

Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 6A

Numbers and Deuteronomy

Review

II. D. 12. d. The Men Were Number and Positions Assigned

Let's go back to where we left off. In the last session we talked about census figures in the early chapters of the book of Numbers. That is on your outline, Roman numeral II., D.12., d., "The men were numbered and the positions assigned." I don't want to get back into the details of that discussion. You'll recall there were questions raised about certain biblical statements (e.g., "seven nations mightier than you in the land of Canaan"), on the basis of what we know of the size of armies at the time, and what we know about the size of cities—Jericho being 7 acres, for example. You begin to wonder if we have really understood the language that was used, which English versions translate "600,000 fighting men," with a general population of 2 or 3 million. I said at the end of that discussion, "I think this is a problem that is in that category of that Latin phrase 'something on which you cannot speak.'" There is something going on here that is not fully understood.

I don't think I called your attention to a paragraph on page 41 of your citations, and I'll just conclude this discussion by referring you to that. This is from R. K. Harrison's *Old Testament Introduction*, where at the conclusion of his discussion of various approaches to interpretations of census figures in Numbers, he says, "None of these attempts to scale down the Old Testament numbers is able to account satisfactorily for all the data involved." Remember when I talked about translating the *eleph* as "chieftain" or "tent group"—you still have a problem with the summation of the numbers at the end. So it's difficult for any presently proposed solution to satisfactorily deal with all the data. "Thus suggestions made cannot be taken as uniformly balanced for the purpose of interpretation. If other evidence from near Eastern sources concerning numbers generally is of any value in this action, it would imply that the Old Testament numerical confirmation will rest upon some basis of reality which is quite familiar to the

ancients, but which is unknown to the modern scholars.” In other words, there is something going on there that we don’t fully understand. That’s where I would leave the issue. If you’re interested you can look at some of the references in your bibliography—there’s a fair amount of discussion there to go further. Any questions on that before we go on?

12. c. The Levites Are Numbered and Their Duties Assigned – Numbers 3:1-4:49

Alright, c. under 12. is: “The Levites are numbered and their duties assigned: Numbers 3:1-4:49.” If you turn to Numbers chapter 3, you’ll notice at the beginning of verse 1 and following it talks about the Levites. Go down to verses 5, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They [the Levites] are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle. They are to take care of all of the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle.’”

So, the Levites are given that task of taking care of the tabernacle, and in doing that they stand in place of the firstborn of all Israelite families. You notice in verse 12 the Lord said, “I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine, for all the firstborn are mine.” Now remember we talked about the tribe of Levi coming to stand with Moses at the time of the golden calf incident. They were blessed in some way for doing that. This may be the way that this is to be interpreted. Back in Genesis, they were cursed in the blessings of Jacob when they were not given a tribal inheritance, but now they are given this important task in Israel. But because they can stand for each of the firstborn of the families of Israel, they also had to be counted, and that’s what follows in this chapter and pretty quickly you’re back into a census problem. Verse 14 says, “The Lord said to Moses in the Desert of Sinai, ‘Count the Levites by their families and clans. Count every male a month old or more.’” That was done, and you find in verse 39 that “The total number of Levites counted by the Lord’s command by Moses and Aaron according to

their clans, including every male a month old or more, was 22,000.”

Now look at your citations on page 44, under J. J. Davis. In his book *Biblical Numerology*, he comments on this number with respect to the firstborn. He’s really commenting on verses 40-49 of Numbers 3, because if you go further after the 22,000 Levites, verse 43 says, “The total number of firstborn males a month old or more, listed by name, was 22,273.” In other words, there were 273 more firstborn males than there were Levites! So compensation had to be made for that, and you read in verse 46 that to redeem the 273 firstborn Israelites who exceeded the number of Levites, five shekels would be collected for each. So that’s the way it all balanced out. But let’s get back to Davis’ comment on the firstborn among the tribes. “One of the more perplexing issues encountered in the book of Numbers is the total of firstborn among the tribes. According to the census taken for the purpose of redemption, all the male firstborns of the tribes totaled only 22,273.” That’s verses 42 and 43. “If the nation had a population of more than a million males, which would probably be the case—if there were 603,550 men of 20 years old and upward—then what would function at 22,273 represents the sum total of all firstborns in the nation, and there will be only one firstborn to 40 or 50 males.” So you see here you’re back into another problem: that’s a pretty large family. “This implies that every father of a family must have begotten or still had 39 to 44 sons, not talking about daughters.” Generally the proportion of firstborns in the population is 1 to 4.

