

Deut 27-34: The death of Moses

27-30: Covenant renewal ceremony in Moab

- Prefaced by assertion of the authority of Moses' speeches as supplement to revelations at Sinai/Horev: "These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb."
- This is followed by yet another summary of history (27:2-9). The appeal to covenant fidelity is buttressed with appeals to God's deliverance of Israel during the Exodus and God's preservation of the people during the wandering in the Wilderness.
- It is stressed that God has made a covenant with ALL Israel—"the leaders of your tribes, your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp, both those who cut your wood and those who draw your water... not only with you who stand here with us today before the LORD our God, ¹⁵but also with those who are not here with us today."
- Appeal is also made to God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and opportunity is taken again to stress evils of idolatry – e.g., the Exodus is here interpreted, not so much as freedom from oppression, but as freedom from the Egyptians' "detestable things, the filthy idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, that were among them" (21:17).
- It is stressed, as well, that the covenant is not eternal (e.g., as for P) but contingent on obedience, esp. to laws against worship of other gods; as for idolaters, "the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven. The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law."
- This occasions a prophecy about Israel's destruction and God's uprooting of them from the Promised Land due to its breaching of the covenant, presumably penned with the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom and/or the Babylonian Exile (21:22-28).
- At the end of the covenantal renewal, in Deut 30, the choice between covenantal fidelity and disobedience is presented as a choice between life and death, and it is stressed that the covenant is not difficult (vv. 11-20).

31: Moses' authorization of Joshua as his successor

Succession of leadership: Reiterating God's decision that he not enter the Promised Land, Moses (now 120 years old!) passes authority to Joshua; he predicts Joshua's success in conquest in the Promised Land due to God's destruction of Israel's enemies because of Israel's covenantal fidelity. Joshua then commissioned by God Himself in the Tent of Meeting.

Two writings penned for the sake of the remembrance of the covenant after Moses' death, both of which serve further to justify Deuteronomy's own truth claims and claim to authority as law (contrast other, earlier works in the Pentateuch for which no such explicit assertion apparently needed to be made):

- *Song:* God tells Moses to write down a song (i.e., Deut 32) to ensure Israel's remembrance of covenant: God tells Moses, moreover, of the future disobedience of his people, telling him to write a song to help them recall the covenant.
- *Law:* Moses' choice to write down his law (i.e., the Deuteronomic Code) is described in 31:9. Moses further commands that it should be read every seventh year during Shavuot to everyone: "men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns." Moses then gives the transcription of his law to the Levites to put in the Ark of the Covenant: "For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly, turning aside from the way that I have commanded you. In time to come trouble will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands" (v. 29).

32: Song of Moses = poetic version of same themes

33: Moses' blessing of the tribes (cf. Jacob at end of Genesis)

34: Moses' travel death on Mount Nebo, having seen but not entered the Promised Land

- Fittingly, Deuteronomy ends by celebrating Moses: "Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. (vv. 10-12).