweh will do to them if they disobey (4:25–31), and because of the unique love Yahweh has shown them (4:32–40). Yahweh has dealt with them the way he has that they might know him. Yahweh wants them to know that he is God, that there is no other (4:35, 39), and therefore they should obey (4:40). As Vogt notes, “The emphasis is on Israel’s unique experience of Yahweh’s nearness and their status as recipients of *Torah* ... it is through *Torah* that Yahweh’s nearness is experienced by Israel.”<sup>12</sup> It would be difficult to imagine a more compelling case for love driven law keeping than the one made by Moses in Deuteronomy 4.

### ***Out of the Midst of the Fire***

The experience of Yahweh at Sinai is recounted in Deuteronomy 5. Yahweh spoke to Israel “face to face at the mountain, from the midst of the fire” (Deut 5:4). Moses stood between Yahweh and the people (5:5), and Yahweh announced his identity (5:6), then spoke the ten commandments (5:7–18, ET 7–21). Again, the most significant thing about the Ten Commandments is Yahweh himself.<sup>13</sup> Moses reviews how the people confessed that they had seen Yahweh’s “glory and greatness” (5:21, ET 24), expressed fear that continual exposure to Yahweh would consume them (5:22, ET 25), and asked Moses to go hear everything Yahweh had to say and report back to them, promising obedience (5:24, ET 27).

### ***Israel’s Heart Problem***

Yahweh agrees to this arrangement (Deut 5:25, ET 28), and his response to the willingness of the people to obey (5:26, ET 29) picks up a key theme in biblical theology. Readers of the Bible see that something is wrong with the human heart as early as Genesis 6:5, where Yahweh, who knows the hearts of all men, sees that “every inclination of the reckonings of [man’s] heart is only evil all the time.” Knowing this, Yahweh responds to Israel’s professed willingness to obey with the words, “Who will give that their hearts might be like this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always” (Deut

5:26, ET 29).<sup>14</sup> Later in the canon, Yahweh will answer the question “who will give” through Ezekiel’s promise that Yahweh will give a new heart to his people (Ezek 36:26; cf. Jer 32:39). The theme of the heart problem in Deuteronomy is addressed almost immediately after this in Deuteronomy, when Moses tells the Israelites, “And these words which I command you today shall be upon your hearts” (Deut 6:4). Later in the canon, apparently in response to Israel’s inability to keep these words on their hearts, Yahweh promises through Jeremiah that he, Yahweh, will write the Torah on the hearts of his people (Jer 31:33).

The heart problem comes up again in Deuteronomy 10:16, when Moses calls on Israel, “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart and stiffen your neck no more.” The second phrase expositis the first—the call to circumcise one’s heart is a call to cease resisting the authority of Yahweh. But this is something that Israel cannot do to herself, which Moses recognizes in Deuteronomy 29:3 (ET 4), “To this day, Yahweh has not given to you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear.”<sup>15</sup> Yahweh alone can remedy this problem: “Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Deut 30:6).<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 30:6 makes plain that the circumcision of the heart enables one to love Yahweh. We saw above that Deuteronomy 10:16 indicated that the circumcision of the heart would make Israel willing to submit to Yahweh’s authority (“stiffen your neck no more”).

This indicates that heart circumcision equips people with a volitional ability to love and submit to Yahweh, a reality that seems to have been recognized by Jeremiah, who wrote, “To whom shall I speak and testify, that they may hear? Behold, they are uncircumcised of ears, and they are not able to listen. Behold, the word of Yahweh is for reproach to them; they do not delight in it” (Jer 6:10). Those who do not have circumcised ears *are not able* to listen, but they do hear—enough for the word to be a reproach to them. In other words, they hear the word physically, but “they do not delight in it.” They cannot hear it in the sense that they do not perceive its beauty: it is a reproach to them (cf. 1 Cor 2:14). These observations lead me to the conclusion that the *ability* provided by *heart circumcision* is equivalent to the *ability* provided by the *new birth*.<sup>17</sup>

The verse that immediately precedes Deuteronomy 30:6, where Yahweh promises to circumcise the hearts of his people, indicates that this will happen after the nation is exiled. When Yahweh brings the people back from all the places he scattered them for breaking the covenant (Deut 30:5), then he will circumcise their hearts (30:6).

