

Book of Deuteronomy Summary

1 **Date of Writing:** These sermons were given during the **40-day period prior to Israel's**
2 **entering the Promised Land.** The first sermon was delivered on the 1st day of the 11th
3 month (**1:3**), and the Israelites crossed the Jordan 70 days later, on the 10th day of the 1st
4 month (**Joshua 4:19**). Subtract 30 days of mourning after Moses' death (**Deuteronomy**
5 **34:8**), and we're left with 40 days. The year was 1406 B.C.

6
7 **Purpose of Writing:** A new generation of Israelites was about to enter the Promised Land.
8 This multitude had not experienced the miracle at the Red Sea or heard the law given at
9 Sinai, and they were about to enter a new land with many dangers and temptations. **The**
10 **book of Deuteronomy was given to remind them of God's law and God's power.**

11
12 **Key Verses:** *"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the*
13 *commands of the LORD your God that I give you."* (**Deuteronomy 4:2**)

14
15 *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your*
16 *heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you*
17 *today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you*
18 *sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*
19 (**Deuteronomy 6:4-7**)

20
21 *"He said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so*
22 *that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are*
23 *not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are*
24 *crossing the Jordan to possess."* (**Deuteronomy 32:46-47**)

25
26 **Brief Summary:** The Israelites are **commanded to remember four things: 1). God's**
27 **faithfulness, 2). God's holiness, 3). God's blessings, and 4). God's warnings.** The first
28 three chapters recap the trip from Egypt to their current location, Moab. Chapter 4 is a call
29 to obedience, to be faithful to the God who was faithful to them.

30
31 **Chapters 5 through 26** are a repetition of the Law. The Ten Commandments, the laws
32 concerning sacrifices and special days, and the rest of the laws are given to the new
33 generation. **Blessings are promised to those who obey (5:29; 6:17-19; 11:13-15), and**
34 **famine is promised to those who break the Law (11:16-17).**

35
36 The theme of blessing and cursing is continued in **chapters 27-30.** This portion of the book
37 ends with a clear choice set before Israel: *"I have set before you life and death, blessing*
38 *and cursing."* God's desire for His people is found in what He recommends: *"choose life"*
39 *(30:19).*

40
41 In the final chapters, Moses encourages the people; commissions his replacement,
42 Joshua; records a song; and gives a final blessing to each of the tribes of Israel. **Chapter 34**
43 relates the circumstances of Moses' death. He climbed Mt. Pisgah, where the Lord showed
44 him the Promised Land that he could not enter. At 120 years old, but still with good eyesight

Book of Deuteronomy Summary

45 and the strength of youth, ***Moses died in the presence of the Lord***. The book of
46 Deuteronomy ends with a short obituary on this great prophet.

47
48 **Foreshadowings:** Many New Testament themes are present in the Book of Deuteronomy.
49 The foremost among them is the necessity of keeping perfectly the Mosaic Law and the
50 impossibility of doing so. The endless sacrifices necessary to atone for the sins of the
51 people—who continually transgressed the Law—would find their fulfillment in the final
52 “once for all” sacrifice of Christ (***Hebrews 10:10***). Because of His atoning work on the
53 cross, we would need no further sacrifices for sin.

54
55 God’s choosing of the Israelites as His special people foreshadows His choosing of those
56 who would believe in Christ (***1 Peter 2:9***). In ***Deuteronomy 18:15-19***, Moses prophesies of
57 another prophet—the ultimate Prophet to come who is the Messiah. Like Moses, He would
58 receive and preach divine revelation and He would lead His people (***John 6:14; 7:40***).

59
60 **Practical Application:** ***The book of Deuteronomy underscores the importance of God’s***
61 ***Word***. It is a vital part of our lives. Although we are no longer under the Old Testament law,
62 we are still responsible to submit to the will of God in our lives. Simple obedience brings
63 blessing, and sin has its own consequences.

