

Dr. Cynthia Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 6, Deuteronomy 12 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 6, Deuteronomy 12, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Cynthia Parker examines Deuteronomy 12 within the broader context of the book of Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch. It discusses scholarly debates surrounding the authorship and dating of Deuteronomy, focusing on the differing perspectives of DeWette, Welhausen, Noth, Von Rad, and Wenham. The lecture then analyzes Deuteronomy 12's central theme: the establishment of a single place of worship for the Israelites, symbolizing national unity and emphasizing God's sovereignty. This contrasts with earlier practices and highlights the importance of centralized worship in fostering a unified Israelite identity. Finally, the lecture connects this central theme with the broader message of Deuteronomy regarding societal structure and the ideal relationship between the Israelites and their God.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 6 – Double click icon to play
in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org
[BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old
Testament → Pentateuch → Deuteronomy).**



**Parker_Deut_Session
n06.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 6, Deuteronomy 12

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Parker_Deut_Session06_Deut12.pdf":

Briefing Document: Deuteronomy 12 Analysis

I. Introduction

- **Focus of Session:** This session, led by Dr. Cynthia Parker, focuses on Deuteronomy 12, which she identifies as the core of the book and the basis for much scholarly debate. The lecture is divided into two parts: first, an exploration of the complex issues of authorship surrounding Deuteronomy; second, an in-depth analysis of Deuteronomy 12 itself.
- **Placement in Deuteronomy:** Dr. Parker positions this discussion of authorship at the start of the law code section (chapters 12-26) because Deuteronomy 12 is central to the questions of the book's origin and purpose. She notes that the preceding chapters can be divided as follows: Chapters 1-3 (historical), chapter 4 (the heartbeat of Deuteronomy), and chapters 5-11 (hortatory).
- **Nature of Law Codes:** Law codes in the ancient Near East were not just rules but a means of communicating an ideal way of being, often tied to creation narratives and supporting the ruling order. Dr. Parker argues that the law code in Deuteronomy is setting a standard for how Israel should live, with Yahweh at the center, and reflects the covenant as a living relationship.

II. Authorship of Deuteronomy

- **Historical Challenges:** While early tradition attributed the entire Pentateuch to Moses, even by the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars recognized inconsistencies and anachronisms that suggested multiple authors and later compilation.
- **17th Century Ideas:** In the 17th century, Jewish scholarship posited that the Pentateuch was compiled long after Moses, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the events and their eventual written form.

- **Three Law Codes:** A key observation in the Pentateuch is the existence of three different law codes: the Covenant Code (Exodus 20-23), the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26), and the Deuteronomistic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26). The presence of three, differing law codes prompts questions of authorship and purpose.
- **Differing Tones and Structures:** Scholars have observed that the three law codes have different tones and structures. This led to attempts to link the style of each code to a specific historical period.

III. Altar Location as a Key to Dating

- **Altar Laws in Each Code:** The laws concerning altars and sacrifices are used to demonstrate the differences between the law codes.
- **Covenant Code (Exodus):** Implies multiple altars were acceptable, reflecting the movement of the Tabernacle.
- **Holiness Code (Leviticus):** Assumes only one altar located at the Tabernacle.
- **Deuteronomistic Code (Deuteronomy):** Positions itself as a transition: only one central altar is allowed for sacred sacrifices, but sacrifices for consumption can happen within city gates.
- **Significance:** The differing regulations regarding altars provide evidence for scholars that the three law codes may have originated from different time periods.

IV. Survey of Modern Scholarship on Authorship

- **19th Century and Beyond:** The 19th century saw the rise of rigorous European scholarship, which fundamentally shifted thinking about the authorship of the Pentateuch.
- **DeWette:** This German scholar posited that Deuteronomy was written just before the reign of King Josiah, as the laws in Deuteronomy, particularly those concerning centralization of worship, are reflected in Josiah's reforms. He also notes that the prohibitions against celestial worship hint at a time where that practice was common (Assyria and Babylon).
- **Quote:** "DeWette...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."

