

**DEUTERONOMY'S PLACE**  
**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLACIAL STRUCTURE OF DEUTERONOMY**

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## ABSTRACT

The study of place in Deuteronomy is often centred around issues related to the chosen place. In recent years, scholars in a variety of disciplines have developed an interest in the nature of place and in place's influence on individuals and society. Their research suggests that within Deuteronomic studies, the traditional conversations about the chosen place do not adequately address the full complexity of Deuteronomy's place.

This study investigates place as conveyed in Deuteronomy using a philosophical and sociological understanding of place. The interdisciplinary approach highlights the multiple factors that contribute to the intricate structure of place. The first half of the study begins with analysing the creation narratives that underscore the importance of Israel's participation in placemaking and also the use of memory to create the ethical motivator for dwelling together in place. The second half of the study focuses on the law code and the internal placial structure built on a mutual relationship between the chosen place and rest of the land.

The analysis reveals that Deuteronomy understands place as something bigger and more intricate than the chosen place. The centralising programme in Deuteronomy challenges a tribal and localised perspective of place and also a politicised and centralised perspective of place that diverts responsibility from the majority of the people. Deuteronomy diminished the importance of an elite class of society, including the king who is not given a significant physical or social place to bolster his authority. Israel possesses the land as caretakers of the gift God has given to all the people, and they dwell in the land with the chosen place at the centre of society and with the rigorous demands to maintain purity throughout the land. Deuteronomy makes all the people liable for one another and for the non-human creation in their care.

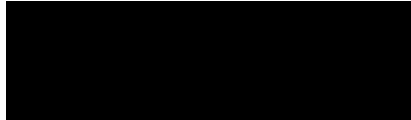


## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out according to the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Anchor Bible Commentary
AJSLL	<i>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ASR	<i>American Sociological Review</i>
AUS	American University Studies
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>The Catholic Bible Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
EC	Epworth Commentaries
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HTKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
JAC	<i>Journal of Ancient Civilizations</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JSOT	<i>The Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NAC	The New American Commentary
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIVAC	The NIV Application Commentary
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RC	<i>Religion Compass</i>
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series

OTL	The Old Testament Library
SBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Jeff Malpas states, ‘there is no possibility of understanding human existence—and especially human thought and experience—other than through an understanding of place and locality.’<sup>1</sup> Place is everywhere, and people are always in place, but its sheer ubiquitousness can beguile people into thinking that place is simply a backdrop to life. Place orients the human existence. Place connects humans and gives them a sense of belonging and rootedness. Place contextualises people and makes dynamic, social interactions possible. Place affects people and yet can be structured and affected by those living within it, creating a mutually dependent relationship. Therefore, understanding what it means to be human is connected to understanding place. In his article ‘Rethinking Dwelling,’ Malpas says:

[T]hat we belong to place is to affirm the way in which our own identity, our own being, is inseparably tied to the places in and through which our lives are worked out—which means that we cannot understand ourselves independently of the places in which our lives unfold even though those places may be complex and multiple.<sup>2</sup>

In recent decades, scholars in disciplines such as architecture, ecology, geography, philosophy, and sociology have begun to examine the complexities of place from new perspectives, and these scholars are developing insightful theories regarding the nature and influence of place.<sup>3</sup> This research, in turn, has affected biblical studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15–16.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Malpas, ‘Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger and the Question of Place.’ *Environmental Architectural Phenomenology*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Winter 2014), 14.

<sup>3</sup> The conversation is also evolving at the grassroots level as many people are making the effort to notice and enjoy the particularities of place with the nuance and uniqueness of that which is local or regional. Take for instance the growing interest in Western, urban communities to forego cheap and convenient food in preference for local, seasonal produce. This trend is evident in the growing interest in farmers’ markets and ‘farm-to-fork’ restaurants. ‘Terroir’ has been a valued quality within the wine industry, and it is now informing consumers’ choices in a wide range of products such as honey, chocolate, coffee, and even microbrew beer.

The book of Deuteronomy is a natural partner in this place-filled conversation. Deuteronomy is rich with descriptions of physical geography; it specifies names of cities and gives details for routes traveled. The book names geographical regions and describes the physical quality of the terrain. In addition to these physical descriptions of place, Deuteronomy also addresses how to value, structure, and live in that specific place for the long-term benefit of people as well as non-human creation.

The significance of place in Deuteronomy has not gone unnoticed, but until recently, the conversation has focused primarily on the unnamed ‘chosen place’ around which Deuteronomy orients Israelite society. Early historical-critical studies identified the ‘chosen place’ with Jerusalem, which resulted in research that worked within the parameters of a small geographical territory and a defined historical period. The result has been a narrow understanding of place in Deuteronomy that relies heavily on a presupposed historical context. However, several scholars have challenged such geographical and historical restrictions, clearing the way for a more holistic study of place in Deuteronomy. The ‘chosen place’ is undoubtedly a significant part of Deuteronomy’s placial structure, but it is only one important piece of the whole. More can be learned by analysing the larger conception of place than by studying the function of the ‘chosen place’ within the larger framework.

The more nuanced the understanding of place, the more holistic the study of place can be in Deuteronomy. Therefore, drawing from the insights of scholars with diverse points of view is advantageous. The present study curates some of the placial conversations from sociology and philosophy to bring them to bear on a synchronic reading of Deuteronomy, a book highly attuned to and richly coloured by placial ideas. This study does not intend to discredit or ignore the diachronic features of the book but, instead, to focus on Deuteronomy’s version of place as received in the current form of the Masoretic text. Elements of historical and geographical studies will be applied to this reading, and selected texts will be studied using literary and theological methods of analysis to explore how place has been defined, shaped, and communicated in the book of Deuteronomy.

To this end, Chapter One has two primary aims. The first aim is to trace how place has been analysed in recent years and how a renewed interest in place in other



disciplines has impacted the study of place in biblical scholarship. The philosophical analyses done by Edward Casey and Jeff Malpas will be particularly important in this study. The second aim is to review how place has been addressed in Deuteronomic scholarship. This chapter includes a discussion of the historical critical interpretation of the 'chosen place' in Deuteronomy 12 and the recent scholarship that challenges such views. The goal is to recognise the complexity of place and to embrace alternative points of view on the placial structure in Deuteronomy.

Chapter Two describes the physical characteristics of the eastern Mediterranean seaboard with an emphasis on the land of the Bible. As this research accepts Malpas' claim that human life and thought is 'place bound,'<sup>4</sup> this chapter is the first step to identify the particularities of the land that affects Israel's existence. This chapter answers the 'where' question of Israel's place. Place certainly encompasses more than physical location, but this is an essential component to establish the lived experience of the people. The description of the land in this chapter relies on the geographical and geological work of scholars like Denis Baly and is supplemented in part by archaeological findings. At this point, Deuteronomy's perception of place is not yet analysed. What is being established is the physical reality that is an essential element in Deuteronomy's placial structure. This chapter helps to identify some of the underlying influencing factors of place on the people of Israel.

After the broader texture of the land is established, the next five chapters move the focus towards place as portrayed in Deuteronomy. Chapters Three and Four look at place from the point of view outside the land. Deuteronomy describes the land into which they are going as that which has the potential to become an ideal place that fosters a healthy human condition. How best to describe an ideal place but with the vocabulary of creation? Chapter Three introduces the underlying logic between placial studies and ancient Near Eastern creation narratives, demonstrating that place was a primary concern in the ancient world. The connection between place and creation narratives invites insight from Creation Theology. Edenic themes in

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<sup>4</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 14.

Deuteronomy have been recognised previously by scholars, but this chapter will explore how the placial structure of creation is the foundation for conveying the ideal placial structure in Israel's land.

Chapter Four begins with explaining the intertwined relationship between place and memory, and addresses how memory plays an important role in contrasting the experienced places of the past with the anticipated place in the near future, and also in reminding people in the present of God's defining actions of the past that will influence present choices and actions. Deuteronomy addresses the necessity of purposefully attaching the national memory to a new place. With a focus primarily on Deuteronomy 6 and 11, this chapter addresses the responsibility to remember that is held corporately and individually as a part of connecting the people to the history of the place. As becomes evident, Deuteronomy is concerned not only with possessing place but also with belonging to place and understanding the responsibility to care for and maintain place.

Chapter Five shifts the point of view from an external perspective of place to the internal organisation of place. If this land is likened to Eden, then how do people in this particular place live to maintain the possibility of the robust, human condition? This chapter explores the significance of Deuteronomy 12 as the foundation for the placial structure that is elaborated upon throughout the law code. Crucial to the conversation is the differentiation of the 'chosen place.' This one differentiated place becomes the focus of Israelite society although a close relationship is maintained with cities throughout the land.

Chapter Six explores what it means for Israel to belong together in place. Deuteronomy 13:1–16:17 raises the issue of community responsibility for the moral and ethical well-being of society as well as the attentive and caring actions of support for all members of the community. The chosen place continues to be of significance, although the focus rests on the communities and on the practicality of the placial structure in the rhythm of life for the Israelites.

Chapter Seven addresses the leadership roles that are introduced in Deuteronomy only after the foundational placial structure is laid and the community responsibilities are introduced. A placial analysis of Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 illuminates the significance behind where leaders are located and which

responsibilities they are given. The analysis also reveals that the community is not completely absent from issues of governance. The leadership structure is designed to work within the previously established placial structure and essentially prevents an indiscriminate exertion of power by a single authoritarian entity.

Finally, Chapter Eight focuses once again on the community's responsibility to belong together in place. The placial focus in the second half of the Deuteronomic law code changes from the interaction between the chosen place and other places to the relationship between the community and place. The laws in Deuteronomy 19–25 encompass a variety of instructions that affect many aspects of life including war, economics, and ecology. The practical engagement between the community and their localised territories gives these laws a certain 'earthy' tone. And this tone provides for a focus on the people's personal responsibilities. Personal involvement in place allows individuals to fully belong to and become rooted in place. Israel is, after all, not from this land; thus, the people must create a sense of belonging, connect their history to this place, and decide to affect the long-term viability of the land. This chapter closes with the liturgical celebration of the goodness of arriving in place and experiencing the blessing from God. The final verses of chapter 26 contain a covenant ratification on the Plains of Moab that conclude the law code.

Place determines the rhythm of life as well as how people behave, think, and form relationships. A placial study of Deuteronomy belongs within the growing recognition in many disciplines that place defines and structures social interactions and that being rooted in place contributes to a sense of belonging and fulfilment. This work represents an initial foray to explain how Deuteronomy's view of place fulfils those roles for the Israelites. While touching lightly on the historical narratives in Deuteronomy 1-4 and the hortatory speeches in 5-11, the bulk of the following analysis will focus on the law code as instructions for life in this particular land.<sup>5</sup> The goal is to widen the parameters of the traditional placial conversation to discover a more holistic view of place that includes awareness of how to belong to

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<sup>5</sup> The study is focused primarily on the law code, because the law code has been the focus of the study of place in Deuteronomic studies. The law code establishes the primary concepts of Deuteronomy's placial structure. Concepts of place are also evident in Deuteronomy 27–34, but they do not substantially contribute to Deuteronomy's place as much as they exemplify what is established in the law code.

the land and how that is influenced by memory, narrative, feasting, and social involvement.

## CHAPTER 1

### The History of Place

#### Introduction

Place is everywhere and yet notoriously difficult to define. Place is pervasive and ‘normal’ and so is easily overlooked. The philosopher Jeff Malpas addresses this normality and says of modern societies, ‘many people never experience place as anything other than the apparently mundane backdrop to their lives, while many also fail to see any particular place or places as having a special or determining effect on their identities....’<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in his theological research, John Inge perceived a lack of conversation regarding the significance of place on human lives. This perception led him to conclude that, ‘place had been eliminated from discourse in Western society,’ an absence noticeable not just in the intellectual arena but in a general ‘loss of place’ in the modern human experience.<sup>2</sup> Humans often overlook and forget that which is closest,<sup>3</sup> and Inge suggests that this loss has had a rather dehumanising effect because the basic element of humanness that depends on place has been minimised.<sup>4</sup> Edward Casey also has written several works in effort to bring place back into academic consideration. In the introduction to *The Fate of Place* he states:

Whatever is true for space and time, this much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is a requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Malpas, ‘Comparing Topographies: Across Paths / Around Place: A Reply to Casey,’ *Philosophy and Geography*, vol 4, no 2 (2001): 232.

