Deuteronomy Introduction—Chapter 1

Bible Study
Deuteronomy has sometimes been called the heartbeat of the Old Testament...its influence was great with Jesus, the apostle Paul and the early New Testament Church...it is one of the most quoted books in the NT.

Deuteronomy literally means: ‘Second law’ but is the Greek equivalent for ‘copy’ or ‘duplicate’

The English name of the book [Deuteronomy] comes from the Greek translation of chapter 17:18 where the Hebrew speaks of “a copy of this law”

Deuteronomy 17:18 (Gr. deuteronomium touto) so it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book from the one before the priests, the Levites.

The title from the Hebrew original is taken from the first verse: “these are the words” —which points to the character of the book, as both the words of God and Moses.
Deuteronomy covers the 11th and 12th months of the 40th year of wandering [1406 BC].

The book continues the story on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year in the wilderness (1: 3).

- In the last chapter it is stated that Israel mourned Moses 30 days = 12th month.
  ...so up to that point the book had covered the 11th month.

Given just before entering the promised land.

(pp. Com.) “The book of Deuteronomy presents itself as the record of a series of addresses delivered orally by Moses to his countrymen on the verge of crossing over into the Promised Land, and immediately committed to writing.
Jesus Christ is the foremost authority for confirming the authenticity of the book—quoting from it three times in turning away the temptation of Satan (Matthew 4: 1-11)

He quoted: Deut. 8:3; 6: 16, 13

Deuteronomy 8:3
He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 6: 16
16 "You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.

Deuteronomy 6:13
13 You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.
Christ answered the question as to which is the greatest and first commandment quoting from Deut. 6:5

[Deuteronomy 6:5]
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might”

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)
And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

(Word) “The book is essentially an exposition of the great commandment”
The apostle Paul quoted from Deuteronomy:

- Deuteronomy 5:16—Ephesians 6:2-3
- Deuteronomy 25:4—I Corinthians 9:9
- Deuteronomy 29:3-4—Romans 11:8
- Deuteronomy 30:12-14—Romans 10:6-8
- Deuteronomy 32:21—Romans 10:19
- Deuteronomy 32:35—Romans 12:19

“So you shall put away evil from your midst”/ “from among you”—Seven times

I Corinthians 5:13 [last part]
“Therefore put away from yourselves the evil person”

Altogether Deuteronomy is quoted over eighty times in the New Testament
Moses—Author of the book
120 years old

God Spake by Moses, Allis) “No book of the Pentateuch—we might perhaps say, no book of the Bible—gives clearer indication of authorship and occasion than does Deuteronomy....its speeches are definitely attributed to Moses...

Deuteronomy 1:1
These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness...”

Deuteronomy 31: 9, 24
So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished
(A History of OT Israel, Eugene H. Merrill) “Moses also composed Genesis and the rest of the Torah at this time.”

Note: the last chapter concerning Moses’ death was probably written by someone else—most likely Joshua
Moses—author of the book continued:

Deuteronomy 31: 9-10
So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests...to be read at the Feast of Tabernacles every seven years.

For a very important reason (v. 12-13)

Deuteronomy 31:9-13
So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

(NIV App. Com.) “It seems likely that when Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River after Moses’ death, they in their possession a written copy of all this material”
Purpose of the book:
Covenant renewal with the new generation

(From a commentary on Deuteronomy by Eugene H. Merrill) “The older generation of Israel has died, and the younger must now be confronted with a fresh, contemporary expression of the covenant. Deuteronomy is a covenant initiative to which Israel, on the eve of conquest, can and must respond.”

“Deuteronomy may be described as Moses’ prophetic farewell speech...given to all Israel on the plains of Moab, just before their entrance into the promised land. As an exposition to the Decalogue, its main concern relates to life within the land, lived before God and one another. Deuteronomy records the training of the new generation and the needed moral preparation for their entrance into the land of Canaan.”
“Though it contains a series of laws, it [Deuteronomy] is not a law code, but rather a work intended for religious instruction and education in ancient Israel.

In short, Deuteronomy represents a very early, and remarkably comprehensive, attempt to reform and transmit religion by means of a program of religious education in which every person was to be included, from the king as the head of the nation to each child in every home.”—[Deut. 4:9,10; 6:7,20; 11:19; 31:13; 32:7,46]

**Deuteronomy 4:9-10**

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and they may teach their children.'
Tyndale

“The sin of idolatry will be Israel’s greatest danger... in order to counter this, Deuteronomy urges Israel to fear, love and serve the Lord alone with all their heart and being, and to keep all of His commandments.”

