

Deuteronomy

It has long been obvious to some, but only recently accepted by many, that the Deuteronomic Code is in fact a Decalogue Code, based on the Decalogue as we find it in Exodus 20, slightly rewritten as Deut 5, and then expanded to include much previous law in Deut 12-26 – a masterpiece of jurisprudence. The material at the ends of Deuteronomy will not long detain us.

(33) To the Jordan (Deut 1-5). This brief reprise of earlier tradition, mostly drawn from Numbers, takes us up to the moment of entry. It concludes with the Decalogue (Deut 5), the groundplan for the Decalogue Code proper.

(34) The Warning (Deut 6-11) urges obedience to the laws which follow and threatens dire consequences if they are not. Contains obviously post-Exilic passages. How early is the rest of it?

(35) The Ten Commandments. The Code proper is agreed to be Deut 12-26. It can be hard to see how its provisions coordinate with the Commandments. Identifying interpolations makes that relationship a little clearer.

(36) Adjusting the Covenant. Deut 26 had ended with a covenant, but then we have Deut 27-30, which present new covenants, each making that previous covenant more adequate in terms of the latest thinking in contract law.

(37) The Death of Moses. Deut 31-34 pick up the story of Moses, and give an account of his death, making Deuteronomy not a law code, but a biography. They also make Deuteronomy part of what is here called the Promise Narrative – a larger theological agenda than Deuteronomy itself originally possessed.

Everything so far is preparatory to the entry into the Land. We next take up the Conquest (the only wholly invented thing in the Bible), and the somewhat more plausible chapters that follow it. The great issue of those days seems to have been, King or No King? The Temple priests, who hated the idea of a king, would soon be confronted by the more worldly instincts of ordinary people.