

DEUTERONOMY

T E L F O R D W O R K



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CONTENTS

Series Preface 7

Author's Preface 13

Abbreviations 15

Introduction 17

Deuteronomy 1 25

Deuteronomy 2 41

Deuteronomy 3 51

Deuteronomy 4 59

Deuteronomy 5 74

Deuteronomy 6 94

Deuteronomy 7 103

Deuteronomy 8 111

Deuteronomy 9 117

Deuteronomy 10 126

Deuteronomy 11 131

Deuteronomy 12 137

Deuteronomy 13 145

Deuteronomy 14 150

Deuteronomy 15 157

Deuteronomy 16 162

Deuteronomy 17 168

Deuteronomy 18 173

Deuteronomy 19 179

Deuteronomy 20 184

Deuteronomy 21 190

Deuteronomy 22 197

Deuteronomy 23 207

Deuteronomy 24 214

Deuteronomy 25 222

Deuteronomy 26 231

Deuteronomy 27 236

Deuteronomy 28 243

Deuteronomy 29 260

Deuteronomy 30 267

Deuteronomy 31 272

Deuteronomy 32 281

Deuteronomy 33 300

Deuteronomy 34 311

Bibliography 317

Subject Index 319

Scripture Index 322

SERIES PREFACE

Near the beginning of his treatise against Gnostic interpretations of the Bible, *Against the Heresies*, Irenaeus observes that Scripture is like a great mosaic depicting a handsome king. It is as if we were owners of a villa in Gaul who had ordered a mosaic from Rome. It arrives, and the beautifully colored tiles need to be taken out of their packaging and put into proper order according to the plan of the artist. The difficulty, of course, is that Scripture provides us with the individual pieces, but the order and sequence of various elements are not obvious. The Bible does not come with instructions that would allow interpreters to simply place verses, episodes, images, and parables in order as a worker might follow a schematic drawing in assembling the pieces to depict the handsome king. The mosaic must be puzzled out. This is precisely the work of scriptural interpretation.

Origen has his own image to express the difficulty of working out the proper approach to reading the Bible. When preparing to offer a commentary on the Psalms he tells of a tradition handed down to him by his Hebrew teacher:

The Hebrew said that the whole divinely inspired Scripture may be likened, because of its obscurity, to many locked rooms in our house. By each room is placed a key, but not the one that corresponds to it, so that the keys are scattered about beside the rooms, none of them matching the room by which it is placed. It is a difficult task to find the keys and match them to the rooms that they can open. We therefore know the Scriptures that are obscure only by taking the points of departure for understanding them from another place because they have their interpretive principle scattered among them.¹

1. Fragment from the preface to *Commentary on Psalms 1–25*, preserved in the *Philokalia* (trans. Joseph W. Trigg; London: Routledge, 1998), 70–71.

As is the case for Irenaeus, scriptural interpretation is not purely local. The key in Genesis may best fit the door of Isaiah, which in turn opens up the meaning of Matthew. The mosaic must be put together with an eye toward the overall plan.

Irenaeus, Origen, and the great cloud of premodern biblical interpreters assumed that puzzling out the mosaic of Scripture must be a communal project. The Bible is vast, heterogeneous, full of confusing passages and obscure words, and difficult to understand. Only a fool would imagine that he or she could work out solutions alone. The way forward must rely upon a tradition of reading that Irenaeus reports has been passed on as the rule or canon of truth that functions as a confession of faith. “Anyone,” he says, “who keeps unchangeable in himself the rule of truth received through baptism will recognize the names and sayings and parables of the scriptures.”² Modern scholars debate the content of the rule on which Irenaeus relies and commends, not the least because the terms and formulations Irenaeus himself uses shift and slide. Nonetheless, Irenaeus assumes that there is a body of apostolic doctrine sustained by a tradition of teaching in the church. This doctrine provides the clarifying principles that guide exegetical judgment toward a coherent overall reading of Scripture as a unified witness. Doctrine, then, is the schematic drawing that will allow the reader to organize the vast heterogeneity of the words, images, and stories of the Bible into a readable, coherent whole. It is the rule that guides us toward the proper matching of keys to doors.

If self-consciousness about the role of history in shaping human consciousness makes modern historical-critical study critical, then what makes modern study of the Bible modern is the consensus that classical Christian doctrine distorts interpretive understanding. Benjamin Jowett, the influential nineteenth-century English classical scholar, is representative. In his programmatic essay “On the Interpretation of Scripture,” he exhorts the biblical reader to disengage from doctrine and break its hold over the interpretive imagination. “The simple words of that book,” writes Jowett of the modern reader, “he tries to preserve absolutely pure from the refinements or distinctions of later times.” The modern interpreter wishes to “clear away the remains of dogmas, systems, controversies, which are encrusted upon” the words of Scripture. The disciplines of close philological analysis “would enable us to separate the elements of doctrine and tradition with which the meaning of Scripture is encumbered in our own day.”³ The lens of understanding must be wiped clear of the hazy and distorting film of doctrine.

Postmodernity, in turn, has encouraged us to criticize the critics. Jowett imagined that when he wiped away doctrine he would encounter the biblical text in its purity and uncover what he called “the original spirit and intention of the authors.”⁴ We are not now so sanguine, and the postmodern mind thinks interpre-

2. *Against the Heresies* 9.4.

3. Benjamin Jowett, “On the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Essays and Reviews* (London: Parker, 1860), 338–39.

4. *Ibid.*, 340.

tive frameworks inevitable. Nonetheless, we tend to remain modern in at least one sense. We read Athanasius and think him stage-managing the diversity of Scripture to support his positions against the Arians. We read Bernard of Clairvaux and assume that his monastic ideals structure his reading of the Song of Songs. In the wake of the Reformation, we can see how the doctrinal divisions of the time shaped biblical interpretation. Luther famously described the Epistle of James as a “strawy letter,” for, as he said, “it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it.”⁵ In these and many other instances, often written in the heat of ecclesiastical controversy or out of the passion of ascetic commitment, we tend to think Jowett correct: doctrine is a distorting film on the lens of understanding.

However, is what we commonly think actually the case? Are readers naturally perceptive? Do we have an unblemished, reliable aptitude for the divine? Have we no need for disciplines of vision? Do our attention and judgment need to be trained, especially as we seek to read Scripture as the living word of God? According to Augustine, we all struggle to journey toward God, who is our rest and peace. Yet our vision is darkened and the fetters of worldly habit corrupt our judgment. We need training and instruction in order to cleanse our minds so that we might find our way toward God.⁶ To this end, “the whole temporal dispensation was made by divine Providence for our salvation.”⁷ The covenant with Israel, the coming of Christ, the gathering of the nations into the church—all these things are gathered up into the rule of faith, and they guide the vision and form of the soul toward the end of fellowship with God. In Augustine’s view, the reading of Scripture both contributes to and benefits from this divine pedagogy. With countless variations in both exegetical conclusions and theological frameworks, the same pedagogy of a doctrinally ruled reading of Scripture characterizes the broad sweep of the Christian tradition from Gregory the Great through Bernard and Bonaventure, continuing across Reformation differences in both John Calvin and Cornelius Lapide, Patrick Henry and Bishop Bossuet, and on to more recent figures such as Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Is doctrine, then, not a moldering scrim of antique prejudice obscuring the Bible, but instead a clarifying agent, an enduring tradition of theological judgments that amplifies the living voice of Scripture? And what of the scholarly dispassion advocated by Jowett? Is a noncommitted reading, an interpretation unprejudiced, the way toward objectivity, or does it simply invite the languid intellectual apathy that stands aside to make room for the false truism and easy answers of the age?

This series of biblical commentaries was born out of the conviction that dogma clarifies rather than obscures. The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible advances upon the assumption that the Nicene tradition, in all its diversity and

5. *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35 (ed. E. Theodore Bachmann; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 362.

6. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.10.

7. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.35.

controversy, provides the proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture. God the Father Almighty, who sends his only begotten Son to die for us and for our salvation and who raises the crucified Son in the power of the Holy Spirit so that the baptized may be joined in one body—faith in *this* God with *this* vocation of love for the world is the lens through which to view the heterogeneity and particularity of the biblical texts. Doctrine, then, is not a moldering scrim of antique prejudice obscuring the meaning of the Bible. It is a crucial aspect of the divine pedagogy, a clarifying agent for our minds fogged by self-deceptions, a challenge to our languid intellectual apathy that will too often rest in false truisms and the easy spiritual nostrums of the present age rather than search more deeply and widely for the dispersed keys to the many doors of Scripture.

For this reason, the commentators in this series have not been chosen because of their historical or philological expertise. In the main, they are not biblical scholars in the conventional, modern sense of the term. Instead, the commentators were chosen because of their knowledge of and expertise in using the Christian doctrinal tradition. They are qualified by virtue of the doctrinal formation of their mental habits, for it is the conceit of this series of biblical commentaries that theological training in the Nicene tradition prepares one for biblical interpretation, and thus it is to theologians and not biblical scholars that we have turned. “War is too important,” it has been said, “to leave to the generals.”

