

Taylor University

Pillars at Taylor University

Milo Rediger Sermons

Milo Rediger

June 2020

Deuteronomy

Milo A. Rediger
Taylor University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pillars.taylor.edu/rediger-sermons>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rediger, Milo A., "Deuteronomy" (2020). *Milo Rediger Sermons*. 4.
<https://pillars.taylor.edu/rediger-sermons/4>

This Manuscript (Unpublished) is brought to you for free and open access by the Milo Rediger at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Milo Rediger Sermons by an authorized administrator of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.

DEUTERONOMY

I love to be in the classroom but I can do a better job than I have been doing under these circumstances, especially if I can build a teaching responsibility into my schedule for a semester and then stay with it, but that hasn't been quite possible this time.

I shall try to make this brief treatment now of the concluding document of the Pentateuch. To the Pentateuch it is a summary conclusion to the ongoing history of the Israelites. It is a transitional, a very important transitional record, and from the standpoint of the revelation of God and the Bible as the vehicle for it, it is of course twofold; it is exactly what the title indicates; it is a second giving of the law, and it is couched in what we logically call Moses' farewell addresses to the people, and it is as much a launching pad for the next very significant period in the development and in the history and in the experiences of the chosen family, God's people, as it is a repetition of the law or a conclusion to the legislative section of the record. I would like to emphasize that in that sense it is certainly transitional. It has a backward look very definitely, but it certainly also has a forward look and it becomes the point from which a very important step---though it is the close of Moses' life and leadership, it is the beginning of a very significant part of the history and the experience of the Israelites. It is definitely transitional. It does conclude something but it also prepares for something that follows---the normally-called "40-year" period of wandering in the wilderness. If you want to make it the 40 years, you'll have to start all the way back at the Passover point of delivery from the land of Egypt. The actual wanderings after they left Mount Sinai would be closer to 38-1/2 years. The 40-year period of wandering in the wilderness is now about over. I don't know if you have imagined---this is something you really should do in connection especially with

the Book of Numbers, I guess. Imagine not so much in a bookish way, not so much in a "reading of printer's ink on white paper" way, but rather in a real-life situation, imagine what some of these problems would be. If you are dealing with that many thousands of people and you are facing human nature and the psychology of having no permanent address, knowing where you've been but not knowing where you're going, much of the time wishing you were back where you were before instead of on the way, because you're moving but you're not really on the way anywhere. The people actually knew when they left Kadesh Barneea that it was going to be actually 40 years before they could realize the next step in the fulfillment of the covenant. So all of this time they were not only facing the inconveniences and the almost impossible difficulties of a large society on the move, but without the motivation of really going anywhere ~~that~~ at which they could arrive soon; and in addition to that, they were doing this under the consciousness of penalty and punishment for a mistake they had made back there at Kadesh Barneea. I don't know whether you can quite conceive of what the problems of leadership must have been--far beyond what the records of Numbers and Deuteronomy (mainly Numbers) can show, even though Numbers, from that standpoint, becomes a very rich book, informationally and from the standpoint of spiritual impact. I think you have to see more than just a record of long ago here. I think you have to try to imagine this as if it were happening today. And what would you do in a situation like that? That is, how would you face and solve the problems? Now obviously there were many points at which the best of Moses and Aaron and the very best efforts of qualified leadership ran out to the very end, and only because God took over in miraculous action at a number of points was the thing possible at all. So there had to be a number of contacts between the best of man and the help of God in order to bring it to pass.