This means that Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 32:29, and Ezekiel 36:26 all point to a day in the future. Nevertheless, there is evidence that there were people under the old covenant who did delight in the law of the Lord (see Psalm 119), which indicates that there has always been “a remnant according to the election of grace” (cf. Rom 11:5).

### *Life under Law*

A new direction is opened up when Moses begins to appeal to love as a motivation for obedience in his address to the nation on the plains of Moab. Again and again Moses urges Israel to love Yahweh and obey his commands.<sup>18</sup> When we stop to ask whether anyone would *love* one of the fearsome deities described in other ancient Near Eastern texts, whether any Greek or Roman would *love* Zeus or any other member of the pantheon, we see that while those other deities are imagined as awe-inspiring, terrifying, even grand, there is none like Yahweh. What other god actually *loves* his people and instructs them to love him?

Obedience to Yahweh will result in blessing (Deut 6:1–3), and Israel is to love Yahweh alone, with his word on their hearts (6:4–6).<sup>19</sup> Having the word on the heart is to issue in teaching it to the children in and through daily routines (6:7). The Torah is to guide Israel’s actions and function as the grid through which they view the world: “And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (6:8). The Torah is to adorn their homes (6:9).

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

Yahweh chose Israel because they were unimpressive (Deut 7:6–7), because he loves them and will keep the oath he swore to their fathers (7:8).<sup>20</sup> Therefore they are to know Yahweh, who is everything he declared himself to be in Exodus 34:6–7, which is alluded to in Deuteronomy 7:9–10. Faithfulness to Yahweh is the path to blessing and triumph (7:11–16). Israel is not to fear any of the peoples they will face in the land because Yahweh is with them (7:17–26).

This section of Deuteronomy seeks to motivate Israel to obey the To-

rah, and the strategy employed in chapters 8 through 10 is to remind Israel of their history of disobedience. Yahweh humbled Israel in the wilderness to know their hearts (Deut 8:2). He sustained them with manna, something they did not anticipate, to teach them to rely upon his word (8:3). As a father disciplines his son, so Yahweh disciplined Israel in the desert (8:5). The land promised to them is an edenic place of brooks and streams, milk and honey (8:7–9).<sup>21</sup> Israel is to bless Yahweh for this land (8:10). They are not to forget the way Yahweh saved them through the judgment he wrought against Egypt (8:11–14), nor are they to forget the way he saved them through his judgment on their wickedness, judgments of fiery serpents and thirsty ground where there was no water (8:15–16). If they exalt themselves in their own thinking and do not remember Yahweh, then just as Yahweh is judging the nations of the land, he will judge them (8:17–20). This threat of judgment is meant to preserve them in salvation.

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

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

What Yahweh requires of Israel is summarized in Deuteronomy 10:12–13. They are to walk in his ways, love him, and serve him with all they are, and the way they are to do this is by keeping the commandments and statutes Moses is giving them for their good. Verse 14 asserts Yahweh's authority to make these demands: "Behold, to Yahweh your God belong the heavens of the heavens, the earth and all that is in it" (Deut 10:14). Yahweh is the Lord of all, and he has chosen Israel "above

all the peoples” (10:15). On the basis of this, their unique position in Yahweh’s cosmic purposes, Israel is called to circumcise their hearts and stiffen their necks no more (10:16), “for Yahweh your God, he is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and fearsome God, who shows no partiality and takes no bribes” (10:17). Knowing Yahweh as the one who does justice for the orphan and the widow, who loves and provides for the sojourner, should prompt Israel to do likewise (10:18–19). Israel is to fear Yahweh, serve him, cleave to him, and swear by his name (10:20). Yahweh is to be the central reality of their existence. He is to be the most relevant thing in their lives. He is their praise, their God, who has done magnificent and fearsome things for them, making a small tribe into a myriad of people (10:21–22).