We do hope, however, that readers do not draw the wrong impression. The Nicene tradition does not provide a set formula for the solution of exegetical problems. The great tradition of Christian doctrine was not transcribed, bound in folio, and issued in an official, critical edition. We have the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, used for centuries in many traditions of Christian worship. We have ancient baptismal affirmations of faith. The Chalcedonian definition and the creeds and canons of other church councils have their places in official church documents. Yet the rule of faith cannot be limited to a specific set of words, sentences, and creeds. It is instead a pervasive habit of thought, the animating culture of the church in its intellectual aspect. As Augustine observed, commenting on Jeremiah 31:33, “The creed is learned by listening; it is written, not on stone tablets nor on any material, but on the heart.”⁸ This is why Irenaeus is able to appeal to the rule of faith more than a century before the first ecumenical council, and this is why we need not itemize the contents of the Nicene tradition in order to appeal to its potency and role in the work of interpretation.

Because doctrine is intrinsically fluid on the margins and most powerful as a habit of mind rather than a list of propositions, this commentary series cannot settle difficult questions of method and content at the outset. The editors of the series impose no particular method of doctrinal interpretation. We cannot say in advance how doctrine helps the Christian reader assemble the mosaic of Scripture. We have no clear answer to the question of whether exegesis guided by

8. *Sermon* 212.2.

doctrine is antithetical to or compatible with the now-old modern methods of historical-critical inquiry. Truth—historical, mathematical, or doctrinal—knows no contradiction. But method is a discipline of vision and judgment, and we cannot know in advance what aspects of historical-critical inquiry are functions of modernism that shape the soul to be at odds with Christian discipline. Still further, the editors do not hold the commentators to any particular hermeneutical theory that specifies how to define the plain sense of Scripture—or the role this plain sense should play in interpretation. Here the commentary series is tentative and exploratory.

Can we proceed in any other way? European and North American intellectual culture has been de-Christianized. The effect has not been a cessation of Christian activity. Theological work continues. Sermons are preached. Biblical scholars turn out monographs. Church leaders have meetings. But each dimension of a formerly unified Christian practice now tends to function independently. It is as if a weakened army had been fragmented, and various corps had retreated to isolated fortresses in order to survive. Theology has lost its competence in exegesis. Scripture scholars function with minimal theological training. Each decade finds new theories of preaching to cover the nakedness of seminary training that provides theology without exegesis and exegesis without theology.

Not the least of the causes of the fragmentation of Christian intellectual practice has been the divisions of the church. Since the Reformation, the role of the rule of faith in interpretation has been obscured by polemics and counterpolemics about *sola scriptura* and the necessity of a magisterial teaching authority. The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible series is deliberately ecumenical in scope, because the editors are convinced that early church fathers were correct: church doctrine does not compete with Scripture in a limited economy of epistemic authority. We wish to encourage unashamedly dogmatic interpretation of Scripture, confident that the concrete consequences of such a reading will cast far more light on the great divisive questions of the Reformation than either reengaging in old theological polemics or chasing the fantasy of a pure exegesis that will somehow adjudicate between competing theological positions. You shall know the truth of doctrine by its interpretive fruits, and therefore in hopes of contributing to the unity of the church, we have deliberately chosen a wide range of theologians whose commitment to doctrine will allow readers to see real interpretive consequences rather than the shadow boxing of theological concepts.

Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible has no dog in the current translation fights, and we endorse a textual ecumenism that parallels our diversity of ecclesial backgrounds. We do not impose the thankfully modest inclusive-language agenda of the New Revised Standard Version, nor do we insist upon the glories of the Authorized Version, nor do we require our commentators to create a new translation. In our communal worship, in our private devotions, in our theological scholarship, we use a range of scriptural translations. Precisely as Scripture—a living, functioning text in the present life of faith—the Bible is not semantically

fixed. Only a modernist, literalist hermeneutic could imagine that this modest fluidity is a liability. Philological precision and stability is a consequence of, not a basis for, exegesis. Judgments about the meaning of a text fix its literal sense, not the other way around. As a result, readers should expect an eclectic use of biblical translations, both across the different volumes of the series and within individual commentaries.

We cannot speak for contemporary biblical scholars, but as theologians we know that we have long been trained to defend our fortresses of theological concepts and formulations. And we have forgotten the skills of interpretation. Like stroke victims, we must rehabilitate our exegetical imaginations, and there are likely to be different strategies of recovery. Readers should expect this reconstructive—not reactionary—series to provide them with experiments in postcritical doctrinal interpretation, not commentaries written according to the settled principles of a well-functioning tradition. Some commentators will follow classical typological and allegorical readings from the premodern tradition; others will draw on contemporary historical study. Some will comment verse by verse; others will highlight passages, even single words that trigger theological analysis of Scripture. No reading strategies are proscribed, no interpretive methods foresworn. The central premise in this commentary series is that doctrine provides structure and cogency to scriptural interpretation. We trust in this premise with the hope that the Nicene tradition can guide us, however imperfectly, diversely, and haltingly, toward a reading of Scripture in which the right keys open the right doors.

R. R. Reno

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This volume is dedicated to the students of my spring 2005 Westmont College course on theological interpretation of the Bible:

Nick Baer	Stephanie Kremmel	Micah Ralston
Meredith Burns	Casey Massena	Kate Retzer
Julianne Faas	Amanda Mathison	Tarah Roberts
Danielle Garcia	Connor Murphy	Jennifer Salemann
Natasha Gettings	Alison Noseworthy	Lindsey Smith
Kelly Hardenbrook	Luke Oliver	Matt Tyler
Ryan Hoxie	Flavia Onofrei	

You and I came together unsure that we could ever pull off decent treatments of a book like Deuteronomy. We worked together through our textbooks all semester, terrified of the approaching task of preaching a passage “theologically.” And you came through! Your final projects were the best collection of biblical interpretations I have ever had the privilege of hearing. Think of this book as *my* final project. I’m honored to place it alongside yours (and sorry it ended up too large to feature selections from your interpretations). May they be just the beginning.

Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and your foreigner who is within your gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear YHWH your God, and do all the words of this Torah—and that their children, who have not known, may hear, and learn to fear YHWH your God as long as you live in the land you go over the Jordan to possess. (Deut. 31:12–13)

ABBREVIATIONS

General

- + indicates a term that could or should be translated inclusively to allow the reader to judge whether and how to respect gender inclusivity
- indicates a cross-reference to commentary on passages in Deuteronomy
- NJPSV New Jewish Publication Society Version
- NRSV New Revised Standard Version
- RSV Revised Standard Version

Biblical

Acts	Acts	Gal.	Galatians
Amos	Amos	Gen.	Genesis
1 Chr.	1 Chronicles	Hab.	Habakkuk
2 Chr.	2 Chronicles	Hag.	Haggai
Col.	Colossians	Heb.	Hebrews
1 Cor.	1 Corinthians	Hos.	Hosea
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians	Isa.	Isaiah
Dan.	Daniel	Jas.	James
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Jer.	Jeremiah
Ecccl.	Ecclesiastes	Job	Job
Eph.	Ephesians	Joel	Joel
Esth.	Esther	John	John
Exod.	Exodus	1 John	1 John
Ezek.	Ezekiel	2 John	2 John
Ezra	Ezra	3 John	3 John

Jonah	Jonah	2 Pet.	2 Peter
Josh.	Joshua	Phil.	Philippians
Jude	Jude	Phlm.	Philemon
Judg.	Judges	Prov.	Proverbs
1 Kgs.	1 Kings	Ps.	Psalms
2 Kgs.	2 Kings	Rev.	Revelation
Lam.	Lamentations	Rom.	Romans
Lev.	Leviticus	Ruth	Ruth
Luke	Luke	1 Sam.	1 Samuel
Mal.	Malachi	2 Sam.	2 Samuel
Mark	Mark	Song	Song of Songs
Matt.	Matthew	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians
Mic.	Micah	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians
Nah.	Nahum	1 Tim.	1 Timothy
Neh.	Nehemiah	2 Tim.	2 Timothy
Num.	Numbers	Titus	Titus
Obad.	Obadiah	Zech.	Zechariah
1 Pet.	1 Peter	Zeph.	Zephaniah

INTRODUCTION

On putting up. Now I know why it defiled one's hands to hold the scrolls of the holy scriptures that were kept in the temple (Beckwith 1990: 39–45, 62–63): it burns the skin.

Deuteronomy is a wonder. Like no other biblical book, it is a template for the two-volume canon of Old and New Testaments. It is the seal of the Pentateuch and the gateway from the patriarchs⁺ to the Former and Latter Prophets. Its narrative framework for the covenant's rules and regulations sets the Psalms and Proverbs and all other wisdom within Israel's life of grace. Its blessings, curses, and sobering song are both the raw material and the essential storyline of apocalyptic. And all these revelations converge on the Messiah on its distant horizon, whose signs and wonders, prophesying, sufferings, and new life will restore and amplify the covenant's blessings after faithlessness has run its cursed course.

Why then do Christians ignore it so? Jews traverse it every year with joy, but Christians seldom enter it at all—especially the thicket of ordinances at its heart. For us it seems a dark and forbidding forest. Or we make it out to be a petrified forest, a dead monument to an age that Christ has put away for good, and good riddance.

Yet the church calls Deuteronomy holy scripture, inspired and useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). The apostles and their churches certainly found it so; it is one of the most quoted books in the New Testament. Along with the end of Isaiah and the Psalms, it is the font of Paul's Christian imagination. In naming it canonical, we claim that it perfects and equips the people of God (3:17), and we bundle Deuteronomy with the Bible's other books and print copies by the billions.