Deuteronomy 6:3

Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—’a land flowing with milk and honey.’

A key verse is 6:3—where the main focus is obedience.
Divisions of the book—Moses’ sermons

The first discourse 1:5—4:43  [Historical retrospective of the 40 years]

Second discourse 4:44—28:68  [Exhortation for the future: the law, covenant renewal, blessings and cursing]

Third discourse 29:1—30:20  [Exhortation to accept the covenant and to choose God and obey]

Fourth discourse 31:1—34:12  [Transition from Moses to Joshua]
Preparing the new generation

“Deuteronomy reiterates the covenant, but it does so in a greatly expanded form and in terms appropriate to a new generation...and the new generation, about to embark on conquest, stood in need of covenant reiteration and reaffirmation.”

“There is no advance on the history of Israel [Events], rather a historical summary [of the past] in the form of discourses or exhortations, showing the true meaning and potentialities of all that had gone before.

“We may notice all through Deuteronomy how much more than simply a review it is. It is also a means of preparation. In Exodus and Numbers the people were passing through these experiences, but in Deuteronomy they are looking back over them and drawing lessons from them.”
The Land—one of the most central themes of the book [almost 200 references]

The land is a major focus in the book:

- The land promise appears in every chapter except 14 and 22
- The link to promise, made on oath to the patriarchs appears 28 times

(Intro. OT, Harrison) “The river Jordan figured prominently in Deuteronomy, being mentioned no fewer than twenty-six times.

Of the occurrences, fifteen referred to the crossing of the river, one defined the boundaries of the territory of Reuben, and the other occurrences were mentioned in the form of the expression, ‘beyond the Jordan’.”
Key significant words—[repeated]

Covenant—found 27 times

Listen/obey—found 18 times

Remember—found 15 times

Fear/revere the Lord—found 20 times

Love—found 20 times
Deuteronomy essentially was a message in preparing for the Passover in the new land.

- **1st month 40th year**
  - 2nd month
  - 3rd month
  - 4th month
  - 5th month
  - 6th month
  - 7th month
  - 8th month
  - 9th month
  - 10th month
  - 11th month
  - 12th month

- **1st month 41st year**
  - 10th day—Cross the Jordan
  - 14th day—Passover

- Deuteronomy 1:1—34:8
- Numbers 20:1
- Numbers 36:13
- Deuteronomy 34:8 (weep for Moses 30 days)
- Joshua 4:19
- Joshua 5:10
Numbers 36:13
- Last scripture in Numbers (end of the 10th month)
are the commandments and the judgments which the LORD commanded the children of Israel by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

Deuteronomy 1: 1
1st day of the 11th month, 40th year

Present timeline
[Start of the book of Deuteronomy]
Deuteronomy begins “on this side of the Jordan” [East side]
These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea.

v. 1 “these are the words”: The content of Deuteronomy—the words of Moses spoken to the new generation...the covenant message he delivers

(Word) “There is no single English equivalent for this important Hebrew term”

“Although Moses obviously was speaking words to the assembly, they were words that constituted the covenant document as a whole and in its parts”

v. 1 last part] The place names are unknown, but the general region is the region around the eastern side of the Jordan River

“eleven days”—the normal time to journey from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea (on the southern border of the land)

What should have taken eleven days resulted in 40 years
came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them,

v. 3 The date is clearly given: [The only exact date given in Deut.]
   The 1st day of the eleventh month of the 40th year after leaving Egypt—Moses spoke to Israel
   day of 11th month= [Shebat in later Hebrew calendar]—January/February [Roman Gregorian calendar]

Van Goudoever pointed out that only three of the forty years from the Exodus to the promised land are specifically noted in the Pentateuch:
- The first year as the people departed from Egypt in Exodus 12,
  - The second year at Mt. Sinai in Number 1:1,
  - And the fortieth year on the plains of Moab in Deut. 1:3.
  - All three are associated with observances of Passover.

In short, he interprets the date here as ‘the time of preparation for the next Passover.’ For him, ‘the book of Deuteronomy’ is presented as the testament of Moses, to be read as a preparation for the Passover in Joshua.
had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth.

