

# TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

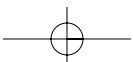
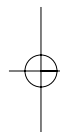
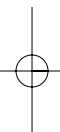
VOLUME 5

TOTC

## DEUTERONOMY



Dedicated to Jenny, Emma, Cathy and Megan



# TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 5

SERIES EDITOR: DAVID G. FIRTH  
CONSULTING EDITOR: TREMPER LONGMAN III

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## DEUTERONOMY

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

EDWARD J. WOODS



Inter-Varsity Press

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 Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426, USA  
 Website: [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)  
 Email: [email@ivpress.com](mailto:email@ivpress.com)

Inter-Varsity Press, England  
 Norton Street  
 Nottingham NG7 3HR, England  
 Website: [www.ivpbooks.com](http://www.ivpbooks.com)  
 Email: [ivp@ivpbooks.com](mailto:ivp@ivpbooks.com)

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First published 2011

Image: © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

USA ISBN 978-0-8308-4281-0

UK ISBN 978-1-84474-533-3

Set in Garamond 11/13pt

Typeset in Great Britain by Avocet Typeset, Chilton, Aylesbury, Bucks

Printed and bound in the United States of America ∞



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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Woods, Edward J.

*Deuteronomy* : an introduction and commentary / Edward J. Woods.

p. cm.—(Tyndale Old Testament commentaries ; v. 5)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8308-4281-0 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Bible. O.T. Deuteronomy—

Commentaries. I. Title.

BS1275.53.W66 2011

222'.1507—dc22

2011014616

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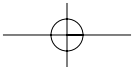
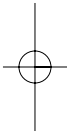
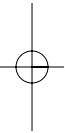
#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

P	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Y	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11		

## CONTENTS

General preface	7
Author's preface	9
Abbreviations	11
Bibliography	15
<b>Introduction</b>	25
1. The importance of the book	25
2. Title	26
3. Authorship, date and provenance	27
4. Some literary features of Deuteronomy	31
5. Structure	37
6. Theology	55
7. Purpose	72
<b>Additional note: the Holy War (<i>hērem</i>) principle</b>	67
<b>Analysis</b>	73
<b>Commentary</b>	77



## GENERAL PREFACE

The decision completely to revise the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries is an indication of the important role that the series has played since its opening volumes were released in the mid-1960s. They represented at that time, and have continued to represent, commentary writing that was committed both to the importance of the text of the Bible as Scripture and a desire to engage with as full a range of interpretative issues as possible without being lost in the minutiae of scholarly debate. The commentaries aimed to explain the biblical text to a generation of readers confronting models of critical scholarship and new discoveries from the Ancient Near East, while remembering that the Old Testament is not simply another text from the ancient world. Although no uniform process of exegesis was required, all the original contributors were united in their conviction that the Old Testament remains the word of God for us today. That the original volumes fulfilled this role is evident from the way in which they continue to be used in so many parts of the world.

A crucial element of the original series was that it should offer an up-to-date reading of the text, and it is precisely for this reason that new volumes are required. The questions confronting readers in the first half of the twenty-first century are not necessarily those from the second half of the twentieth. Discoveries from the Ancient Near East continue to shed new light on the Old Testament, whilst emphases in exegesis have changed markedly. Whilst remaining true to the goals of the initial volumes, the need for contemporary study

of the text requires that the series as a whole be updated. This updating is not simply a matter of commissioning new volumes to replace the old. We have also taken the opportunity to update the format of the series to reflect a key emphasis from linguistics, which is that texts communicate in larger blocks rather than in shorter segments such as individual verses. Because of this, the treatment of each section of the text includes three segments. First, a short note on *Context* is offered, placing the passage under consideration in its literary setting within the book, as well as noting any historical issues crucial to interpretation. The *Comment* segment then follows the traditional structure of the commentary, offering exegesis of the various components of a passage. Finally, a brief comment is made on *Meaning*, by which is meant the message that the passage seeks to communicate within the book, highlighting its key theological themes. This section brings together the detail of the *Comment* to show how the passage under consideration seeks to communicate as a whole.

Our prayer is that these new volumes will continue the rich heritage of the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries and that they will continue to witness to the God who is made known in the text.