It is one thing to call a book biblical, and another thing to treat it that way. To excuse our reticence to engage Moses's last words, we have needed to invent rationales for treating Deuteronomy the way we do. These only harden our distance from the canonical voices for whom Deuteronomy was so much more prominent.

If we cannot read the story of Moses's last words in the same power as did the prophets, priests, and sages of ancient Israel and the apostolic church, then it is hard to claim that we and they share the same faith, at least in much depth.

This theological commentary is a recovery project. I think Christians need to put up or shut up. We need to read Deuteronomy as a volume in the canon of the church of Jesus Christ, and to do it well. We need to interpret *all of it* in ways that honor both the gospel and Deuteronomy itself. We do not need to do this just to show others that it can be done. We need to do it because we must stand under Deuteronomy's testimony as the word of God in order to know and respect the Father's will, as our Lord Jesus Christ has done.

The fourfold apostolic sense of scripture. Theological commentaries—an intentionally underdetermined genre at present (see Rowe and Hays 2007)—could do all this in a variety of ways. My approach here focuses on one main goal: to form and discipline a contemporary apostolic imagination by reading every passage of Deuteronomy according to the sensibilities of the New Testament church.

Richard Hays concludes that the New Testament writers share three common “root metaphors” that function as lenses focusing the canonical texts' diverse details (1996: 194–95). These summarize the biblical story and guide readings of the Bible's individual texts. He distills three “focal images” that he calls “community, cross, and new creation”:

The church is a countercultural community of discipleship, and this community is the primary addressee of God's imperatives.

Jesus' death on a cross is the paradigm for faithfulness to God in this world.

The church embodies the power of the resurrection in the midst of a not-yet-redeemed world. (1996: 196–98)

I do not think it is coincidental that these three focal lenses suggest the three spiritual senses of the fourfold allegorical method of medieval exegesis, often encapsulated in Augustine of Dacia's jingle:

The letter teaches events,
 Allegory what you should believe,
 Morality teaches what you should do,
 Anagogy what mark you should be aiming for. (de Lubac 1998: 1)

The medieval church was following up on the apostolically formed instincts of the patristic era. There is no sudden departure from the faith of the apostolic communities that knew Jesus and his authorized ambassadors, no massive apostasy into “early Catholicism” or whatever one wants to call the consolidated subapostolic faith. There is instead an imperfect but profound sense, exploited in the masterful storytelling of Irenaeus of Lyons in *Against Heresies* (de Lubac 1998: 154; cf. Hays 1996: 199), that every chapter and verse of the whole story

of God in Jesus Christ means what it means in light of that whole story, and vice versa.

So Hays's three lenses along with something like a critical literal sense can work in contemporary biblical scholarship as the fourfold sense did in the Middle Ages, guiding readers into a more accurate, clearer, and fuller sense of the import of biblical texts and forming an apostolic imagination in ourselves in the process. The so-called literal sense of a passage is its *plain* sense in its immediate literary and perhaps historical context. The allegorical sense is its meaning in light of the advent of the Messiah in whom we are to *believe*. The anagogical sense is its significance for the eschatological age that stirs in Israel's return from exile, approaches in the kingdom of God, and culminates in the Son of Man's *hoped-for* return to judge all things and make them new. The tropological or moral sense is its guidance for the church that signifies that kingdom and respects its law of *love*.*

These are not Platonistic or Christian impositions! They follow trajectories that are already prominent in Israel's scriptures. Ecclesiology, the proper life of the people of God, is of course a driving focus of Tanakh. Eschatology not only suffuses the prophets but describes the futurology of the Torah and the hopes and dreams of the writings. And deliverance is a memory not just fixed in Israel's Egyptian past but fueling trust that YHWH will send an anointed one, a *mashiach*, to restore the nation's blessings and relocate it in its promised global and cosmic context. What distinguished the first Christians' interpretations of Israel's scriptures was not the presence or even prominence of these concerns, but the conviction that all three were being fulfilled through Jesus the son of Mary. That conviction informed a distinctively Christian biblical hermeneutic—an "apostolic hermeneutic." Its various forms—from the focal lenses and voices of the New Testament to the fourfold allegorical method to liturgical syntheses and folk preaching—inspire and structure this commentary.

I have arranged my observations on each passage roughly according to the four senses. (Please disagree charitably if you do not agree with a particular classification. I have treated the senses as broad semantic domains rather than rigid categories to keep them flexible, and even then one sense is not always easy to isolate from others.) With space limited, I have rarely offered an observation on every sense of every passage. Moreover, comments devoted to the plain sense are often missing or very brief. This is not because I regard the plain sense as unimportant—it teaches us *and* grounds all the others—but because so many fine commentaries already concentrate on the plain sense, often exclusively. These serve Deuteronomy's readers (and have served me) exceptionally well, and I rarely have much to add.

*Indeed, the specific form of love that characterizes the *ekklēsia Israel* answers Hays's objections in rejecting "love" in the abstract as an adequate focal image, and the specific form of hope that waits for the kingdom meets his similar objections to "liberation" and "freedom" (1996: 200–204). The particulars of Christology, eschatology, and ecclesiology keep faith, hope, and love from diffusing into abstractions no longer determinatively informed by the canon's content.

Inspired by the Talmud, I had unrealistically hoped to set my comments alongside rather than under the biblical text, in five columns. This format would have the virtue of leading the reader back and forth from the commentary's senses and the text, rather than just *away* from the text to our contemporary worries and debates, as the conventional format subtly does. It would also have been confusing to most readers, and astronomically expensive to publish. I have retained the five-column format only on the first page to give readers a visual sense of my strategy, then reverted to a one-column format in which my observations on the four senses follow the text. I have usually ordered the senses thus: *plain* (literal or historical) sense, *faith* (christological), *hope* (eschatological), *love* (ecclesiological). This is neither Hays's order nor the traditional medieval order. Instead it follows both the order of the Pauline theological virtues of 1 Cor. 13 and the narrative order of the creeds, which begin with creation in the first article, follow salvation christologically from the Son's first advent to his last in the second article, and end in the third article's explicit ecclesiology. I have reordered observations where it would serve to unite distinct senses into a passage's broader lesson. At any rate, I do not consider the order of the senses to be terribly significant, since each sense informs the others.

The claim that *all* scripture is God-breathed is a genuine apostolic conviction. As a test of the fact—which many would call a dogma, others a hypothesis, and some just a convention—that Deuteronomy belongs in the canon of Christian scripture, I offer a Christian interpretation of every passage. This has been a wonderful discipline for me, if sometimes intimidating and rather fatiguing. It has helped me see how Paul and other New Testament writers read Deuteronomy, why churches found answers there when they came to the text with their most urgent questions, and where Moses's voice reverberating through centuries of subsequent history tutored these later voices in the first place—especially the prophet like him. I cannot certify that I have offered *good* Christian interpretations of each passage, nor do I expect readers to find them all plausible, but I have knocked on all of Deuteronomy's doors, and every time I have come away satisfied.

Many professional biblical interpreters share a disdainful attitude toward allegory. This is a pity, not least because it trains us to be perplexed by the Bible's own metaphors, symbols, types, and allegories. Certainly there are many bad allegories out there, and they should warn us away from doing allegory badly. Allegorical exegesis is never supposed to be *fanciful* exegesis. But neither is literal exegesis, and there are enough examples of fanciful literal readings in contemporary biblical scholarship and theology to feed a lifetime of popular disdain toward modern theologians, biblical scholars, and pastors. I have been impressed and edified by both skillful allegorizing and skillful literalizing and wish only to improve skills in both. My dream is that preachers, liturgists, teachers, and students in particular would find these observations useful in developing sermons, hymns, lessons, and intuitions drawing on Deuteronomy.

Sacrifices. One can do only so much in a commentary. Dedicating this one to the task of “disciplining an apostolic Deuteronomic imagination” has meant sidelining other, truly worthy, pursuits, including some that qualify as theological commentary.

The broad rhetorical sweep of Deuteronomy, “the theology of the Deuteronomist,” and relationships between Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch, the rest of the Tanakh, postbiblical Jewish interpretive traditions, and specific schools of Christian theology—all take a backseat to intertextual relationships between Deuteronomy and the New Testament as they resonate in the present. This will disappoint readers for whom these other topics matter more.

To professional biblical scholars who want to see more attention to historical context, critical scholarship, and secondary literature than the occasional observations I have incorporated here: please do not take my inattention as ignorance (though sometimes it is), let alone disdain. To source critics and redaction critics who wish I had concentrated on Deuteronomy’s “sources,” literary critics on its themes and major structures, historicists on its correlation (or lack of correlation) with real historical events, and so on: I involved such questions and insights here and there, but chose not to focus where so many others do. Old Testament theologians will lament the relative paucity of references to other Old Testament texts; their scholarship already develops these relationships much more extensively than relationships between the Testaments, and I commend interested readers to the fine work of these theologians—from Abraham Heschel to Walther Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad to Samuel Terrien and Brevard Childs.

Jews will search for rabbinic sources here and find barely any; here I say only, rather sadly, that the distinct trajectories of apostolic and subapostolic exegesis and rabbinic and Hellenistic Jewish exegesis set our two traditions on very different courses, with divergent central questions. I would like someday to be equipped to enter into the informed and mutually enriching conversations between these two traditions. My task here is to fortify the Christian side of that conversation so that Christian readers can more adequately represent it and so that Jewish readers can perhaps understand better why we read Torah as we do.

