

## Session 6: Deuteronomy 12

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This is Doctor Cynthia Parker and her teaching on the book of Deuteronomy.

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### **Introduction**

Okay, so we have finally made it to the core of Deuteronomy. So, we are looking at Deuteronomy 12. And actually, before we get into the chapter, we're actually going to divide this lecture into two parts. The first part is going to dive into the crazy complicated scholarship that is all enveloped in Deuteronomy, all about authorship. Where did we get the book? Why do we have the book? When was it written down? All these things, so we are going to dive into that, and then we'll talk about chapter 12. The reason I decided to put the authorship section and the purpose of the book here at the beginning of the law code section, chapters 12 through 26, is because it is due to chapter 12 in Deuteronomy that a lot of scholarship has developed trying to figure out. Why was Deuteronomy written? So, it hinges on this chapter, which is why I moved this conversation to this chapter in particular.

Now, just as a quick review at the beginning of this lecture of the places where we have been before. So, we already talked about the historical chapters 1- 3, and we talked about 4, chapter 4, being the heartbeat of Deuteronomy, and it presented some of the themes that we've already heard repeated over and over and over again. Then we looked at chapters 5 to 11, and those are hortatory chapters. They're chapters that are meant to be persuasive. There is a lot of

speech in those chapters about not forgetting the history; please remember who God is. It's persuasive, encouraging kinds of speeches in chapters 5 to 11.

## **Law Codes**

Now we have entered into the law code section. This is the section that tends to frighten people but don't be afraid. It is fascinating, it's really quite interesting, and so we will break it down into segments.

So, what is interesting about law codes? That might sound like a strange way to put it, but we don't think of law codes as being interesting, but in the ancient Near East, law codes were a way of communicating the ideal way of being, so that the natural laws of the universe. Often law codes are associated with creation narratives. So, when the other nations had their creation narratives, their ways of explaining the way the world came into being, they often ended with some kind of law code. Those reasons, the stories we tell ourselves about how the world began, also are the stories that helped to support why this particular king is in charge and why we have the particular rules that we have. So, likewise, in the book of Deuteronomy, I've already been talking about how there's a casting a vision for when you go into this land, and it has the opportunity to potentially be like an Eden, like a garden. It has the potential of reflecting God's version of good. So, the Israelite law code as well is a way to explain an ideal way of being.

And we could argue whether or not the Israelites were ever able to attain the law code, but it is set as the standard. This is the standard for what God says is good for you and your culture in the here and now living in this particular land.

We're going to find that the law code here in Deuteronomy is very particular to put Yahweh at the center. So, God is the center of Israelite identity

and Israelite Society. So, not just the way that they perceive themselves but also the ways that they act in their own homes, in their communities, and in the world around them.

We are also going to find that this law code reflects the covenant, but this covenant is not just a truth to be understood. This covenant is something that reflects the type of relationship that God has with his people.

### **Authorship – Middle Ages**

Okay. So, keeping a very positive mindset about what this law code is all about, let me dive into a little bit of the complications related to Deuteronomy.

So, with Deuteronomy, when people read the Pentateuch, although in very early history, it was thought that Moses wrote all five books of the Pentateuch. But already, I mean, obviously, this can't include chapter 34 of Deuteronomy because Moses dies in chapter 34. And already in the brief study that we've done of Deuteronomy, we've already seen how there are times when it looks like there's an editorial hand when Moses is being spoken of in the third person.

So, already by the Middle Ages, there were Jewish rabbis and Jewish scholars that recognized that there was no way Moses could have written everything in the Pentateuch. There are multiple stories written in different ways. There are anachronistic things. So, two different time periods are being represented.

So already, by the time of the Middle Ages, there were questions related to how much did Moses write? What did he write? And what was written by someone else? So, these questions are already by the Middle Ages people are having these types of conversations.

## **17th-Century Reflections on Authorship**

In the 17th century, already in the seventeenth century, and again, still speaking Jewish scholarship in the 17th century, people were already saying the Pentateuch was compiled way after Moses. So, this is when we have to remember that the Israelites told stories. They passed down stories from one generation to another generation. There's a difference between when events took place and when the histories of those events were written down. In the 17th century, people were asking, when were things finally written down, and how were they compiled together to form one unit that we now call the Pentateuch?