<sup>2</sup> John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), ix–x.

<sup>3</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, ix–x. Similarly, Craig Bartholomew suggests that ignoring place is at the root of the modern crisis of the dehumanised global markets, urban sprawl, the agrarian crisis, and even the sense of leading detached lives of endless choice and little commitment. Craig Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: BakerAcademic, 2011), 3.

them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to recognize this primal fact?<sup>5</sup>

Malpas and Casey are saying that even though exploration of the world has increased and benefits are gained when people travel and experience different cultures, geographies, foods, and religions, their sensitivity to the particularities of place that create a sense of belonging and of fulfilment for the human *being* has diminished. People are increasingly fascinated with the people and objects in places, but place itself has not demanded the same attention. As people and objects become mobile over larger distances, the significance of creating and valuing connections to a place has shifted into the background. This attention is slowly changing with a new interest to bring place back under the examining eye of scholarship.

Human lives are intimately affected by place, so it seems strange that the subject has slipped from attention, at least until one understands how ingenious scientific discoveries and engineering developments have shifted the cultural context within which people live, create, and research. These developments occurred over years and through eras of development. Industrialisation brought mass change to regional landscapes, homogenising variants within places. Developments in the fields of travel, energy, and communication have altered perceptions of place and shifted the boundaries in which people function. Participation in the global economy is easier now than ever before because travel is accessible and cyberspace allows for easier interaction. Food, fuel, entertainment, and merchandise can be shared around the world. Not only objects move globally; people move as well. Electronic developments have revolutionised the world so that *where* one lives is irrelevant as long as one is connected through technology. With such technology, communication is instantaneous, political and geographic borders are ignored, and the floodgates regulating the flow of information are opened. Social divisions created by money, language, and education are overcome with ingenuity and access to the Internet. Time and space are prioritised, as globalisation and virtual reality allow people and objects to move at great speed through places.

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), ix.

Philip Sheldrake suggests that people in the West prioritise mobility and economic rationalisation over place. Mobility is equated to freedom, whereas remaining in place is equated to confinement and to lack of choice or economic ability.<sup>6</sup> The benefits of advanced technology and global markets come with a danger that one will forget about places, no matter how large or small, that give people their unique perspective from which they interact with the larger global network. Place contains historical meaning, exists prior to and after human life, and is affected by humanity. Place provides continuity and identity across generations. It creates such powerful connections that when people want to break away from their past, they often break away from the *place* of their past. For as significant as scientific and engineering developments have been and for as worthwhile as their pursuits continue to be, people sometimes obscure the value of place—the particular *somewhere*.

As the effects from a diminished value of place become noticeable, a growing number of people are re-focusing efforts to understand the significance of place and what it means for the individual as well as for society. A renewed interest in place provokes questions related to how large or small ‘place’ can be, or how individuals experience connection to place when globalisation changes traditionally held boundaries. In the last fifty years there has been a renewed interest to celebrate the particular *somewhere*. People at the grassroots level are educating communities about the value of the uniqueness of what is local or regional, and they bring awareness to the impact that a healthy relationship with place has on the local

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 8. Even in common parlance space is perceived in a better light. We talk of ‘giving people their space’ as positive whereas ‘being put in one’s place’ is negative.

community.<sup>7</sup> Philosophers like Malpas and Casey are at the forefront of examining the fundamental nature of place and how *being in place* is a fundamental aspect of human *being*. The modern study of place is an effort to regain the human connection to place.

Walter Brueggemann perceives a sense of being lost or displaced that is pervasive in contemporary culture. He describes the underlying sense of homelessness as a ‘yearning to belong somewhere, to have a home, to be in a safe place.’<sup>8</sup> Brueggemann suggests, ‘it is *rootlessness* not *meaninglessness* that characterizes the current crisis. There are no meanings apart from roots. And such rootage is a primary concern of Israel and a central promise of God to his people’ (emphasis original).<sup>9</sup> Modern issues of placelessness have instigated the current conversation of place, which, in turn, present an opportunity for biblical scholars to bring a fresh awareness of place to the biblical text. The current conversation about the significance of place is a valuable perspective from which to ask questions about how Deuteronomy instructs the Israelites to belong in place.

The conversation about *place* is complex, however, because the term *place* is hard to define and can be difficult to distinguish from its partner *space*. Part of the difficulty exists because place is a part of every day, and many assume the vocabulary is clear and intuitive. Concepts of *place* and *space* seem clearly distinct from each another until one tries to define their unique characteristics and then the

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the efforts of Will Allen to transform the ‘food deserts’ (areas with limited or no access to affordable and nutritious food) of poor neighbourhoods is a wonderful example of these new efforts at the grassroots level. Allen’s slow transformation of an impoverished place brought about a transformation in the community. Children worked along side him, getting their hands dirty and learning the value of persistence, investment in long-term projects, and care for nature. Personal investment made residents take a greater interest in their place. They pulled weeds, planted flowers, and paid attention to the land. Beautification of place resulted in drug dealers moving to other locations. Allen’s greenhouse became a source of affordable produce for the locals—produce that they helped to grow. Even more, it became a source of hope and of courage to engage, connect, and change the context within which people live. Place is powerful and has the ability to transform humanity as much as humanity has the ability to transform place. Will Allen, *The Good Food Revolution: Growing Healthy Food, People and Communities*, (New York: Gotham Books, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Overtures to Biblical Theology 1; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 4; cf. Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (London: Routledge, 1997), 43–44.



lines start to blur.<sup>10</sup> Generations of scholars since Plato and Aristotle have attempted to define these terms and to understand the close association between place and space, but these definitions keep changing as the vocabulary shifts along with developments in math, science, and philosophy. A growing interest in place/space is developing even without an overarching theory dictating a standard vocabulary to use. While some analyse *space*, others focus on *place*. Unfortunately, it can be unclear if they are studying two distinct topics (i.e., place as opposed to space) or if they are using different vocabulary for the same topic. Doreen Massey states:

Many authors rely heavily on the terms ‘space’/‘spatial’, and each assumes that their meaning is clear and uncontested. Yet in fact the meaning which different authors assume...varies greatly. Buried in these unacknowledged disagreements is a debate which never surfaces; and it never surfaces because everyone assumes we already know what these terms mean.<sup>11</sup>

Great thinkers through the centuries have grappled to define space and place, making a complete history of the concept of place difficult to assemble. Casey suggests that the concept is not difficult because of a deliberate effort to obscure place but because place is common, unobtrusive, and easily taken for granted.<sup>12</sup> In the following study ‘place’ terminology as it is shaped by philosophical research is preferred—for reasons that will be explained below.

Because the purpose of this research is to bring concepts of place to bear on an analysis of Deuteronomy, this introduction meets two objectives. The first is to become familiar with how placial studies have developed, particularly in the past eighty years. The conversation is long and complex. However, because the extensive

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<sup>10</sup> One may associate the concept of space to ideas of unbounded extensions of freedom, exploration, expansion, and innovation. In contrast, place is perceived of as a point in space. Remaining in place is sometimes associated with restrictions to one’s freedom, choice, or economic ability, and modern innovations in business, science and technology are sometimes motivated by breaking the restrictions of place. People and objects alike are considered mobile, transportable, and transferrable—a huge benefit to those who value access to goods and services irrespective of local seasons, drought, or labour problems. Remaining in place is often considered the burden of the poor, elderly or unsophisticated.

<sup>11</sup> Doreen Massey, ‘Politics and Space/Time,’ in *Place and the Politics Identity* (ed. Michael Keith and Steve Pile; London: Routledge, 1993), 141–142. Cf. Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 20–21.

<sup>12</sup> Casey, *The Fate of Place*, x.

history of the conversation can be found elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> this review will focus on modern scholars whose works have impacted the placial conversation in biblical studies. This influence has come primarily from the disciplines of sociology (in which ‘space’ terminology is used) and philosophy (in which ‘place’ terminology is used). In order to minimise confusion, it is necessary to establish a singular terminology that will be used in the following study. The second task is to review the history of placial studies in biblical scholarship with a particular focus on Deuteronomic scholarship. Place oriented topics are a natural fit with Deuteronomy due to the book’s developed land theology, and that natural fit has invited a variety of perspectives on Deuteronomy’s shaping of place. Interest in analysing and understanding the physical land developed alongside advancements in textual research, both of which contributed to conclusions about place as discernible in Deuteronomy. Within the past several years, the quest to understand place—especially within the fields of sociology and philosophy—has provided biblical scholars with insights, vocabulary, and methodology that have been helpful for broadening the understanding place and the human connection to place in ancient Israelite society. This new perspective on place can illuminate previously overlooked placial details in Deuteronomy and can contribute to a re-thinking of the biblical perspective on belonging to place.

### **Task One: A Modern History of Space/Place**

By the mid-twentieth century, scholars in the fields of sociology, geography, and philosophy were developing a renewed interest in place. In part, this came about as scholars began to resist the positivism of prior generations in recognition of the

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<sup>13</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the philosophical discourse of place, see Casey, *The Fate of Place*, a summary of which is in Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 167–188. For a sociological discourse on spatial theory, see Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, (London: Verso, 1989).

value of the individual's point of view.<sup>14</sup> As Edward Soja (a sociologist and thus inclined to use 'spatial' terminology) explains:

The larger significance of the spatial turn and the resurgence of interest in critical spatial thinking arise from the belief that *we are just as much spatial as temporal beings*, that our existential spatiality and temporality are essentially or ontologically coequal, equivalent in explanatory power and behavioural significance, interwoven in a mutually formative relation (emphasis original).<sup>15</sup>

The resurgence of attention to place/space was not an attempt to subvert the perceived temporal priority that dominates modern society but to bring it into balance with aspects of human existence that depend on place and space.

The modern re-engagement with place is indebted in part to Martin Heidegger's book *Being and Time*.<sup>16</sup> This work belongs to Heidegger's early studies and was the starting point for his continual development of placial ideas. It brought attention to both the temporal and the spatial aspects of human being.<sup>17</sup> Heidegger characterised basic humanness as *Dasein* or 'being-in-the-world,' so that human *being* should be understood in terms of relatedness to the place in which one belongs. Because fundamental human existence is 'being-in-the-world,' it can only be understood within the concept of place. He was influential in insisting on the

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<sup>14</sup> During the Enlightenment, objective, scientific knowledge was prioritised, concepts of space were *a priori*, and place was compartmentalised space. This has at least three problems, which have been pointed out by Philip Sheldrake. First, such an appraisal of space and place suggests an objective reality apart from how we interpret it. It relies on prioritising the universal/general over the local/particular and 'objective' information over what we learn from experience. Second, it makes nature a neutral reality on which to impose whatever we like. Third, thinking of space as something three dimensional, geometrical, and evenly divided is complicated by changes in science. For example, the theory of relativity, developments in particle physics, and psychology of perception challenge the view that space is an objective 'thing.' That which was highly prioritised because of its objective characteristics that lend themselves to 'pure' reasoning is now understood as having subjective elements: Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 16. The term 'spatial turn' was first presented in Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds., *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson; New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962); trans. of *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Neomarius Verlag: Tübingen, 1927).