Now, in the next paragraph Davis mentions C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch in that old classic commentary series on the Old Testament. They handle this problem by arguing that this number of firstborns only represents the number of those born within the space of 13 months, or between the Exodus and the time that the law was given. On the basis of the above statistics, this would seem to indicate that there were about 19,000 firstborns in one year, thus bringing the numbers in conformity with the probabilities of the historical situation. Now, that’s an interesting suggestion; but the problem, it seems to me, is that if you go back to verse 43 in the text, what’s it say? It says the total number of first born males a month old or more is less than 22,273. It doesn’t say “firstborn males born in the last 12 to 13 months.” It says the total number of firstborn males among the

Israelites. So again I think there's something going on with these numbers that we don't fully understand as far as the way that they are put together and the language that is used. So I would just fold this into that large point. I don't believe we have adequate information. I don't think that leads you to conclude that the text isn't reliable; I think the text is reliable, it's just not fully understood. Any questions?

d. The Law of Jealousy – Numbers 5:11-31

Let's go onto d. It is "The law of jealousy: Numbers 5:11-31." The title "law of jealousy" for this section really comes out of verse 29, at the end of the section, after describing the procedure to deal with a certain kind of problem. You read in verse 29, "This then is the law of jealousy," and it goes on to say, "when a woman goes astray and defiles herself while married to her husband, or when feelings of jealousy come over a man because he suspects his wife. The priest is to apply the provisions of this law." If you go back to verse 14 you get a description of what this is dealing with. Let me start reading at verse 11. "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them, 'If a man's wife goes astray, and is unfaithful to him by sleeping with another man, and this is hidden from her husband, and her impurity is undetected (since there is no witness against her, and she is not been caught in the act).'''" And then you see verse 14 describes the issue, "and if feelings of jealousy come over her husband, and he suspects his wife and she is impure, or if he is jealous and he suspects her even though she is not impure," then he is to do certain things and that's the law of jealousy.

This gives the procedure that is to be followed in that kind of a case. It's a case where there is no evidence, and there are two possibilities: a woman has sinned against her husband, he becomes jealous but he has no proof, but she's guilty; or a case where a man suspects his wife has sinned, and again there's no proof, but the woman is innocent. So, it's a case where there is no evidence, but the husband is suspicious. In such a case there is a procedure outlined here that is to be followed. The procedure is not to deal with the alleged offense itself. There was already a death penalty for adultery for both men and women. But this procedure is to deal with the innocence or guilt of the woman, in order

to remove jealousy that was unfounded. It was also to be a deterrent to unfaithfulness with the procedure of exposure.

Now, what's the procedure? Verse 15 says that if there is a case like this, then the husband is to take his wife to the priest: "he must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf. He must not pour oil on it or incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder offering to draw attention to guilt." So, an offering is to be brought in verse 15. Then in verses 16 to 18 the priest places the woman before the Lord and puts the offering in her hand. Verse 16 says, "The priest shall bring her and have her stand before the Lord. Then he shall take some holy water in a clay jar, and put some dust from the tabernacle floor into the water. After the priest has had the woman stand before the Lord, he shall loosen her hair and place in her hands the reminder offering, the grain offering for jealousy, while he himself holds the bitter water that brings a curse."

So he places the woman before the Lord, puts the offering in her hand, and then in verses 19 to 22 the woman takes an oath that the Lord uses to either bless her or curse her according to her innocence or her guilt. Verse 19, "Then the priest shall put the woman under oath and say to her, 'if no other man has slept with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you. But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and defiled yourself by sleeping with a man other than your husband—here the priest puts one under this curse of the oath—may the Lord call your people to curse and denounce you when he causes your thigh to waste away and your abdomen to swell. May this water, that brings a curse, enter your body so that your abdomen swells and your thigh wastes away.'" Now that water is this water that is mixed with dust from the tabernacle floor.

So, the woman drinks this mixture of dust and water and the result will be as described. If she was innocent nothing would happen, if she was guilty her thigh would waste away and her abdomen would swell. I don't think there's any reason to conclude that a mixture of dust and water, such as described here, would bring about that sort of a

result in just a natural kind of way. It's not purely a physical effect. It involves an intervention by God who sanctioned this procedure for the purpose specified—to determine innocence or guilt of the woman.