64
65 None of us is “*above the law*.” Even Moses, the leader and prophet chosen by God, was
66 required to obey. The reason that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land was that
67 he disobeyed the Lord’s clear command (***Numbers 20:13***).

68
69 During the time of His testing in the wilderness, Jesus quoted from the book of
70 Deuteronomy three times (***Matthew 4***). In so doing, Jesus illustrated for us the necessity of
71 hiding God’s Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (***Psalms 119:11***).

72
73 As Israel remembered God’s faithfulness, so should we. The crossing of the Red Sea, the
74 holy presence at Sinai, and the blessing of manna in the desert should be an
75 encouragement to us as well. **A great way to keep going forward is to take some time to**
76 **look back and see what God has done.**

77
78 **We also have a beautiful picture in Deuteronomy of a loving God Who desires a**
79 **relationship with His children. The Lord names love as the reason that He brought**
80 **Israel out of Egypt “with a mighty hand” and redeemed them (***Deuteronomy 7:7-9***).**

81 What a wonderful thing to be free from the bondage of sin and loved by an all-powerful
82 God!

83
84 Other Resources:
85 Bible Project: <https://youtu.be/q5QEH9bH8AU?si=adxAlhg4em-0wgAm>
86 Catholic Answers: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/deuteronomy>
87 On the plains of Moab, God charges **Moses**—now close to death—once more to proclaim
88 the Law which he received through the revelation on **Mount Sinai**. This proclamation is

Book of Deuteronomy Summary

89 contained in the fifth and last book of the [Pentateuch](#), called in Hebrew *had-debharim* (=
90 the words) and by the Septuagint *deuteronomion* (= second law). Moses is addressing a
91 new generation of Israelites, all those who would have been under twenty when
92 the [Exodus](#) began. By having the Law read again Yahweh is saying that his covenant with
93 Israel is made with all generations (29:13), both present and future, it is an everlasting
94 covenant.

95 Life for Moses means serving God and leading his people to the promised land. Here, with
96 characteristic humility and patience, he repeats the precepts and directives given him by
97 God. He wants to engrave them on the minds and hearts of his people, to keep them loyal
98 to the commitment their parents made to the covenant. The kings and judges who will rule
99 over them (17:18) must, like other members of the people, stay true to the Law if they want
100 to attain salvation (27:1). As a permanent reminder for future generations, when they cross
101 the Jordan they must write the Law on stone (27:2-3), to symbolize their fidelity to Yahweh.
102 From then on the Law is to be read out to the people every seven years to ensure that they
103 obey it. These commandments of God can be understood and kept, Augustine says, when
104 man is aided by grace. The Law of Moses was unable itself to cause grace, it could do so
105 only by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, to which it pointed in an obscure way; in the
106 New Law the Lord enables us to have a deep understanding of the mysteries of God and his
107 commandments, which in turn leads us to love them and practice them.

108 Deuteronomy is structured in the form of three discourses or exhortations, the second of
109 which, particularly, contains the laws proper.

110 The first discourse (1-4:43) acts as a kind of introduction to the book. It stresses what the
111 book—and the entire Bible—are all about; it is telling us that God in his providence is
112 constantly watching over his people—over every single man and woman—as can be seen
113 from the prodigies he worked during the long years the Jews spent in the wilderness. But it
114 also emphasizes another basic fact: Yahweh requires of Israel strict fidelity to the
115 covenant—that was what Israel committed itself to in Sinai, to adore the one true God.

116 The second discourse takes up the center of the book (4:44-28:69). From chapter 5 to
117 chapter 11 Moses promulgates the Decalogue and spells out what the first commandment
118 of the Law entails: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord
119 your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these
120 words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them
121 diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you
122 walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a
123 sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write
124 them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (6:4-9).