### **3 Law Codes: Covenant Code (Ex. 20-23), the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26), and the Deuteronomic Code (Dt. 12-26)**

Maybe the thing that pertains quite a lot to Deuteronomy and to the conversation that we are going to have related to Deuteronomy is we see as we look in the Pentateuch that there are three versions of the law code. So, there is a law code, a collection of laws, in Exodus. There's one in Leviticus, and now we have one in Deuteronomy. This also goes back to if Moses wrote the Pentateuch, why do we need three versions of the law? And if we read these versions of the law, they all seem to be a little bit different. Are those different authors? Or is it just expressing a different purpose behind each law code?

I just wanted to throw it out that many people have traditionally thought the author is Moses, but for centuries, people have been discussing what other way this could happen. Now, I'm going to focus most particularly on what we can learn about authorship based on the law code because that's what we're studying right now in Deuteronomy.

So, let's put up this idea that we can compare the law codes so, as you'll see on this slide in Exodus 20 through 23. These are the laws compiled in Exodus. In Leviticus, they are in chapters 17 through 26. And as I've already said, in Deuteronomy, they are in chapters 12 to 26. You can lay out all the different laws, and the laws that Deuteronomy repeats are fairly similar to the ones in Exodus. But Leviticus has a whole different set of laws.

We now call these groupings of laws different things. So, we call the Exodus grouping of laws, and we call this the Covenant Code. In Leviticus, because Leviticus is so intent on trying to communicate how an unholy people can be next to a holy God, how do you bring those two things together? We call the Leviticus chapters the Holiness Code. And we call the Deuteronomy the Deuteronomistic Code. So, there is the Covenant Code, Holiness Code, Deuteronomistic Code.

Now if you were to go through and just read through these codes and read them one after another, and if you keep an open mind about them, you might notice that there are differences in tone between these chapters, between these chapters in these different codes.

This has prompted scholars to say, I wonder if we can take the tone of the book, the structure of the book, and maybe we can match it to a time period. Now, that might seem like they are pulling this out of thin air. They don't know what they're talking about, but I want to show you a picture.

If I were to show you a picture of all of these cars and I would say here's a collection of cars. Can you put these in order? So, if you were to take a look, I have six cars. And let's say I have one movie, and in this movie, all six cars are present; you would know that's kind of funny, but it's not; it's not telling the story of one singular time frame. You can date these cars, and it might seem pretty

intuitive to you. So, of course, these cars, if we were to put them in order, they go C A D B F E. So, in fact, this one is a French car that doesn't yet exist. It's an ideal car, maybe sometime in the future. It was shown at one of the recent car shows.

Okay, so what this shows you is, when this is material that you are very familiar with, it's pretty easy for you to put things in order to recognize when these cars are of the same time period and when they're not.

So, scholars, when they are reading through these different law codes, the Covenant Code, the Holiness Code, and the Deuteronomic Code, actually notice different things in these codes that make them think; perhaps they can put these in order.

### **Altar Location in the 3 Law Codes**

I'm going to use something that shows up in Deuteronomy 12. So, the way that these various codes, Holiness Code, the Covenant Code, Deuteronomic Code, how they speak about sacrifices that are offered at an altar. So, if we take that altar law, and we take the one from the Covenant Code, which takes place in Exodus, we can find it in Exodus or the Holiness code in Leviticus 17. And then the one in Deuteronomy chapter 12, the one that we will be talking about momentarily. We will discover that these actually say something different about the altars. There are very consistent themes that all sacred offerings are presented at the altar, that is, before God.

The thing that we noticed, though, when we look at the Covenant Code, as we read in Exodus, it seems to state that there can be lots of different altars. This makes sense because in Exodus, the people are moving quite a bit. So as the Tabernacle moves, there's a new altar that is built. And so, every time a new altar is built, these are the types of sacrifices you can offer.

