

Offprint From:

For Our Good Always
*Studies on the Message and Influence of
Deuteronomy
in Honor of Daniel I. Block*

Edited by

JASON S. DEROUCHIE, JASON GILE, and KENNETH J. TURNER

Winona Lake, Indiana
EISENBRAUNS
2013

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Printed in the United States of America

www.eisenbrauns.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

For our good always : studies on the message and influence of
Deuteronomy in honor of Daniel I. Block / edited by Jason S.
DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-1-57506-285-3 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Bible. Deuteronomy—Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Block,
Daniel Isaac, 1943– honouree. II. DeRouchie, Jason Shane, 1973–
editor of compilation.

BS1275.52.F67 2013

222'.1506—dc23

2013027379

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the
American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper
for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984. TMⓂ

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DeRouchie et al., eds., *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*
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Preface

No other book colors the tapestry of biblical thought like Deuteronomy. Its theological significance can scarcely be overstated, for it synthesizes pentateuchal theology, provided Israel a constitution for guiding their covenant relationship with Yahweh in the promised land, and served as a primary lens for later biblical authors to interpret Israel's covenant history.

In recent years, Deuteronomy scholarship has developed in significant ways. Many once held views are being questioned, as developments in biblical interpretation and world history are creating new queries and opening doors for fresh discovery and original proposals. Advances in rhetorical criticism and discourse analysis are proving useful for understanding the meaning of many passages and for assessing both diachronic and synchronic readings of the book. Deeper understanding of ANE literature, ideology, and historiography is drawing attention to Deuteronomy's content and raising new questions about its date and provenance. The sustained debate over the New Perspective on Paul has forced many to rethink old paradigms about law and gospel. Heightened interest in final form analysis, canonical criticism, and biblical theology has identified new vistas for viewing the message and role of the whole in Christian Scripture. In contemporary culture and history, increased environmental crises and devastations due to terrorism, abortion, poverty, sex trafficking, and the like have forced fresh assessment of ethical questions. The time seems right for a new study from evangelical scholars that wrestles with Deuteronomy from historical, literary, theological, and canonical perspectives.

Few OT scholars have worked so ably, carefully, and intentionally as Daniel I. Block to help the church and academy grasp the message of Deuteronomy. For well over a decade, he has devoted the bulk of his academic research to properly hearing the life-giving gospel of Moses in Deuteronomy. In the process, he has guided dissertations on the book, taught and preached the deuteronomic torah all over the world, and written numerous essays on the topic, which have now been collected into two accessible volumes: *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011); and *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book*

of *Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012). Block has also published an 800-page “pastoral” commentary titled *Deuteronomy* in Zondervan’s NIVAC series (2012), and he is considering a more developed two-volume *Deuteronomy* commentary that would in many respects rival his earlier two-volume commentary on *The Book of Ezekiel* in Eerdman’s NICOT series.

In the sea of OT studies, Daniel Block’s scholarship has been a beacon for many, guiding the developing student, the alert pastor, and the thoughtful scholar safely into the harbor of God’s life-giving word. Block’s studies always exhibit a unique balance of exegetical rigor, literary and theological awareness, and pastoral care—all for the glory of God. And it is because this man has set his heart to study, practice, and teach God’s word so faithfully within his home, the church, and the academy (Ezra 7:10) that we honor him with this volume on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

An Overview of the Book

With a title adapted from Moses’ statement in Deut 6:24, *For Our Good Always* is a collection of new essays on the message of *Deuteronomy* and its influence on Christian Scripture. These studies from a range of evangelical perspectives come from an international group of specialists made up of Daniel Block’s colleagues, friends, and former students. Many contributors are leaders in their areas of interest, and this volume has allowed them to show how their specializations overlap with the study of *Deuteronomy*. Other scholars are younger, some Block’s former students, who are here summarizing or building upon their previous work for the benefit of the broader world. All who have contributed to this project (and others who were unable) are delighted to honor Daniel Block with this volume and are so grateful to God for the way this man has served as a steward of God’s grace into our lives and into the broader world (1 Pet 4:10–11).

Part 1: The Message of Deuteronomy

The first of this volume’s three parts includes ten essays that address the message of *Deuteronomy* proper. The initial five studies deal with foundational issues related to the book’s interpretation. Alan Millard, Daniel Block’s doctoral father, opens the collection by comparing *Deuteronomy*’s history writing to ancient chronicles and treaties, and his observations provide provocative implications for the book’s dating. Richard S. Hess then relates the biblical portrait of the Canaanites with

extra-biblical evidence in order to provide a balanced understanding of the nature of the Canaanite wickedness that Deuteronomy views as the ground for Yahweh's divine judgment. Harry A. Hoffner Jr. identifies several examples of admonitions within Hittite legal material in order to show that the pentateuchal literature follows contemporary practice in mixing anecdotal accounts of defiance and divine response with legal and judicial data. Peter T. Vogt then provides a new argument for a pre-monarchic dating of Deuteronomy by considering the implications of implied audience within the book. Next, Gordon J. Wenham assesses the tension within Deuteronomy between that which is ethically or theologically desirable and that which the law can realistically enforce; along the way he shows how the penal sanctions defined for ancient Israel what was tolerable behavior.