- **Julius Wellhausen and the Documentary Hypothesis:** Wellhausen proposed that the Pentateuch was compiled from four sources: the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Priestly (P), and the Deuteronomist (D). He situated the J and E sources in the United Monarchy and considered the Deuteronomic source to be linked to the time of Josiah.
- **Beyond the Documentary Hypothesis:** Beginning in the 1970s, scholars began to emphasize the literary aspects of the Bible and challenged the fragmentation of the Pentateuch.
- **Martin Noth:** Noth argued that Deuteronomy was not part of the Pentateuch but rather the introduction to the historical narratives (Joshua through Kings), connecting it to the purpose of the law code as a means of self-judgment.
- **Gerhard Von Rad:** He agreed that the themes in Deuteronomy align with Josiah's reforms, but he cautioned against concluding that Deuteronomy was written *just* before those reforms; it could be much older.
- **Gordon Wenham:** Wenham countered that Deuteronomy's emphasis on one place for sacrifice didn't necessarily mean Jerusalem, as the law may refer to "one place at a time" and not necessarily the one central temple in Jerusalem. For example, he suggested that Deuteronomy could also be referring to Shiloh.
- **Sandy Richter:** She states that chapter 12 of Deuteronomy is not about the reforms of Josiah, but is a way of communicating God's ownership of the land. She connects the phrase "chooses to put his name" with how ancient Near Eastern Kings would claim territories.

V. Conclusion on Authorship

- **Lack of Definitive Answers:** Dr. Parker admits that there is no definitive answer as to the precise author and dating of Deuteronomy.
- **Focus on Meaning:** She emphasizes that the lack of definitive answers should not hinder our appreciation of the book's beauty and purpose.

VI. Message of Deuteronomy

- **Building Society:** Dr. Parker interprets Deuteronomy as a guide for building a just and thriving society aligned with God's vision.
- **Quote:** "I still like to read Deuteronomy as a way to say, what is the biblical view of investing in place, of investing in society?"

VII. Analysis of Deuteronomy 12

- **Structure:** Deuteronomy 12 is structured with a double frame. It begins and ends with a condemnation of Canaanite worship, while the central section describes how Israelite worship should be practiced.
- **Forbidding Canaanite Worship:** The chapter begins by calling for the complete destruction of all Canaanite places of worship, to eradicate the memory of false gods.
- **Quote:** "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods...You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars."
- **One Chosen Place:** The central teaching of Deuteronomy 12 is the establishment of a single, divinely chosen place for Israelite worship.
- **Quote:** "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."
- **Sacrifices and Offerings:** The chapter lists the types of sacrifices and offerings that should be brought to the chosen place.
- **Eating Meat in City Gates:** The chapter permits the slaughter and consumption of meat within any city gate. However, sacred offerings must only take place at the chosen place.

VIII. Implications of Deuteronomy 12

- **Unified Nation:** Deuteronomy 12 is crucial to the emergence of a singular unified Israelite nation, breaking down tribal barriers.
- **One Law:** The unity of the people is connected to their unified acceptance of the single law code given by God.
- **Quote:** "The unity that comes to the people is because they're all functioning under the same law umbrella."
- **Diverse Land:** The law code provided in Deuteronomy is the means by which people from all regions of the diverse land of Israel can be unified.
- **National Identity:** The concept of national identity emerges from the shared practice of going to the one chosen place.

- **Distribution of Unity:** The ideas of the singular place are distributed to the various cities as the people return to them.
- **Quote:** "And then when those people redistribute back to their different places, they're actually taking that unity back into their hometowns with them."

IX. Conclusion

- **Core Idea:** Deuteronomy 12 is about establishing one singular place for worship and national identity, a place that acts as a source of unity for a diverse people.
- **Future Chapters:** Dr. Parker indicates that chapters 13-15 will further elaborate on the connection between God's sacredness at the one chosen place and its distribution throughout the cities.

This document provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Parker's lecture on Deuteronomy 12, highlighting the key discussions regarding authorship and the chapter's central theological and social implications.