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

### **The Covenant Stipulations**

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

There is a sense in which everything that follows the recital of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5 serves to exposit those ten words. Broadly speaking, all of Deuteronomy 6–25 can be understood as a development of the Ten Commandments, as Table 2.16 indicates.<sup>22</sup>



Table 2.16: Deuteronomy's Exposition of the Ten Commandments

<b>Commandment</b>	<b>Exposition</b>
1. No other gods	Deut 6-11, Love and Worship
2. No idols	Deut 12-13, Central Sancturary and False gods
3. Name	Deut 13-14, Holiness to Yahweh
4. Sabbath	Deut 14-16, Periodic Duties
5. Parents	Deut 16-18, Authority: judge, king, priest, and prophet
6. Murder	Deut 19-22 Life and Law
7. Adultery	Deut 22-23, Regulations on Sexuality
8. Theft	Deut 23-25, Property
9. False Testimony	Deut 24-25, Truthfulness
10. Coveting	Deut 25, Unselfish Levirate Marriage

Yahweh is to be dearer to Israel than the convenience of worshipping where they please (Deut 12).<sup>23</sup> Anyone who seeks to lead Israel away from Yahweh through false prophecy—be that person one's brother or son or daughter or wife of one's bosom or soul-mate friend—the person is to be stoned to death (Deut 13). Israel is to be distinct, set apart to Yahweh, and this will be reflected in what they do with their hair, their food, their money, and their calendar (Deut 14–15). They are to worship Yahweh as he has prescribed and no other way, appearing before him three times a year at the place he chooses to set his name (Deut 16–17). Israel's leaders, judges, kings, priests, and prophets, serve at Yahweh's pleasure and according to his instructions (Deut 16:18–18:22).<sup>24</sup> Yahweh gives Israel cities of refuge (Deut 19), instructions for warfare (Deut 20–21), instructions concerning human sexuality (Deut 22), the regulations for keeping the camp clean (Deut 23), laws for marriage and divorce (Deut 24), instructions for levirate marriage (Deut 25), instructions for tithes and offerings (Deut 26), and many other things. Peter Vogt states, "at the core of Deuteronomy is a theology of the supremacy of Yahweh, expressed in the life of Israel through adherence to *Torah*."<sup>25</sup>

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

Testament. The Torah is the standard by which later narratives measure, whether they say that is what they are doing or not. The intellectual furniture of the Old Testament world view is built and arranged by the laws of Torah, revealed by Yahweh.

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

### **Moses’ Last Will and Testament**

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

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

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

weh uprooted them from the land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and he cast them to another land as it is this day” (29:27 [ET 28]). Other nations will understand that Yahweh is holy when he judges Israel. They will, as this text shows, confess the righteous judgment of Yahweh against covenant breaking Israel when he sends them into exile.

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

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

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

And it shall be when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you and you return to your heart among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you, and you return to Yahweh your God, and you listen to his voice according to all that I am commanding you today, you and your sons, with all your heart and with all your soul, then Yahweh will return your captivity and have mercy on you, and he will turn and gather you from all the people where Yahweh your God scattered you.

Here the warning of punishment described in chapter 29 is treated as a prophecy, and Moses declares that after exile will come restoration to the land. This, however, will be a supernatural return, for the exiles will be gathered from the end of heaven (30:4), Israel will be more prosperous and more numerous than ever (30:5), and Yahweh himself will circumcise their hearts (30:6a). As a result of Yahweh's heart circumcision, the people will love Yahweh and live (30:6b). Through the judgment will come salvation.

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

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

The song of Moses calls heaven and earth to witness (Deut 32:1) and proclaims the name of Yahweh (32:3). Yahweh is the Rock who is faithful, just, perfect, and upright (32:4), but the people have dealt corruptly against him (32:5). Yahweh's love to Israel is recounted (32:6–14), as are the abominations with which Israel repaid his kindness (32:15–18). Yahweh will judge Israel, and part of the judgment is the promise to provoke Israel to jealousy by those who are no people (32:21, cf. 19–26). Yahweh's concern for his own reputation, and his concern that Israel's enemies not boast over him, will prompt him to mercy (32:27). Israel will be saved through judgment for the glory of God. Israel's folly is announced, the folly of failing to respond appropriately to Yahweh (32:28–

33). Like the secret things that belong to Yahweh (29:28 [ET 29]), this too is stored up with Yahweh, sealed in his storehouse (32:34). Vengeance is Yahweh's, the foot of those who disregard him will slide in due time (32:35), and Yahweh will judge his people and be satisfied on his servants (32:36). He will taunt the folly of worshiping other gods (32:37–38), and he declares that he alone is God, none beside him; he kills and makes alive, wounds and heals, and none can deliver from his hand (32:39).