The mention of victories over Sihon and Og, confirm Israel’s claim to territory east of Jordan and show that for obedience to the commandments [v.3] they would obtain victories west of Jordan.
On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying,

v. 5 “this law” (torah) = instruction

“They were about to enter the promised land, and the law of the covenant could not lie as a dead letter....Success in the promised land lay not in military prowess and strength, but an unbroken covenant relationship with the Lord, who alone could bring further victories like those over Sihon and Og. [v.4]"
The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the hills and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates.'

v. 6 "The Lord our God" (Heb. Jehovah eloheinu)  
(From Int. Com. OT) "The words emphasize the covenant character of the God of Israel, for it is only on the basis of the covenant that Moses can say, identifying himself with his people, that the Lord is our God."

v. 6 "spoke to us in Horeb" = Mt. Sinai—20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year [Numbers 10:11]

v. 6 [last part]  
"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain"—(The year that they had been at Mt. Sinai-- [Horeb])
  - It was time to move on and take possession of the promised land
v.8-11 Moving on to the land—tied in to a three-fold promise to Abraham:

- The land v.8 / the people v.10 / the blessing v.11 [Gen. 12: 1-3]

The Lord has set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.'

9 "And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you.

10 The Lord your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. By the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He promised you!

v.8 “the land which the Lord swore to your fathers”—this promise is repeated twenty-seven times in Deuteronomy [But understood by means of the book of Genesis]

v.9 “at that time”—occurs eleven times in Moses’ first address [highlights the chronology]

v.10 The people had multiplied to the point that Moses needed help—and it was distributed among others [v.12]
12 How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints?

Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.

14 And you answered me and said, 'The thing which you have told us to do is good.'

I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

Moses asks the people to select leaders, and Moses would appoint them—this was not mentioned in Exodus nor in Numbers.

A threefold criteria in selecting leaders:
- Wise—acquired knowledge
- Understanding—ability to discern
- Knowledgeable [KJV] ‘known among your tribes’—respected among the people

(New Int. Com. OT) “Their task was a difficult one, and the required qualifications were high.”
I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him.

You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.'

18 And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.

v. 16 “judge righteously”—personal and spiritual requirements of the judges

(NEW BIBLE COM.) “They did not do so relying on their own wisdom alone, but rather, as instruments of God, they interpreted his laws. That is the nature of judgment here.

God’s judgment requires that his standards are met for the benefit of every member of the people. All are equally entitled to justice.”
we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way through from Mount Horeb; you came at that time toward the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea.

20 And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. The LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'

21 Everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.'

23 The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe.

24 And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out. They also took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, 'It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.'

v. 19 [last part] “we came to Kadesh Barnea”
The first base camp from which to launch the conquest of the promised land...also the place they would come back to during...and after the years of wandering

go up and possess it...do not fear or be discouraged”—this command was based on what Israel already knew about God, that he had brought them out, against all odds from the powerful nation of Egypt by his mighty hand...
came to Kadesh Barnea
26 "Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. How can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, "The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there."' 

29 Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' 

32 Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, by fire by night and in the cloud by day. 

The reaction to the spies bad report was fear and discouragement—a fear that was rooted in a lack of faith on their part.

(New Bible Com. ) “The people had chosen to walk by sight, first sending the spies, then by letting themselves be discouraged by their report. Oddly, this made them blind to the obvious, that God can overcome any obstacle. [v.32-33] Moses was at pains to show how unreasonable this was.”
34 "And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, "surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers; except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked because he wholly followed the LORD.'

37 The LORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there; Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

Over your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.

40 But as for you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.'

v. 39 “your little ones and your children”—who were too young to make the responsible choices “who have no knowledge of good and evil”...would go in and possess the land

v. 40 “by the way of the Red Sea”
A road that ran to the east of Kadesh Barnea, and extending to Elath in the south, to the southern region of the Dead Sea in the north
Then you answered and said to me, 'We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.' And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain.

And the LORD said to me, 'Tell them, "Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies."'

So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and presumptuously went up into the mountain.

And the Amorites who dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back to Hormah.

Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you.

So you remained in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you spent there.

v. 46 “remained (“abode” KJV) in Kadesh many days”

(Companion) “How solemn the word ‘abode’ when the command had been to ‘go up’”

(Expositors) “The Hebrew phrase noting the time Israel spent in the Kadesh Barnea area figuratively expresses a long, indefinite time and suggests that a large part of the next thirty-eight years was spent there”
Lessons

Deuteronomy was important **preparation** for the new generation’s entrance into the promised land

A snapshot/foretaste of our preparation for entrance into the kingdom of God

Deuteronomy draws attention to the importance of learning lessons from past events

NIV App. Com.) “By recounting significant events in Israel’s recent past and concluding with an impassioned appeal, calls his people to not be rebellious like their ancestors”