The remaining five essays in Part 1 address specific texts or themes in Deuteronomy but do so in a way that sets trajectories for broader reflection on the message and significance of the book as a whole. Jason S. DeRouchie reassesses the proper enumeration of the Decalogue and argues that a modified Catholic-Lutheran model is most faithful to the discourse grammar and finds support from the perspective of style, semantic content, and cantillation. J. Gordon McConville then explores the meaning and life-encompassing implications of God's external words being "kept in the heart" (Deut 6:6). Next, Jerry Hwang provides a rhetorical study of Deuteronomy 9–10, reflecting on the ideological purposes that guided the imaginative depiction of Horeb and considering what implications this reinterpretation has for the literary relationship between Deuteronomy and the narratives in Exodus. Rebekah Josberger places Deut 21:10–14 within its cultural and literary context, and argues that, rather than endorsing the abuse of subjugated women in the context of war, it actually seeks to restrict the rights of the head of household in order to safeguard the weaker members of society. Finally, Kenneth J. Turner carefully synthesizes Deuteronomy's theology of exile and unpacks how it provides the necessary framework for understanding the book's eschatological vision of restoration as Israel's resurrection from the dead.

Part 2: The Influence of Deuteronomy

With nine essays, Part 2 investigates the influence of Deuteronomy on specific texts or whole books within the Prophets, Writings, and New Testament. Michael A. Grisanti overviews the development of and challenges to the concept of the "Deuteronomistic History," and then proceeds to summarize the linguistic and thematic influence

Deuteronomy had on the Historical Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. H. G. M. Williamson then analyzes the possible linguistic and ideological influence of Deuteronomy on Isaiah, assuming the standard higher-critical views on the history and composition of both books. Michael Graves explores how the account of the burning of Jeremiah's scroll (Jeremiah 36) builds on Deuteronomy's theology of writing, particularly that the authority of the written word is dependent upon the internalization of the word of Yahweh. Jason Gile then considers the image of scattering as a motif for exile in Deuteronomy and Ezekiel and argues for the priority of Deuteronomy with respect to the direction of dependence.

In the unit on the Writings, Christopher B. Ansberry argues that the deuteronomic torah likely influenced Job's ethical vision in light of the distinctive sources of knowledge within the Joban dialogue and the apparent role of deuteronomic thought in Job's epistemology. Richard Schultz then utilizes recent approaches in intertextuality to show that the outlook of Ecclesiastes, including that of Qoheleth the sage and of the final editor, is compatible with the theology of Deuteronomy. Next, Gary V. Smith focuses on the theological impact of Deuteronomy on the prayers of Ezra (ch. 9) and Nehemiah (ch. 1), showing that both Ezra's more pessimistic outlook and Nehemiah's more optimistic outlook are based on Deuteronomy's multifaceted portrayal of covenant relationship.

Grant R. Osborne examines the so-called "temptation narrative" in Luke 4:1–13 and demonstrates how its backdrop—the larger context of Deuteronomy 6–8—invites us to see Jesus as both victor over cosmic powers and exemplar for disciples to follow. Finally, Douglas Moo focuses on two Pauline quotations of Deuteronomy (Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10; Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–8), showing that the apostle finds larger theological contours of law and grace in the words of Moses.

Part 3: The Lasting Significance of Deuteronomy

Part 3 provides six trajectory-shaping essays that consider the lasting significance of Deuteronomy for Christian preaching and ethics. Jason S. DeRouchie follows up his earlier essay on the Decalogue with a sequel: a passionate and pastoral plea for Christians to reflect theologically on and apply practically the Ten Words in light of the work of Christ. In consideration of various approaches to applying OT law to Christian ethics, M. Daniel Carroll R. proposes a theology of immigration based on Deuteronomy's view of the sojourner. Elmer A. Martens then reflects on the sermons in Deuteronomy 4 and Jeremiah 7 in order

to highlight rhetoric and themes that ought to be emulated by preachers today. Daniel L. Akin's sermon on Deut 18:15–22 considers this text's relevance and application for biblical prophets and modern preachers, but points to Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of "the prophet like Moses." Myrto Theocharous, who herself is involved with fighting human trafficking in Greece, provides a sensitive, provocative, and timely application of the kidnapping prohibition in Deut 24:7 to the church's fight against this modern evil. Finally, with the expected warmth of a former student, Pastor Thomas H. McClendon Jr. synthesizes Daniel Block's understanding of the theology of Deuteronomy by rehearsing Block's writings on Deuteronomy's vision in four areas: word, worship, leadership, and missions.

Words of Thanks

This Festschrift would not have been possible without the backing of many others. We wish to thank Jim Eisenbraun for his enthusiastic support of this project. His admiration for Dan made this a fitting partnership. We are grateful to Ellen Block, who supported the project at many stages. Even more, we admire her life-long, faithful devotion to Dan and her relentless support of all his endeavors. We also acknowledge our families, who have graciously helped us balance our commitments to them with our teaching, writing, and church commitments. Finally, we pray that this volume expresses our appreciation to Daniel Block, for modeling what it means to be a godly scholar, teacher, husband, and father. May our God, who has worked enduring good for us in Jesus Christ, use this volume for his glory and for the advancement of his kingdom.

JASON S. DEROUCHIE
JASON GILE
KENNETH J. TURNER

July 2013