<sup>17</sup> Jeff Malpas offers a thorough explanation and critique of how Heidegger's thoughts on place developed over time: Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006); Idem, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 23-42.

mutual influence of place on humanity and of humanity on place. Heidegger suggested that humans have an innate need and yearning for place. Not only is place an essential aspect of being, but it also plays a part in how identity is formed and how one engages with other people and objects in the world. His influence is noticeable in the number of sociologists and philosophers who share Heidegger's basic understanding that people are emplaced in their own bodies and, through their bodies, experience and understand place.<sup>18</sup>

### *A Sociological View of Place*

One of the early voices contributing to the recovery of place was Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan's work in *Space and Place* focused on the individual's experience of place instead of on society's shaping of place.<sup>19</sup> Part of the innovation of his work was breaking away from the scientific need to define and measure space and to look instead at human interactions with it. Tuan opposed the view that objective knowledge is superior to subjective knowledge, based on his opinion that humans understand their orientation to the world through their bodies. Being influenced by Heidegger's work, Tuan argued that only through personal interaction with one's immediate surroundings does an individual have the ability to conceptualise an abstract understanding of space. This initial self-orientation to the world is fundamental, and therefore understanding and engaging place are necessary to study what it means to be human. Tuan embraced human experience as knowledge; a position that pushed

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<sup>18</sup> Joel Green argues that the Bible is not at odds with science when it comes to understanding the bodily nature (or 'creatureliness') of humans. His work addresses the dichotomous terms (body-soul) often used in biblical anthropology: Joel Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2008). David Nikkel argues that the body orients humans to the environment and makes possible human living and knowing. He states that subjectivity and objectivity are inseparable. Knowledge of God comes through human interaction in the world: David Nikkel, *Radical Embodiment* (PTMS, Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick Publications, 2010). Norman Wirzba draws from Wendell Berry's work on human emplacement to explore how agrarian practices can reformulate contemporary mysticism that is firmly rooted in creation. Contemplation is the act of being fully present in our world: Norman Wirzba, 'The Dark Night of the Soil: An Agrarian Approach to Mystical Life,' in *Wendell Berry and Religion: Heaven's Earthly Life* (ed. Joel Shuman and L. Roger Owens; Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 148–169; see also Wendell Berry, *The Art of Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (ed. Norman Wirzba; Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

against positivism to restore the significance of the observer.<sup>20</sup> Since individuals are emplaced in his or her body, every interaction with the external world is unique to each person. Embodiment gives people a perspective on the world based on their constructs of a perceived world.

Tuan's distinction between space and place is significant. He associated space with being free and unencumbered, an open space with no well-worn paths and signposts.<sup>21</sup> Place, on the other hand, is space that has been charged with significance and personal narrative; it is 'humanized space.'<sup>22</sup> Tuan said, 'when space feels familiar to us it has become place,'<sup>23</sup> and also, 'space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning.'<sup>24</sup> Whereas space implies outward movement and expanse, place is locatedness invested with meaning. As such, place is understood as a subset of space.

Another significant contributor to modern spatial theories was Henri Lefebvre. His work continues to influence modern studies of geography, architecture, landscape, and sociology. Born in 1901, Lefebvre developed a career as a Marxist philosopher and sociologist. He was influenced by the development of modernisation, industrialism, and suburbanisation of cities. Lefebvre was interested in class struggles within societies, and he realised part of that struggle took place in social space that is often mistaken as neutral. Lefebvre claimed space is *produced* so that social interactions are crafted for the benefit of the powerful. In his work *Production of Space*, Lefebvre stated that a science of space had not yet been developed, and although scholars talked about space and created inventories of what existed in space, they had no theories to enhance knowledge of space itself.<sup>25</sup> Lefebvre's work brought awareness to the role of space in how societies functioned, which in turn stimulated a critical conversation in which space was a primary focus. To analyse the production of spaces, Lefebvre thought it essential to move away

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6–7.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 52, 54.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>25</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 7; repr. of *La production de l'espace* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith; Paris: Anthropos, 1974).

from the traditional, bifurcated thinking of space as either physical (measurable) or mental (infinite). He developed a new trifocal spatial theory that found a way to combine empirical and subjective understandings of space that acknowledged all space is humanly constructed and socially contested.

Lefebvre introduced a critical spatial theory to analyse physical space along with the social practices that transform physical space into usable and significant social space. He categorised three ways to know space. The first is *perceived space* or physical space,<sup>26</sup> which is one's perception and interaction with the physical outside world, nature, or cosmos. The second is *conceived space* or mental space, which is the logical and formal abstraction (ideality) of space. Conceived space is the subjective representation of space in the form of ideas, images, and ideologies that can take the form of a two dimensional written description or drawn map.<sup>27</sup> The third is *social space* or lived space, which is the context of social practice, symbolism, and tradition. It is the space of every-day life. Although Lefebvre defined three spaces, he insisted that these are not three *types* of spaces but are three *aspects* of space that are interwoven and mutually dependent. Therefore, they should be given equal attention, because ignoring their multifaceted quality flattens out and distorts one's understanding of space. Lefebvre's theory created a much needed language capable of grappling with aspects of space. His critical spatial theory was not a scientific model of exact divisions and clean categories; it was an attempt to move beyond a *description* of space to develop a method to *understand* space and its influence on people.

Edward Soja worked two decades after Lefebvre. He is credited with moving the social critical conversation of space into a postmodern, American context while faithfully preserving Lefebvre's belief that space is produced.<sup>28</sup> Soja modified and re-expressed Lefebvre's theoretical base in his 1989 book *Postmodern Geographies*.<sup>29</sup> He moved away from Lefebvre's Marxist background with an

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>27</sup> Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 102.

<sup>28</sup> Soja gives an account of the historical changes from Marxist to postmodern geography in Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 43–75.

<sup>29</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*.

emphasis on the struggle between classes, and he shifted attention to the lived experience of those who are either in the centre or on the periphery of society. Instead of Lefebvre's *perceived, conceived, and lived* spaces, Soja labeled them Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace. Firstspace is physical space or objective physicality; it is space that can be measured—the space of GPS coordinates. Secondspace is conceptual and relies on symbols, narratives about space, and plans and intentions. Thirdspace is lived and experienced space,<sup>30</sup> in which people interact and live within space and develop behaviours and social practices.<sup>31</sup> 'Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience.'<sup>32</sup> The space in which people live is not simply geometric and measurable; it is filled with meaning.

### Critical Spatial Theory and Biblical Studies

The work of Lefebvre and Soja has been favourably received in biblical studies due to the work of James Flanagan. His article 'Ancient Perceptions of Space/ Perceptions of Ancient Space' is responsible for initiating an interest in the spatial aspects of the biblical text that go beyond the ancient view of physical land to examine how Israelite society constructed space to facilitate or to obstruct connections between segments of society.<sup>33</sup> Flanagan's work instigated a five-year joint project between SBL and AAR during the 2000–2005 annual meetings, which resulted in a five-volume series that compiles much of the significant work from the

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, (Maiden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Jon L. Berquist, 'Place and Space of Jerusalem,' in *Constructions of Space II: The Biblical City and Other Imagined Spaces* (ed. Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp; New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 41–42.

<sup>32</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 79–80.

<sup>33</sup> James Flanagan, 'Ancient Perceptions of Space / Perceptions of Ancient Space,' *Semeia* 87 (1999): 15-43; Idem, 'Space,' in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (ed. A. K. M. Adam; St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 323–327.

meetings.<sup>34</sup> Although the use of critical spatial theory in biblical studies is just over a decade old, its influence on new research is evident in two recently published books. Using Lefebvre's critical spatial theory, Mark George analyses how constructed spaces in the tabernacle determined and communicated who was allowed to enter differentiated spaces.<sup>35</sup> Christl Maier uses Soja's work to analyse the spatial concepts associated with female roles in the Hebrew Bible—such as daughter, mother, whore, or victim—and then interprets how those spatial concepts portray Israelite national identity.<sup>36</sup>

Spatial thinking in biblical studies and theology continues to generate new perspectives on human embeddedness in creation, spiritual practices, the built environment, and pilgrimage.<sup>37</sup> However, when it comes to studying place in Deuteronomy the added philosophical perspective is truly valuable even though the social theories have been more widely used in biblical studies. The different perspective offered by philosophy along with the benefit it brings to Deuteronomic studies will be addressed next.

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<sup>34</sup> The Constructions of Ancient Space joint seminar addressed a wide range of subjects from the ancient perception of the city and of sacred space to the construction of Israel's social space: David M. Gunn and Paula M. McNutt, *'Imagining' Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan*. JSOTSup 359 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Jon Berquist and Claudia Camp, eds., *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography and Narrative* (LHBOTS; New York: T & T Clark, 2007); idem, *Constructions of Space II: The Biblical City and Other Imagined Spaces* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008); J. Cornelis de Vos, Karen Wenell and Jorunn Økland, eds., *Constructions of Space III: Biblical Spatiality and the Sacred* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); Mark K. George, *Constructions of Space IV: Further Developments in Discovering Ancient Israel's Social Space* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Gert T. M. Prinsloo and Christl Maier, eds., *Constructions of Space V: Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013). These conversations generate questions regarding the application of critical spatial theory to the Bible. Matthew Sleeman, although optimistic about future spatial applications, has called for a more cautious analysis of the critical spatial theory and appropriate adaptation of the theory prior to bringing it to the biblical text: Matthew Sleeman, 'Critical Spatial Theory 2.0' in *Constructions of Space V: Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, (ed. Gert T. M. Prinsloo and Christl Maier; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 49-66.

<sup>35</sup> Mark George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Christl Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> For a summary and explanation of theology's use of spatial theory see Sigurd Bergmann, 'Theology in its Spatial Turn: Space, Place and Built Environments Challenging and Changing the Images of God,' *RC*, vol. 1, issue 3 (May 2007): 353-379.



### *A Philosophical View of Place*

The philosophical perspective of place, in the work of Malpas and Casey, elevates the innate value of the physical qualities of place beyond the social interactions that happen within it. Arguably, place should be considered a complex matrix in which the physicality of place is an equal partner with humanity in constructing place.

In *The Fate of Place*, Casey offers a comprehensive philosophical history of the conception of place and space, and in *Getting Back into Place* he advocates for the return of place to modern scholarship that has clearly been dominated by concepts of space and time. Place must be acknowledged because, at the most basic level of human experience, humans are located in a world with horizons, dimensions, and depth.<sup>38</sup> Casey traced how the loss of place happened by following the changes in the perception of space and place from the time of Plato and Aristotle to modern day. He described the transition from ancient to modern thinking as a ‘gradual ascendancy of the universe over the cosmos’ wherein the cosmos is the ‘particularity of place’ and the universe is the ‘totalized whole.’ The cosmos is contained, is made up of ‘place-worlds,’ and encapsulates all that can be subjectively experienced. The universe, however, is a large, ever-expanding expanse that is mapped in physics and objective knowledge.<sup>39</sup> (Ancient Near Eastern views of the cosmos will be discussed in the next chapter, where it will be evident that ‘place’ is a dominant idea in cosmological myths.)

When scholars in mathematics and science pushed beyond the bounded view of the cosmos to inquire about the boundless character of the universe the distinction between place and space moved onto a grander scale. Scholars formulated questions around trying to understand if space exists beyond the discernible heavens.<sup>40</sup> If space is conceived as a vast expanse, what does that do for the understanding of place? This relationship was left unclarified.<sup>41</sup> According to Casey, the sixteenth century was the critical turning point in the conversation about space and place. He

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<sup>38</sup> Casey, *The Fate of Place*; idem, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (2nd ed. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2009), 17.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, *The Fate of Place*, 78.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 127.

said, ‘the generality and openness of infinite space—in contrast with the enclosedness and particularity of finite place—have become virtually irresistible by the time we reach the threshold of the early modern era.’<sup>42</sup> Preoccupation with the nature of space grew, whereas place was relegated to being a derivative of space.

This history is important because it shaped the vocabulary as well as the issues scholars throughout history have prioritised. Casey, like Heidegger, has tried to restore the importance of place and retrieve a sense of priority of place that existed in antiquity.

Casey identified key aspects to properly apprehend place. First, place does not always look the same because it varies in size. ‘[P]laces often nest inside each other in a coherently expanding series,’ (i.e., the plaza which is in the neighbourhood, which is in the city, which is in the country).<sup>43</sup> ‘Furthermore, a place folds outward to link up with other places, just as it folds inward to reveal its own content and character.’<sup>44</sup> Place is both contained and containing, meaning there are concentric spheres to which one belongs. Second, along with determining ‘where’ one is located, place determines one’s self-identity and the appropriate actions required in that place. For example, to be placed in a living room determines appropriate interactions with people, but those actions might change if one is placed in a different room—say the kitchen. The role a person assumes will be different at the work place than at home or at the beach on holiday.