David G. Firth, Series Editor  
Tremper Longman III, Consulting Editor



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

When I commenced my very first solo student pastorate at North Auburn Baptist Church in Sydney, in 1968, I decided to begin my pastoral ministry by preaching through the book of Deuteronomy. Now, in the final year (2010) of my official working life as Senior Lecturer in Old Testament at the Bible College of Victoria, I have found myself completing a five-year project, writing a replacement for the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on *Deuteronomy* written by Dr John Thompson in 1974. In so doing, I believe that Deuteronomy has provided a kind of bookend to my life's story.

Deuteronomy is rich in spirituality, and is arguably Old Testament preaching at its best. What struck me most about the book were the powerful and rhetorical echoes of the burning bush narrative from Exodus 3. Thus, in Deuteronomy God continually speaks to Israel *from out of the fire*, as a way of eliciting an appropriate *fear* and obedience to his word that would serve and bless them for ever (5:29; 10:12–13). This in no small way drives the narrative throughout, for Yahweh, Israel's sovereign God, continues to *burn* with jealous love and judgment towards his people to the very end, and expects his people to *love* him with equal passion (6:4–5).

Writing a commentary of this kind cannot be undertaken in a vacuum. Acknowledgment and thanks are here made for the many commentaries, monographs and articles that I have consulted in the preparation of this work. My special thanks are also directed to David Firth, for his helpful and patient editing of the manuscript throughout its preparation.

Finally, I would like to pay special tribute to my former lecturers with whom I began my spiritual journey and training at The Baptist Theological College of New South Wales (now known as Morling College), in Sydney from 1966 to 1970. These include Principal B. G. Wright (Theology), Rev. N. P. Andersen (Dean and Lecturer in Church History and Religious Education), Rev. E. R. Rogers (New Testament and Greek) and Rev. Dr V. J. Eldridge (Old Testament and Hebrew). These godly men ought never to be forgotten, for, like Moses in Deuteronomy, they have seen the Promised Land from afar, and have shared its lasting glory with generations of their grateful students.

E. J. (Ted) Woods

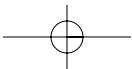
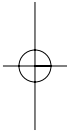
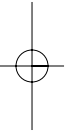
## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Associates for Biblical Research</i>
<i>AnBib</i>	<i>Analecta Biblica</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament</i>
<i>AOTC</i>	<i>Apollos Old Testament Commentary</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>Bsac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CR:BS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
FB	Focus on the Bible
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
HBS	Herder biblische Studien
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society of America
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplementary Series
<i>JTOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplementary Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>LNTS</i>	<i>Library of New Testament Studies</i>
<i>MAARAV</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Northwest Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
NAB	New American Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NIB	New International Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblischer Aufsatzbände
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TBT</i>	<i>The Bible Today</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
<i>VE</i>	<i>Vox Evangelica</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
VTE	Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

**Texts and versions**

4QDeut (j, q)	Fragmentary texts from Deuteronomy from Qumran
4QMMT	Six fragmentary texts (Halakhot) from Qumran
ET	English Text
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SamP	Samaritan Pentateuch
Vg.	Latin Vulgate



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Importance of the book**

Deuteronomy is a pivotal book for the entire Bible. To begin with, its importance relates to the beginning of a *canonical* process (Deut. 31:24–26) that has produced the Hebrew Bible (Christensen 1991: 51–55). In this way, it has left its *theological* mark upon the content of all three divisions of the Old Testament (Law, Prophets and Writings). This includes the Psalms, whose *fivefold* structure may be patterned on the five books of the Pentateuch, concluding with Deuteronomy.

