

Lecture 13: D and Deuteronomy.

Reading: Deuteronomy 4; 10:12-11:32; 28 (Deuteronomy's theology of history);
Deuteronomy 12 (centralization of the cult);
Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 31:7-13 (the writing and studying of the Torah);
Kugel 296-316.

Topics:

- Contrast P and D.
- Which is earlier: P or D? What is at stake in this debate?
- What are the distinctive hallmarks of D?

D = the book of Deuteronomy;

Dtr = the Deuteronomist = the narrator of Joshua-Judges-Samuel-Kings (MBS:
Deuteronomy through Kings was originally one long book).

The book of Deuteronomy: a series of farewell discourses of Moses: survey of Israelite history; sermons; laws (12-26); blessings and curses (27-28); two final poems (32-33); death of Moses (34).

Is the book a unity? Is Moses the author of "these words" (1:1)?

MBS link D to the discovery in the temple of "the book of the Torah" (2 Kings 22:8), and the subsequent religious reform under Josiah (ca. 621 BCE) (Kugel).

The speeches are attributed to Moses → the book of Deuteronomy is attributed to Moses (Joshua 8:31 citing Deuteronomy 27:6) → the entire Torah is attributed to Moses (Nehemiah 8:1).

MBS: D has complex and diverse origins:

1. *Jerusalem priests:* centralization of sacrificial cult in "the place in which God shall cause his name to dwell" (Deut 12):

- Permission for secular slaughter:
 - ✦ Contrast with Leviticus 17 which requires that all slaughtered cattle sheep and goats must be brought to the altar, apparently for the disposition of the blood. In D: you may spill out the blood like water.
 - ★ D does not have a tabernacle in the wilderness; only an ark of the covenant (31:9).
- Even Pesah/Passover is to be a pilgrimage festival (16), in contrast with Exodus 12 (P) in which it is a family feast by the tent.
- Similarly: Levitic priests (and the judge) at the central shrine are to be the chief judges in all legal disputes (17:8-13; 33:10).

- But:
 - ✦ odd that Deut nowhere mentions Jerusalem/Zion by name (a sign of northern provenance?);
 - ✦ seems to have a loose and inclusive view of priesthood (the “Levitical priests”; see Kugel).

2. *Scribes*: the king’s scribe played an important role in the discovery of the book (2 Kings 22).

- Prominence of writing the words of God or the Torah (e.g. 6:4-9. 31:9), reading the words;
- But: no mention of the scribal group in D.

3. *Laws and legal traditions*: wide range of subjects:

- Themes:
 - ✦ limit power of the king (17) and prophet (18);
 - ✦ social concern for widows and orphans;
 - ✦ to be merciful (e.g. not to return a runaway slave 23:15, not to take chicks from a mother bird, 22:6);
 - ✦ Israelites are a holy people (14:2) but (almost) no purity rules, no detailed sacrificial rules.
- Seems to revise some earlier laws e.g. the seventh year (Deuteronomy 15:1-11 vs. Exodus 23:10-11; cf. Leviticus 25:1-7), slavery (Deuteronomy 15:12-18 vs. Exodus 21:2-11);

4. *Wisdom traditions*: Deut 4:6 (the word of the Lord is your wisdom in the eyes of the nations); the virtue of study and knowledge (6:4-9).

- But: emphasis on divine retribution (esp. 11) and on sacred history, God’s covenant with the ancestors, Israel’s special place in God’s eyes;
- Importance of the theme of divine justice in D and Dtr.

5. *Traditions from the north*: most obviously prominence of Shechem in Deut 27:

- Hosea (northern kingdom prophet 8th cent BCE): God demands exclusive worship, as a husband demands exclusive loyalty from his wife. This idea (altho not the metaphor) developed by D:
 - ✦ One temple for the one God;
 - ✦ God allows other nations to worship the sun moon and stars (4:19-20) but not Israel. Other Gods exist but our God is better (4:7); Israel is to worship only God (5:7).

- ★ Cf. 18 re soothsayers and necromancers: what they do is real but it is prohibited;
- ✦ Contrast 4:35 “there is none else.”
- Israel is to destroy the Canaanites (7) to preserve exclusive loyalty to God – we’ll come back to this.

6. *Assyrian vassal language* (see Kugel): note esp the hair-raising curses of 28.

Contrast P and D (Kugel):

P: emphasis on purity/holiness of the land and central sanctuary; proper performance of rituals in the central sanctuary keeps the Deity happy; God’s *kavod* (glory) is in the temple, but P is not concerned whether God is anywhere else.

H: a priestly school that establishes priestly holiness as an ideal for all the people (Kugel).

D: emphasis on holiness of the people of Israel; necessity of studying and observing the laws of God. In distress people should turn to God because God is everywhere; only God’s name is in the temple. Little concern about central sanctuary except as site of pilgrimage.

Kugel is concerned about competing visions of P and D all coming from God; but why is this problem worse than the different visions and themes of different prophets?

Scholarly arguments about the relative dates of P and D (summarized by Kugel) reflect some deep seated prejudices: P is “primitive,” therefore early; P is ritualistic “legalistic,” therefore late.