When we read Leviticus, Leviticus assumes there is only one altar, and it's the one altar in front of the one stable place, which is the Tabernacle.

Deuteronomy seems to be almost a transitional law. So, where we had the assumption that there are probably multiple altars in Exodus and the assumption of only one altar in Leviticus, Deuteronomy seems to be that transition point that is saying, from now on, only one altar. And you can only have sacred sacrifices at this one altar. But then Deuteronomy says you can continue to have sacrifices in your city gates, as long as you're sharing and they're not your official tithing offerings or official offerings for God. But you can still kill animals and share the meat and have a feast in your cities. So, Deuteronomy seems somewhat permissive and very strict on only one place. And yet allowing for options, Leviticus only one place; that's it. Exodus, there are probably going to be multiple.

So this would be one of those instances where scholars look at these different codes and the vocabulary of these different law codes, and they say this seems to show us different time periods.

Okay, so then the question becomes so, when is Deuteronomy written, or when can we date any of these law codes?

So we have now; I'm going to give you a couple of different scholars that have been extremely influential in the history of the scholarship of Deuteronomy.

#### Survey of Modern Scholarship on Authorship

And then, when we get to the end, there are so many more contemporary scholars making headway and so many different areas of Deuteronomy, but these are the ones who are talked about in every Deuteronomy commentary. You're going to start to see them actually in new Bibles that are being published.

These people are actually showing up; their names are showing up in the introductions to the Bible. So, it's good to be at least familiar with who they are and what their ideas are that they presented.

So, I'm going to start with modern scholarship. We already talked about how the issue of authorship was already coming up through the Middle Ages and into the 17th century. When we get into the 19th century, we have a very robust European scholarship that enters the scene, and it changes the course of a lot of scholarship with Deuteronomy.

### **DeWette**

Some of it is due to this gentleman, DeWette. He was a German scholar who looked at the book of Deuteronomy. He said when we look at Deuteronomy, the laws of Deuteronomy 12 through 26 prescribe a certain type of action that we don't see in a lot of Israelite history until Josiah. King Josiah is one of our great reforming kings. He shows up in 2 Kings, the book of 2 Kings. So DeWette, one of his ideas was the book of Deuteronomy was probably written down right before the rulership of Josiah. And if you read in 2 Kings, Josiah is the one when they were refurbishing the temple, one of the priests in the temple found the Book of the Law, as it's called. And they pull that out, and they send it to Huldah, the prophetess, and she affirms that it is in the original book. Josiah reads it, and he is struck by how far away Israelite society is from this Book of the Law. And this initiates, and births, this whole big huge reform that Josiah is said to be the head of. Okay, so DeWette says that Book of the Law must have been written down just prior to Josiah, and then that Book of the Law is probably Deuteronomy. And so Deuteronomy was written just prior to Josiah. Deuteronomy is responsible for the reforms of Josiah.



He points to a couple of things. So one is the fact that at this time, internationally, the Assyrians were a large nation on the international scene, and the experience later, the Babylonians were very big into celestial worship.

And we see in a couple of places in Deuteronomy the idea of or the recognition that there is celestial worship. And it usually comes in the form of Deuteronomy chapter 12, or chapter 4, when there's a prohibition against worshipping the celestial bodies. So, DeWette says even just the idea Deuteronomy seems aware of celestial worship must mean that it is placed during the time period when Assyria and Babylon were worshipping the stars. So potentially, but that's one of his points.

He also points to the fact that when we read through the historical narratives in earlier Israelite history, there are lots of different altars that people are building and worshipping at, not of foreign Gods but of Yahweh. And so, for instance, we have Solomon; after he builds the temple, he goes next to Gibeon, and at Gibeon, he offers another sacrifice at an altar to God, and that's where he has a conversation with God about asking for wisdom.

Or if you think about 1 Kings, in 1 Kings, Elijah, the prophet, is confronting King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and goes up on Mount Carmel with all the false prophets of Baal. And he, too, builds an altar. And in each of these stories, and there are many more stories, in each of those stories, those altars don't seem to be prohibited or to be a wrong kind of idea.