Perhaps it is not strange that the three books that appear in the largest number of manuscripts at Qumran – Psalms (36), Deuteronomy (29) and Isaiah (21) – are also the three quoted most frequently in the New Testament (VanderKam 1994: 32). Deuteronomy figures prominently in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and was the *first* Old Testament book directly quoted by Jesus after his baptism during his wilderness temptations by the devil (Matt. 4:4 = Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:7 = Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:10 =

Deut. 6:13). Jesus also made Deuteronomy 6:5 a primary demand for his followers (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). In Matthew 22:34–40, he reminded his audience that the *whole* of the Law and Prophets (= the entire Old Testament) rested upon the twin pillars of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Luke saw in Jesus the prophet *like Moses* who must be listened to and obeyed (Deut. 18:15, 18–19; Acts 3:22–23), and he patterned the early Christian community on Deuteronomy’s vision (Acts 4:34; cf. Deut. 15:4). It was Paul who made the most use of Deuteronomy in his writings, especially Deuteronomy 30:11–14 (Rom. 10:6–10) and chapter 32 (Rom. 10:19 – 11:26; 1 Cor. 10; 2 Cor. 6:14–18). Finally, in Deuteronomy we have, for the first time, a reflective attempt to systematize belief in Israel.

## 2. Title

Deuteronomy begins, *These are the words* (v. 1). The name ‘Deuteronomy’ derives from the Greek rendering of 17:18, where the king who is to rule over Israel is commanded to prepare *a copy of this law*. In its context, it is unclear whether this means a copy of this law of the king (Deut. 17:14–20), or a copy of the full law code of Deuteronomy in which it is now contained. However, regardless of this point, the Greek Septuagint (LXX) mistakenly rendered this phrase as *to deuteronomion touto*, literally translated as a ‘second law’. Subsequently, the Latin Vulgate followed suit and rendered the Greek noun *deuteronomium* (‘second law’). The book’s contents were therefore regarded as a ‘second law’, quite apart from the original meaning of 17:18. On the one hand, the translation ‘second law’ is somewhat misleading, since the book is not a ‘second law’ as such, but rather a renewal and recapitulation of the law given at Sinai in *preached* form (Deut. 29:1). This is the new element with these laws. Yet, the description of the Septuagint (LXX) is apt if it was based on the observation that the book of Deuteronomy contained ‘new laws’ *in addition* to those found in Exodus to Numbers (Deut. 29:1). But this does not mean with Weinfeld (1991: 19) that Deuteronomy should be seen as the ‘law proper’, *replacing* the Book of the Covenant. Rather, Deuteronomy restates about half of the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:22 – 23:19) in order to account for ‘centralization’ and changes in ‘economic’ and ‘social relationships’,

while preserving much of the wording of the original law (Nelson 2002: 5). The reader is reminded yet again of the dramatic staging of Deuteronomy as an address delivered on the verge of entry into the land. Also, if, by the translation ‘second law’, the Septuagint (LXX) could mean *repeated law*,<sup>1</sup> or *completed law*,<sup>2</sup> then this, in some measure at least, aligns with the suggestion that Deuteronomy is a re-presentation of the law of Sinai, in the form of an exposition or expansion of Mosaic law. The phrase ‘second law’ reminds readers that God’s law is not a matter given once and for all (Fretheim 1996: 153). Law was integral to life before Sinai (e.g. Exod. 16:23), and develops after Sinai in view of the needs of new times and places.<sup>3</sup> The phrase also indicates the authoritative role that Deuteronomy has in interpreting the Sinai law. But this is achieved only in association with Moses. Deuteronomy is therefore best understood as a *covenant renewal* document and not an initial statement of covenant establishment (Merrill 1994: 52). It seeks to *anticipate fully* changes that would be brought about by the entrance and settlement into the land of Canaan.

### 3. Authorship, date and provenance

The question of the authorship, date and provenance of Deuteronomy continues to gravitate between two poles. The first is represented by pre-critical Jewish and Christian tradition in almost unanimously attributing Deuteronomy to Moses, at least in its basic form.<sup>4</sup> The second position relates to the new direction taken by De Wette in 1805, who argued that the *Book of the Law* found by Hilkiah the high priest (2 Kgs 22:8), and used by Josiah (2 Kgs 22 – 23), was

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1. Suggested by Thompson (1974: 12) involving *reinterpretation* and *reapplication* in legal and religious traditions.
  2. E.g. Exod. 20:22 – 23:19 expounding Exod. 20:1–17.
  3. Notably with the situation of Zelophehad’s daughters (Num. 27:1–11 and 36:1–13).
  4. With some arguing for post-Mosaic additions such as Moses’ death at 34:5–12, e.g. the reservations of Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (pp. 121–124, 128–132).

