

“Deuteronomy is a book about a community being prepared for a new life.”¹

In the previous outlines I gave you, the authors identified three sermons. Following another book I added to my study list, we now see four sermons plus additional spoken material at the end.

1. **Consider:** a review of God’s faithfulness (1.6–4.40)
2. **Covenant:** an exposition of the law (5–26)
3. **Commence:** preparations for renewing the covenant (27.1–28.68)
4. **Commit:** an exhortation to obedience (29.2–30.20)

Consider: The First Sermon, Part 1

A summary: “Moses’ initiation of the conquest is recalled in Deuteronomy 1–3, which tells again how Israel came to spend a long time in the wilderness (Deut 1) and gives its own account of its progress to its present station, including the campaigns against Sihon and Og (Deut 2–3). After an exhortation (Deut 4), this part is framed by a report of *cities of refuge being set up in Transjordan (Deut 4:41–43), a mark of Israel’s legitimate occupancy and jurisdiction there.”²

Deuteronomy 1: Consider the Previous Generation

1.1-5, Housekeeping: introductory matters

These are the words Moses **spoke** across Jordan (1)

The **short walk:** 11 days to Kadesh from Horeb (2)

Moses **spoke** in the fortieth year (3) [after the long walk]

The **hard fight:** Moses defeated Sihon and Og (4) [note size of these men]

Outside the promised land [acr. Jordan in Moab] Moses **expounded** the law (5)

Note on v. 1: (mostly uncertain place names, but only Paran and Hazeroth clearly identified as “the great desert between Mount Sinai and Kadesh Barnea and the latter a stopping place for Israel in the southern part of Paran (Num 11:35; 12:16).”³)

¹ Peter C. Craigie, ed., *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 7.

² J. G. McConville, “Deuteronomy, Book Of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 183.

³ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, v. 4 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 62–63.

1. What is the theme of the opening verses? – the words Moses spoke
2. What is the location of these sermons? – across Jordan, not in the land, but why the difference in location?
3. Other observations?

1.6-46: The first point, consider the previous generation

1. God calls in Horeb, go up to the land (6-8)
2. A seeming digression about leadership (9-18)
3. On the edge of the land [Kadesh Barnea] (19-25)
 - a. Moses: Go up (19-21)
 - b. People: Let's take a look first (22-25)
4. The people unwilling to go up (26-33)
5. The Lord's sentence (34-40)
6. The second thoughts and hard lessons (41-46)

The passage isn't narrative, but "a narrative about a narrative" — Moses is reminding this generation of their long ago past. Most of them were too little to know of it when it happened (or unborn), a few of the older men would remember (those in their 50s).⁴

What is the significance of v. 9-10 in relation to the Abrahamic Covenant (alluded to in v. 11)?

"If the nation had any doubt about God's intention or ability to fulfill His ancient covenant with Abraham she had only to look at her present condition. Israel had become so numerous that they were like the stars in the sky (v. 10)." Jack S. Deere, "Deuteronomy," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 263.

Why does Moses take time for the digression about leadership in vv. 9-18, compare 22-23?

"Though the people initiated this plan (vv. 22-23), the Lord agreed to it (Num. 13:1-2). It was therefore not an act of unbelief initially but rather a wise step in the necessary preparations for battle." Deere, 263.

However, Moses seems to highlight here the initiative of the people, indicating their caution and lack of trust.

"Moses went on to remind his present audience that their fathers, the previous

⁴ Caleb and Joshua were the oldest men in Israel at this point, except for Moses, at somewhere just over 80.

generation, were not wholly persuaded of the presence and power of God.” Merrill, 73.

The sending of the spies nonetheless pleased Moses (and had God’s endorsement Num 13.1-2). However, what fault did the sending of the spies reveal? (see vv. 26ff.)

The people did not trust God, his covenant promises, their own eye-witness experience of God’s might and power.

When the Lord responded to their lack of faith with the sentence of “death by wilderness wandering,” did the people then respond in faith? (see vv. 41-46)

They attempted a “do over,” but the Lord allowed no such thing. Even after their defeat at the hands of the Amorites, he would not hear, nor would he listen (45). Merrill offers this translation: “He would by no means pay attention to your weeping.” [p. 87]

A quick note on v. 37, where Moses seems to blame the people for his own disobedience and prohibition from entering the land: “The wording here seems to imply that Moses blamed his predicament on the people— ‘Because of you the Lord became angry with me’ (v. 37). This need not be the case at all, however, as other occurrences of the adverbial form *biglal* (‘because of’) make clear. For example, Laban was aware that the Lord had blessed him because of Jacob, that is, Jacob was the occasion of blessing and not its cause (Gen 30:27, 30). Likewise, Moses attributed his punishment to none other than his own disobedience, though that act of defiance was occasioned by the people or by his desire to address their needs.”⁵

Later, in Dt 32.51, Moses fully confesses his own wrongdoing as he recounts the reason he cannot lead them any further.

“But on the present occasion, if he had given prominence to his own fault, he would have weakened the object for which he referred to this event, viz., to stimulate the consciences of the people, and instil into them a wholesome dread of sin, by holding up before them the magnitude of their guilt. But in order that he might give no encouragement to false security respecting their own sin, on the ground that even highly gifted men of God

⁵ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 82–83.

fall into sin as well, Moses simply pointed out the fact, that the quarrelling of the people with him occasioned the wrath of God to fall upon him also.”⁶

“Although Moses was personally without blame for the failures of the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea, his identification with the people as their leader meant that he also accepted with them the result of their failure.”⁷

Considering all our discussion, what applications should we make to our own circumstances?

⁶ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 290.

⁷ Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 105.