Some in all these circles will tire of Jesus, the eschaton, and the church showing up again and again in every passage. They will suspect that my approach imposes a foreign agenda onto the text. Does it really? Or does it respect what Markus Bockmuehl calls “the explosively ‘totalizing’ theological assertions that writers like Paul and the evangelists state or imply in practically every sentence” (2006: 46)—assertions altogether warranted given the developments since the days of Moses?

Finally, my fellow theologians will wish I had appealed much more often to the towering voices in the history of the church, from Augustine and Chrysostom to Thomas Aquinas to Luther and Calvin, as well as to theology’s many contemporary voices from across the confessional and theological spectrum. Those resources are already at hand—one can write a dissertation on the history of any

one influential passage's interpretation—and I have not wanted to offer a history of exegesis or a compendium of other people's readings. Instead, I have aimed to assimilate a style of exegesis that yielded our New Testament, once dominated our common theological tradition, and guided these very theological authorities to the readings their disciples so prize, but that has been driven underground or intimidated into near silence in modern academic theology. For meanwhile, the church's old traditions of spiritual reading have lived on in folk traditions, unofficial networks, stubborn preachers, confessional loyalists, mystics, artists, and liturgists, and other movements and denominations that don't really give a damn—well, maybe a damn—about what credentialed theologians think; and it looks as if these traditions will continue to flourish with or without us. As a theologian who has learned far more from this motley assortment of experts than I am supposed to admit, I have prioritized the voices of the masters who seem to have taught the best of them: the writers of the New Testament. I am sitting at their feet in the hope that I might inherit the inheritance they themselves inherited from the once itinerant, now ascended and seated royal sage who “opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45 NRSV).

My debts and debtors. This is not to say that the Bible has been my only teacher. Far from it! I can express profound gratitude to a number of people at the same time that I commend them to you. Richard Hays embodies a faithful and powerful, if uneasy, synthesis of critical biblical scholarship and apostolic reading. Geoffrey Wainwright shows habitual rationalists like me that worship has informed the deepest instincts of the church's biblical interpreters. He also introduced me to my favorite contemporary theological commentary: Lesslie Newbigin's *The Light Has Come* (1982). Miroslav Volf and Stanley Hauerwas have mentored me in theological interpretation just by teaching, writing, and living. John O'Keefe and Rusty Reno represent patristic exegetical habits in a way that has transformed my students' and my appreciation for precritical interpretation. Robert Alter is a master of Hebrew narrative and poetry whose literary instincts are a godsend and an inspiration to students wearied by the artificialities of some styles of biblical criticism, while Richard Bauckham and Marianne Meyé Thompson analyze scriptures historically and theologically in ways that simultaneously honor the gifts of contemporary critical insight and expose its vices. Reuven Hammer's translation and commentaries in *The Classic Midrash* (1995), Hammer's edition and translation of *Sifre* (1986), and Abraham Joshua Heschel's *Heavenly Torah* (2005) all display the vanishing (and, among many Christians, vanished) art of reading Israel's Bible as what Peter Gomes calls “the lively oracles of God.”

While my approach here differs from the conventional critical commentary form, I owe a vast debt to critical commentaries on Deuteronomy and the whole Torah. Contemporary Jewish commentaries are particularly rich, treating the Torah both as a text of ancient Israel and as a living covenant. Jeffrey Tigay's JPS Torah Commentary (1996) is a treasure—a goldmine of critical, literary, and traditional

exegesis. If you read a critical commentary alongside this one (and you should), Tigay's is an excellent choice. Robert Alter's *The Five Books of Moses* (2004) and Richard Elliott Friedman's *Commentary on the Torah* (2001) offer two delightful translations of the Masoretic Text, along with commentaries engaged with both scholarly and contemporary Jewish questions. Among other one-volume commentaries I have found Richard D. Nelson's Old Testament Library commentary (2002) and Walter Brueggemann's Abingdon Old Testament Commentary (2001) repeatedly helpful. We are truly God-blessed to live in an age with such voices.

My greatest debt of gratitude goes to Robert Jenson and Rusty Reno, who entrusted me with one of the volumes in their pathbreaking Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, and to Brazos Press for publishing the series. It is a privilege even to be able to *read* the holy scriptures. To have as one's career the task of reading the Bible better and helping others do the same is the work of a teacher, and that is grace upon grace. To be able to write a commentary, let alone a theological commentary on the blueprint of the whole canon, is just *awesome*. And I mean that in both the literal sense of the word and its southern Californian spiritual sense.

Rodney Clapp stayed patient and encouraging in the face of my ambitious (read: unworkable) ideas. Thanks, Rodney, for both the justice and the grace.

In the midst of her graduate school education, Danielle Garcia volunteered to read a draft of this whole volume and offered very helpful comments, suggestions, and observations of her own. George Sumner did the same, sending me a valuable list of corrections and pointers. My Westmont colleague Tremper Longman III read a draft of this book's early chapters, caught some truly embarrassing errors, and offered some much appreciated encouragement. With patience and care, David Aiken edited the manuscript, made a number of improvements, and caught a slew of inconsistencies. Joshua Nunziato did his usual splendid job compiling indexes. Sincere thanks to all of you. The howlers that remain are all my own.

Commentary format. My format aims to compress a lot of information conveniently and efficiently. Here is an explanatory legend:

¹Passages are reproduced or altered from the World English Bible.

²References to passages (6:4) and to notes on passages (→6:1–3) are embedded in the text or the commentary.

Plain Observations on the plain sense of the passage pertain to its literal or critical meaning, in its literary or historical context. Boldface words in the commentary on all four senses are reproduced or slightly adapted from vocabulary in the passage.

Faith Observations on the allegorical sense pertain to faith, ultimately in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Hope Observations on the analogical sense pertain to hope of the eschaton that stirs in Israel's return from exile, that approaches in the kingdom of God, and that culminates in the Son's return to judge and renew all things.

Love Observations on the moral or tropological sense of love concern guidance for the church, which signifies that kingdom.

While this is my usual ordering of the senses, observations may be listed in a different order that serves some dependence or progression across them.

Issues of translation. I have reproduced Deuteronomy from the World English Bible, an adaptation of the American Standard Version that has been placed in the public domain (ebible.org/web). While it retains a bit more of the awkward pomp of traditional biblical English than I usually prefer, it is literal enough to be useful for close readings and economical to reproduce. I have sometimes altered the text and punctuation for readability or where I have disagreed with the translation. The World English Bible's "Yahweh," usually rendered LORD in English, is YHWH here.

Translations of other biblical books sometimes follow the RSV, sometimes the NRSV, sometimes the NJPSV, sometimes my own translation—whatever accurate version lay at hand at the time.

Gendered nouns and pronouns present a stubborn problem in contemporary English. Contemporary translations often translate pronouns inclusively and circumvent awkward sexist language. This strategy comes at the price of sometimes distorting the underlying language or obscuring important terminology, as well as alienating readers of both sexes for whom the old-fashioned English inclusive masculine is intuitive and inoffensive. I know of no translation convention that has been wholly successful. So I translate Hebrew and Greek gendered terms that could or should be translated inclusively nowadays into the English inclusive masculine, while marking them with a superscript plus symbol (+). Since YHWH is beyond gender, I have done the same with pronouns referring to God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit (but not the incarnate Son). This allows the reader to judge for himself⁺ (read: "for himself or herself") whether and how to respect their inclusivity. Words that seem to refer only to males or only to females are not so marked. The superscript notations will grate on those who prefer inclusive masculines, while the masculine language will grate on those who prefer explicitly gender-inclusive English. I hope this device is irritating enough to everyone to communicate just how difficult it is to handle this translational dilemma in a way that satisfies more than one camp at a time.

Westmont College
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DEUTERONOMY 1

Plain Classic Jewish tradition rests on both the written Torah of the Pentateuch and the oral Torah given to Moses at Sinai. But Deuteronomy's opening verse, and others such as 4:2, construe oral Torah as the contents of Deuteronomy itself. **These words** are Moses's authoritative spoken interpretation of what was received at Sinai and what it means for his people. Deuteronomy sets them in a narrative frame from some future (monarchical? exilic?) age or ages. So do the prophetic, rabbinic, apostolic, and academic frames that follow. These settings did not originate on Sinai, nor do they need to. Teaching has always gone beyond mere transmission to involve (and so legitimate) understanding, wisdom, imagination, and courage. Deuteronomy's narrator possesses all of these, and more: determination that refuses to stop repeating the message until Israel really does learn and fear (→31:9–13); vision that assembles Israel's origins, immediate past, immediate future, possible as well as determinate legacies, eschatological horizon, and present day in a panorama so stunning that it practically orders the whole Jewish and Christian Bible; and a burning love for YHWH, Israel, holiness, the vulnerable, the nations, the land, and the traditions that carry these from their old homes across and near the Jordan to all who ache for the promises to be fulfilled.

Faith Jesus has not just fulfilled Moses's original **words**, whatever they may have been; he has fulfilled *the scriptures* (→32:40–43). He did this by trusting them, in life and death, as his Father's words to him as **all Israel's** Spirit-anointed Son. He bequeaths **these** fulfilled holy writings (Luke 24:27, 44–45) on all who preach his name (24:46–47) in the power of the Father's Spirit

1:1a These are the words
Moses spoke to all Israel

(24:48–49). He has not retired Moses's words from YHWH's service but has *unveiled* them for **all** to see and heed (cf. Deut. 32:35 and 28:64, echoed in Luke 21:20–31; →30:1–5).