Even at that there are many, many sorry details about this experience. Now I've said that in order to indicate some of the transitional elements from what went on in the Book of Numbers to Deuteronomy. For example, Moses was in the very midst of the most difficult kind of leadership activity as he worked with the people and led them through the Book of Numbers. But now, in spite of all of that, he's facing the more difficult experience of leaving the people--of saying goodbye--of passing on the leadership to somebody else. And remember, he's doing this now at the point at which---you might say he's stopping just short of what almost any human leader would feel would be the climax of realization and of consummation and of fulfillment. And he's having to stop just on this side of it. And if we had a map here we could point out--and I hope you've looked at maps as you've studied this--how these people did wander through an area on the--as you look at the map--what would be the left-hand side, ~~or what would be the~~ and they came up along the Moab side of the Jordan River, and were now about to cross over into that part of the western part of Palestine, as related to the Jordan River, and that's really where the focus of all of this promised land was. And here Moses, for all of these years, had been leading these people toward the Promised Land, and now ~~here~~ he stood--and the Jordan River at that point (I've been there and it's only--I don't know that it's 25 feet wide there. Probably it is, and we don't know just how it was then, but the Jordan River is not a large stream by any means)--and he stood where he could look across and see the fulfillment, but he wasn't going to have a part in it. Now this, you see, gives you a basis for comparison-- a very, very difficult time of leadership, but now the more difficult experience of giving up that leadership and leaving the people just before the experience that would be the fruition and the fulfillment of all of his whole life of leadership, ~~or~~

this 40-year period at least. Throughout the Book of Numbers, one of the things that made it so difficult was that the people were murmuring most of the time. I don't know whether you can blame them, but at least this certainly made leadership difficult. And here, at least in the Book of ~~Numbers~~ Deuteronomy, the people are attentive, they are listening, they know that they are on the verge of passing over into the Promised Land. They are also saddened and awed by the fact that Moses is not allowed to go with them. They do now listen, even though they have given him a rough time for all those years. During the Book of Numbers, this murmuring indicated that the people did not really take the covenant very seriously, just like when they ran into what they thought was a big problem at Kadesh Barnea and didn't want to go on into the land because they feared the giants and the walled cities, so they almost forgot the covenant, and in spite of the promise of the covenant, they said, "Oh, we wish we'd stayed in Egypt. Let's elect a captain that will turn us around and lead us back to Egypt." So the covenant wasn't very highly esteemed, or wasn't taken very seriously, during the Book of Numbers, but now the Book of Deuteronomy is to a very great extent a renewal of the covenant--both ways, both parties. This is the meaning of the restatement of the law. It is the renewal of God's covenant with the people, and the people declare themselves as being renewed and as being ready for this.

If we were to organize the Book of Numbers on a personnel basis, I think we would simply represent it ⁱⁿ this way, by putting Jehovah God at the top, Moses next, and Joshua next, and here you have the predominant characters in this book. I would break it down into about three subdivisions for a careful study. The first ten chapters actually constitute a review of the event. Moses is speaking, ~~but he is~~ reviewing the events of the period of his leadership; he is reminding the people of

what God has done, reminding them of what they have done, reminding them of the covenant, reminding them of their failure to keep it, reminding them of a great many things. Here as Moses is about to turn over the leadership to someone else, he takes the amount of the record here which represents these first ten chapters to review the period of 40 years and tries to revise in their minds, at least in a very sketchy way, the salient points of their own experience in relation to God during that time. Then a section beginning at Chapter 11 and running ^{through} ~~to~~ the 31st chapter actually, this major portion of the book, this is the Deuteronomy section, this is the retreatment or the restatement of the law. This is the popular version of the law, if by popular you will let me mean the law---since originally it was stated by God to Moses, this now is the human receiver's translation of it to the people for whom he was responsible, so this is the popular version; ~~this is~~ the Exodus version is the version for Moses; the Deuteronomy version is the version for the people, this is the applied version of the law, and Moses is doing his best to state it, restate it in such a way that they will pick it up again, that they will take it with them, that they will obey it and enjoy the benefits of obedience. So he repeats not just the Ten Commandments as they were given to him, but he elaborates upon them, he explains, and he repeats along with them much of the ordinance type, the ceremonial type of application which was made.