This leads to a third aspect of place. Beyond determining an individual’s identity and actions, place determines how the individual interacts with others, which means interactions can be cultural. Because places are shared (interactions between people in places), people can collectively shape the common places.<sup>45</sup> One must be careful, however, of regarding place only as a social or political construct

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>43</sup> Idem, ‘J.E. Malpas’s *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) Converging and diverging in / on place,’ in *Philosophy and Geography*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2001): 229.

<sup>44</sup> Tuan also addressed various sizes of place that can be as small as an armchair or as large as the world depending on contrasting space: Tuan, *Space and Place*, 149. Casey says place can be of different scales, and there can be place inside place: Casey, ‘J.E. Malpas’s *Place and Experience*,’ 229; cf. Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 157.

<sup>45</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 31.

even though place has cultural and historical dimensions.<sup>46</sup> Even though a close bond exists between place and culture, it is not true that place is solely a product of cultural construction.

Malpas begins to define place as ‘an open region within which a variety of elements are brought to light through their mutual interrelation and juxtaposition within that region,’ so a study of place is a model within which ‘various elements at stake can be distinguished and assembled so as to allow the construction of a single complex structure.’<sup>47</sup> Place influences how one engages with other people and objects of the world. The elements of place that contribute to its complex character include the natural landscape, weather patterns, social ordering of space, and the narratives embedded within place.<sup>48</sup> As such, it combines physical elements with social elements, giving them each equal importance. People are connected to place, and, if place is changed, the people and objects within will be changed as well. Like Lefebvre before him, Malpas states that layers of place cannot be dissected from each other because place is a complex network of interrelated elements. ‘Different ways of grasping the structure of place are grounded in the complexity of place as such, so no such single way of grasping place can exhaust its complexity nor can any such way entirely ignore that complexity.’<sup>49</sup> Keeping this in mind will minimise the tendency to flatten out and objectify place.

Place is fundamentally dynamic and relational. As Malpas explores in ‘Place and Human Being,’ the human connection to place goes beyond a subjective response to place.<sup>50</sup> Connection to place is part of what it means to be human, and it plays a significant role in how people form self-identity and how they interact with other humans and objects in place. For not only does place affect those within it, but will itself be affected by what it contains. Importantly, Malpas insists that understanding the essential belonging of humans to the places they inhabit must go

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<sup>46</sup> Idem, ‘J.E. Malpas’s *Place and Experience*,’ 225.

<sup>47</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>50</sup> Jeff Malpas, ‘Place and Human Being,’ *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 20.

beyond concepts of proprietorship or authority over places. Place is not a static object over which ownership is asserted, even though belonging to place may stir up a sense of protection, preservation, or guardianship.<sup>51</sup> Because humans are embedded in place, a perpetual interaction and mutual dependence exists between place and human being that should lead to a sense of human responsibility to respect and care for (but not dominate) place.

### Philosophical Views of Place in Theology and Biblical Studies

Philip Sheldrake, a theologian working primarily in the area of spirituality, used a philosophical conception of place in his book *Spaces for the Sacred*. He clearly distinguished place from space and highlights the essential quality of *belonging* to place.<sup>52</sup> Quoting from the work of Simone Weil, Sheldrake explained the hunger for a sense of placedness is fundamental to human identity. ‘To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul.’<sup>53</sup> Sheldrake traced the connections between place and issues such as culture, belonging, landscape, memory, and narrative that are noticeable in the Bible. He also traced perceptions of place through early Christianity, medieval monasticism, and modern urbanisation, providing a helpful historical summary of place in theology. Inge, who explored the concept of place and Christian tradition, suggested that the demise of place has had a negative impact on the human experience, and he urged theologians to devote more attention to this subject.<sup>54</sup> Inge reviewed the significance of place in Scripture but then explored how place affects and informs Christian tradition and practice. In a similar vein, Bartholomew’s recent work *Where Mortals Dwell* draws heavily on the placial theories of Casey and Malpas.<sup>55</sup> Bartholomew offers a more detailed explanation than Inge offered of the early philosophical conversations of place, and then traces themes of place within Old and New Testament studies. He explores the benefits of developing a conscious awareness of place in Christian thought. Both

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 21–22.

<sup>52</sup> Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 8; cf. Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (London: Routledge 1997), 41.

<sup>54</sup> Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*.

Inge and Bartholomew address biblical concepts of place in the modern world, but Inge focuses on Christian sacraments and pilgrimage and Bartholomew develops what it means for the church to engage with *placemaking*.

### *The Place between Philosophy and Sociology*

Similarities exist between the philosophical and sociological studies of place/space. Although the two disciplines differ on what motivates their studies and the questions with which they grapple, sociology and philosophy agree that place influences how individuals interact with others. Place is shared by people, and, therefore, the inhabitants collectively shape place. Both disciplines uphold that there exists in place an important relational aspect between people, place, and other people.

The distinction that Tuan made between place and space lingers within critical spatial theories. Tuan suggested space is transformed to place when it is invested with significance and meaning. Although Tuan's work is widely respected, his definition of place is not readily agreed upon. Essentially, Tuan's 'place' remains a derivative of space, having no importance in its own right. Malpas critiques Tuan's definition, saying the importance of place is thus wrapped up in a human psychological response instead of being understood for its own innate qualities.<sup>56</sup>

The recognition of place's innate qualities highlights another important difference between the sociological and philosophical understandings of place. Sociologists value physical space as a part of a frame within which social interactions occur that allow people to construct space and to assign value to places. Thus, the social interactions determine the significance and the function of space. Place remains inert and does not carry a value of its own except for what is assigned to it. Within many social treatments of space, it is the space *between* physical places that is the focus, so that the perceived influence that physical place exerts on humanity is diminished.

John Allen cautioned against such evaluations. He recognised that sociologists acknowledge that physical geography affects social action, and he insisted that studies must go beyond considering physical space in terms of a surface on which things play out. 'It is not part of our argument that the social science

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<sup>56</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 30.

disciplines today are simply blind to these features of the social world; rather, it is that they have failed to conceive the extent to which space and nature are integral to an understanding of social activity and social change.<sup>57</sup> Social processes necessarily take place in geographical places, and the extent to which that geography is recognised for its innate value differs depending on the discipline's priorities in their study of place.

The philosophical analysis of place, however, does not view the physical characteristics of place as a frame within which social interactions evolve. The physical characteristics of place are studied as an equally important character within a complex network of mutually interconnected components. Malpas claims, 'Indeed, the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place....'<sup>58</sup> Malpas warns against placing a primary focus on the relational aspect of space in which place is significant only for being the intersection of movement, because then the interactions are studied and more effort is exerted to understand the *implications* of the relational.<sup>59</sup> As Malpas states, scholars end up looking for the social consequences rather than the space itself.

Although recent history demonstrates that biblical studies has primarily engaged with the sociological critical spatial theory, the philosophical perspective is preferred for this study because it offers a more natural collaboration with Deuteronomy. A philosophical approach requires a perpetual inquiry into how the physicality of the particulars of place challenge or enhance the theoretical constructs of place, therefore, this approach highlights Deuteronomy's awareness and use of the physical aspect of place. A philosophical understanding of place also looks beyond the human production of space to how each aspect contributes and affects the placial network, a network that includes the various extents of place without dismissing how they continue to influence each other. Thus, smaller intimate places can belong to and influence larger public places. The following study primarily uses

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<sup>57</sup> John Allen, 'Part 2 Introduction: Analysis: Aspects of the Geography of Society,' in *Geography Matters!* (ed. Doreen Massey and John Allen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 49.

<sup>58</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, 'Putting Space in Place: Relational Geography and Philosophical Topography,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2012): 228–229.

the works of Casey and Malpas, and the principal vocabulary will be of ‘place,’ because ‘place’ is consistent with the philosophical perspective and it also keeps both physical and social aspects of place in the forefront of the study.

### **Task Two: Placial Studies and Biblical Scholarship**

Even prior to the application of sociological and philosophical studies of place to biblical studies, scholars have been interested in aspects of place through historical geography and historical criticism. This history is worth mentioning for it contributed a great deal to fixing the parameters around placial studies in Deuteronomy that existed until recent decades.

#### *19<sup>th</sup> Century Exploration of Land*

The study of place in modern biblical studies began not with the analysis of the qualities and nature of ‘place’ but with the exploration of the land. In the early 1800s an interest developed in organising a systematic measurement of the physical land in which biblical events took place.<sup>60</sup> Explorers and scholars ventured to the land to study the physical context and to see if it added to an overall understanding of biblical history. In 1838, Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, both biblical scholars skilled in linguistics, traveled through Egypt, the Sinai, and the southeastern Mediterranean seaboard. Their extensive knowledge of the biblical text as well as their command of Arabic allowed them to match dozens of biblical place names with those used by the local population which allowed them to identify many ancient sites.<sup>61</sup> Robinson’s work and subsequent three-volume publication of his findings earned him the popular title of the ‘Father of Biblical Geography.’

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<sup>60</sup> Additional information on the history of cartography in the land along the eastern Mediterranean seaboard can be found in Haim Goren, ‘Sacred, but Not Surveyed: Nineteenth-Century Surveys of Palestine,’ *Imago Mundi*, vol. 54 (2002): 87–110.

<sup>61</sup> Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions: A Journal of Travels in the Year 1838* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1856).

In 1865 the British Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was started to promote the study of the geography and archaeology of the land of the Bible.<sup>62</sup> In the late nineteenth century, the PEF sponsored the first detailed survey of the land—roughly south of the Lebanese Mountains, east to the Rift Valley, south to the Biblical Negev, and west to the Mediterranean coastline. Two men, Conder and Kitchener, were primarily responsible for the survey, although other experts in geology, flora and fauna also contributed. From their detailed survey of what was named Western Palestine detailed maps were drawn that became the standard geographical resource for scholars.<sup>63</sup>

George Adam Smith was a biblical scholar at this time who knew the significance not only of documenting the places of biblical events but also describing the physical qualities of the land. His book *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, published in 1894, described the land in detail including its climate, soil fertility, and scenery.<sup>64</sup> He diligently defined the Bible's geographical terms in relation to the physical terrain.<sup>65</sup> Smith asked questions about how the 'Land's testimony,' and not just the material details of archaeology, could assist a greater understanding of Scripture.<sup>66</sup> He believed place contributed to a greater understanding of the authors of the biblical text as well as of the historical events portrayed in the text. Smith remarked that the poetry and narrative of the Bible reflected the natural features of the land, which did not necessitate a factual account of history but did suggest that the text was written in the land by someone who knew and was affected by the land. Smith said, 'All that geography can do is to show whether or not the situations were possible at the time to which they are

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<sup>62</sup> Other British interests also motivated the creation of the PEF, including the protection of trade routes to India. The survey of the land was to include strategic routes through the Jordan River Valley and the Suez Canal. Great Britain's recognition of the strategic importance of the land is one of many modern examples of the significant characteristic of this territory as a land bridge—an issue that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Goren, 'Sacred, but Not Surveyed,' 103.

<sup>63</sup> Anson Rainey and Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2005), 10.

<sup>64</sup> George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy; New York: HarperCollins, 1966; repr., London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1894).

<sup>65</sup> Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 10.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 88.



assigned....<sup>67</sup> Smith adhered to the higher criticism that was developing in biblical studies at that time (and will be discussed below), but he recognised geography should be among the tools for study because of its value in establishing or refuting the possibility of the occurrence of the recorded historic events.

These early explorations and documentation of the physical qualities of the land fostered the still-young discipline of archaeology. A growing number of biblical scholars examined elements of physical place as a tool for better understanding historical events. Simultaneously, in Europe, a different type of historical study was happening that would prove to impact how place was studied in the book of Deuteronomy.