Faith Moses's divinely authorized **speech** yields Deuteronomy's whole narrative. Likewise, the church does not need to pin every holy tradition in the time the apostles spent with Jesus before his ascension in order to honor his charge to teach all he has commanded his disciples (Acts 1:2), or to respect that **these** canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the God-breathed **words** with which they have done so.

Hope The final verse of Numbers (36:13) sets the stage for Deuteronomy. The close of the interval between exodus and entry is the setting of this teaching. Deuteronomy is both a conclusion and an introduction—an end to the old and a beginning for the new. The Apostle Paul treats it as an introduction written especially for us “on whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11 NRSV). Its New Testament analogue is the Gospels' saga—a veritable Pentateuch of the disciples' call-

ing, failure, remediation, restoration, witness, and pneumatic preparation for Jesus's long mission (Acts 1:8a). Deuteronomy is advice for a people preparing for their big event, from the sage who led them to it. We are that people (→34:10–12).

Hope In this fullness of time our sage is among us even more truly than **Moses** in his day (→1:1b). Christ is YHWH, Moses, Joshua, and Israel all in one. He takes on every role in a play with a cast of thousands (Gal. 3:15–4:7). He has seen us through our trials, has persevered despite our doubt, has suffered for our folly, has prevailed when we have drawn back, has put us in our right minds, has restored us to our task, and has commanded all of us to enter into his Father's and his fathers' inheritance with the time his Father has given us (Acts 1:7).

Love With story, command, law, song, pleading, and silence, Deuteronomy probes the depths of the relationship between the bride and our bridegroom. Diligent readers will find its pages a mirror in which we can see who we truly are, in all our depravity and all our promise, and learn how to act accordingly (Jas. 1:23–24). Moses did not speak just to Israel's appointed leaders (cf. Deut. 1:9–18) or to one generation (→1:19; →27:9–10), but to a collective identity that exceeds both. Jesus's disciples too were charged to take his words to **all Israel** and then to all the earth (Acts 1:8b). Neither the gospel nor the Torah is for just a few—for only peoples in the ancient Near East, gnostic elites, professional clergy, religious eras or subcultures, or the spiritually disposed. It orders the whole lives of whole fellowships: families, cities, tribes, inner consciences, and ages. “Repentance and forgiveness of sins” (Luke 24:47 NRSV)—“peace and mercy” (Gal. 6:16a)—are offered not in only one place or age, but to “all who walk by [his] rule . . . the Israel of God” (6:16b RSV).

^{1:1b}beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Di-zahab.

Faith The geography moves southward through the Sinai Peninsula, as if to recall the first years following Sinai. Many of these places are likely settings for earlier words from Moses. Deuteronomy is a final summary of what Moses has been teaching all along. He does not suddenly become Israel's teacher at the conclusion of his life, like a parent determined to compensate all at once for years of inattention. John 2:22 reveals similar continuity in Jesus's teaching.

Hope Deuteronomy's readers are not with Moses **in the wilderness**. Nor are we farther east in Babylonian exile, as modern critical reconstructions intimate. Deuteronomy sets us in the promised land (→2:10–12). It takes us as Canaan's residents back to the long train of events that fulfilled God's promises and forward to the long train of our own catastrophic failures to respond faithfully—without ever surrendering our rightful place of residence.

Love Suph has traditionally been understood as the Sea of Reeds or Red Sea, though critics now differ. The exodus is now far away, worth only (perhaps) a secondary mention in this introduction! First Cor. 10:1–2 reflects this priority: Israel was transformed “in the cloud and in the sea.” The wilderness was literally a death and rebirth for Israel, with Sinai its point of departure (Deut. 1:2). Deuteronomy labors to develop and harvest the fruit of that baptismal transformation among its readers.

^{1:2}It is eleven days from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. ^{3a}In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month,

Hope Israel has taken **forty years** to travel the short distance from Sinai to the southern threshold of Canaan. The wilderness punishment and rehabilitation costs one generation its entry into the master's joy and delays another's. Nevertheless, after forty years Israel has made it. Sin's frustration is never total and never final. The long time we take to fulfill the will of the Father can always become a short time if we stop resisting. Wesleyan Arminians and sanctificationists can appreciate God's impatience and expectation of these **eleven days**, just as Lutherans and Calvinists can appreciate God's patience and determination in those forty years.

Love The northward journey from Sinai to Canaan through the Negev would have been faster than Israel's roundabout journey following the debacle at **Kadesh-barnea** (1:26–28). Yet entering Canaan through **Seir-Edom** and across the Jordan yields the additional blessing of land for Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (3:12–17). Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (Rom. 5:20).

Faith Jesus takes the harder and longer route. His **forty days** without food or drink are not southward at Sinai (Exod. 34:28), but eastward in the wilderness

(Luke 4:2). Rather than ascending immediately to face the glory of the Father, he follows the Spirit into the wasteland and faces the devil on our behalf.

^{1:3b}Moses spoke to the sons⁺ of Israel according to all (→4:1–2) YHWH had given him in commandment to them,

Faith In Exodus's scenes of lawgiving, God is the trustor and Moses the trustee (e.g., 19:3–25). That scene returns when the disciples, like Moses, climb the mountain to receive the Lord Jesus's teaching (Matt. 5:1–2). In Deuteronomy the roles shift: Moses is the trustor and Israel is the trustee and beneficiary. This scene returns with Jesus in the wilderness heeding Moses's words (→6:13–16 and →8:1–5 in Matt. 4:1–11) and later when he instructs his disciples to teach along with him in their cities (10:5–7; 11:1). So is Jesus a divine authority or a human one? A prophet, or more than a prophet (11:9)? Emmanuel is both. At once trustor, trustee, and beneficiary, Jesus speaks Torah *and* hears it *and* passes it along. Torah is God's commandment of Christ (→30:11–16 in Rom. 10:4–9) for instructing the apostles, and through him and them all of God's people (→25:4 in 1 Cor. 9:1–14).

Hope Moses's instruction is set in a season of intense expectation. Like a confirmation homily and like Jesus's last words to his disciples just before his passion in John 14–16, his long review orients God's people to what is coming soon.

^{1:4}after he had struck Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth, at Edrei (2:24–3:11). ^{5a}Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab (29:1),

Plain Despite the paragraphing of many translations, a flashback begins in 1:4 that runs through the end of Deut. 3 and sets the stage for Deut. 4.

Faith Who **struck** these kings, Moses or YHWH? The antecedent is ambiguous both grammatically and theologically. YHWH alone is credited for these victories (3:24); however, Israel under Moses (3:3) and later Joshua (3:28) can also be named as conquerors. Considering only one of these the antecedent does not respect the cooperative character of this work of Israel's sovereign lord. Nor does it respect the unity of divine and human through which Joshua's namesake will defeat sin and death.

Hope Of all the many events of the wilderness wanderings, why make **Moab** the setting and subject of the first discourse? Because these strikes conclude the age of Israel's frustration after its failure to trust YHWH to fight. Though minor compared to, say, Sinai, they are proleptic fulfillments that rekindle hope in an otherwise unpromising present. Similar smaller-scale events early in the Gospels and Acts anticipate the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension at the center of Jesus's story. Dismissing either set of preliminaries as insignificant or fixing on them as climactic is eschatologically mistaken.

Love Heshbon, Ashtaroth, and Edrei are the Transjordanian homelands of two-and-one-half tribes of Israel. For them these victories are not just foreshadowing.

Likewise, for the paralytic of Mark 2:1–12, Jesus is bringing salvation, not just setting the stage for even greater things. Some in the story receive their most tangible benefits long before the story's climax. They deserve recognition as goals of grace rather than just signs of greater grace. Yet they must appreciate that grace *does* increase—to heed the rest of Deuteronomy, as it were. Otherwise they are liable to remain content with their lesser blessings and forget the kingdom's other beneficiaries and greater blessings.

^{1:5b}Moses began to explain this Torah, saying:

Plain In Deuteronomy the **Torah** is not five written texts but the content of God's commandments (4:2), decrees (4:45), laws, and rules (4:1) as interpreted through Moses and delivered in a book to the Levites (→31:9–13).

Faith Moses draws on his skill, experience, and wisdom to **explain** God's instructions. He is not just a relay of God's words but their authoritative interpreter. His tactics include reworking, simplifying, and changing what look like earlier traditions (e.g., Exod. 18:13–26 and Num. 11:14 in Deut. 1:9–15; and Num. 20:1–13 in Deut. 1:37). These are his prerogatives, as long as he acts faithfully. In committing his **Torah** to writing and canonizing it as part of *the* Torah—which Jesus himself respects as God's word to him—Israel and the church acknowledge his faithfulness and distinguish biblical prophecy from the kind that dominates in Islam, where the Qur'an's human traits can be treated as marginal if not embarrassing.

Love The term **began** has the sense “determined.” The passage highlights both Moses's effort as a teacher and his courage (cf. Gen. 18:27, 31). It is one of Deuteronomy's many signs of Moses's fierce love of his people. These are constitutive virtues for a rabbi. So it is no surprise to find similar efforts and attitudes in Saul of Tarsus and especially in Jesus, who “began” (*ἔρξατο*, using the same word as Deut. 1:5 Septuagint) to explain his fulfillment of Isa. 61:1–2 at the synagogue at Nazareth before his congregation cut him off (Luke 4:16–22).

