DEUTERONOMY

*Hinging the Pentateuch and the Historical Writings*

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I would like to start my paper by stating that Deuteronomy is not a hinge between the Pentateuch and the Historical Books. Deuteronomy is not a hinge between but is instead part of the Pentateuch itself. It is in fact the last of the five books in the Pentateuch so it most assuredly plays an integral part of the Pentateuch. We only see the story of Israel’s journey to the edge of the Promised Landed when we read from Genesis through Deuteronomy. The land, seed and relationship theme of the Pentateuch is found in Deuteronomy. This book is showing the completion of the promise that Yahweh gave to Abraham. Yahweh now commands once again that Israel to take the land. This command then leads the reader into Joshua. The way Deuteronomy reflects the style of a Hittite treaties shows that what is found in this book is a treaty preparing the people for the new land. Deuteronomy therefore sits as a reflecting point for the Historical Books. Yahweh, in his treaty with Israel, gives them instruction for how they must live in the land He is giving them. We then see how that treaty will greatly influence the Historical Books, as Israel lives in the Promised Land and looks back on the book called, ”These are the Words” for guidance.[[1]](#footnote-1)

To see how important these words were for the nation of Israel, the reader must see and understand the format of the book of Deuteronomy. This book is split up into different sections, just as the usual Hittite treaty. There is a Preamble or the “Thus Says”. This runs in Deuteronomy from chapter 1:1 through chapter 1:5. This acts as an introduction for the treaty, giving the historical setting of Moses’ speeches. The next part is the Historical Prologue, which spans from chapter 1:9 to chapter 4:49. The Historical Prologue tells the reader the history of or relationship between the two parties involved in the treaty. In the case of Deuteronomy what is found is Moses reviewing the acts of God from Horeb to Beth-peor, a command for Israel to head the Law of Yahweh and lastly the establishment of three cities of refuge.[[2]](#footnote-2) This reminds everyone of the great things God had done for Israel so that will be fresh on Israel’s mind as God lays down His stipulations for His people. Both the general and specific stipulations are set forth throughout Chapters 5-26. The giving of the Ten Commandments provides a set of more general stipulations for His people to follow. Continuing then throughout this section of the scripture there can be fond more specific application of those general laws. Blessings and curses follow in chapters 27-28. Fairly self-explanatory, this section of the book provided the if’s and if not’s of the treaty. The next part of the Deuteronomy is the deposit. The deposit can be found in chapter 31:26 where Moses commands the law he commanded the Levites to place the writings beside the Ark of the Covenant as a witness to the things written. After that there is a public reading of the law. An account of this can be seen in chapter 31:9-26. Lastly there is a witness given and a ratification of the treaty. In the case of Deuteronomy, Heaven and earth are provided as witnesses in chapter 31:26-28. [[3]](#footnote-3)

Looking at Deuteronomy as a Hittite Treaty allows us to see the intimate role it plays in both the Pentateuch and the Historical books. This Document does not stand-alone but is set into a narrative that the reader has followed since Genesis. God doesn’t just produce a treaty out of the blue but gives it to a people as part of their story. The treaty isn’t a document but a history of Yahweh and Israel. The Pentateuch tells about that history and concludes that section of Israel’s journey with Deuteronomy. Now, when the Jews look back to the treaty they find that it cannot be divorced form their own history.

Another aspect of the transition we find in Deuteronomy is the completion of the mosaic authorship. Although there are debates over chapter 34, Deuteronomy still stands among conservative scholars as the final book of Moses. Starting with his revelation of the primeval history, Moses pens the first five books of the Bible. Now that the end of Moses life has come, leadership passed to Joshua, as does authorship. Joshua is the next book and the next writer, so this provides readers with a natural transition from the Pentateuch to the Historical books. [[4]](#footnote-4)

From the Adam to Abraham and throughout the existence of the nation of Israel, the narrative has followed God’s promise. Land, seed and relationship is now being fulfilled at the end of Deuteronomy. Almost as if we were watching Luke Skywalker leaving Degobah to fight Darth Vader, we see Israel, after all it’s been through, finally ready to redeem themselves by take the land Yahweh had promised to give them. Deuteronomy is the perfect book to end the Pentateuch and act as an anchor for life in the new land. It is reflected upon by the generations to come and considered to the rule for holy living and governing in the camp of the Jews. Looking back on the aspects of the treaty, this pact between God and man doesn’t stop in with the death of Moses but continues on in Joshua and through the existence of God’s people. No one can denounce it’s importance in the Historical books because it is to them which the words in Deuteronomy speak as well as to the generation in which it was given. It is part of the Pentateuch but stands as the bedrock of the Historical books.

1. Arnold, Bill T. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. MacArthur, John. *The John MacArthur Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. (accessed February 20, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Old Testament Survey 1 Lecture*. Dr. Trey Bechtold, United States, 2014. Lecture Notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sproul, R. C. "Characters and Themes." In *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version, Containing the Old and New Testaments*, 4-5. Orlando, Fla.: Ligonier Ministries ; 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)