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

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

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

### **The Center of the Theology of Deuteronomy**

Yahweh's glory is the central reality of Deuteronomy. It is Yahweh who has saved Israel through the judgment of their enemies (Deut 1–3). It is ultimately Yahweh whose compelling existence is to motivate obedience (Deut 4) to the law he revealed when Israel heard his voice out of the midst of the fire on the mountain top (Deut 5). It is Yahweh that Israel is to love (Deut 6–11), Yahweh Israel is to serve (Deut 12–28), and it is Yahweh who must give them the heart they need (29:3 [ET 4]; 30:6). Yahweh has the secret things to himself (29:28 [ET 29]), laid up with him, sealed in his storehouses (32:34). Israel will break Yahweh's

covenant (30:1; 31:16–32:42), but Yahweh will restore them through the judgment he visits upon them (30:2–10; 32:43). There is none like Yahweh, God of Jeshurun (33:26), who is glorified in salvation through judgment in the manifestation of his justice and his mercy.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* by James M. Hamilton Jr. © 2010. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 1300 Crescent St., Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

<sup>2</sup> T. D. Alexander points out that “love in Deuteronomy is never presented as something emotional ... True love will demonstrate itself in perfect obedience” (T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 167). Similarly Walther Eichrodt (*Theology of the Old Testament* [trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961, 1967], 1:93–94), who describes legalism as a perversion of Deuteronomy’s call for Israel to love God by obeying him.

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

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

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

“These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel” (1:1);

“This is the Torah that Moses put before the sons of Israel” (4:44);

“This is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments, which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you” (6:1);

“These are the statutes and the judgments that you shall keep to do in the land” (12:1);

“These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to cut with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he cut with them at Horeb” (28:69 [ET 29:1]);

“This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the sons of Israel before his death” (33:1).

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

<sup>6</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology*, 227.

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

A. 1:1, beyond the Jordan;

B. 1:2, eleven days journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea (cf. Deut 1:19–2:1);

C. 1:3, first day, eleventh month, fortieth year, Moses gives Deuteronomy;

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

A’. 1:5, beyond the Jordan.

<sup>8</sup> Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 70): “this is not simply a history lesson.”

<sup>9</sup> Vogt points to the way this passage stresses the supremacy of Yahweh, “since it is his judgment that must be carried out by the judges” (*Deuteronomical Theology*, 112).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology*, 228: “That Deuteronomy, like some ANE political treaties, includes a historical prologue in which Yahweh’s generous actions on behalf of Israel are recounted further highlights the supremacy of Yahweh. He has shown himself willing and able to act on Israel’s behalf in the past.”

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology*, 129.

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

<sup>14</sup> Modern English translations all take the phrase  $\text{וְהָיָה כִּי תִשְׁמַע הָאָדָם אֶת הַקוֹל וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים}$  as an idiom to mean something like “Oh that their hearts would be this way,” and in their defense, the phrase does appear to function as an idiom meaning “would that it were” elsewhere (see, e.g., Exod 16:3; 2 Sam 19:1; cf. also Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*