Trial by Ordeal

Now having said that, the procedure resembles, to a certain degree—not completely, but to a certain degree—what is known as “trial by ordeal.” I don't know if you have ever heard of that descriptive term—the “trial by ordeal.” Trial by ordeal has a long history from many people over a long period of time. If you go to the code of Hammurabi (that's about 1700 B.C.), Law 132 reads, “If the finger is pointed at the wife of a citizen on account of another man, but she has not been caught lying with another man”—in other words, again, no evidence—“for her husband's sake she shall throw herself into the river.” Of course the theory was, if she's guilty she'd drown. If she's innocent she would survive. That's “trial by ordeal.” The encyclopedia says, “Trial by Ordeal is legal proof by divine intervention. In a case where normal evidence does not exist.” If you look at the history of this you'll find that it's often ordeals by water or by fire. Sometimes people were required to walk across hot coals of fire, and then the severity of the burns would be inspected over a period of time. If they were severe burns it'd indicate guilt; if it wasn't then it'd indicate innocence. One could be asked to put the hand in the flame and a similar examination would render an evaluation of guilt or innocence.

So often this procedure has been compared to trial by ordeal which was common in the Middle Ages in Europe. It was common in England before the jury system. But I think there's an important difference. I said it resembled to some degree the trial by ordeal, but notice that there is a difference. In trial by ordeal as normally practiced, there is an assumption of guilt unless proven innocent. In other words, if you walk on coals, you're going to probably get burnt. So, there is normally in the ordeal an assumption of guilt unless one is proven innocent, that is, unless the person is delivered from the fire or the water. But here the ritual is really the opposite. There is an assumed innocence unless

proven guilty. The danger here is not life-threatening or something that you would expect to cause injury, it's just drinking the water mixed with dust. If the thigh rots or the abdomen swells after a period of time then you're assumed to be guilty. So I think that that's an important distinction.

It seems that the Lord ordered this to be a procedure to be followed in a place like this, in a social context where women were generally disadvantaged. This provision really in many respects is to the woman's benefit. It forces a suspicious husband to establish his case or desist from accusations and suspicion, and is perceived that he can't do that.

e. The Law of the Nazirite – Numbers 6:1-21

Alright, let's go on to e. "The law of the Nazirite: Numbers 6:1-21." The title for this, you will find in verse 13 and in verse 21. You notice in verse 13 of Numbers 6, "Now this is the law of the Nazirite," and in verse 21, "This is the law of the Nazirite." What was the purpose of the law of the Nazirite? The law of the Nazirite provided for a type of special consecration to the Lord for someone, either male or female, who was not of the priesthood, and enabled them to set themselves apart to the Lord for a limited amount of time. It was something that was not obligatory, but voluntary. It was not some sort of monasticism or asceticism. It permitted a rather normal life in society with a few qualifications or exceptions. So you read in the first verse of Numbers 6, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them, "If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the Lord as a Nazirite,"'" he must do certain things. I might say the word "Nazirite" comes from the root *nazar* (*nzr*), which means "to dedicate or separate." So there's a play on the root meaning of that word—it is a special vow of separation to the Lord.

The three things the Nazirite was not to do were things that were not wrong in themselves but things that marked this special period of consecration to the Lord. The first thing, verses 3 and 4, was abstaining from everything that comes from the grapevine. "He must abstain from wine and other fermented drink, and must not drink vinegar made

from wine or from any other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skin.”

The second thing was to let his hair grow as a symbol of dedication to the Lord. Verse 5 says, “During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the LORD is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long.”

And thirdly, verses 6 and 7, he was not to come in contact with any dead body. “Throughout the period of separation to the Lord he must not go near a dead body. Even if his own father or mother or brother or sister dies, he must not make himself ceremonially unclean on account of them, because the symbol of his separation to God is on his head.” So those are the three things that the Nazirite was to do. At the end of the vow, various offerings of sacrifices were to be made, the head was to be shaved and the hair burned on the altar, and the period of that vow was terminated. So that’s the law of the Nazirite.

I might just comment here; if you look at the history of the Christian church you’re probably aware that in the Roman Catholic church there is a long tradition of requiring people to take vows, and particularly for the priesthood, of celibacy, poverty, chastity and obedience, and to do so for one’s entire life. That system has led to a lot of problems. Particularly with the monastic system, for which I think that there’s no biblical support. Celibacy is not a holier state than matrimony, and withdrawal from normal social intercourse, engagement and involvement in society and community, is not something that is more conducive to spiritual growth in true religion than involvement in society. So, it’s interesting that in this particular vow, that a person can take it and it is voluntary and temporary. It’s not something that is imposed for a lifetime except in special cases such as Samson and Samuel. It’s not something that totally involves a lifetime and it’s not something which totally withdraws them from a normal life in the community.