4. Study Guide: Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 6, Deuteronomy 12

Deuteronomy Study Guide: Session 6

Quiz

1. Why did Dr. Parker choose to discuss the authorship of Deuteronomy in this particular session? Dr. Parker chose to discuss authorship here because the scholarship around it hinges on Deuteronomy 12, which is the main focus of this session. The various interpretations of the altar law within chapter 12 have led to different views about authorship.
2. What are the three law codes found within the Pentateuch, and where are they located? The three law codes are the Covenant Code in Exodus 20-23, the Holiness Code in Leviticus 17-26, and the Deuteronomistic Code in Deuteronomy 12-26. Each code provides a different way of communicating the ideal way of being for the Israelites.
3. How does the concept of altars differ in the three law codes? In the Covenant Code, there are multiple altars; in the Holiness Code, there is only one altar at the Tabernacle; and in the Deuteronomistic Code, there is primarily one chosen place for sacrifices, but other animals can be slaughtered in the city gates.
4. According to DeWette, why was the Book of Deuteronomy likely written before the reign of Josiah? DeWette argued that the book's laws and prohibitions against celestial worship align with the context of Josiah's reign, and the discovery of the "Book of the Law" during his reforms suggests a direct link to Deuteronomy. Also, multiple altars were previously okay, but Josiah destroyed them.
5. What is the Documentary Hypothesis, and who developed it? The Documentary Hypothesis, developed by Julius Wellhausen, suggests the Pentateuch is compiled from four different sources – the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Priestly (P), and the Deuteronomistic (D) sources, each with its own unique characteristics and time period.
6. How did Martin Noth's view of Deuteronomy differ from previous scholars? Noth proposed that Deuteronomy is not a part of the Pentateuch but is instead the introduction to the historical narratives from Joshua through Kings. He believed Deuteronomy provided a standard to judge the actions of the kings of Israel.

7. According to Dr. Parker, what is the main message of Deuteronomy? Dr. Parker views Deuteronomy as a guide for how to build a community and society, with a particular focus on investing in people and place so that the community thrives and the people maintain a good relationship with God.
8. What is the overarching structure of Deuteronomy 12? Deuteronomy 12 has a frame structure, beginning and ending with prohibitions against Canaanite worship. The middle section of the chapter details the requirements and implications of the prescribed Israelite worship, with the singular chosen place at its core.
9. How does Deuteronomy 12 describe the "chosen place?" Deuteronomy 12 emphasizes that the "chosen place" is selected by God, not the Israelites, and it is where they must offer sacrifices and worship. This one location represents God's ownership and kingship over the land, and it serves as a gathering point.
10. What is the significance of the "distributed places" in Deuteronomy 12? The "distributed places," referring to the various cities and communities, are places where people can eat meat and hold celebrations, but the sacred sacrifices and worship should take place at the "chosen place." They serve to unify the nation under one common law.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the altar laws in Deuteronomy 12. How do they reflect the text's view of God, community, and identity?
2. Compare and contrast the views of DeWette, Wellhausen, Noth, and Wenham on the authorship and dating of Deuteronomy. What are the key points of each scholar, and how do they differ?
3. Analyze the relationship between "place" and "memory" as discussed in Deuteronomy 12. How does the text use this concept to shape the identity and practices of the Israelites?
4. Discuss the concept of a "unified nation" in Deuteronomy 12. How does the law promote this unity, and what challenges does it address?
5. Assess the significance of the concluding message in Deuteronomy 12 in relation to God's role and expectations. What do those expectations teach about the nature of the relationship between God and Israel?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
- **Covenant Code:** The collection of laws in Exodus 20-23.
- **Holiness Code:** The collection of laws in Leviticus 17-26, concerned with the holiness of the people.
- **Deuteronomic Code:** The collection of laws in Deuteronomy 12-26.
- **Documentary Hypothesis:** A theory that the Pentateuch was compiled from four main sources (J, E, P, and D).
- **Yahwist (J):** One of the hypothetical sources of the Pentateuch, using the name "Yahweh" for God.
- **Elohist (E):** One of the hypothetical sources of the Pentateuch, using the name "Elohim" for God.
- **Priestly (P):** One of the hypothetical sources of the Pentateuch, emphasizing ritual and priestly concerns.
- **Deuteronomic (D):** One of the hypothetical sources of the Pentateuch, including the book of Deuteronomy.
- **Anachronistic:** Belonging to a different time period than that which is described.
- **Hortatory:** Intended to exhort or encourage a certain behavior or belief.
- **Celestial Worship:** The worship of heavenly bodies like the sun, moon, and stars.
- **Liminal Places:** Thresholds, borders, or transitional spaces, places that exist on the edge of two things.
- **Asherim:** Sacred poles or trees associated with Canaanite worship.
- **Chosen Place:** The central location designated by God for Israelite worship, particularly for offering sacrifices, according to Deuteronomy.
- **Distributed Places:** The various cities and communities in the land of Israel where people lived and could celebrate but not offer sacred sacrifices.