*Syntax* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 680 §40.2.2d). But the earliest translations appear to have understood the phrase more literally. The Greek translation reads, τίς δώσει (who will give? See John William Wevers, ed., *Deuteronomium* [vol. 3, 2nd ed.; Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2006]), and the Vulgate has “quis det” (who gives? See Robertus Weber et al., ed., *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* [4th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994]). On this phrase, Joüon (§163d) writes, “In some cases the sense to give etc. is fully retained, whilst in other cases it is weakened or even lost.” He cites Num 11:29 as an instance where “give” is retained, but takes Deut 5:26 as “an optative formula” meaning “Oh that they had kept this attitude!” The analysis in GKC §151a–d is similar, and cf. HALOT, 733. Because Yahweh’s own promise to give Israel a new heart (Ezek 36:26; cf. Jer 32:39) looks like a direct answer to this question, it seems as though Yahweh is provoking thought by saying in Deut 5:26 (ET 29), “Who will give that their hearts might be like this,” only to answer later by saying “I will!” as Ezekiel and Jeremiah promise that Yahweh will give his people new hearts. Even in Deuteronomy Yahweh later promises to circumcise the people’s hearts (Deut 30:6). As a side note on translation, the more one moves toward the “dynamic equivalent” end of the translation spectrum, the more one sacrifices these kinds of inter-textual connections. There is no word for “mind” in Hebrew, but some English translations render the Hebrew word “heart” as “mind” when they think “mind” is in view. Rendering “heart” as “mind” in Deut 5:29, however, obscures inter-textual connections. Perhaps this is simply more evidence for the absolute necessity of learning the biblical languages.

<sup>15</sup> Tigay suggests that this verse should be rendered, “But the LORD did not give you a mind to understand ... until today,” going on to say that the other translation “implies that even now Israel lacks the capacity to understand its experiences properly. If that were Moses’ meaning, his appeal that Israel observe the covenant would be hopeless” (*Deuteronomy*, 275). Neither the ancient Greek (cf. Wevers, *Deuteronomium*) nor modern English translations follow Tigay in this understanding, and Paul does not seem to have read Deut 29:3 (ET 4) the way Tigay does. Paul combines words from Deut 29:3 (ET 4), Isa 6:9–10, and 29:10 in Rom 11:8 to say, “Just as it has been written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to see and ears not to hear, until this very day.’” In the wider context of Romans 11, Paul seems to understand Deut and Isa to be pointing to an eschatological renewal of Israel, while Deut is most naturally taken to indicate that the people do not have the heart necessary to obey.

<sup>16</sup> Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 179) writes, “Deuteronomic theology ultimately rests on the conviction that human nature is deeply flawed, and can be transformed only by God. This basic conviction underwrites all the ethical teaching of the book.”

<sup>17</sup> See further James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (NACSB; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Deut 5:10; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20.

<sup>19</sup> On the Shema, see Waltke and O’Connor, *Hebrew Syntax*, 135 §8.4.2g.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the point that Israel did not choose God, God chose Israel, see David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> William J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 20, 58, 64; Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 55.

<sup>22</sup> There is some variety in the way scholars divide and group the material, and there are some items that do not fit. In general, however, viewing the material this way seems legitimate. See Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 107–108), who discusses the seminal proposals of S. A. Kaufman and G. Braulik.

<sup>23</sup> As Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 103) writes regarding Deut 12:1–5, “The primary motive for going to the place is not simply conformity in worship, but to meet with Yahweh himself.”

<sup>24</sup> Vogt (*Deuteronomic Theology*, 226) writes, “This section of Deuteronomy, then, highlights what I believe is at the heart of the Deuteronomic program. The supremacy of Yahweh is firmly established, because it is he who gives Torah, commands its obedience, enforces its terms, and chooses king and prophet.”

<sup>25</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology*, 5–6.

<sup>26</sup> So also Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 178.

<sup>27</sup> See the helpful discussion of the prophet like Moses in Deut 18:15–20 and 34:10–12 in O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 59–65. John Sailhamer understands Deut 34:10 to mean “A prophet like Moses never did arise in Israel . . .” and concludes “Clearly, the author who made this statement knows about the entire line of prophets who followed Moses” (John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 31, emphasis added). I agree with Sailhamer that Deut 34:10 sheds light on the prophecy in 18:15–18, but it does not exclude the office of prophet as he claims (*ibid.*, 18). Nor, in my judgment, does the content of Deut 34:10 demand that the author of the statement be aware of every prophet who arose in Israel’s history. It seems that the phrase in question, *קום נביא צור בישראל כמשה*, could just as well be interpreted to mean, “And a prophet like Moses has not arisen yet in Israel,” which leaves open the possibility that the one making the statement might not be at the end of the line of prophets. Sailhamer’s rendering is possible, but it is not the only way the text can be taken.