^{1:6}YHWH our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: “You have lived long at this mountain (2:3): ^{7a}turn and take your journey,

Faith Israel's time at Sinai did not give Israel the courage to conquer its fears at Kadesh-barnea (1:22–28), and more time would not have helped. Retreat for spiritual preparation is necessary but not sufficient for a life of faith, and more is not always better. Excess is one of the spiritual abuses that Jesus warns his disciples (Matt. 6:7–15) and Paul warns the Corinthians about (1 Cor. 12–14).

Hope Sinai is a stop, not a destination. A mystic might consider Sinai the pinnacle of Israel's experience with God, but YHWH prefers Israel to have a good home. In fact, Israel must **turn** and go in order not to turn away again from God (→1:40; →1:46–2:1; →10:6–11). Likewise, for Jesus's witnesses Jerusalem is the point of departure for their travels to the end of the earth (Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:6–11). The land is critical at all points of both missions.

Love God did not say: “**You have lived long with me.**” No sacred space contains YHWH (Isa. 66:1–2 in Acts 7:44–50). The Holy Spirit accompanies Israel and later Israel’s Messiah as the leader of its wilderness journey (cf. Luke 4:1).

^{1:7b}and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all the places near there, in the Arabah, in the hill country, and in the lowland and in the Negev, and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites (Num. 13:29), and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

Faith The **Amorites** live in the heart of future Israel, but the **Arabah** is Edomite territory, the **Negev** is a desert waste, the coastal lands are Philistine, and **Lebanon** and the **Euphrates** become troublesome borders. God is calling Israel to a life of trust in *all* situations—better or worse, richer or poorer, sickness or health.

Hope Some of the **places** on this itinerary are on the way; others belong to the promised land; others name its farthest boundaries. At the outset of the journey God discloses a future narrative whose shape is greater than just a migration or even a homecoming. “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2 NRSV).

Love Israel’s interactions with neighbors are ultimately more noteworthy than its domestic life. Israel is a witness not only of YHWH’s love of the patriarchs but for YHWH’s power beyond Israel’s borders (Mal. 1:5) and the **great river** (Rev. 9:14).

^{1:8}Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land YHWH swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their seed after them (→4:36–39; →11:8–15; →34:1–4).”

Faith Only as Israel heeds God’s word to turn toward the **land** is it set **before** them.

Love As a God of not the dead but the living (Matt. 22:32), he⁺ not only remembers the patriarchs but continues to set their names at the center of his⁺ mercy on their descendants (→2:4–5; →5:8–10). Likewise, the Father’s blessings on disciples today are blessings on the Living One (Rev. 1:17–18).

^{1:9}I spoke to you at that time, saying: “I am not able to bear you myself alone (→31:1–8). ¹⁰YHWH your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky (Gen. 15:5; →26:1–11; →28:58–63a) for multitude. ¹¹YHWH, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are, and bless you, as he has promised you! ¹²How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? ¹³Take wise men of understanding and experience according to your tribes, and I will make them heads over

you.”¹⁴You answered me and said: “The thing that you have spoken is good to do.”

Faith Moses’s inability cannot be logistical; he has already led Israel out of Egypt to Sinai with YHWH providing spiritual food and drink (Exod. 16–17 in 1 Cor. 10:3–4), and it is only eleven days to Canaan. The problem is deeper. Moses is worried not about the Canaanite threat (Deut. 1:29–30) but about Israel’s internal dynamics. His concerns are well placed; the next story reveals that Israel’s group psychology is its own worst enemy and that he is caught up in it himself (→31:1–8). So it is in Paul’s churches (1 Cor. 10:5–13): they have Christ’s provision (10:16–17; 11:26) and even the Spirit (12:1–13) but lack decency and order (14:40).

Love God had been fulfilling the old **promises** even while Israel was crying out in captivity (Heb. 11:12–14). The nation’s numbers now loom as a threat to fulfillment’s next stage. The peril of grace is a pervasive Deuteronomic and biblical theme. Wisdom yields prosperity that numbs and distracts (Luke 12:13–21; Rev. 3:17–18). Free grace tempts the justified to sin freely (Rom. 6:1). Family puts loyalty before lordship (Luke 14:26; →1:26–28). Moses’s solution is not to resist the grace (e.g., postponing children and reducing family sizes, as both ascetics and the wealthy do today), but to welcome the further blessing of wisdom for handling it. Yet in Deuteronomy’s narrative this move fails (1:22–28), because all the wisdom, understanding, and experience in Israel’s structures of justice only constrain rather than overcome its internal disorder and **strife** (→4:9–10). Only love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:7 NRSV). The wilderness generation has shown precious little of it, and its lovelessness destroys it. Its saga is Torah for us “on whom the ends of the ages have come” (10:11 NRSV), because lovelessness is deadly in any generation and any age.

^{1:15}So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men and experienced, and made them as heads over you, captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers, according to your tribes. ¹⁶I commanded your judges at that time, saying: “Hear the cases between your brothers⁺, and judge righteously between a man⁺ and his⁺ brother⁺ and the foreigner with him⁺. ^{17a}You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated, for the judgment is God’s.

Faith Moses establishes a consensual and just political order for the brief journey to the promised land under his leadership, which is not unlike the arrangement for life in the land (→16:18–17:1). Respect for the reality of God’s just reign underpins **wise** discernment, fair **judgment**, and courageous action. Instead, unchecked and self-serving subjectivity paralyzes Israel in the next passage, and corruption erodes landed Israel from within.

Hope The ban on intimidation has the form of a commandment but the hint of a prophecy. The wicked who have “no fear of God before their eyes” (Ps. 36:1 NRSV in Rom. 3:18) do not **intimidate** those who know YHWH’s saving judgments (Ps. 36:6). Those who rest their hope in God’s determinations, like Joshua and Caleb in the following verses, are “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37 NRSV).

Love Why does it follow from **God’s judgment** that **brothers**⁺ (fellow Israelites; →2:4–8) and **foreigners** should be treated impartially? The nations’ deities are supporters of clan loyalty and champions of the already great, but Israel’s God is associated with impartiality because of who he⁺ is: the God of love before whom *all* are beloved neighbors.

1:17^b And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.” 18ⁱ I commanded you at that time all the things you should do.

Hope After Jesus’s ascension Peter gets the church’s political affairs in order and waits in the city for the Holy Spirit to come and lead his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:15–26).

Love Moses maintains his leadership under the new system as supreme judge; in the land leaders will bring cases to the central authorities (→17:8–13). Paul appoints leaders in churches he is leaving but still intervenes from afar when necessary (1 Cor. 6; Gal. 1). Judgment “begins with us” in God’s household (1 Pet. 4:17). A disordered or overwhelmed Israel is not fit as a missionary of God’s power either in or out of the promised land. Justice and holiness within God’s fellowships are both goals and grounds of future hope. So Peter’s treatise on Christian mission in our time of wandering concludes with a command for just and humble church leadership (5:1–11).

Love *Sifre Deuteronomy* 2.10 on 1:3 calls Deuteronomy Moses’s parting rebuke to Israel. If Deuteronomy is a rebuke, it is one delivered out of fierce dedication to the welfare of its audiences. This passage hints at Moses’s full commitment to Israel’s total political and spiritual readiness for its new life and his patience through **all** its failures. Training both these leaders and their people at the journey’s outset is an even more important political task than hearing difficult cases; and forty years later, Moses’s pastoral ambition remains undiminished (→4:1–2). The prophets, the apostles, and their common Messiah share this gift of the long-given Spirit of fellowship and use it proportionately (Rom. 12:6–8).

1:19^a We traveled from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as YHWH our God commanded us. And we came to Kadesh-barnea.

Faith Moses’s audience has not literally **seen** or **come** (1:35), but through tradition the sight, arrival, and memory are truly theirs (→26:1–11). However, this is not the only way to read Moses’s use of pronouns. The converse is also true: through

living tradition, past and future generations are included along with the present one in Moses's *whole* audience. This device extends through 2:1. Living and dead alike tell and hear, as well as resist and accept, the good news of God.

Hope Another demonstrative pronoun reminds the audience of how intimidating the first days of their journey from Sinai were. If Israel made it through **that great wilderness** as God commanded, how much more could they have fulfilled God's command to cross this border and possess the land! We too stand on an eschatological borderland between having been justified and someday being saved (Rom. 5:9–10). Cooperation with Israel's faithful God makes suffering a factory of endurance, then character, then hope that does not disappoint (5:3–5).

Love The last tale in 1:9–18 prepares for the one that begins here at **Kadesh-barnea**. Success (reaching the border) and failure (drawing back) are juxtaposed to focus present and future audiences on the life-and-death consequences of how they respond to these words (→30:11–16). As mentors build up the inexperienced by reminding of minor past successes **on the way**, so prophets and psalmists pass on to their audiences a legacy of triumph as well as defeat. Tempering each with the other is a key to telling the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Here Moses coaxing Israel into the land prefigures the apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers who raise up the body of Christ to full stature (4:11–13).

¹²⁰I said to you, "You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which YHWH our God is giving us. ²¹Behold, YHWH your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as YHWH the God of your fathers has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Plain At this point Moses is still allowed to enter.

