

# First Impressions of Deuteronomy and its Message

## Setting:

- On the Plains of Moab (East side of Jordan R. opposite Jericho) around 1400 BC
- Moses is restating the Law of the LORD for a new generation of Israelites preparing to enter the Promised Land after 40 years of wilderness wanderings
- These are Moses' last words as he commissions Joshua to replace him as leader

## Personal Matters:

- The LORD's restriction of Moses from entering the Promised Land is an emotional issue for them both (1:37, 3:23-26, and Num 20:10-13)
- Moses is 'all there' at 120 years old (34:7) and puts everything into this 'turnover'
- The stakes could not be greater for this fledgling nation as they are being called to be the LORD's sole representatives on earth at this time in history

## Intended Audiences:

- This new generation of Israelites who were either in their youth (under 20) or not yet born at the time of the Exodus some 40 years earlier
- Future generations of Jews needing instruction in following or returning to the LORD
- Christians of all ages and from all parts of the world seeking to better understand some of the heart issues lying at the root of New Testament teaching and faith

## Primary Themes:

- The LORD is uniquely God and from Him His people derive their uniqueness
- As an act of covenant renewal, the Suzerain LORD is calling His people to render to Him their exclusive loyalty by carefully obeying His Holy requirements
- The consequences of such obedience (or the lack thereof)

## Basic Book Outline / Plan of Study:

<i>March 27</i>	Introductory Matters
	1. Author's Preamble (1:1-5)
	2. Historic Prelude - The LORD's View of Israel's Recent Past (1:6-4:43)
<i>April 3, 10</i>	3. Stipulations for Covenant Renewal - The LORD's View of Israel's Present
	A. General Stipulations (4:44-12:32)
<i>April 17, 24</i>	B. Specific Stipulations (13:1-26:19)
	4. Closing Terms - The LORD's View of Israel's Future
	A. Consequential Blessings and Curses (27:1-30:20)
<i>May 1</i>	B. Succession of Joshua, Moses' Witness Song, and Tribal Blessings (31:1-33:29)
	5. Moses' Death and Epitaph (34:1-12)
	Closing Reflections

**Note:** Deuteronomy's structure appears to follow the typical format used in Moses' era for Suzerain-Vassal treaties - popularized and used particularly by the Hittites (see example).

**Observation of one Old Testament scholar:** Deuteronomy is still a book of considerable contemporary relevance. Then, as now, the surrounding world was experiencing a time of change, of political tension and military engagement. But in the midst of world events, a relatively small community was being urged by Moses... to commit itself wholeheartedly to the Lord, before engaging in the struggle for the promised land. The kingdom of God's chosen people was coming of age, unnoticed by the great powers of the time, and struggling against what were, by human standards, impossible circumstances. The book provides a paradigm for the kingdom of God in the modern world; it is a time for renewing commitment within the New Covenant and turning to the future with a view to possessing the promise of God.

Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT Commentary Series - Eerdmans) 1976, p. 7

# Maps for Deuteronomy Study: Historic Prelude Chapters 1-4

(courtesy of <http://www.thebiblejourney.org/>)