I’m not sure if it tells how long it takes to terminate the vow. It doesn’t appear

that it would take that long of a time to terminate it, so maybe a person could. I think later in Judaism there was an attempt to specify the length—it would be the period of a month or six weeks or two months or something—but in the law itself, it's not specified.

f. The Offering of the Princes at the Dedication of the Altar – Numbers 7:1-89

But let's go on to f. I just want to make a few brief comments here. f. is, "The offering of the princes at the dedication of the altar: Numbers 7:1-89." I might just mention that this is the longest chapter in the Pentateuch. It's how many verses? 89 verses. Now if you glance down through it, you'll find it very repetitive. It describes the offering that's brought by a representative of each of the tribes on this occasion of the dedication of the altar for the tabernacle. For example, look at verse 24: "On the third day, Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the people of Zebulun, brought his offering." So the representative from the tribe of Zebulun brings an offering. The offering is then described in verses 25 through 29. "His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old, to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Eliab son of Helon."

Now if you look at each of the other offerings of the representatives of the other tribe, they are all identical. So the chapter becomes very repetitive and you might ask, "What's the point?" Seems to me, what it's telling us is that God is interested in each one of his people and their offerings even though those offerings may be basically the same. God is personally interested in each person and each of these tribes and what they bring. So it's recorded, offering after offering after offering.

g. The Second Passover after Leaving Egypt -- Numbers 9:1-14

Let's go on to g. "The second Passover after leaving Egypt: Numbers 9:1-14."

There is a time designation in verse 1 of chapter 9: “The Lord spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt. He said, ‘Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. Celebrate it at the twilight on the fourteenth day of this month.’” Now notice that time: first month of the second year. Go back to Numbers 1:1. Numbers 1:1 says that “The Lord spoke to Moses on the first day of the second month of the second year.” First day of the second month of the second year in 1:1, but in 9:1 it is the first month of the second year. So this is actually earlier than the instructions in chapter one about taking the census.

But what happens at this time is they did that on the first month of the second year, but you read the following in verse 6: “Some of them could not celebrate the Passover on that day because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body. So they came to Moses and Aaron and said to Moses, ‘We have become unclean because of the dead body, but why should we be kept from presenting the Lord’s offering with the other Israelites at the appointed time?’” In other words, they are obligated to observe the Passover but they’re ceremonially unclean so they can’t observe the Passover. Here you have a problem of conflicting morals. All Israelites were to observe the Passover or they would be cut off from God’s people. Go down to verse 13: “If a man who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover that man must be cut off from his people because he did not present the Lord’s offering at the appointed time, that man will bear the consequences of his sin.” But if you go back to the Mosaic legislation in Leviticus, anyone who touched a dead body was unclean and was prohibited from observing the Passover. So what do you do in such a case? You are supposed to observe it, but you can’t because you’re unclean.

These people come to Moses and say, “What shall we do?” And Moses doesn’t know. In verse 8, Moses says, “Wait, until I find out what the Lord commands concerning you!” Then you read in verse 9 what the Lord tells Moses. He says, “Tell the Israelites when any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or away on a journey they may still celebrate the Lord’s Passover. They are to celebrate it on the fourteenth day, on the second month.” In other words, a later date is given as an

alternative. I think you see in this something important with respect to the nature of the civil and ceremonial law. I don't think this law was intended to be perceived in a narrowly legalistic way; that is, it's not something totally unbending and unchanging.

Now I think what Jesus said in Mark 2:27 gets at the same point. Jesus said, "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." This law was given by God for the benefit of humankind; it's not the other way around. What the Lord does here is provide a way of maintaining the best of both these requirements: You must observe the Passover, you must not go when you are unclean, without really compromising either. But provision is made for exceptions and conflicts. So, a second Passover could be held a month after the regular Passover in order to accommodate people who could not participate in the first because of either being unclean or being away on a journey.

h. Divine Provision for Direction and Guidance, Israel is Now to Start to Leave Sinai on their Journey towards the Land of Canaan

H. under 12: "Divine provision for direction and guidance, Israel is now to start to leave Sinai on their journey towards the land of Canaan." Two provisions are made: in Numbers 9:15-23 you have the pillar of cloud and fire. You read in Numbers 9:15, "On the day of the tabernacle the tent of the testimony was set up, the cloud covered it from evening till morning. The cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire, and that is how it continued to be. The cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. Whenever the cloud lifted from the tent the Israelites set out. Whenever the cloud settled, the Israelites took camp. At the Lord's command the Israelites set out, and at his command they camped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle they remained in the camp." So, the rest of it describes how that was to work to lead the Israelites on their journey. The second provision is in Numbers 10:1-10 and that's the provision of providing silver trumpets to coordinate the movements of the tribes. The Lord said, "Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camp set out. When both are sounded, the whole community will assemble," and so forth. So, those are the two provisions for the guidance of the people as they set out.