none other than the recently written book of Deuteronomy (possibly going back to Hezekiah). This was developed by Wellhausen (1885), who argued that a *prophet* wrote the specific chapters (12–26) just prior to Josiah's reforms around 622 BC. They then became a kind of manual for reform, targeting the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem and the removal of the 'high places' in the land. The prophet hid the book in the temple in such a way that it would be found. Thus Hilkiah's discovery of the book, and Shaphan's reading of it to the king, became the basis for the various reforms. Eventually Deuteronomy was added to the other four books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers) to create the Pentateuch, in line with Wellhausen's evolutionary view of the *documentary* sources and history of the Pentateuch. Since then, the viewpoints expressed by De Wette and Wellhausen have provided the hinge point on which basic questions relating to the origin and date of the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) have turned.

In current scholarly debate and research, Wellhausen's central thesis connecting Deuteronomy with Josiah's reforms (seventh century BC) continues to be assumed (in different forms) by most higher critical studies. But as Clements (2003: 508) has put it, the most recent work has tended to view the link between Josiah's reform and the date of Deuteronomy very differently, by recognizing that a *lengthy process* of composition best explains Deuteronomy's final form. However, as Block (2001: 388–390) has pointed out, this does not mean that scholars have always agreed in their explanations of the book's origin. For example, von Rad (1953: 60–69) argued that Deuteronomy was written by country Levites from the north, who came to Judah after the fall of Israel in 721 BC, and preserved their traditions shortly before 701 BC. Nicholson (1967: 119–124) and Clements (1965: 300–312) have adopted a similar approach, with a northern circle of either prophets (Nicholson) or reformers (Clements) fleeing south and composing their work in Jerusalem, hoping to reform Judah and the Jerusalem cult in line with the distinctive teaching of Deuteronomy (e.g. centralization, ark and 'name' theology). On the other hand, Weinfeld (1991: 44–50) argues that northern prophecy (especially seen in Hosea) has influenced Deuteronomy. During the periods of Hezekiah and Josiah in the south, Deuteronomy was eventually

formed as a manual for the king and the people by a scribal school, which also reflects the wisdom tradition (Deut. 4:6). Lohfink (1977: 12–21) anticipates Weinfeld (1991: 44–50) in seeing a southern provenance for Deuteronomy, arguing that it was composed in several stages, chiefly as a protest against a growing Assyrian hegemony over Judah that went back at least as far as Hezekiah's father, Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:10–16).<sup>5</sup> However, Clements (1998: 278–280) locates the background to the composition of Deuteronomy with the surrender of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 598 and 587 BC, resulting in the destruction of the temple and the removal of the last of the Davidic kings from the throne. In this situation, Israel stood at the borders of the land, with Deuteronomy providing a magnificent response to the political and religious crisis.

Thus we begin to see that there is anything but a consensus with regard to the authorship, date and provenance of Deuteronomy in its *final* form.<sup>6</sup> Hamilton (2005: 373) says there are really only two options: the classical position or some form of De Wette *redivivus*. For Clements (1998: 279; 2003: 508–516), the Babylonian exile has deeply influenced the demand for cult centralization, the greatly weakened role of the king, the desacralizing of several aspects of the cultus, and loyalty to the covenant based upon a written law for guidance. But one could argue that each one of these areas can equally suit the classical position of Israel anticipating its new life within the Promised Land. Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned in Deuteronomy 12:5–14, and the 'name theology' suggests that Yahweh is taking *possession* of the land, awarding Israel her initial land-grant.<sup>7</sup> This includes the destroying of the names of the foreign gods, followed in 12:5b by the command to seek Yahweh at

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5. Nelson (2002: 7) and especially Mayes (1993: 29–30) have followed Lohfink in understanding Deuteronomy as a reaction to this Assyrian 'culture shock', also deriving from Assyria the idea of a contract relationship (but see fn. 24, p. 45).
  6. Hamilton (2005: 373) expresses the view that it is unlikely that any future monograph will ever silence all contrary views.
  7. Hill (1988: 399–406). Hess (1997: 63–76) also sees this applied in the boundary lists of the book of Joshua (chs. 13 – 21).