### *19<sup>th</sup> Century Changes to Biblical Studies*

While scholars discussed the probability of the events recorded in the Bible based on the physical context of the land, German scholars transformed how textual analysis dealt with the composition of the biblical text.<sup>68</sup> W. M. L. de Wette was not the first to raise issues of historicity, but he is credited with shifting biblical studies with his argument that the Old Testament's account of history was different from what could be established by historical research.<sup>69</sup> The gap between the actual historic event and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>68</sup> For a history of biblical scholarship beyond the scope of what will be talked about here see T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2002); Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997); A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (NCBC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 81–108; Eckard Otto, *Deuteronomium 1–11: Erster Teilband: 1,1–4,43; Zweiter Teilband: 4,44–11,32* (HTKAT; Stuttgart: Herders, 2012), 62–230; John W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: SPCK, 1984); J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996) xix–xxiv; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB, vol. 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 9–57.

<sup>69</sup> De Wette's dissertation on Deuteronomy in 1805 (the full title was *Dissertatio critico-exegetica qua Deuteronomium a prioribus Pentateuchi libris diversum, alius cuiusdam recentioris auctoris opus esse monstratur* and was defended at the University of Jena in 1805), followed by his *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Halle, 1806), suggested that there was not a developed Israelite religion that was handed down to Moses at Mount Sinai. Instead, the religion developed throughout centuries to reach the form that is now presented in the Old Testament: John W. Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament: Cultural Memory, Communication, and Being Human* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 6.

the accounting of such event garnered the focus of his work.<sup>70</sup> For de Wette, the historical writings primarily reflected the views of history at the time of writing by those who wrote them.<sup>71</sup> Observing noticeable variants in the text, de Wette suggested that the Pentateuch did not emerge in its entirety at one time but was compiled from sources that originate in different time periods. Two of his ideas had a particular influence on how Deuteronomy was studied. First, de Wette supported the claim that the books of the Pentateuch were not written by Moses and that the oldest sections at most could be dated to the time of King David.<sup>72</sup> Second, he suggested that Deuteronomy was distinct from all other Pentateuchal source materials, and that this unique document (or portion of) was the scroll found in the temple during Josiah's reign (2 Kgs. 22:8). In de Wette's opinion, this meant that Deuteronomy should be dated separately from the rest of the Pentateuch and, because of its similarities with Josiah's reforms, it should be dated close to the time of Josiah.<sup>73</sup>

De Wette's research increased the amount of attention given to separating and dating perceived layers of the biblical text. Questions were raised regarding the purpose behind the text's repeated stories, anachronistic details, and the use of various names for God. For Wellhausen, these variations betrayed different source materials, each with its own characteristics and patterns and each reflecting different periods of Israelite religion. Based on variants in the text, scholars could separate the source materials and study them individually.<sup>74</sup> Wellhausen is famously associated

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<sup>70</sup> For a detailed discussion of his work see John W. Rogerson, *W. M. L. de Wette, Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism: An Intellectual Biography* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Idem, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, *W. M. L. de Wette*, 40, 50; cf. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 13; Peter Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2009), 130.

<sup>73</sup> A seventh-century date for Deuteronomy has been challenged through the years yet remained the majority opinion until recently. For a history of how this opinion became the accepted view as well as a list of scholars who are gradually changing this opinion, see Rannfrid Thelle, *Approaches to the 'Chosen Place': Accessing a Biblical Concept* (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 6–8, note 12.

<sup>74</sup> A complete analysis of criteria typically used to identify sources can be found in Norman Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (JSOTSup 53; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1987).

with the Documentary Hypothesis, wherein four primary compositional layers of the Pentateuch are defined (J, E, D, P).<sup>75</sup> Scholars held that by differentiating and dating the textual sources, the history of the biblical text and the development of Israelite religion could be reconstructed. Therefore, a real (and possibly more accurate) history of events could be recovered from the text.<sup>76</sup> Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* effected a seismic shift in Old Testament studies.<sup>77</sup> Like de Wette, Wellhausen concluded that Deuteronomy should be dated to Josiah's era, which became the standard against which all other source documents were dated.<sup>78</sup> In other words, the texts that seemed to present older views than those in Deuteronomy had to originate prior to Josiah, and the texts that took Deuteronomistic writing for granted had to originate during or after the exile to Babylon. Although Wellhausen's original Documentary Hypothesis was later refined, the foundation of this theory was widely accepted and became the dominant approach to interpreting the Pentateuch. It is, in fact, the source of much of the vocabulary that continues to be used in Pentateuchal studies to this day.

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<sup>75</sup> The original proposal that the Pentateuch was composed of four sources (JEDP) was proposed by Hermann Hupfeld in 1853, but scholarly doubts about Hupfeld's dating of the sources prevented widespread use until the later work of Graf, Vatke, and Wellhausen. It should be noted that the Documentary Hypothesis is not the idea of one person although often closely associated with Wellhausen. Cf. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 14–16.

<sup>76</sup> William Dever, *What did the Biblical Writers Know and When did they Know It?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 10.

<sup>77</sup> His argument for the dating of the Pentateuchal sources, especially of the Priestly source as a reflection of postexilic Judaism was so persuasive it went unchallenged for decades. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003; repr. *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*; trans. *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, Scholars Press, 1878). Wellhausen's view was supported and popularised by S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 8th ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909); cf. Gordon Wenham, 'Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm,' in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. David Baker and Bill T. Arnold; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 116–144.

<sup>78</sup> Wellhausen suggested the scroll found in the temple was likely only the Deuteronomistic law code (chs. 12–26), and this core text appeared in different editions with two different introductions, one being chapters 5–11 and the other being chapters 1–4. However, as Driver pointed out, the language and style of Deuteronomy 5–11 are too similar to chapters 12–26 to assume a different hand wrote them. He went on to say that even chapters 1–4 were similar to the core text of Deuteronomy: S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), lxxvii–lxxii.

Another significant shift came with Martin Noth's work *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*.<sup>79</sup> The Documentary Hypothesis had already distinguished Deuteronomy as a distinct literary source of the Pentateuch, and scholars had been looking for its influence in other Old Testament texts. Although scholars noticed theological connections with the historical books and wisdom literature, Noth formulated a new hypothesis of Deuteronomy's composition. Instead of being read in combination with the Pentateuch, Noth claimed that Deuteronomy should be read with the following historical narratives of Joshua–Kings. He suggested a Deuteronomistic historian worked not only as an editor to shape the book of Deuteronomy but also as an author of the historical books during the time of the exile. This editor/author took existing material with roots in the early history of Israel and knit it together with new material to form a cohesive theological interpretation of Israel's history, or the Deuteronomistic History, of which Deuteronomy was the paradigmatic introduction. Noth supported the claim that the legal code of Deuteronomy and Josiah's reforms were connected, and subsequently, theological themes of Deuteronomy such as idolatry, the chosen place, and covenant became the criteria against which Israelite history was judged. In Noth's opinion, the Deuteronomistic History was an explanation of the people's failure to act in accordance with the covenant resulting in the Babylonian exile.

A specific study of Deuteronomy's place emerged when Deuteronomy was separated from other Pentateuchal source documents. The ensuing comparison of documents highlighted Deuteronomy's particular interest in the 'chosen place.' Deuteronomy is the only Pentateuchal book to command Israel to bring sacrifices, offerings, and tithes 'to the place which Yahweh your God will choose.'<sup>80</sup> The chosen place is where Israel celebrates the annual festivals and where difficult judgements are made. The unique focus in the Deuteronomic laws on the chosen place attracted attention in Deuteronomic research, and efforts were directed at deciphering the qualities of that place. Where was it? How did it function? The

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<sup>79</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1981); trans. *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, pp. 1–110 (Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1957).

<sup>80</sup> Deuteronomy 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23–25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11.

initial questions about the chosen place focused on what that place revealed about Israel's history and religious beliefs.

The benchmark ideas of the scholars mentioned above shaped the parameters within which place in Deuteronomy was studied. The trajectory of scholarship in biblical studies impacted the study of the social and religious aspects of place in Deuteronomy that began when Deuteronomy was separate from other Pentateuchal source materials. The goal of the following section is to summarise the progression of traditional thought along with the recent research that has opened doors to re-examine Deuteronomy's concept of place.

### **The Initial Study of Place in Deuteronomy**

There are three similar law codes in the Pentateuch found in Exodus 20–23 (Covenant Code, CC), Leviticus 17–26 (Holiness Code, HC), and Deuteronomy 12–26 (Deuteronomic Code, DC).<sup>81</sup> The laws in each code are similar, but, as it was initially thought, the unique features of each law code illuminated the historical development of Israelite religion. Within these comparisons, Deuteronomy's regulations regarding the chosen place are pronounced. For example, Exodus 20:22–26 instructs Israel to build an altar on which they will sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. Imbedded within these instructions is the statement, 'In every place where I cause my name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you' (vs. 24b), where 'in every place' seems to infer that several places will exist for worship. However, Leviticus 17:3–7 instructs the community to bring all sacrificed animals to the altar located before the Tent of Meeting. Deuteronomy 12:1–28 commands the people to offer sacrifices at the chosen place but also makes allowances for animals to be slaughtered in the city gates. The comparison of these three altar laws highlights key differences. The CC seems to allow multiple altars while the HC and DC permit only one altar. Within historical critical studies, the scholarly consensus followed Wellhausen's conclusion that the CC was the oldest and most permissive of the laws. Both the HC and DC limit the sacrifices to only one place, but, Wellhausen

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<sup>81</sup> Parallels between the CC and DC and also between the HC and DC are collated by Mark Biddle, *Deuteronomy* (SHBC; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 198–199.

saw in Deuteronomy a demand for centralisation while Leviticus assumed it.<sup>82</sup> Since the HC was perceived as presenting the most restrictive version of the law, it was, therefore, the later source.<sup>83</sup>

Laws in Deuteronomy that regulate activity at the chosen place are not focused solely in chapter 12. They permeate the entire law code so that all aspects of life are affected, including sacrifices, annual festivals, and judicial decisions. Wellhausen suggested the ‘cult centralisation’ at the chosen place altered the traditional practices of sacrificing and celebrating religious festivals ‘among one’s native hills.’<sup>84</sup> By requiring all celebrations to be located at the chosen place, religious life was completely severed from daily life.<sup>85</sup> ‘Human life has its root in local environment, and so also had the ancient cultus; in being transplanted from its natural soil it was deprived of its natural nourishment.’<sup>86</sup> Wellhausen astutely recognised that people have a strong personal attachment to the land they occupy, but he interpreted the overarching reforms of Deuteronomy as a purposeful programme designed to sever the religious connections the people had with their territory. Deuteronomy’s centralisation was understood as a programme to isolate Israelite authority and significant religious activity to one location. As will become evident in the following research, a study of Deuteronomy through a placial lens suggests that instead of severing religious life from daily life by separating the chosen place from the rest of the land, Deuteronomy tightly knits all of these elements together. Centralisation should not be automatically understood as isolation. That which Wellhausen places into opposing camps actually belong together within the whole placial structure.

The mutual relationship between the chosen place and the rest of the land has gone unnoticed primarily because of de Wette’s idea that Deuteronomy was associated with Josiah’s reign. De Wette’s proposal shifted much of scholarly research towards discerning the relationship between centralisation in the

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<sup>82</sup> Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 19.

<sup>83</sup> In earlier scholarship, de Wette thought the priestly source preceded Deuteronomy, but Wellhausen suggested the Priestly writings, with the assumption of one sanctuary, rested upon the result of the reforms in Deuteronomy: Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 35.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 76–79.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Deuteronomic law code and Josiah's reforms. The chosen place was assumed to refer to Josiah's capital established in Jerusalem. Scholars were left to answer if Deuteronomy prescribed the reforms of Josiah or if the composition of the text was influenced by and served to validate Josiah's reforms.<sup>87</sup> Wellhausen suggested that Deuteronomy reflected a polemic against the local, Israelite sanctuaries in favour of singular worship in Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup> This ultimately meant that the programme of centralisation reflected in Deuteronomy meant the same thing as the religious reforms in the narratives of the book of Kings.<sup>89</sup> The exact nature and ramifications of Deuteronomy's laws were then deduced by comparing them to what was understood of pre-Josianic Israelite life and religious practices.