Now, there is an interesting motif that runs through all of this. Granted, it's not as advanced as New Testament. You've got to remember the rule of progressive revelation here, but at that point this was the emphasis, the emphasis of blessing and curse. Moses was constantly saying to them, "This is the law. If you keep it, you will be blest; if you disobey it, you will be cursed." I don't think he was meaning here

always blessing and curse in the sense of ultimate or eternal salvation or damnation, but I think he was relating this to their ongoing experience as they attempt to walk now under the instructions of the last half of the Book of Leviticus, attempting to walk in holiness, which they certainly didn't do much of the time during the 38-1/2 years that intervened. But now Moses is saying, "Do this. Pick it up again and walk this way, and right here in this life, to the extent that you do this, you will be blest, and to the extent that you don't do this, you will experience the curse." Again I say not necessarily in the sense of eternal damnation, but the absence of the blessing of God, and it will be rough for you. So, while this is too much of a simplification for us to apply as a formula, and especially under the covenant of grace, it's not quite that way any more. I mean there are a lot of people now who get by without suffering, and many others who are good people who suffer all the time, and this is because under the covenant of grace and further revelation about immortality, and so forth, and God's ^{fuller} revelation of His plan for people, and since Christ came, we now know that this can be, and the punishment or the reward will come later on. But at this point, Moses was focusing this on their day-by-day living and put it almost in a formula type of presentation and assured them that if they respected the law and obeyed it--not just legalistically, not outwardly--but respected the law and wanted to do what was right, they would have the blessing of God, and the other attitude would bring the curse of God.

Then the last section would be three chapters, the 32nd, 33rd and 34th, where we have the song of Moses and the mourning for Moses and the record of his death and burial.

Now, I'd like to take just a few minutes to raise the question: Why would this be necessary? Why was this review of the law necessary?--because if we can't answer that, then we would have a question about the place and the purpose and the propriety of this document here at this important transitional point in the record. So let me make several observations. You have to keep the history in focus and remember that when the punishment was pronounced at Kadesh Barneea, remember that it was put this way, that every man who was twenty years old or more at that point would perish in this wilderness. In other words, the wandering in the wilderness was not a punishment of traveling, it was a punishment in the sense of the deterioration and the destruction of a generation, so that every man who was twenty years old or more at the time of Kadesh Barneea was not going to be there any more at the time they stood on the banks of the Jordan River ready to cross over into the land. So, what we have here is an entirely new generation. You see, if God's promise was fulfilled--and we are sure that it was--then we have here an entirely new generation. And none of the grown men,--none of the ~~people~~ men who were twenty years old or more back there when Moses talked to them at Kadesh Barneea, were here any more. This was all a new generation that had come up since then. Now, they should have known a great deal about this, depending upon how good their religious education in the home was, but in terms of Moses' relationship to them, this was an entirely new generation; therefore--- I should have pointed out, of course, that there were two exceptions to that categorical statement that I made. Caleb and Joshua were exempt from that. As you know, they went on into the land with the people. But the whole generation had perished by now, so here was a new generation. Well, this is one reason why the review of the law was necessary, because it was just a different group of people. It was like the change of a college generation every few years. You're always dealing with new people, people who haven't heard this or haven't

done this, or haven't been involved in it before. So here this is what it was.

Another thing that I think makes this necessary is that they were now going into both a new land and a new experience. And Moses was very much concerned, even though they had spent--this younger generation now, this adult generation that had grown up in this time, had no experience other than this wandering-in-the-wilderness experience plus the history of their predecessors in Egypt and the deliverance from Egypt. But now they were going into an entirely new land, and they were going to have an entirely new experience. This experience would be new in a number of ways. In the first place, this was a very good land--you know it was originally described as a land flowing with milk and honey--it was a very good land, but it was filled with a lot of bad people--religiously bad at least, idolaters and worshipers of idols and false gods, and so forth.

Another way in which this was going to be very different, instead of having to depend on manna from heaven or the roots and the berries that they could get from the wilderness--vegetation, instead of that, they were now going into a land in which they would have a new experience, and this would be the experience of prosperity, so that the whole socio-economic context of their society was going to change, it was going to be jolted tremendously, and Moses was concerned that they would lose their tendency to depend on God, because this is what so often happens when prosperity comes. It's not an old problem; it's not a new problem; it's just a problem always. And they were going into a land that was going to be different--- I said it was a good land but filled with bad people, religiously speaking--they were going into a land now in which they were going to be surrounded; their neighbors were going to be idolaters, and they were going to need a degree of loyalty to their