Skipping e. f. and g.

I'm going to skip sections e., f., and g. on your outlines for our class discussion. You'll notice that e. is "From Sinai to the plains of Moab: Numbers 10-22." F. is "The Balaam incident: Numbers 22-25." That's where Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam, a heathen soothsayer, to curse the Israelites; but he ended up blessing the Israelites rather than cursing them. I do want to make a couple comments on that, so I'll come back to that in a minute. I'm not going to discuss e., f. or g. G. is "Preparations for entrance into Canaan: Numbers 26-36" where you have the discussion of a new census and some things right at the end of that period of the wilderness wandering.

f. Balaam Oracles and Divine Kingship

I did want to make a few comments on the Balaam oracles. I want to do that in connection with one specific thing that is included in those oracles, and that's a reference to the rise of kingship in Israel. Notice what Balaam says in Numbers 23:21: "No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The Lord their God is with them, the shout of the king is among them." Now, you could debate what "the shout of the king" is referring to there. Is the king God himself—"the Lord their God is with them, the shout of the king"—is that the shout of recognition of Yahweh as the divine King, or is this a human king?

Look at Numbers 24:17, where Balaam says in his fourth oracle, "I see him but not now, I behold him but not near, a star will come out of Jacob, a scepter will come out of Israel." Now a scepter is a symbol of royalty. "He will crush the foreheads of Moab all the skulls of all the sons of Seth, Edom will be conquered; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, but Israel will grow strong. A ruler will come out of Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city." I think in verses 17-19 you have a prophetic predictive statement that finds its fulfillment in the time of David. David was the scepter who rose out of Israel, David crushed Moab and Edom. Look at 2 Samuel 8—it lists all David's conquests and among them are Moab and Edom. What I just want to call your attention to is that kingship is anticipated already in the Balaam oracle. When we get into 1 and 2

Samuel we're going to see the rise of kingship in Israel. Kingship doesn't arise in Israel without any indication in advance that there would be a time when kingship would be established in Israel. In fact, if you go back to the time of Abraham, the Lord says, "Among Abraham's descendants kings will arise." In Deuteronomy 17, there is what is called "the law of the king"—it explains that when you establish a king, here is what the king will do. So kingship is anticipated; it was God's purpose for his people to have a king. So I did want to make that comment on the Balaam oracles.

h. Moses' Last Days

1. Book of Deuteronomy

a. Name of Deuteronomy

I do want to move forward, skip forward to h. which is "Moses' last days," to two sub-points: one is the book of Deuteronomy and the other is the death of Moses. Under the book of Deuteronomy there are three sub-headings, the first of which is "The name" which is the last book of the Pentateuch or Torah. As you have noted, in Hebrew tradition the title is taken from the words of the first lines of the book. In this case, the title which we are familiar with is not from the Hebrew tradition but from the Septuagint. In the Hebrew tradition, the title is taken from Deuteronomy 1:1: "These are the words which Moses spoke unto Israel beyond the Jordan." "These are the words" is the title in the Jewish tradition. But the title we're familiar with for Deuteronomy really rises from the translation of Deuteronomy 17:18. I mentioned a few minutes ago that Deuteronomy 17:18 is also called "the law of the king" that described how the king was to function when kingship arose in Israel. This verse, Deuteronomy 17:18, is a verse from that "law of the king." It says, "When he [that is, the king] takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll, [the NIV says] a copy of this law, taken from that of the priest who are the Levites." So you see in the Hebrew text there "he is to write for himself a copy of the law," that is translated in the Septuagint "he is to write [literally] this second law." Now the *Misneh* in Hebrew is a word that can mean either copy or second. And you see Septuagint has translated this as "second law." I think it's a

mistranslation. And it has become the English title for the book: “*Deuter-onomion*,” meaning “second law.” It’s a mistranslation and it’s open to misunderstanding. I think it can be understood correctly in a sense, and can be helpful, but it is open to misunderstanding.

Generally, I think it has always been understood in wrong ways. If you translate it “second law,” you might get the idea that this is a second law that differs from the first law. The first law was given at Sinai. This is a law that was given forty years later to the new generation that grew up during the wilderness wandering. Remember when they were at Kadesh Barnea because of their lack of faith in the middle of the book of Numbers. The spies went out and came back with the negative report saying, “There’s no way we can do that.” So a second law could be understood as a law that differs from the law given at Sinai.