The identification of the 'chosen place' as Jerusalem was made because of the connection between the Deuteronomic law code and Josiah's reforms. It was a view further supported by Noth's theory of the Deuteronomic History. When Deuteronomy is interpreted as an introduction to the books of Joshua–Kings instead of as a part of the Pentateuch, the 'chosen place' is considered to be the same as 'chosen city' in the book of Kings. King David initiated the political and religious centralisation in Jerusalem. He established his political capital in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5) and then moved the Ark of the Covenant there (2 Sam. 6). Solomon built and dedicated the Jerusalem temple as 'the place of which You have said, "My name shall be there"' (1 Kgs. 8:29). Solomon then prayed that God would hear the prayers of his people when they prayed 'towards the city which you have chosen and the house which I have built for your name' (vs. 44). This speech is traditionally

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<sup>87</sup> Thelle, *Approaches to the 'Chosen Place'*, 9. See also Thelle's note 17 on the same page for archaeology's contribution to the argument of a centralisation reform dating to either Hezekiah or Josiah.

<sup>88</sup> Wellhausen says Deuteronomy is clearly relying on the earlier Yahwistic laws, and 'from this step it is easy to believe that the work whose discovery gave occasion to King Josiah to destroy the local sanctuaries was this very Book of Deuteronomy,' which must have been a version abbreviated from the book we have today: Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 33.

<sup>89</sup> Thelle, *Approaches to the 'Chosen Place'*, 29–30. Wenham says the presence in Deuteronomy 27 of the covenant renewal ceremony on the hills of Gerizim and Ebal suggests Deuteronomy is not requiring a specific centralisation program in Jerusalem. Gordon Wenham, 'Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary,' *TynBul* 22 (1971): 115–116; idem, 'The Date of Deuteronomy: Linch-pin of Old Testament Criticism. Part Two,' *Themelios* 11.1 (September 1985): 15–16.

interpreted to mean that the ‘chosen city’ mentioned in 1 Kings 8:29 is the same as the ‘chosen place’ mentioned in Deuteronomy (cf. 2 Kgs. 21:4).<sup>90</sup>

Scholarship progressed in such a way to establish certain parameters that influenced how place in Deuteronomy was studied. Because Deuteronomy was dated to a particular time period, the ‘chosen place’ was assigned a specific location, and the centralising laws were interpreted according to the identified location (i.e., Jerusalem) without consideration of the placial structure developed in the book. By identifying Jerusalem as the intended ‘chosen place,’ centralisation was naturally viewed as a programme to bolster Jerusalem as the centre while simultaneously de-emphasising all non-Jerusalem worship. The historical connection between Deuteronomy’s reforms and Josiah’s reforms meant that the book could be interpreted in the socio-political context of the growing threat of the Assyrian Empire. With this historical background in place, various scholars suggested on the motivation for such radical reforms in Deuteronomy. The primary trends are exemplified through the work of the following scholars.

Weinfeld suggested that the centralisation reforms intended to demythologise and desacralise ancient worship.<sup>91</sup> Deuteronomy 12 initiates the laws of centralisation at the chosen place (and thus severed religious life from daily life), but Deuteronomy also abstracts the notion of the sanctuary by calling it ‘the place where Yahweh chose to cause his name to dwell there.’ Weinfeld said the phrase ‘to cause his name to dwell’ was a new theological conception of the presence of God ‘intended to combat the ancient popular belief that the Deity actually dwelled within

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<sup>90</sup> R. E. Clements bolsters such an opinion saying that within the Deuteronomistic History the verb ‘to choose’ is never applied to any other city but Jerusalem: R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 92–93. A contrary opinion is explored in Thelle’s work to answer the question if the ‘chosen city’ is the same as the ‘chosen place.’ Thelle, *Approaches to the ‘Chosen Place.’* For additional summary of the interpretation of the chosen place throughout biblical literature, Jewish literature and modern scholarship, see McConville in Gordon McConville and Gary Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup Series 179; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 90–110.

<sup>91</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992; repr. from Oxford University Press, 1972), 191–243.



the sanctuary.<sup>92</sup> It was a part of the Deuteronomic school's polemic against the anthropomorphic and corporeal conceptions of God,<sup>93</sup> ultimately replacing the corporal representation of God's glory with the doctrine of God's name.<sup>94</sup> It is interesting, as he himself notes, that Deuteronomy as a book would elevate the chosen place to the highest rank while at the same time divesting that place of all sacral content and import.<sup>95</sup> However, Weinfeld held to his theory because he perceived additional aspects of desacralising in other typically sacral practices. Deuteronomy 12 sanctions the slaughtering of animals in city gates without requiring that the animal's blood be sprinkled on the altar.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, the tithe was not described as belonging to the priests but instead the tithe remained in the possession of the individual who was permitted to give it away for humanitarian reasons.<sup>97</sup> Weinfeld suggested these laws freed the population from cultic artefacts and severed the law from ancient myth or primitive character that was associated with local altars.<sup>98</sup> The tribal loyalties that originally developed around local worship sites were purposefully dismantled to centralise authority in one location. Weinfeld, like Wellhausen, polarised local worship and leadership from centralised worship and leadership. As will become evident in the study below, the tendency to make either-or conclusions (i.e., either local or central) is directly challenged by a placial analysis of Deuteronomy in which bifocal divisions of place are questioned.

In his book *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, Levinson suggested that Deuteronomy is not just reacting to historical changes but is actually

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<sup>92</sup> Weinfeld was in agreement with von Rad who stated, 'The name dwells on earth in the sanctuary; Yahweh himself is in heaven.' Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (trans. Dorothea Barton; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 90; cf. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 191–209.

<sup>93</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 198.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; Weinfeld also says the instructions to pour the blood of the animal on the ground like water devalued any perceived sacrality of the blood of the animal: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 213–214.

<sup>97</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy I–II*, 43.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–44. Weinfeld says elsewhere that Deuteronomy frees the people from their ties to ancient ceremonies. Religious actions are moved to one place and removed from daily life. Sacrifices and festivals are removed from their more natural, local context to a central sanctuary: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 217–221.

creating new innovations to bolster Jerusalem and the position of the Jerusalem scribes.<sup>99</sup> Like Wellhausen, Levinson confirmed the oldest textual layer of the Pentateuch allows sacrificial worship at multiple altar sites, and that contrary to this tradition, Deuteronomy prohibits sacrificial worship at local altars by restricting sacrifice to an exclusive site, thus draining the local sphere of religious activities.<sup>100</sup> Deuteronomy also restructures traditional authority by subordinating local leaders to cultic centralisation and the authority of the written Torah.<sup>101</sup> Levinson suggested that Deuteronomy justifies these innovations by using the authority of the Covenant Code. By quoting and reworking the older law code, Deuteronomy brings legitimacy and authority to the new ideas it is suggesting.<sup>102</sup> He stated, ‘The authors of Deuteronomy radically transformed the religion and society of ancient Judah,’<sup>103</sup> primarily reshaping how society function in place all in response to neo-Assyrian ravages at the time of Hezekiah’s reign.<sup>104</sup> Levinson viewed Deuteronomy as an unrealised vision of a constitutional monarchy in which every leadership position was required to submit to the central cult and to the Torah.

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<sup>99</sup> Bernard Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>101</sup> Bernard Levinson, ‘The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History’s Transformation of Torah,’ *VT*, vol. 51 (October 2001): 512.

<sup>102</sup> He suggests selective editing reworked early texts that would have otherwise precluded centralisation: Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 5, 20–21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

Instead of a religious reform, Halpern suggested that Deuteronomy's programme of centralisation facilitated a social reform<sup>105</sup> that moved Israel from a society based on kinship networks to one based on individual merit and welfare.<sup>106</sup> Halpern focused on analysing the social context that would necessitate the innovative laws outlined in the book. He concluded that a reformer king used Deuteronomy to change the ancient tribal structure of Israel in order to create a new social structure focused on Jerusalem. Halpern based his analysis on contrasts between city gates and the chosen place, oral traditions and written documents, and a central government against local administration. He concluded that Israelite tradition and theology was upheld in Deuteronomy but separated from the traditional social structures by breaking down countryside patrilineages and upholding the centralised cult as the only acceptable cult. In effect, Halpern concluded that Deuteronomy modified Israelite social structure to withstand contemporary geopolitical challenges.

Dutcher-Walls agreed that Deuteronomy fits within the sociopolitical period of the Assyrian empire.<sup>107</sup> She recognised that Deuteronomy responds to international

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<sup>105</sup> Halpern's work is a part of a larger development to bring a social scientific approach to the biblical text. Such an approach includes inquiry into the social context that motivated historical events and the recording of such events. Other scholars who have embraced this approach have challenged the imperial focus of traditional scholarship and have pushed scholarly attention outward from the urban elite, who comprise the social minority, to the rural peasants, who make up the social majority. Interaction between people and objects or other people must transpire in places, and so as scholars study the social interactions, they take note of the places. For examples of this scholarship along with good bibliographies see: Norman Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible in its Social World and in Ours* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1993); Philip J. King and Lawrence Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Paula McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); Victor Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel: 1250-587 BCE* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005); Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Robert Wilson, *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

<sup>106</sup> Baruch Halpern, 'Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century B.C.E.: Kingship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability,' in *Law and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Deborah Hobson; JSOTSup, 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991): 11–107; idem, 'The Centralization Formula in Deuteronomy' (*VT*, vol. 31, Fasc. 1 (January 1981): 20–38; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1518357>).

<sup>107</sup> Patricia Dutcher-Walls, 'The Circumscription of the King: Deuteronomy 17:16–17 in Its Ancient Social Context,' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 121, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 601–616.

social pressures but said that the regulations in the book prescribe something unique from the political structures of surrounding nations, namely diminishing the authority of the king. In light of the Assyrian onslaught, Dutcher-Walls suggested that the law code was modified post-defeat to fit treaty regulations between suzerain and vassal kings. In other words, Deuteronomy must reflect a time when Assyria had already established control over Judah, and, in light of that control, the Israelite king is prevented from exercising extensive power. Both Dutcher-Wall and Halpern's works are structured around the perceived role of the king as understood in light of a centralising policy that supports the political and religious centre. They assume the monarchy plays a significant and central role in Israelite governance. As will become evident in subsequent chapters, a centralised government with a human authority figure at the core is antithetical to Israel's leadership structure as understood through a placial lens.<sup>108</sup>

Issues related to Deuteronomy's chosen place are tightly intertwined with the dating of the Pentateuchal texts and the historical reconstructions of Israelite religion. These issues become difficult to disentangle.<sup>109</sup> Although critical scholarship held that Jerusalem should be assumed to be the chosen place, von Rad said that conclusion was too hasty.<sup>110</sup> He suggested that although Hezekiah and Josiah enacted reforms in which Deuteronomy's laws were applied to the temple in Jerusalem, the reforms prove nothing about the origin of the stipulations.<sup>111</sup> The nature of the relationship between the royal reforms and the Deuteronomic law code is not clear, and it is difficult to determine if Deuteronomy affected the reforms or if it was a product of the reforms. This begs the question if it is possible to study Deuteronomy's chosen place apart from the traditional assumptions that have been associated with it since the time of de Wette. Recently, such assumptions have been challenged, and alternative ideas regarding the location and the function of the

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<sup>108</sup> See chapter seven for the analysis of Israelite leadership roles.

<sup>109</sup> Thelle, *Approaches to the 'Chosen Place,'* 7–9.

<sup>110</sup> Von Rad suggested Deuteronomy emanated from a covenant renewal ceremony that was not based on political reform: von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1984), 36–38.

<sup>111</sup> Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 94.

chosen place have been offered. The following scholars laid the foundation for widening the parameters in which place can be addressed in Deuteronomy.