Faith The divine assurance **not to fear** pervades the Bible from Genesis (15:1) to Revelation (1:17). Often it precedes good news of a deliverance or a mercy that hearers might be too intimidated to grasp. Its uses in Deuteronomy (3:2, 22; 7:18; 31:8) give a variety of warrants for Israel not to fear, but all converge on God's trustworthiness. Moses has learned this firsthand, so he does not softly suggest—"let us not fear" or "let us go up"—but commands. Unlike the rest, Joshua obeys his command to **take possession** rather than fearing (1:38). Joshua's messianic namesake follows his example, entering the land obediently and thus victoriously on behalf of his people (Phil. 2:8–10). In turn, with the exceptions of the angels in the Gospels' infancy narratives and 1 Pet. 3:14, Jesus is the only one in the New Testament who tells us not to fear.

Hope What Moses does **fear** is God's anger (9:19 in Heb. 12:21). That is not the place to which we **have come** in Christ (12:18–20), but to Jesus and his church and to the joy of the new covenant's every fulfillment (12:22–24).

Love "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts away fear; for fear involves punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love" (1 John 4:18, my translation). Israel's downfall and ours (Heb. 12:25) is unreciprocated love.

At the threshold of the gift **God has set before** us we turn away in fear (Deut. 1:28). Its new opportunity and ours is the grace of a truly reciprocal love in the Father's beloved and loving Son. "We [can] love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19 NRSV).

^{1:22}You came near me, all of you, and said: "Let us send men before us, that they may search the land for us, and bring us word of the way by which we must go up, and the cities to which we shall come."²³The word pleased me well, and I took twelve men from you, one man for every tribe.²⁴And they turned (→1:6–7a) and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out.²⁵They took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down to us, and brought us word and said: "It is a good land that YHWH our God is giving us."

Faith The account in 1:22–45 condenses memories or traditions from Num. 13–14 to offer a contrary narrative, rooting the desire for spying out the land in the people rather than YHWH. For instance, contrary to Num. 13:1–2, in Deuteronomy the Israelites ignore the chain of command just established and go to Moses as a group. Here we meet the kind of threat that Deut. 1:12 alludes to and that Exodus and Numbers repeatedly chronicle. The multitude of Israel threatens order when it becomes a foolish and frustrating mob. A fickle crowd will similarly deal injustice rather than wisdom to Jesus (Luke 23:18–25).

Faith Whether out of eagerness or overconfidence, Moses relaxes his own procedure. In accepting the people's recommendation (cf. Num. 13:17–21), he earns a share of the blame for the debacle that follows (Deut. 1:37). His efforts to retroject a semblance of order into the situation with **twelve men** are ineffectual. Discernment is a communal office.

Faith Moses expects the spies to find evidence of God's goodness, and they do. **Eshcol** is an especially fruitful valley. Despite the dubious nature of the mission, God still leads the spies to the best land. This makes Israel's dismay that much more egregious.

Hope Israel did not spy out the "great and terrifying wilderness" (1:19). God has led the way until now. With the land finally in view, the nation suddenly feels the need for others to go **before** them. Why? As 1:41 confirms, Israel thinks war is its own affair—for YHWH to assist rather than lead, let alone win on his⁺ own. Spiritual food and drink are one thing; battle against earthly cities and appropriation of territory is another! The Constantinian church drew a similar dichotomy, seizing the sword from God's hand and assuming his⁺ blessing for its ambitions. In reaction, today's postcolonial church exhibits 1:22's cagey timidity, spying out prospects and pursuing only the campaigns it thinks easy. Neither triumphalism nor defeatism is a sustainable alternative to hope.

Love Used three times in this brief passage and once shortly afterward, **word** holds together the good words of all the people, Moses, and the spies. Moses highlights the news that is encouraging, yet Israel uses the same report to rebel against the word of YHWH (1:26). In →26:1–11 Moses offers a more reliable way of combining produce and testimony to train Israel's narrative imagination and protect its inheritance.

^{1:26}Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the mouth of YHWH (→1:7b) your God. ²⁷And you murmured in your tents, and said: "Because YHWH hated us he⁺ has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. ²⁸Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our heart to melt, saying: 'The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to the sky. And moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim (→2:10–12) there.'"

Faith "Let me first say farewell to those at my home" (Luke 9:61 NRSV). Moses's plan backfires when the logic of tribal self-protection overpowers Moses's authority (→1:9–14). The report in Deuteronomy makes no mention of dangers, only that the land is good (1:25). Compared to Num. 13:27–33, Moses all but splits the report into two: a good word according to him and bad news according to the crowd. So the people's rebellion against God is rebellion against Moses and vice versa.

Hope The people do not take the matter to their leaders or to Moses for judgment (cf. 1:17), but grumble and panic in private. Israel's faithless heart leads it in the opposite direction of God's good news, missing the way to hope and melting in social disorder, despair, and nostalgia for slavery. Lack of trust estranges from God (Rom. 5:1), breeds discord with God, bars his⁺ grace, perceives trial as **hate**, **murmurs** in secret, and turns suffering into bitter disappointment (cf. 5:1b–5).

Love The people make no mention of the goodness of the land or the way of YHWH. With every phrase their analysis becomes more and more dire. By ignoring God's promise and presence they see only hazards. So they infer that **Egypt** was their security and God is their enemy. The deepest theological chasm seems to separate the theology of these two parties: faith, hope, and love versus distrust, despair, and hatred. Each side fixes on the evidence that confirms its convictions. Today believers and skeptics read the signs of the times in the same opposing ways.

^{1:29}Then I said to you, "Do not dread or be afraid of (→4:9–10) them. ³⁰YHWH your God who goes before you, he⁺ will fight for you, just as he⁺ did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness, where you have seen how YHWH your God bore you, as a man does

bear his son, in all the way you went until you came to this place.”³² Yet despite this word (→1:22–25) you did not believe YHWH your God, ³³who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to show you by what way you should go and in the cloud (→31:14–18) by day.

Faith It is God, not a party of spies, who really **goes before** Israel (1:22). And YHWH bearing Israel as a **son** is no mere analogy but a figure of Christ (→8:1–5). Indeed, YHWH has found places for the very **texts** in which the Hebrews murmur (1:27), providing even the room in which we doubt. YHWH above, his⁺ tabernacling son, and his⁺ revealing fire image the Spirit-led Son on the Father’s mission to recover the lost.

Faith To ignore the evidence of God’s favor and the assurance of his⁺ prophets is to **disbelieve** God himself⁺. The risen Jesus rebukes his faithless disciples on the road to Emmaus with an appeal to Moses, the prophets, and all the scriptures (Luke 24:25–27).

Hope Moses takes the word **way** from the people’s original request for spies (1:22) and repeats it three times to try to recall them to their original stated purpose: not to assess the risks and rewards of their venture but to discover the way of fulfillment. Unlike Israel, Moses sees consistency rather than discontinuity in God’s dealings on either side of the border. There is no dichotomy between providence in nature and providence in human affairs. He reminds them that **Egypt** was not a refuge but an oppressor. Divine wisdom, not human ingenuity, lifted Israel out of captivity and has sought the whole way to this point. Wisdom still leads the way and will overcome all the natural and social obstacles that lie ahead.

Love Committing God to **fight for** Israel poignantly reasserts God’s love after the people’s accusation. Yet this word turns out to be presumptuous. These things do not take place until this generation has passed away (3:22; 31:1–8). By comparison, Jesus assures his own rebellious generation that it will not pass away before his victory (Luke 21:17–19, 31–32), and he and his apostles indeed begin restoring them to justice within days of his resurrection (24:46–47; Acts 2:40).

¹³⁴YHWH heard the sound of your words and was angry, and swore, ³⁵“Surely not a man⁺ of these men⁺ of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give to your fathers, ³⁶except Caleb the son of Jephunneh (Num. 13:6, 30; 14:6–10; →33:7). He shall see it, and to him will I give the land he has trodden on, and to his children, because he has wholly followed YHWH.”

Faith Caleb literally “fully went after” YHWH. The imagery is spatial. Caleb trusts that God goes before him (1:30). His blessing, later extended to the next generation (→11:22–25), is that he will inherit all that he has stepped on (cf. 2:5)—all God has led him to.

Hope The land is good, but even the tone of the Hebrews' words is evil. Their generation will be denied, but Caleb's generations will inherit the promise. Moses wants his present audience to see what Caleb saw, walked, proclaimed, and now awaits.

Hope Not one except one? Following a generality with a particularity is a common device in the Torah. The *klal shehu tzarich lifrat* rule of later rabbinic exegesis extends the rule of the particularity to the generality. All who wholly follow YHWH are eligible for Caleb's blessing. For instance, his children would inherit the land with the rest of the descendants of Caleb's generation anyway. Their mention here is not superfluous, but an intensified blessing on account of God's approval of Caleb. As with God's curse of Eve (Gen. 3:16, 20), God embeds hope for all in an emphatic condemnation of all (→1:37–38). Paul follows the logic in drawing out the universal consequences of Israel's rejection and acceptance (Rom. 11:12, 30–32).

^{1:37}Also with me YHWH was angry because of you (→4:21–24), saying: "You also shall not go in there (→32:48–52).³⁸ Joshua the son of Nun (→33:12–17), who serves you, shall go in there. Strengthen him, for he shall secure it (→31:1–8) for Israel.