There is an element of truth in that because if you look closely at the formulation of the law in Deuteronomy and compare it to the formulation of the law in Exodus, you will find there are slight differences in some cases. Some of the Ten Commandments are worded quite differently in Deuteronomy 5 than they are in Exodus 20. But what should not be concluded from this is that this is a second law that is in any way inconsistent or contrary to the law given at Sinai. This is simply a restatement of the law by Moses to the next generation of people in a way that is consistent and harmonious with the Law given at Sinai. It’s not a second law in the sense it is a different body of material than what was given at Sinai. So that’s one way in which it could be misunderstood.

A second way in which it could be misunderstood is that the title implies that this is simply a repetition of the first law. If that’s the case, why should we pay a whole lot of attention to Deuteronomy? Why not just read Leviticus and Numbers if it’s simply a repetition of what had been given before? Why do we have this book?

It’s interesting that in the Samaritan Pentateuch text of Deuteronomy as well as in the Dead Sea Scroll of Deuteronomy you see attempts made to harmonize Deuteronomy with the wording of the laws of Exodus and Numbers. So the differences between the two were intentionally minimized. There seems to be an attempt to draw the wording

closer together in the Dead Sea Scroll text and the Samaritan text than in the Masoretic Hebrew text. But a more accurate translation is simply “a copy” of this law not “a second law.” The king was to write a copy of this law. Why the Septuagint translated it this way and why this became the title of the book is an open question. If you go back to Deuteronomy 17:18, you can still ask the question, “What is the law in view?” “The king is to write for himself a copy of this law.” What law? Is it just the law of the king telling how the king is to govern or perform his job as king? Or is “this law” the whole of the Pentateuch? Or is it just the book of Deuteronomy? There are three options there. I’m inclined to think it’s the whole book of Deuteronomy, to have a copy of this restatement of the law by Moses on the plains of Moab to guide him as he assumes the responsibilities as king. To draw this discussion of the title to a conclusion, the derivation of the title from the translation of this phrase from Deuteronomy 17:18 has provided a title that can be misunderstood, and it’s a title that I don’t think was intended that way in the original composition or in the text from which it is derived. Now, having said that, the other option is to go with the Jewish tradition: “These are the words.” If properly understood, the title “Deuteronomy” probably conveyed more of the idea of what the book is about than “These are the words,” which doesn’t tell you much of anything.

b. The Significance of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament

b. is “The significance of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament.” Citation on page 45, there is a paragraph on 45 that is from an interesting book by Samuel Schultz, who was on the faculty of Wheaton college graduate school for a long time. He wrote a book called *Deuteronomy, The Gospel of Love*. It was a popular book, not a technical academic discussion of Deuteronomy, but the ideas he discusses is in that book I find quite helpful. Notice the first paragraph where he says, “The book of Deuteronomy is the most important book in the Old Testament from the standpoint of God’s revelation.” I don’t know, if somebody asked you what the most important book in the Old Testament was, would your mind go to Deuteronomy? Probably not. But that’s what he says. “In all his

years of Old Testament survey the author made only brief references to Deuteronomy as a book that merely reviews or repeats what precedes what's in the Pentateuch." He didn't pay attention to it? "Such, however, is not the case. It is one of the books most frequently cited in the New Testament. It is cited nearly 200 times according to the Greek New Testament." So he makes that statement which I think is quite striking. Whether you would agree with that statement or not, I think you can certainly say one would have to admit that Deuteronomy plays an enormously important role in Old Testament revelation. We will say more about this later. But when you get beyond Deuteronomy, the theology and the concepts of all the historical books (Joshua, Judges, Kings, etc.) reflect the theology of Deuteronomy. The influence of Deuteronomy in the prophetic books is often quite striking. So Deuteronomy is a very significant book.

Setting and Background

Let's get the setting in the background for this. Israel had entered into covenant with the Lord at Sinai after that remarkable deliverance out of Egypt. At Sinai he made known the obligations that his covenant entailed. Israel left Sinai, as I mentioned, and because of their lack of faith a whole generation died in the wilderness. The new generation is now on the border of the land of Canaan just across the Jordan River on the plains of Moab where they were camped. What Moses does in this book is summarize for this new generation what it is that the Lord expects of them. And he challenges this new generation to walk in the way of the Lord and to be obedient to their covenantal obligations. I think you can say the book of Deuteronomy is as much sermonic as it is legal. If you look at the structure of the book, you find there are three addresses given by Moses. He's really preaching to the Israelites, and challenging them to live up to their covenant obligations.