*The Chosen Place may not be Jerusalem*

Wenham challenged the general consensus that Deuteronomy's composition must be associated with Josiah's attempt to limit all worship to Jerusalem.<sup>112</sup> He posited that it is unnecessary to believe that Deuteronomy only had one place in mind for the chosen place because the reference could easily allow for one place *at a time* rather than one *for all times*. In fact, Wenham adds, Jerusalem is an unlikely reference, because a book that is so intent on abolishing false sacrifices would not encourage a covenant ratification ceremony with an altar at Ebal and Gerizim if Jerusalem was intended (Deut. 11:29, 27:1–14; cf. Josh. 24:1).<sup>113</sup> Indeed, other places besides Jerusalem held religious significance for the Israelites in their history, and one of those places could have functioned as the chosen place. Shiloh was an early resting place for the tabernacle (Josh. 18:1), and is referred to by Jeremiah as the place where 'Yahweh caused his name to dwell' (Jer. 7:14).<sup>114</sup> Shechem sat in between the hills of Gerizim and Ebal and was the location of the covenant ratification ceremony where the people built an altar and offered sacrifices (Deut. 11:29; 27:2–8; Josh.

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<sup>112</sup> Wenham, 'Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary,' 116–118. Previously argued by Theodor Oestreicher, *Das Deuteronomische Grundgesetz* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1923). Welch argues that the phrase 'in one of your tribes,' which modifies God's chosen place in Deut. 12, should be taken in a distributive sense and not a limiting sense. Adam Welch, 'The Problem of Deuteronomy,' *JBL* 48 (1929): 291–306, esp. 296. Cf. Halpern, 'The Centralization Formula in Deuteronomy,' 22. Greenspahn agrees that the syntax of Deut. 12:5, 13–14 does not require one single place. Instead, the definite article in 'the place' can be understood to mark a class or category as opposed to an individual entity. See Frederick Greenspahn, 'Deuteronomy and Centralization,' *VT*, vol. 64 (2014): 227–235. Greenspahn's suggestions are called into question by Bill Arnold, 'Deuteronomy 12 and the Law of the Central Sanctuary *noch einmal*,' *VT*, vol. 64 (2014): 246–248.

<sup>113</sup> Wenham concludes that if the intention was to centralise worship in Jerusalem, Deuteronomy 27 would have been omitted. Wenham, 'The Date of Deuteronomy,' 15–16.

<sup>114</sup> At Shiloh the whole congregation assembled before the Lord at the tabernacle (18:1, 10; 19:51). McConville suggests the phrase 'before the Lord' (לפני יהוה) that occurs twice within Joshua 18:1–10 'establishes a link between this passage and Deuteronomy 12, identifying Shiloh as the place in question.' This place of worship seems to have prominence throughout the book of Samuel continuing to be the place where people traveled to celebrate the feasts (Judg. 21:19; 1 Sam. 1:19); McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 91. Also Pitkänen who suggests the presence of the Ark of the Covenant differentiates the central sanctuary from local altars. He suggests the chosen place prior to it becoming Jerusalem was Shiloh: Pekka Pitkänen, *Central Sanctuary and the Centralization of Worship in Ancient Israel* (Piscataway, N.J.: Georgias Press, 2003).

8:30–35; 24:1).<sup>115</sup> Added to these northern, hill-country sites of worship should be Bethel (Judg. 20: 23, 26) and Gilgal (1 Sam. 11:15) both of which were locations where people gathered to celebrate and to offer burnt offerings ‘before the Lord.’ Wenham says instead of trying to identify the chosen place the question should really be whether Deuteronomy’s programme of centralisation always had one particular location in mind (i.e., Jerusalem) or if it allowed any location as long as there was only one specified place at a time.<sup>116</sup>

Thelle recently challenged similar assumptions about the chosen place but from a different angle. Thelle argued that despite similarities, the ‘chosen place’ of Deuteronomy is not the same as the ‘chosen city’ (Jerusalem) in the historical narratives.<sup>117</sup> Thelle demonstrated that although ‘place’ is chosen in Deuteronomy and ‘city’ is chosen in the book of Kings, they are not interchangeable phrases. Deuteronomy is not concerned with naming a location for the ‘chosen place,’ but it does insist that the place has to be chosen by God.<sup>118</sup> She pointed out that Deuteronomy 12 restricts certain actions to the ‘chosen place’ but with the primary purpose of setting Israelite practices in contrast to Canaanite religion. Deuteronomy is not at all concerned with a divine house, temple, or altar, focusing instead on establishing a place that is distinct from Canaanite places.<sup>119</sup> In contrast, the book of Kings is specifically concerned with connecting the house of God with the house of the king. Jerusalem is established as the seat of royal power and as the location of

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<sup>115</sup> In Joshua 24:1, the people gather at Shechem, present themselves before God, agree not to worship other gods, and ratify the covenant. Then Joshua sets up a memorial stone ‘by the sanctuary of the Lord’ (24:26).

<sup>116</sup> McConville makes a clear distinction between an early centralising tendency in Israel and the requirement to centralise worship in Jerusalem: Gordon McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSup 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 23-29.

<sup>117</sup> Thelle, *Approaches to the ‘Chosen Place.’* This conclusion is also held by McConville in Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (AOTC; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2002), 217. See also McConville’s summary of centralising tendencies in Israel in McConville, *Law and Theology*, 23–28.

<sup>118</sup> Thelle, *Approaches to the ‘Chosen Place,’* 57–58.

<sup>119</sup> Deuteronomy’s choice of placial language when referencing the ‘chosen place’ (instead of more precise terms such as ‘temple’, ‘tabernacle’, or ‘sanctuary’) is consistent with Deuteronomy’s overall unique literary perspective. Deuteronomy highlights community and place whereas the Priestly writings emphasise sacral details of ceremonies at the sanctuary. This may explain the book’s overall lack of attention to the specifics of rituals, as found in Exodus and Leviticus. Ibid., 94; J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 110.

the temple. The book of Kings portrays a city chosen to support the election of a royal house in spite of its failure to uphold loyalty to God. Although the ‘chosen’ references in Deuteronomy and Kings sound similar, in actuality they serve very different functions when read within their literary context (although the book of Kings may read Deuteronomy’s laws as supporting the Jerusalem temple).

*The Chosen Place may have a Different Function*

In addition to challenging the identification of the chosen place as Jerusalem, scholars have questioned the assumptions related to the function of the chosen place in Deuteronomy. Lohfink argued that de Wette’s initial suggestion to connect Deuteronomy to the found scroll in the temple is problematic, and, therefore, so too the connection between Deuteronomy’s laws and the reforms of Josiah.<sup>120</sup>

Complementary works by Lohfink and Milgrom attempted to dismantle the long held assumption that Deuteronomy’s laws of centralisation put the chosen place in opposition to the city gates.<sup>121</sup> They argued instead that the land functioned as an interconnected placial network. Against Weinfeld’s suggestion that Deuteronomy creates a programme to desacralise the land, Lohfink and Milgrom claimed Deuteronomy does the opposite by subordinating all aspects of life to God. They suggested that the ‘chosen place’ in Deuteronomy preserves instead of removes the presence of God in the midst of his people. The holiness of God is present in the chosen place and spreads outward into the land. Deuteronomy calls the people holy

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<sup>120</sup> Norbert Lohfink, ‘Opfer und Säkularisierung im Deuteronomium,’ in *Studien zu Opfer und Kult im Alten Testament: Mit einer Bibliographie 1969–1991 zum Opfer in der Bibel* (ed. Adrian Schenker; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 15–43. Idem, ‘Recent Discussion of 2 Kings 22–23: The State of the Question,’ in *Song of Power and Power of Song* (ed. Duane Christensen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 36–61; repr. from ‘Zur neuen Diskussion über 2 Kön 22–23,’ in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft* (ed. N. Lohfink; trans. Linda M. Maloney; Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1985), 24–48.

<sup>121</sup> Jacob Milgrom, ‘The Alleged “Demythologization and Secularization” in Deuteronomy (Review Article),’ *IEJ* 23, (1973): 156–161. Lohfink also states that Deuteronomy may limit sacrifices to the chosen place, but Deuteronomy’s restriction of the rituals at the chosen place is less apparent. Although Deuteronomy requires people to go to the central sanctuary, the high point of the pilgrimage is not the sacrifice but the shared celebration before God. The whole people are considered holy before God. See also Peter Vogt who, in agreeing with Lohfink suggests political and religious issues of centralisation are not the key point in Deuteronomy but the supremacy of Yahweh expressed in the life of Israel: Peter Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah: A Reappraisal* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

to the Lord, calling into question an underlying secularising mentality in Deuteronomic ideology (Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19). Lohfink held that nothing in Deuteronomy is given over to secularisation but instead underscores the sacredness of the people.<sup>122</sup> The book is not constricting but broadening the sphere of holiness.

Related to the dispersal of holiness through the land is Grosby's study on the formation of Israelite nationality.<sup>123</sup> Grosby suggested that 'all of Israel' belonged to 'all the land of Israel' which was God's territory and therefore sacred.<sup>124</sup> Even though Deuteronomy recognises God's presence in one location, the whole land is understood to be holy because it belongs to God. As opposed to the prevailing view that centralisation stripped the land of its religious importance, Grosby demonstrated that, within the development of Israelite nationality, people who were dispersed throughout the land were connected to the sacrality of the 'chosen place' by enacting a single cohesive law.<sup>125</sup> Dispersion of sacrality through the land depends on the territory that exists with specified boundaries. The law of the land thus has jurisdiction throughout the borders where the boundaries indicate the spatial limits of the law's life-ordering power.<sup>126</sup> The sacred place, although a restricted territory, was meaningfully connected to the extended territory. Grosby suggested the people are unified under one central value system stemming from the chosen place but imitated throughout the disparate locations.

Wilson challenged the ideas put forth by Weinfeld and von Rad that the place formula in Deuteronomy 12:5, which states the people should seek the singular chosen place where Yahweh will cause his name to dwell, was a new theological conception of the presence of God that was designed to combat the belief that Yahweh's presence was actually in the sanctuary. Weinfeld suggested that Deuteronomy elevated the importance of the chosen place to the highest rank while

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<sup>122</sup> Lohfink, 'Opfer und Säkularisierung im Deuteronomium,' 36.

<sup>123</sup> Grosby does not deal extensively with the documentary hypothesis or historical background to the text. His emphasis is on developing a social-political theory to explain the Israelite experience of nationality. Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 61–91.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.



at the same time divesting that place of all sacral content and import, but Wilson said Deuteronomy is not that inconsistent.<sup>127</sup> Wilson focused his study on Israel's perception of the presence of God, concluding that the Deuteronomic writer did not retell historic events in such a way to downplay God's presence. In fact, Deuteronomy's use of the phrase 'before the Lord' (לפני יהוה) heightens the understanding of the earthly presence of God. That phrase was used in Deuteronomy for the encounter the people had at Horeb (4:10) and when they gathered before God at the chosen place (12:7, 12, 18; 27:7) for tithes (14:23; 15:20) and for festivals (16:11, 16; 26:1-13).<sup>128</sup> Wilson suggests לפני יהוה links the *activity* of gathering before God at Horeb with the act of appearing before God at the chosen place. The rhetorical significance of the phrase has more to do with Israel choosing to be where God chooses to be present. The heavy presence of God with his people in at the chosen place sacralises the land.

Richter also disagreed with Weinfeld's view that setting God's name in the chosen place was a replacement for his presence. Whereas Wilson focused on Israel's understanding of the presence of God, Richter analysed the ancient Near Eastern context for the place formula used in Deuteronomy 12:5.<sup>129</sup> After surveying biblical and Akkadian literature, Richter concluded that Deuteronomy borrowed from the Akkadian phrase *šuma šakānu* ('to place his name'), which was characteristic in Mesopotamian royal monument traditions. The phrase 'to place his name' meant that a ruler's name was inscribed into a monument or stela that was erected to commemorate the conquest of foreign land.<sup>130</sup> To place the king's name on a monument was a legal action claiming the monument for the king. Therefore, Richter suggests that in Deuteronomy, God's chosen place, the place where he

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<sup>127</sup> Ian Wilson, *Out of the Midst of Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy* (SBLDS 151; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995).

<sup>128</sup> Cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 223.