And so, DeWette points to that and says earlier in Israelite history, it seems to be okay. They had other altars all to Yahweh, but multiple altars, but by the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, those were no longer allowed.

So, he takes the international influences of the 8th and 7th centuries, the idea of altars, and the idea of celestial worship to say, Deuteronomy had to have been written; it seems to reflect a context of Josiah.

### **Julius Welhausen**

Julius Welhausen is maybe one of the next very well-known scholars who enters onto the scene and kind of reforms or maybe tightens up the idea just a little bit. So, Welhausen also looks at the variations in the text of those law codes and says, well, there's the Covenant Code, the Holiness Code, and the Deuteronomistic Code. If we're putting those in order, where do they belong? Can we bounce them off of each other? Can we date them based on what they're doing? Well, perhaps Deuteronomy belongs to Josiah.

And so, he develops this whole idea related to the whole entire Pentateuch. That's called the Documentary Hypothesis. And maybe you've heard of this before. So, he thought that there were four different sources. And that these four original texts were brought together to create the Pentateuch that we currently have.

So, he thought that there were four different sources, one of which he calls the Yahwist J. The second one, he calls the Elohist, E. These all come from different stories that are being told. What names of God do they tend to show up within those stories? These first two, he said, probably date to the United Monarchy. They were finally all of these stories and histories are finally being written down during the time of maybe Saul, David, and Solomon.

The Priestly Code, he said there we have documents where there are very strict regulated laws related to holiness behavior, or behavior at the Tabernacle, or behavior at the temple. He calls all of those Priestly. And in Deuteronomy, he actually recognized the whole entire book of Deuteronomy, and the whole lot of

Deuteronomy seems to be its own unique thing. So, it gets to have its own source and it's its own document.

The dating of the Priestly document and the Deuteronomistic document people have changed over time when they think that is. Now this Documentary Hypothesis has ruled Pentateuch history and history of scholarship for a very long time. In fact, all the way up until the 1970s.

### **Beyond the Documentary Hypothesis**

In the 1970s, we started having people who had studied the Documentary Hypothesis, who had discovered really interesting things about the Bible, and who were paying attention to such small details in the Bible. Interesting conversations were coming up. But it also got to the point where people were kind of tearing apart the Pentateuch into little tiny, itty-bitty fragments, and it got to the point where we were kind of losing the gist and the overall story and the overall history. In the 1970s, we started to have this rebirth of looking at the Bible as literature, looking at it as a created, beautiful, cohesive whole. So in the 1970s, there's a whole different offspring and how the study of the Pentateuch happened.

Now related to Deuteronomy, if we go back to the Deuteronomistic Code, we have another actually three more influential scholars that will show us the trajectory of scholarship.

The first one is Martin Noth, so he is really interesting because he looked at Deuteronomy and he looked at the historical narratives Joshua through Kings. He said there is a lot of similarity between these books. He was one of the first people to say, maybe, just maybe, Deuteronomy doesn't belong to the Pentateuch, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Maybe Deuteronomy is actually the introduction to the historical narratives. So he just grouped it

differently and said Deuteronomy was written in order to introduce these historical narratives, and it was a way to, when those books were written down, it was a way for the Israelites to judge themselves against the law.

So, there are things in Deuteronomy; when we get to Deuteronomy 17, for instance, there's a very unique law related to kings and the place of the king in society. And that is used, Noth would say, to every king, then gets compared to the law in Deuteronomy.

### **Von Rad**

Now, Gerhard Von Rad, also a German scholar, looked at all of this data instead and said a lot of what has been presented makes a lot of sense, except why do we have to say Deuteronomy was written right before Josiah's reforms?

They do seem to go hand-in-hand. There's a lot of what Deuteronomy says that reflects very specifically the actions of Josiah. But that doesn't mean Deuteronomy was written right before Josiah. It could have existed any number of years prior to Josiah. So, we can't use the fact that Deuteronomy and Josiah go hand-in-hand to date Deuteronomy as much as a form of Deuteronomy probably existed by the time of Josiah. So, Von Rad is one of the first ones to come and says everyone hold on just a moment; Deuteronomy could potentially be much older.