the place where he chooses to place his name. Also, it is difficult to argue that the law of the king (Deut. 17:14–20) is meant to *supplant* the historic monarchy in Israel. The request for a king at 1 Samuel 8:5 presumes Deuteronomy 17:14–20, and a further clue may be offered by 1 Samuel 10:25 (cf. 2 Kgs 11:12, 17–18). Further, if the instruction of Deuteronomy 27:1–8 and 31:9–13 was carried out faithfully by Joshua (Josh. 8:30–35), with its further link back to Joshua 1:7–8, then a strong early connection with a canonical form of Deuteronomy may be supported (cf. 2 Kgs 23:2–3).

From a literary and structural perspective, the book of Deuteronomy comes closest to the earlier law codes in particular, and also to the Hittite suzerainty/vassal treaties of the second millennium BC. The later Assyrian treaties of the first millennium BC did not at first include the historical prologue (see fn. 24, p. 45) or the blessings part of the blessings and curses (sanctions), nor as a rule did they include border descriptions.<sup>8</sup> This fact points to an earlier date for Deuteronomy, possibly somewhere within the Late Bronze period (1400–1200 BC).<sup>9</sup>

In addition, we may also observe within Deuteronomy a twofold witness to its own authority, which speaks of *not adding to or subtracting from* this law (Deut. 4:2; 12:32). Joshua's consistent reference to the 'Book of the Law/of Moses' must refer to a *canonical* form given to written materials from the time of Moses, which, in all likelihood, incorporated most of the book of Deuteronomy in its final form (Deut. 30:10, 19; 31:9, 24, 26). This does not exclude the possibility of further minimal editing or rearrangement of the book, possibly by Joshua himself (cf. Josh. 24:25–26), or in conjunction with the book of Joshua, some time beyond in the period leading up to the monarchy.

Finally, the great diversity of views on the authorship of Deuteronomy reveals the difficulty of tying the book down to one particular group with one particular aim. Also, if scholars are prepared to concede that the direct link between the book of Deuteronomy and Josiah's reform is tenuous, then the main reason

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8. Singer, cited in Hoffner (2004: 183).

9. Kitchen (2003: 289–291).

for confidently dating Deuteronomy in the seventh century BC as a *fixed point* of historical criticism is correspondingly diminished. Thus, the date of origin becomes a much more open question (Wright 1996: 7). Already we have noted that scholars have seen Deuteronomy as the product of diverse groups, including prophetic, priestly, elders, scribal and wisdom circles. Some scholars have even proposed a combination of these views acting together (Miller 1990: 5–10; Nelson 2002: 7). However, as Wright (1996: 7) and Block (2001: 389) aptly conclude, such diversity causes one to wonder if the reverse direction of influence is not more probable, and certainly simpler, as an explanation: namely, that Deuteronomy (and Moses) precede the development of these movements, and it is *these* which have influenced them.

In the end, the *internal* witness of Deuteronomy itself offers the strongest clue about its original authorship, date and provenance (Moab/Mount Ebal/Shechem), but leaves open-ended the issue of its final editing and canonical form. Deuteronomy's testamentary character, acting in tandem with the movement from oral (1:5) to written tradition (31:9–13, 24–30) in one complete process, places this book squarely with Moses in the plains of Moab before Israel's entrance into the Promised Land. Finally, within the period of the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BC) Millard (1998: 179) says, 'There was literary activity in the Levant covering a wide range of texts and the scribes were clearly capable of producing books.' On this basis, there are no compelling reasons against locating the *origins* of Deuteronomy during this period.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Some literary features of Deuteronomy

##### *a. Deuteronomy and the divine Torah*

Deuteronomy has been aptly described as 'preached law', and not

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10. For a good outline of the arguments for the early and late dates of the exodus, see Hill and Walton (2009: 105–108). While recognizing the difficulties in both points of view, this commentary favours the early date for the exodus (1446 BC), on the basis of a literal reading of 1 Kgs 6:1 and Judg. 11:26. See Wood (2008: 97–108).