5. FAQs on Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 6, Deuteronomy 12, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Deuteronomy 12 and its Context

- **Why is Deuteronomy 12 considered so crucial in the study of the book?**
- Deuteronomy 12 is pivotal because it introduces the core of the law code within the book (chapters 12-26). It's the chapter that many scholars believe holds the key to understanding the book's purpose and potential authorship. It centers on the idea of a single, central place of worship chosen by God, a concept that has fueled much scholarly debate about when and why the book was written. This focus on a single altar has shaped scholarly discussions about its historical and theological context.
- **What is the significance of law codes in the Ancient Near East and how does Deuteronomy fit into this?**
- In the ancient Near East, law codes were not just lists of rules but ways of communicating the ideal way of being. They were often linked to creation narratives and served to uphold the established order, including the authority of the ruling power. Deuteronomy's law code, particularly, is presented as a vision for the ideal Israelite society in the promised land, reflecting God's standard for good. It aims to center the culture around God and the covenant, not merely as a set of rules but as an expression of the relationship between God and His people. This law code is a way to establish an ideal way of life in this new land, much like other ancient near east law codes, but with Yahweh at the center.

- **How do the different law codes within the Pentateuch (Covenant, Holiness, and Deuteronomic) vary, and what does this suggest about authorship?**
- The Pentateuch contains three main law codes: the Covenant Code (Exodus 20-23), the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26), and the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26). These codes differ in tone, focus, and details. The Covenant Code, found in Exodus, describes that there can be many altars. The Holiness Code, in Leviticus, assumes there is only one altar, located at the Tabernacle. The Deuteronomic Code, in Deuteronomy, transitions to the idea of only one place for sacred sacrifices, while permitting less sacred slaughter of animals for shared meals in cities. These differences, among others, have led scholars to question the traditional idea of Mosaic authorship and to propose that the law codes were composed at different times by different authors.
- **What are the main theories about when and by whom Deuteronomy was written?**
- Traditionally, Moses was thought to be the author, but by the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars recognized inconsistencies. 17th-century scholars understood the text to be compiled much later. In modern scholarship, DeWette proposed that Deuteronomy was written just before the reign of King Josiah to influence his religious reforms and that the Book of the Law found in 2 Kings was the book of Deuteronomy. Julius Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis suggests the Pentateuch is a combination of four distinct sources (J, E, P, D), with Deuteronomy as its own unique document. Scholars like Martin Noth proposed that Deuteronomy was written to introduce the historical narratives of Joshua-Kings. Von Rad stated that the text predates Josiah, but was used to justify Josiah's actions. Gordon Wenham argued that the singular altar in Deuteronomy didn't necessarily point to Jerusalem, but simply one worship center at a time. This ongoing conversation about authorship reflects scholarly disagreement about when and how Deuteronomy took its final form.

- **What is the significance of the singular chosen place of worship in Deuteronomy 12?** Deuteronomy 12 centers on the idea of a single place chosen by God for worship. This is important for several reasons. First, it directly contrasts the Canaanite worship practices, which allowed for worship on “every high mountain, and on the hills, and under every green tree,” and thus to destroy any possibility of merging the cultures. Second, it creates a central point of national identity and unity for the Israelites, drawing them together from diverse geographical areas. Finally, it establishes God’s sovereignty over the land and society, declaring that God, as king, has the right to establish rules and systems. The singular chosen place symbolizes God's presence and reign over the entire nation, thus becoming a type of physical "name tag" of God.
- **How does Deuteronomy 12 balance a singular worship place with the everyday life of the Israelites?** While Deuteronomy 12 mandates that all sacred sacrifices and offerings be made at a single, chosen place of worship, it also allows the slaughter and eating of meat in the various cities where the Israelites live. This provision allows for shared meals within the different communities and the inclusion of everyone, both clean and unclean, in everyday fellowship. This balance suggests that while worship at the chosen place is paramount, daily life and community were also essential aspects of Israelite identity. The singular place represents God, while the cities are a distribution of his authority and influence.
- **How does Deuteronomy 12 work to create a sense of national identity for the Israelites?**
- Deuteronomy 12 aims to foster national unity among the Israelites by establishing one single law code and one place of worship. It emphasizes the idea of "brothers and sisters" (equal kinship) to diminish the significance of tribal distinctions. By centralizing worship, and requiring that all the tribes journey to a singular place, the book emphasizes that the Israelites are to be unified under a single set of laws and a common covenant with God. This common identity is then meant to be brought back into the local cities and families, thus creating national identity.

- **How should we understand Deuteronomy today, given the complex questions surrounding its authorship?**
- Despite the debates over authorship, the message of Deuteronomy remains relevant. It should be read as a vision for a society centered on God, emphasizing investment in community, equity, and a just society. The book outlines the ideal way of building a community that is in relationship with God. Its enduring message calls to mind questions of how our current communities and societies may best reflect God's ideal. This is why understanding Deuteronomy is important to living a life centered on God.