Look at what Schultz says in paragraph b on page 41. Moses is preaching, and Schultz says that love is at the heart of the message. "Neither lists of dos or don'ts or laws of legalism for living, nor good works, nor even a high moral standard was the primary focus. Basic to all of these was a vital relationship with God, a relationship of

love. Out of this love relationship issued all other considerations that were important to man. Love for man was initiated by God. It did not come from human action. Although God's tender care had been bestowed upon all of mankind, God's love for Israel started with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's love was manifest to the whole nation through their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. As a recipient of God's love, which was evident through his redemption and constant care, the Israelite was expected to respond with wholehearted love and devotion. This response tapped all the resources of his entire being: his heart, soul, mind and strength. This love and devotion was exclusive; no other gods could be allowed or tolerated in such a relationship." Now again look at the context for this. I think Schultz is absolutely right in calling attention to this word "love" being at the heart of the message.

But at the time when Moses addressed the Israelites on the plains of Moab, Israel was about to enter the land of Canaan and settle down. The heathen people of the land of Canaan exposed them to their customs, to their gods, and their religious practices. The question before Israel was: would they adopt the practices of the Canaanites and accept the Canaanites' deities, or would they remain loyal to the Lord? After Moses had gone up the mountain, after the initial establishment of the covenant, what did Israel do in matters of worship? They built the golden calf to worship. Now you have a new generation. What's this new generation going to do, on the plains of Moab?

Plains of Moab

Look at Numbers 25. We read in verse 1, "While Israel was staying in Shittim." Shittim is a place in the plains of Moab just across from Canaan. Just to get that setting, look at Joshua 2:11. "Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim." Look at Joshua 3:1: "Early in the morning, Joshua and all Israel set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan." They are camped there ready to cross into the land of Canaan, and what happens? In Numbers 25:1, "While they were in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with women who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in the worshipping of

Baal Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against Israel."

Here's this new generation, on the plains of Moab, about to cross into the promised land; yet they are drawn into heathen worship. So I think Deuteronomy is to be read with that background in mind: Moses is appealing to the Israelites to remain faithful to the Lord exclusively, to love him with all their heart, mind and soul. That love and devotion was to be a response to his gracious and mighty acts on their behalf. He had delivered them from Egypt, he had brought them to Sinai, he had entered into covenant with them, and he had given them his law. Remember that law—it's grace, law, grace. The law was a means of grace to be obeyed and to expect blessing. So Schultz says, at the heart of the message of Moses, here on the plains of Moab, it's not just dos and don'ts, it's "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul." And it's exclusive to be to Yahweh's alone.

Shema and Love of God

Look at that famous text of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the *Shema*: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These commandments I give you are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children." Verse 4 is difficult to translate. If you look at the Hebrew there is a certain ambiguity. The NIV says, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." In my copy there is a N text note, and if you look at that N note it says, verse 4 the "Lord our God is one God," or "the Lord is our God the Lord is one," or "the Lord is our God the Lord alone" I'm inclined to think that last one is the best one: "the Lord alone is God. Therefore love Yahweh with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."

In any case, love is at the heart of the message. Go back to Schultz. Paragraph c, page 45: "Out of the unique relationship with God, the Israelite was to express his love horizontally to his neighbor. Only as he experienced being loved by God was he qualified to extend love to his neighbor. A keen realization of God's love provided the wellspring that allows the Israelite to love his fellow man in a true sense. It is this vertical and horizontal love that Jesus pinpointed as the essence of all that God required of man to

attain eternal salvation.” In Matthew, Mark and Luke, “What does love require? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul; and love your neighbor as yourself.” It is that vertical and horizontal relationship. The expert in the Mosaic Law as a representative of the Pharisees concurred with Jesus that the law of love was more important than all other considerations. It was in the book of Deuteronomy that Jesus and the religious leaders found the core of God’s revelation to man in written form. Jesus also pointed out that this represented the essence of all that is written in the law and the prophets. Consequently, we do well to study this book which provides us with insight and understanding of the context in which this love was revealed to and stated by Moses. So it is that dual emphasis that’s found in the book: love for God, and the horizontal love your neighbor as yourself.

The concluding statement that I have from Schultz is, “These two responsibilities, complete love for God and love for neighbor, constituted the essence of God’s message to man that is revealed through Moses at Horeb.” Now notice the next page, because I think this is where Deuteronomy is misunderstood “*deuter-onomios*, or second law, not legalism, not ritual, not external minutia of religious observance, not of legalistic observances of the Decalogue or creed; none of these was basic. Rather Moses emphasized the vital relationship with God as fundamental to all other issues in life. Second to this was a genuine love relationship with fellow man.” I think Schultz was right in this on this basic perspective reflecting Moses’ sermon on the plains of Moab.