Faith Why does Moses not stand above this judgment? He has encouraged Israel rather than joining in the tribes' murmuring. However, he did not discern the root of Israel's wish to look ahead into the land; he approved the plan; he chose the surveyors; and his response to their rebellion was equal parts prophetic word, denial of the deeper problem that needed addressing, and wishful thinking. He shares responsibility for Israel's failure. Deuteronomy testifies to Moses's determination not to make the same mistake twice, for "he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8 NRSV).

Faith Meanwhile YHWH's confidence passes to Joshua. On first impression this seems to be a cruel personal humiliation: the great Moses, God's servant (3:24; 34:5), will decrease, and his mere servant will win the victory. The truth is the opposite: God will salvage Moses's work by raising up a worthy servant. The kingdom's great ones and especially its Savior serve not just God but all, even sinners (Matt. 20:25–28).

Hope In Numbers, Joshua is named only later (Num. 27:12–23), so these verses are out of the natural sequence of events. As God has contrasted Moses's generation with Caleb and his posterity, he⁺ contrasts Moses with Joshua, who will be the leader of Israel that Moses can no longer be. Throughout Israel's story God raises up new leaders when the old ones are too compromised (→32:48–52). With so much blood on his hands, David receives the promise of a son of peace to build the temple he longs for (1 Chr. 22:8–10). God chooses Matthias in the place of the apostle Judas Iscariot, who chose a place of his own (Acts 1:24–26). The last Adam's righteousness atones for the first Adam's trespass (Rom. 5:18). Joshua is God's providence for Moses and all of Moses's charge.

Love Like a lame-duck politician, Moses's new task is to prepare his successor (so 3:21; cf. 3:28). However, this does not diminish Moses's power or significance. Moses's new supporting role for Joshua magnifies his work. Israel's later infidelities reverse Joshua's conquests (1–2 Kings), but until all is accomplished the Torah will still stand (Matt. 5:17–18). Even Jesus calls for his disciples to stay and **strengthen him** as he prepares to win them their legacy (26:38). Even the smallest assistance in his name has eternal consequence (10:40–42).

^{1:39}Moreover your little ones, who you said should be a prey (Num. 14:1–4), and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.

Plain Sons are those not old enough to be warriors (2:14), that is, those under the age of twenty. The Talmud makes this the age of moral accountability. Students' maturation between entering college and graduating illustrates its wisdom.

Faith Ironically, the parents' desire to protect their infants and children from the land's enemies would corrupt them into the same disbelief and heresy (1:27). The one "who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34–39 NRSV).

Hope The kingdom is the future arriving in the present. So it belongs to such as these **little ones** (Matt. 19:14).

Love The most profound test of faith involves releasing one's own children to the costly call of discipleship. Our culture resists that sacrifice. We rationalize our hesitation as instinct, prudence, deference to individual spiritual conscience, and even love. But it is really a lack of trust. It breeds contempt for God the Father who carried and **gave** his⁺ only Son (1:31; 8:5; Rom. 8:32). It divides God's fellowship and would sell our **little ones** into slavery to the present age. Jesus assures his disciples of his profound identification with believing children (Matt. 18:5), fierce protection of them (18:6), and steadfast care of them (18:10–13). In Matthew's literary context it is familial love, not the usual lust or greed, that is a particularly powerful temptation to sin against the Father's will (18:7–9, 14). Father Abraham, who would cut off even his only son, is the Father's kind of parent (Gen. 22:1–19).

^{1:40}And you, turn, and take your journey (1:7; →2:1) into the wilderness by the way to the Sea of Reeds."

Faith Without God's confidence that it can take and hold the land he⁺ has given, Israel is now spiritually vulnerable to its enemies in the land and needs the protection of the terrifying **wilderness** (Gen. 3:21; 4:15).

Hope Israel is still facing the land—but in dread rather than hope. God now commands them to turn back on **the way** they came. To the suspicious this could

sound as if he⁺ has granted their muttered wish to return to slavery, but he⁺ really intends a baptismal renewal and retraining in their own identity.

Love And you means everyone, against most translations' "but you," meaning everyone else. After all, Joshua and Caleb must endure forty years of delay for which they were not responsible. The innocent suffer guilt's consequences too. The time will be well spent as Joshua receives the strength he needs to lead a better prepared Israel into its inheritance. "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp" (Heb. 13:12–13 RSV).

¹⁴¹Then you answered me, "We have sinned against YHWH. We will go up and fight, according to all YHWH our God commanded us." Every man of you put on his weapons of war and presumed to go up into the hill country. ⁴²YHWH said to me, "Tell them, Do not go up or fight; for I am not among you (31:17); lest you be struck before your enemies."

Plain Every man? Were even Caleb and Joshua caught up in Israel's war fever (→1:34–36)?

Faith The word **all** God has **commanded** is poignantly ironic. Israel now has two contradictory divine directives (1:21 and 1:40). Selective memory lets them couch their presumption in the language of obedience. If eisegesis reads into the Bible what the interpreter wants to find, "ectogesis" crosses out what the interpreter wishes were not there. Moses will prohibit both in →4:1–2. Like savage wolves, sinful teachers restore what has been superseded, supersede what still stands, overlook the inconvenient, and fix on the desirable. The problem is endemic in contemporary biblical studies, theology, and pastoral preaching. Children of guilty Catholics, trembling Lutherans, dour Calvinists, and zealous Wesleysans have become breezy universalists who, under the guise of faith, presume God's refusal to condemn. True exegesis trusts, heeds, and teaches the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26–32). And by obeying Deut. 1:40 the next generation will eventually become ready to obey 1:21 and fulfill God's whole counsel.

Faith The mob swings in an instant from defeatism to triumphalism (→1:22–25). Why the change? The Anakim are as tall as ever (1:28). Perhaps the **presumptuous** Hebrews now construe God as having commanded them to believe in themselves. Or perhaps God's rebuke has exposed insecurity and provoked them to arrogant self-defense. In Num. 14:42–44 the departing Israelites **go up** without the ark of the covenant, as if to prove they are capable of victory on their own. Here the soldiers **put on** their **weapons** without the spiritual preparation necessary before holy war (Deut. 20:1–4). They trust in their own strength and strategy and in God's unconditional solidarity with the oppressed. Either pride or shame could lead to this bizarre shift in group psychology, but not humility. "Lord, where are you going?' . . . 'Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will

follow afterward.’ . . . ‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you’” (John 13:36–37 NRSV).

Love Israel’s remorse and God’s warning are a devastating display of mutual spiritual estrangement. The people’s going up is no longer a partaking in God’s victory. Even their repentance and confession are not genuine—not from the Lord. The Spirit remains over the Hebrews as judge and protector, but the Spirit is **not among** them either to conquer or to convict (cf. John 16:8). The contrast with the kingdom’s powerful arrival in the Spirit-anointed Son is absolute (Luke 11:20–22). The correlation of divine presence, self-knowledge, and community strength continues in the conquest (Josh. 7:1–15), in the time of the judges (Judg. 10:6–16), and from the beginning to the end of the monarchy (1 Sam. 28:4–19; 2 Kgs. 24:18–25:7). It extends all the way to the apostolic present (Matt. 28:16–20; 1 Cor. 11:27–32; Jas. 3:13–4:10; Rev. 3:1–6; cf. 3:7–13).

¹⁴³So I spoke to you, and you did not listen; but you rebelled against the mouth of YHWH, and were presumptuous, and went up into the hill country. ⁴⁴The Amorites (Num. 14:41–45; Deut. 25:17–19) who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do and beat you down in Seir even to Hormah. ⁴⁵You returned and wept before YHWH, but YHWH did not listen to your voice or give ear to you.

Plain Israel **rebelled** earlier in word (1:26) and now rebels in deed (Matt. 21:28–32).

Faith Israel finally does “turn and travel”—in retreat (1:40). Moses delivers a relentless succession of humiliating images. Rather than being carried into its inheritance like a father’s son (1:31), Israel is chased and beaten like a panicked child (→28:20–26), and the army travels the last leg of its journey alone to the border and cries. It weeps out of profound sadness, not just defeat (Judg. 20:26; 21:2). **Hormah** is south of the hill country but still north of Kadesh-barnea. Here the word plays cruelly on its root *cherem*, the giving over to YHWH of the land taken in conquest. Self-deprecating accounts like these fill the pages of both Testaments. They testify to a people whom the prophets have taught to boast only in the things of its weakness (2 Cor. 11:30) and so only in the Lord who delivers in the midst of their own disasters (Jer. 9:22–23 in 1 Cor. 1:31).

Hope How will **that hill country** become “this good land” (4:22)? The audience’s physical location does not change in the course of Moses’s address. What changes is our spiritual location and thus our eschatological location. Sanctification will have once again placed the land within reach.

Love **The mouth of YHWH speaks**, and the people **do not listen**; the people **weep** but YHWH stops his⁺ **ears**. Deuteronomy warns of even worse alienation in the future (→31:14–18). Ruptures such as these call for a different kind of communication: absence and silence that will restore attentiveness (such as Paul’s

declaration of excommunication in 1 Cor. 5). Likewise, the long sequence of miscommunication between Jesus and his disciples comes to a head when Peter rebukes Jesus for speaking of the Son of Man's suffering and rejection, and Jesus in turn rebukes him as an adversary (Mark 8:31–33). Mystified disciples can be quiet, take up our crosses, and follow behind—or expect our shunning to be reciprocated on judgment day (8:34–38).