God that was never required, actually, before because of their mixture with, or their contacts with, these other people. So there are plenty of reasons why what is done here in the Book of Deuteronomy was appropriate, and was necessary. But I would add a third observation. Actually, they were going to have to take up--many of them were going to have to take up new duties and new responsibilities, because their society and their way of life was going to change from this closely knit--although I don't know how closely knit it could be with that many people--but by contrast with that now, they were not going to stay together any more in a big family and be under the protection and guidance of one great leader. They were now going over into the land, and they were going to spread out, and they were going to decentralize themselves by tribes and occupy different geographical areas, so they would now have to take up all the normal domestic and social duties of that kind of a way of life which, really, they didn't have to worry about earlier. This would be a--if you can imagine it--this would be a great change. They were now going to become, to some extent, tillers of the soil. Their way of life was going to change vocationally and occupationally. So there were very good reasons for the repeat performance here in the matter of the treatment of the law.

Now let me give you what would seem to be a subdivision into the addresses that Moses made. I think there is some reason for looking at it this way. The first address would be from the beginning to Chapter 4, verse 43. This is a survey of Israel's history from Sinai to the Jordan River. Then in 4:44, the second address begins; this, namely, the popular form of the law as Moses presented it to them, hoping that he was presenting it in a way that would be relatively easily remembered, and he reinforced it with these warnings and threatenings and promises about blessing and curse. And then the third address would be Chapters 29 and 30. This seems to

be separated from the other in that here was a specific review of the covenant. And again, as he had done with the law, he now treats the covenant specifically in these last two chapters (that is, the 29th and 30th), and again reinforces this with these warnings and promises and threatenings about blessing and curse. If you organize this into the three addresses, then you would have a conclusion section left-- Chapters 31 and 34 where we have what I indicated before.

Let me make two or three comments about the religious value of this book. Deuteronomy is a deeply spiritual book. I don't know whether you realize how many quotations there are in the New Testament from Deuteronomy. Jesus himself quoted quite a great deal from Deuteronomy. First I would say that this is one of the most beautiful books in the Bible, if you analyze it from a literary point of view--style and manner of expression--and we don't have time to talk about it, but I would recommend it to you for review and for reading from that point of view after this course is over.

Secondly, there are some of the finest examples of Hebrew literature--literature in the sense of poetry and music and other types. This book has the potential for study as literature, as some of the other Old Testament documents do not have. Again I would say that there is noticeable here throughout this book a deeply devout spirit. Moses is at his best. The people are in the right attitude. The book is devotional in character, really.

Now there is one way that I would suggest that you might make up a summary of the Book of Deuteronomy. I said as I introduced it that it is a highly transitional book, and so one device that's easy to remember--and I've used it myself--is what it reviews and what it previews. For the first part of the book, reviews, and the rest of it, previews. Let me list these rather quickly for you, and then you may elaborate on

them and increase the list indefinitely. It reviews their experiences from Sinai to Jordan. That's the factual data. It reviews their relation to Jehovah. That's the more spiritual application of it. It reviews their blessing. This would be for their encouragement. However, it also rather bluntly and frankly reviews their punishments, and this would be for their warning. These are what the book reviews.

What it previews is their entrance into the Promised Land. It previews their prosperity. This is a big thing throughout all the rest of the Old Testament, as you know. It previews their idolatry, which they promised Moses they would never do but which they did very soon after Moses was no longer there. And this is a big thing throughout the rest of the Old Testament. But it also previews their ultimate redemption. You remember, this is summarized in one great statement that Moses made. Moses said this: "Today you are telling me that you will do all this.

However, I know that after I am gone you will not keep these promises. But, in the latter day, there will come a prophet like unto me, but him you will hear."

I'm quoting some of this from the King James version. That was the thrust. That was the thesis of his message--"I'm warning you; you're promising that you will do it. I know, however, that after you've made the promise and after I am gone, you won't do it, but I also know that there is a day out ahead when the Messiah will come, a prophet like unto me, but He will be bigger and better and higher, and Him you will hear, and salvation will come." And that's really the message of the book.

-- THE END--