Well, Gordon Wenham, who is a very recent scholar in the UK. He stated Deuteronomy definitely has one place in mind for the chosen place for the altar and the laws that we will be looking at in Deuteronomy 12. So, yes, that is true; there is only one place. And Deuteronomy is very specific about that. But in contrast to all of the scholars who came before, and all of these scholars, who said, Deuteronomy says there can only be one place, Deuteronomy must be connected to Josiah. So Deuteronomy's chosen place must mean Jerusalem.

Gordon Wenham took a step back and said not necessarily. Deuteronomy says for sure there can only be one place, but that one place, it's only one place at a time, not multiple places.

So, we know in the historical narratives that the Israelites had a worship site at Shiloh long before they had a worship site in Jerusalem. And so maybe this is, Gordon Wenham says, we cannot date Deuteronomy based on all these similarities with Josiah because what the law that Deuteronomy is getting after is actually just one altar at a time, only in front of God's place of worship.

Okay, so obviously, there's been a lot of confusion. There are other scholars; Sandy Richter is a great scholar who spent a lot of time studying Deuteronomy. She looks at Deuteronomy 12 and does not quite like Gordon Wenham's view here, but she does say this law and chapter 12 have nothing to do with Josiah's reform, as much as it is talking about this place where God "chooses to put his name." That phrase is actually a way of stating God is putting his name on a territory just like ancient Near Eastern kings would put a stella in the ground, put their name on this big plaque, and say, I own this land. And so God is making that same kind of claim over the land that Israel is going in to claim. In other words, Deuteronomy 12 is another way of saying God is the only true king in this land, and our society is going to function around God as king.

### **Authorship Conclusion**

So, I may not have actually answered all that many questions for you as far as giving you a very specific name and date of an author in Deuteronomy. And I've done that on purpose because I think the real honest way to answer that question is we don't know yet.

However, I don't think that should disrupt our study of Deuteronomy. We've already looked at how beautiful it is. We've already looked at how well constructed it is, and it embodies certain songs, the songs that show up at the end of Deuteronomy are very old and ancient Hebrew songs. So, it embodies a whole bunch of the history of the Israelites, and it's a very well-crafted and very beautiful book.

### **Message of Deuteronomy**

I still like to read Deuteronomy as a way to say, what is the biblical view of investing in place, of investing in society? So, if God were to come down and tell us, this is the best way to build your community and the best way to invest in the people around you so that the land thrives so that you thrive as human, and so that you have a good relationship with God and all those things work together. Deuteronomy is the book that we should be going after for that. So, I like to focus on it in terms of how Deuteronomy is telling us to build society. So, I'm taking that view with us into the law code. So now we're going to start looking at Deuteronomy chapter 12.

### **Deuteronomy 12**

So, Deuteronomy 12 is organized, I would say, almost with a double frame where we begin and end with very similar ideas. We have a couple of verses in the beginning that are all about forbidding Canaanite worship that is repeated for us at the end of the chapter, where again we have a forbidding of Canaanite worship. The bulk of chapter 12 is all about how Israelite worship really should look. So, that is the heart of the chapter.

## **Deuteronomy 12: Beginning and Ending Frame**

So let's go ahead and read some of these verses together. So, I am reading in Deuteronomy 12. So, it starts off with an introduction, "These are the statues and the judgments, which you shall carefully observe in the land, which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth." This sounds familiar. We have heard this almost at the beginning of most of the chapters.

This is the same way we're going to conclude. So, if you flip to the end of the chapter, when we look at, well, depending on the Hebrew, the English Bible, it ends with kind of an overview. "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do it. You shall not add or take away from it."

## **Forbidding Canaanite Worship**

Now let's look at this Canaanite section forbidding Canaanite worship. This is the part that actually reflects and sounds very similar to chapter 12, a portion of Deuteronomy that we skipped earlier.

So, it says in verse 2, "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on every high mountain, on the hills, under an evergreen tree. You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars. Burn their Asherim with fire. You shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. You shall not act like this towards the Lord."