125 In this text we can see the two basic principles in Deuteronomy: (1) monotheism—Israel has
126 to believe in the one true God, and (2) it must love him above all else. This prayer, called
127 the *Shema*, is a summary of true religion. No other book in the Old Testament puts such
128 stress on the love man gives God. Jesus Christ quotes this text when he promulgates the
129 law of love of God (Matt. 22:37). Because God is the only origin of all creation, he is to be
130 adored and loved above all things.

Book of Deuteronomy Summary

131 God's choice of Israel, a grace which must imbue its lifestyle forever more, is a pure act of
132 love on his part. chapters 12 to 28 give a whole series of liturgical, civil, and criminal laws
133 all deriving from the fact that Israel is the people chosen by God to carry out his promises.
134 The third discourse, which is by way of epilogue, is a vigorous exhortation to obedience to
135 Yahweh. What God hid from their parents is now being revealed to them and their
136 descendants (29:28), to all their descendants, which includes us. Their love of God should
137 be inspired not by fear of punishment but by appreciation for all the gifts he has given. True
138 wisdom consists in this—not in exploring the hidden mysteries of God out of curiosity, but in
139 knowing his commandments and practicing them faithfully (4:6). The book ends with an
140 account of the last days of Moses' life and of his death, mourned for thirty days by the
141 children of Israel on the plains of Moab. Deuteronomy marks the high point of Old
142 Testament religion. The whole history of Israel, from Egypt to Canaan, is described in terms
143 of Yahweh's love for his people and of the love they owe him in return. No other Old
144 Testament book breathes forth an atmosphere of such generous devotion to God and of
145 such magnanimous divine benevolence toward men; nowhere else are man's duties so
146 tenderly, so eloquently and so persuasively expressed, or the principles to do with service
147 of neighbor given with such wealth of detail.

148 Deuteronomy can be said to be the last will and testament of Moses. It is imbued with his
149 feelings of affection and understanding for his people and also with sincere recognition of
150 God's goodness and mercy. Chosen as he is to guide his people, Moses is not content with
151 simply dictating laws. He acts like a true father, seeking the salvation of all Israel. He
152 tirelessly exhorts them and encourages them not be deflected by any obstacles they meet
153 on their way to the promised land. But he also warns them of the serious consequences
154 that will follow if they allow themselves to stray into the idolatry practiced by their new
155 neighbors. Deuteronomy contains many prophecies about the New Covenant of the future,
156 of which the following is the most outstanding: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a
157 prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed—just as you
158 desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me
159 not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' And
160 the Lord said to me, 'They have rightly said all that they have spoken. I will raise up for them
161 a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he
162 shall speak to them all that I command him.'" (Deut. 18:15-18).

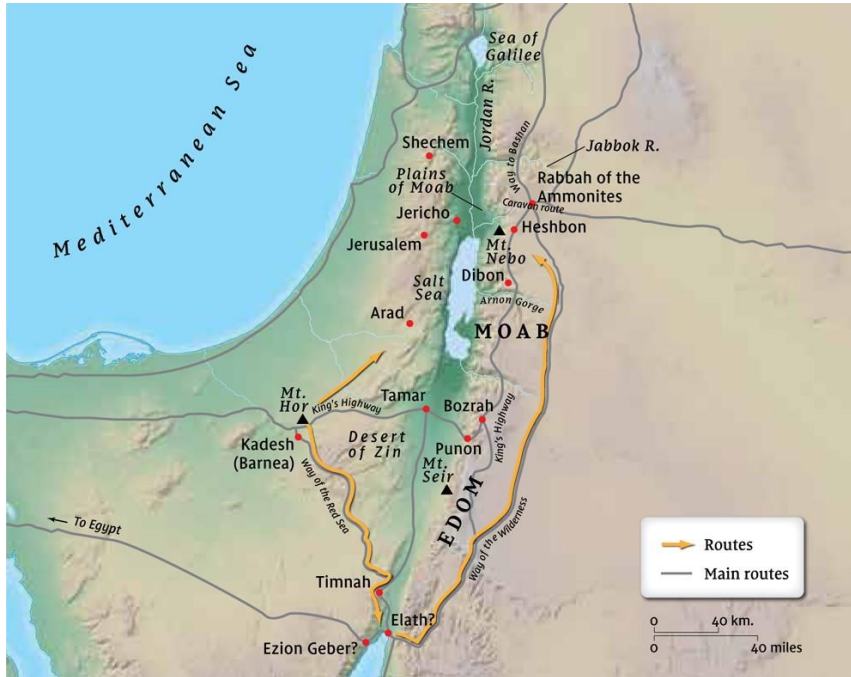
163 This is, among other things, a prophecy concerning Christ. Just as Moses was the legislator
164 of the Old Law, Augustine says, Jesus Christ will be that of the New, for which all the Old
165 Testament prophets are preparing the way. From this point onward, the people of Israel will
166 live in hope of the Messiah announced from the beginning (Gen. 3:15).