Deuteronomy 6:4, but look at Deuteronomy 10:12, “And now O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him.” What does God want? Fear him, love him. “Serve the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees I have given you today for your own good.”

Deuteronomy 30

Look at Deuteronomy 30:11 and following. I’m going to come back to chapter 11 in a minute but let’s look at chapter 30 first. “Now what I am commanding you today is

not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” So that emphasis comes through repeatedly in the book.

Deuteronomy 11 Summarizing the Message of the Book

I said I wanted to go back to chapter 11. It summarizes the message of the book in a nutshell, giving a very brief description of what the Lord requires of man. Let’s look at the way that that chapter begins. What’s it say in verse 1? “Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws, his commands always.” What follows is the description of God’s mighty acts on behalf of his people. Go down to verse 7, you read, “It was your own eyes that saw all these great things the LORD has done.” What were some of the great things the Lord had done? Well, there were deliverances. Look at verses 2-4: “Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the LORD your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm; the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of Egypt, both

to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his whole country; what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them. It was not your children who saw it”—it was you. In verse 5 they saw provisions for their needs: “It was not your children who saw what he did for you in the desert until you arrived at this place.” What else did he provide? In verse 6, discipline and judgment: “...and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab the Reubenite, when the earth opened its mouth right in the middle of all Israel and swallowed them up with their households, their tents and every living thing that belonged to them. It was your own eyes that saw these things.” These were the ones under the age of 21. The ones that died were 21 and older. This was the younger generation.

Now that knowledge of the past—the way God had delivered them, sustained them, and even judged them—proved a basis for what to expect in the future. Israel could know that if they were faithful to the Lord, then they would experience his blessing in the future. Notice what follows in verse 8: “Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” If they are obedient, they will possess the land and they will retain possession of the land. Verse 9, “So that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.” And if they observe the commands in verses 10-17, they will prosper in the land. “The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land that your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in you grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will

eat and be satisfied. Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is given you." They will possess and retain the land. If they obey, then they will be victorious against the inhabitants of the land. See verse 22: "If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him—then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you; and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours: your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. No man will be able to stand against you. The Lord your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go." So that's set out before Israel: they are to love the Lord and walk in his ways and he will bless them in these ways described.

Blessings and Curses

But what follows in Deuteronomy 11:26-32 are the alternatives that are open to Israel, and the choice is theirs. If they obey, they will experience God's blessing. If they disobey, they will experience his curse. Let's look at verse 26 and following. Moses says, "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. When the Lord your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, west of the road, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in Arabah in the vicinity of Gilgal. You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you. When you have taken it over and are living there, be sure that you obey all the decrees

and laws I am setting before you today.” So there’s Moses’ challenge: be obedient and you will experience God’s blessing; if you are disobedient, you will experience his curse and judgment.

That challenge really provides the perspective from which Israel’s experience as a nation subsequent to entering the land of Canaan is to be understood. During the life of Joshua things were pretty stable. But you get to the next book, the book of Judges. In the book of Judges you have this cycle, the turning away from the Lord and his judgment. The Israelites are oppressed by various peoples; then they cry out to the Lord, he delivers them, and they have peace, rest, and blessing. Then they go through the cycle again, and it’s not just a repeating of a cycle—it really is a downward spiral. Things get worse and worse. By the end of the book of Judges it’s complete chaos, because they had not followed the pattern that Moses set out before them.

So, I think you can say that Deuteronomy is foundational to understanding what follows in the remaining books of the Old Testament, both the historical and prophetic books, because Israel’s history followed this pattern. The provisions of this covenant worked themselves out, depending on whether or not Israel walked in the ways of the Lord and loved the Lord exclusively. The Lord sent his prophets constantly, repeatedly, to call Israel back to the way of the covenant and to be faithful to his foundations. In many cases the prophets pronounce the covenant curses of judgment because the people had turned away. So the book of Deuteronomy is enormously important as far as setting the foundation for all that follows in the remainder of the Old Testament.

I might say that in chapter 11, you get back to that treaty structure. Remember we talked about how Deuteronomy basically followed that structure. Chapter 11 is really the basic stipulations; you’re to love the Lord, that fundamental obligation of loyalty. You see the way chapter 12 begins, moving from the basic stipulations in chapter 11 to the detailed stipulations that follow. Chapter 12 begins, “These are the decrees of the laws you must be careful to follow”—there you get the detailed obligations of the covenant.

Notice on your outline, I want to say something about the date of the writing of

Deuteronomy. We already talked a little about that before, but I want to say a little bit more. But we'll have to look at that next time.

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