That sounds fairly harsh, except let's think about this for a second.

We said in an earlier lecture that place and memory are connected, right? The place is like Ebal, and Gerizim can hold memories like a covenant ratification ceremony with God. Deuteronomy seems quite familiar with this because it's

saying when you go in, there's already a system of worship, the memory of worshipping other gods, that is etched into the fabric of this place. You have to get rid of it, right? So, we're building up to the idea that there is one God, one place of worship. And yet, when we look at how the people living in the land worshipping, listen to how many different types of places are listed.

They serve their gods on high mountains, on hills, and under every green tree. So, if there are lots of places that hold memory, the worship of other gods, and there are objects associated with those places. So, this comes, "and you should smash and obliterate the sacred pillars, burn down the Asherim or sacred pools with fire. You shall cut down engraved images of their gods. Obliterate their name from that place."

Now, when we get to that "their name, obliterate their name." You could read that as obliterating the name of the Canaanites from that place. We could read that as obliterating the names of their gods from that place. So, we are destroying, going into this place that is currently holding the memory of worship of all these other people, and it's a type of worship that displeases God. So, when you go into the land, obliterate that, wipe that out; it's like etching out or smoothing out these old memories that the land possesses and creating a new type of habit of worship.

### **Seeking the Lord in the One Place He Will Choose**

So this is the middle portion of the chapter. So it begins this way: "You shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all of your tribes to establish his name there for his dwelling, and there you shall come." So there's a recognition that there are tribes going into this very diverse land, but God is only going to choose one place and recognize it is God choosing and not the Israelites choosing.



"There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings. The firstborn of your herd and your flock." There also, you and your household shall eat before the Lord your God and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you. You shall not do at all what we are doing here today; every man was doing what is right in his own eyes. For you have not as yet come into the resting place, an inheritance the Lord your God is giving you." In that moment, you hear the full recognition of what we're talking about when you go into the land as opposed to how we have been acting up to this point. When we look at that list, we see a list of all the different types of offerings that the Israelites generally took before God. Deuteronomy is very specific in saying it is you and your whole entire household everyone is included. So, everyone goes to worship God in one place.

### **Offering Sacrifices at the Chosen Place**

So in verse 10, "When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and he gives you rest from all your enemies around you. So that you live in security, then it shall come about that the place in which the Lord your God will choose for his name to dwell there you shall bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings, which you will vow to the Lord." So, again a list of all the sacred types of offerings.

"And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levite who is within your gate since he has no portion or inheritance with you. Be careful that you do not offer

your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see. But only in the place which the Lord chooses in one of your tribes."

So again, we have this list of sacred offerings that are only supposed to be given at the one chosen place. And everyone is invited there, male, female, poor, rich, slave, and landowner. Everyone gets to go. Everyone is welcome to that table.

In verse 15, this is kind of a unique portion of Deuteronomy because it says, "However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of the gates." So, when it means gates when it says gates, it means in any of the different cities where you live. So, in your city you can slaughter meat. "According to the blessing of the Lord your God which is giving you. The unclean and the clean may eat it, as of the gazelle and the deer. Only you shall not eat the blood. You are to pour it out on the ground like water." So, you are not allowed to eat in the gates any of the sacred tithes and offerings, but you can repeat the same kind of activity; you can slaughter an animal in the gates, but when you do it in the gates, all are welcome to eat -- clean, unclean, poor rich, the Levite in the city gates, the owners, everyone can be there.

### **Distribution of Places**

So, it is Israelite worship. I'm going to show this is a very rough drawing. It's not very technical; maybe one of you can figure out a more technical way of drawing this out for me. But this would be a drawing, I would say, that represents the altar code of Deuteronomy. So, in Deuteronomy 12, what we get is there is one chosen place. This is a place God chooses to put his name. This is the place that represents God as king, as owner, and as the executor of the land.

Connected to this place are lots of distributed places. So, in the center, we have God and His chosen place, but everywhere else, we have various cities and

communities. So, in the way that I drew this out, we have small circles and big circles there of a whole variety of distances away from the chosen place. But they are all connected because of the sacrifices they all bring to the chosen place.