167 Deuteronomy also contains passages of great doctrinal depth, especially those to do with
168 love of one's neighbor, which is inseparable from love of God; passages speaking about
169 mercy and compassion toward people who are suffering deprivation of any kind; passages
170 defending the family, women, and public and private morality. Deuteronomy is one of the
171 Old Testament books which comes closest to the teaching of the Gospel and in fact it can
172 be best understood in the light of the Gospel.

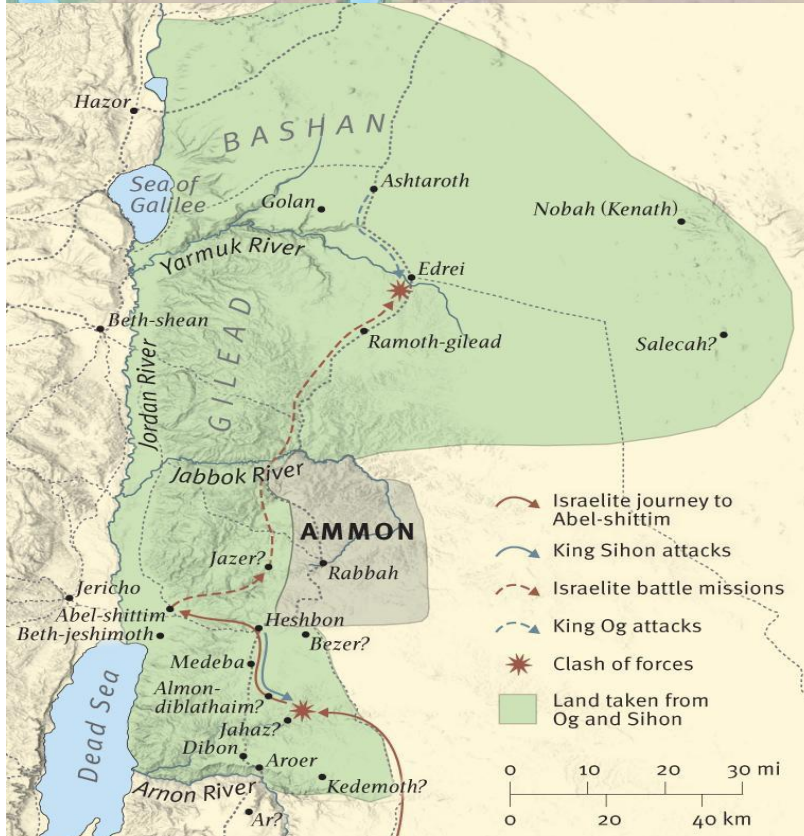
173 When we read this book we should remember that its blessings are addressed to us as
174 well, when we do what Jesus Christ, the Messiah, has commanded us. Its threats also

Book of Deuteronomy Summary

175 apply to us if we act in a way which conflicts with his teaching. The Israelites' hardness of
 176 heart prefigures our own blindness, our own rebellion against God's goodness and mercy.
 177 Today, as then, he "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"
 178 (1 Tim. 2:4).
 179



180



181