So whether you originate from a big city or maybe a small village, maybe you were very far away, or perhaps you're quite close, it doesn't matter. Everyone goes to the one place, and this is not chosen by the Israelites it's chosen by God-sacred sacrifices here. Now you can return to all these other distributed places. You can also eat meat here. You can also have celebrations with your community here, but they are only sacred when you're standing before the one true God at the one chosen place.

### **Birth of a Singular Unified Nation**

This is actually important for us when we consider a couple of things that are happening in the book of Deuteronomy. So, we're starting to see this idea of nationality that is being birthed. The idea is that they have been slaves in Egypt. They have wandered as a group of people through the wilderness. But now they're going into one singular land, and I need to become one singular people. And so, they're going to have to break out of a completely tribal mindset and tribal worldview into a nation worldview.

So, we're already starting to see that Deuteronomy is looking forward to the time when they start to function as one cohesive nation. This is quite interesting in Deuteronomy because although there are a few different times, Deuteronomy recognizes that there are tribes and that the tribes exist more often than not. Deuteronomy refers to the people as brothers, brothers, and sisters as equals, and it kind of blurs out these lines that break people in segments and groups.

We also need to recognize the unity of the people. So, how do you take a diverse group of people and unify them? Well, they're unified under the one law that God gives them. So the unity that comes to the people is because they're all functioning under the same law umbrella. This law was given by God. It's the word of God. It is his way of saying this is how you flourish the best you can as humans in this chosen place.

### **Unifying the Nation in a Diverse Land**

We need to remember because we've looked at, as we looked at, pictures of the land, and we saw how diverse the land is. When we looked at Deuteronomy 7, originally, we talked about how difficult it is to unify people who live in that land because we have the coastal plain, and we have desert way down in the south, and we have farming territory in the hill country. How do you take people living in such diverse terrain and unify them as one people group? Well, Deuteronomy does that by focusing on one law. It says to the people; it doesn't matter if you live on the coast, if you live in farming terrain, if you're a shepherd in the wilderness, if you live way down south where you can barely make an existence in the living, everyone regardless of the terrain in which they live journeys, to the one chosen place to remember. It is one God, one set of laws that draws all of them together as one people.

So, everything the Israelites considered sacred was infused into the families and the villages. So let me take this concept and go back to that picture I had before.

### **National Identity**

We have one chosen place, and we talked about this idea of nationality, of taking your identity from the one chosen place. Think about choosing one of the

dots on here and say, that is your city. That is where you originate from. Maybe it's a big one or the small one; maybe it's closer, far away, it doesn't matter.

Now, let's say, I am choosing to come from a whole different city. You might live on the coast. I might be a farmer up in the hill country, we come from such a different contexts, but we meet together to participate in the same kind of activities to remind ourselves that we both exist under the same kind of law that originates from the one God in the one sacred place.

So, we kind of renew our sense of identity and nationhood and belonging together because we're both agreeing this place is sacred. I go back home; we take the same ideas of what is sacred back into our homes.

Now, really, we can draw the lines between this distributed place and this place, and this place and that place because all of us are functioning under the same kind of law.

So, remember when Deuteronomy in chapters 6 and 11 talks about marking liminal places? We're writing God's law on our hearts, or we're binding it to our hands, putting it at the forefront of our heads, the perception of other people, on the door frames of our houses, on the city gates. What law is that? It's the law that originates from the one God at the one chosen place. So, it is bringing a diverse group of people living in a very diverse kind of land, unifying them as one nation under one law code.

And then when those people redistribute back to their different places, they're actually taking that unity back into their hometowns with them.

That, I think, is what is at the heart of Deuteronomy 12.

When we move on to chapters 13, 14, and 15, which will be the next lecture, they still focus on God and the sacredness of God at the one chosen place but then talks about how to distribute that into the cities around them.

This is Doctor Cynthia Parker and her teaching on the book of Deuteronomy. This is session 6 on Deuteronomy 12.