<sup>129</sup> Sandra L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: lēšakkēn šēmō šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (BZAW 318; Berlin, 2002); idem, 'The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,' *VT*, vol. 57 (2007): 342–366. See also the earlier works of de Vaux and McBride who also held the Name Theology was a statement of ownership. Roland de Vaux, 'Le lieu que Yahvé a choisi pour y établir son nom,' in *Das ferne und nahe Wort, Festschrift L. Rost* (ed. Fritz Maass; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967), 219–228; Sean McBride, 'The Deuteronomic Name Theology' (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1969).

<sup>130</sup> Richter, 'The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,' 344.

chooses to set his name, should be associated with an inscribed monument, a claimed territory, or both.<sup>131</sup> Richter says that setting God's name at the chosen place emphasises his role as a conquering king and demands the people's allegiance based on his sovereignty. Richter comes to a completely different conclusion than does Weinfeld by suggesting that the 'Name Theology' is not actually making a statement about God's presence nor is it about demythologising Israelite belief, because it is actually a statement of God's ownership of the whole land and his relationship with his people.

### *Constructing a New Understanding of Place*

It was traditionally held that King David's efforts to bring the tabernacle to Jerusalem was the first effort to centralise the political and religious activities of the Israelite kingdom. Centralisation challenged the local, patriarchal structure of authority and all national leadership was focused in one location. Although the Israelites worshiped at altars built throughout the land, the royal structure of centralisation began to draw the focus towards one place, but it was not until the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah that the local altars were destroyed in favour of the temple in Jerusalem—reforms that have been interpreted as essentially evacuating the land of meaning in favour of the chosen place. This basic historical timeline provided the framework that focused much of the analysis of Deuteronomy's centralising policy.

However, a growing interest in literary criticism that began in the 1970s focused attention on synchronic readings of the received text. This perspective highlighted the fact that each Pentateuchal law code is embedded within different narratives, and the substance and ideas of the text are transformed by the literary context. Thus, an argument can be made for reading the text as a whole instead of being analysed in isolated parts because the literary context influences the interpretation of the law. This is important for a study of place in Deuteronomy because a literary reading of Deuteronomy prioritises an analysis of the chosen place in context of the placial structure communicated in Deuteronomy instead of drawing historical conclusions based on the comparison between the law codes. Inter-

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

disciplinary collaborations have allowed the placial study to become more holistic in an approach. Deuteronomy's placial structure and the programme of centralisation can now be studied from a perspective that engages physical land, population, and specific dynamics of social structures.

Walter Brueggemann was at the *naissance* of this change with his seminal work *The Land*.<sup>132</sup> Brueggemann's research preceded the trend to embrace detailed placial methodologies. His work focused on tracing the theme of land as place through the Old Testament. Brueggemann recognised that land was an important, if not the central theme of biblical faith, but it had been neglected because traditional scholarship was preoccupied with time/history.<sup>133</sup> *The Land* explores the impact that living in the promised land of inheritance had on Israelite society by focusing on the human need to belong to place. Brueggemann then re-examines the historical narrative of Israel highlighting the impact on society of *landedness* versus *landlessness*. The second edition of Brueggemann's book notes that many changes have taken place in scholarship since the first publication. He lists several approaches to land and place that were just beginning to emerge at the original time of writing.<sup>134</sup>

Like Brueggemann, Wright highlights the significance of the land in the Old Testament.<sup>135</sup> Throughout the Pentateuch, Israel anticipates the gift of the land of inheritance. The land is a major aspect in the covenant promises of God to Abraham, and in that land the Torah is lived out. The anticipation of entering into that

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<sup>132</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002).

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Brueggemann's work was amplified by Habel who catalogues various land ideologies in Norman Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Habel himself pushes into new territory with the Earth Bible Project which he co-leads with Shirley Wurst. Arising out of the context of the modern ecological crisis, this project gathers biblical scholars from around the world who are committed to read the biblical text from an ecojustice perspective. The first volume published in this project is Norman Habel, *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>135</sup> Christopher Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Exeter: Eerdmans, 1990); *idem*, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

particular place is the context for Deuteronomy.<sup>136</sup> The threat of exile is more than a retraction of the gift of inheritance; it is the threat of being separated from the place that helped form the people's identity. Wright's book *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* famously triangulated God, people, and land as a structure for understanding Old Testament ethics.<sup>137</sup> Wright explains the relationship between the Israelites and God is not independent of context. It is inseparable from land. The health of the covenant relationship will be reflected in the health of the land.<sup>138</sup>

Gradually, scholars have widened the scope of placial studies as they have also recognised that environment can impact people and their living space. When people become disinterested in and unattached to place, they develop a sense of rootlessness. When place is evaluated solely on its physical qualities that can be consumed, destructive attitudes towards the natural environment can develop. One influential voice speaking against these tendencies is Wendell Berry. Berry is a writer and a farmer who is deeply concerned about the health of land and communities.<sup>139</sup> His writings have influenced works such as Ellen Davis' *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*.<sup>140</sup> Davis analyses the Old Testament's mandate to care for nature and draws from that analysis an understanding of the theological basis for

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<sup>136</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 78–80.

<sup>137</sup> Wright introduces the 'triangle of relationships' in the introduction of his book (pp. 17–20), but the scheme is explained in depth in the work he does in Part One. *Ibid.*, 23–99.

<sup>138</sup> Wright notices that place is relational, and place affects those who dwell within it, so the way place is treated will in turn impact on the people. Marlow uses Wright's structure for Old Testament ethics but limits her biblical study to the prophets in her focus on contemporary environmental ethics: Hilary Marlow, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>139</sup> Berry is a prolific writer, but a sample of some of his influential articles about place can be found in a recent book edited by Norman Wirzba. Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Common-Place: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (ed. by Norman Wirzba; Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2003).

<sup>140</sup> Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). See also Norman Wirzba who in building on Berry's claim that humanity belongs to place instead of the other way around, states humanity needs to relearn how to be fully present in place. '...to live well is to live in such a way that our own creative gestures—as witnessed in our eating, teaching, building, parenting, playing, and loving—increasingly bear witness to and honor the continuing creativity of God.' Norman Wirzba, 'The Dark Night of the Soil: An Agrarian Approach to Mystical Life,' in *Wendell Berry and Religion: Heaven's Earthly Life* (ed. Joel James Shuman and L. Roger Owens; Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 152. *Idem*, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

engaging in the modern, pressing, ecological issues.<sup>141</sup> As Davis states, studying the biblical texts with agrarian eyes equips scholars to be more attentive to the biblical writers' 'abiding awareness of their place.'<sup>142</sup> People in the modern world may be less aware of place, but the ancient writers were not. They were shaped by and very conscious of the place around them.<sup>143</sup> This type of scholarship fully embraces the essential quality of physical place that must be respected as a contributor to the overall health of an individual's as well as society's placial network.

### **Recent Studies of Place in Deuteronomy**

The modern interest in place finds echoes in current research within Deuteronomic studies. Many of the above works have explored large narrative portions of the Bible or have pushed into ethical or ecological applications for modern society. The subject is still new enough that only in the past couple years have scholars begun to dig deeply into particular texts to see how studies of place affect our understanding of individual books of the Bible or even portions of those books. Because this study is concerned with place in the book of Deuteronomy, the following scholars should be given special attention.

An initial foray into place as it pertains to Deuteronomy came with Gordon McConville and Gary Millar's *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*.<sup>144</sup> Their study is engaged primarily with historical questions and yet shakes off the constraints of source criticism in order to analyse Deuteronomy as a whole. The synchronic approach highlights important themes of time (past, present and future) and place (principally Horeb, Moab, and Gerazim) as interwoven throughout the framework of Deuteronomy. The approach traces a journey that is both geographical and theological, so that the chosen place is understood in context of succession of places of encounter with God. The memory of past events not only influences national

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<sup>141</sup> See also Daniel Hillel's work which reverses the traditional perspective of humanity's affect on the environment, to approach the biblical text with a specific interest in how the environment brought about changes in Israelite society and religion: Daniel Hillel, *The Natural History of the Bible: An Environmental Exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>142</sup> Davis. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 26.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–26.

<sup>144</sup> McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*.

identity but also shapes future actions because of the connection between these significant places. Deuteronomy relates the physical journey of the people from Horeb to Moab and the journey from Moab into the land, and these places are linked by repeated events of covenant making. The same act of choosing covenant obedience conflates multiple generations into one. It is as if the timeline folds back on itself to align significant places and to put each generation in a similar context. On one hand, the people must learn from the past to make wise choices for the future, thus following a chronological progression of time, and on the other hand, each generation is connected through associated places thus ignoring, or transcending, temporal limitations.

Michaela Geiger's *Gottesräume: Die literarische und theologische Konzeption von Raum im Deuteronomium* is fully located within the renewed contemporary interest in social space.<sup>145</sup> Geiger relies on the work of the German sociologist Martina Löw to develop an understanding of space according to the relational ordering of material things and living beings. Like many sociologists, her work focuses on the 'spaces' between physical locations. She argues that Deuteronomy's theology could be considered a theology of space in which the actions and images of both everyday life and religious festivals construct spaces. These spaces are closely connected to the people's relationship with God. As spaces are constructed and then associated with God-narratives, the people are in essence making them God-spaces. Her work is focused primarily on Deuteronomy 1–12, in which she connects the historic narrative to particular space-nouns (gate, house/home, land, doorposts, 'the place,' Egypt, Moab, Mount Gerazim, etc.). Some spaces are closely connected with God and are thus constructed spaces for divine presence (i.e., Horeb). 'Normal' spaces of daily life can be connected to such divine spaces through tangible means (i.e., writing 'these words' on the doorpost of a home). Narratives are connected to spaces, and when those spaces are connected, the narratives are joined. Geiger's insights are helpful even though the sociological perspective of her study keeps the focus on the social construction of space while giving little attention to the innate value of the physical aspect of place.

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<sup>145</sup> Michaela Geiger, *Gottesräume: Die literarische und theologische Konzeption von Raum im Deuteronomium* (BWANT 183; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010).

Moving away from the wider scope of the Deuteronomic narrative, Jean-Marie Carrière's book *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome* offers a detailed analysis of the Israelite political structure outlined in Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22.<sup>146</sup> This political structure leads him into discussions of how places are constructed. Carrière demonstrates the land in Deuteronomy is more than a location to enter into; it is a place of dwelling, thus making it a social space. He looks at the land from the outside as a place of inheritance and of dwelling and as distinct from surrounding nations. Then he examines how the land is organised from the inside. Carrière examines the connection between God's chosen place and the city gates by looking at the function of each of those places and how they are connected to one another by the pursuit of justice and by the physical movement of the people between them.

### **Conclusion**

Place has certainly not been ignored in Deuteronomy, but, until recently, the placial conversation has remained primarily focused on interpreting the relationship between the chosen place and the rest of the land. The analysis has been confined by a polarising perspective that concludes the Israelites defined place by either local leadership and local worship or centralised leadership and centralised worship. This kind of bifocal analysis suggests that whatever is centralised has been removed from the local sphere.

The philosophical view of place benefits Deuteronomic studies by bringing the complexity of place to the foreground and challenging the bifocal perspective commonly found in historical critical analyses. A nuanced understanding of place is necessary to develop a holistic placial conversation that is aware of the multiple contributing factors to place and is less likely to make either-or conclusions. The chosen place and distributed places are not necessarily opposed to each other. The establishment of the chosen place does not necessitate the dismantling of all local authority, nor does it diminish the religious significance of the individual's actions in the local community. However, Deuteronomy's centralisation programme is evident, so a question remains regarding the function of centralisation in Deuteronomy. Is it

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<sup>146</sup> Jean-Marie Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome: Analyse des unités, des structures et des concepts de Dt 16,18–18,22* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001).

possible that centralisation serves a different purpose than the siphoning of human leadership and authority along with religious thought and practice to one centralised place leaving the local communities void of these things? The placial analysis in this study suggests that the concentration of certain activities to the chosen place informs how life is led throughout the land. Centralisation strengthens the social fabric of the local community while maintaining unity among all the people in all the land.

A synchronic reading of Deuteronomy focuses on the picture of place that is created throughout the whole book. Deuteronomy portrays Moses and the people on the border of their land of inheritance. In this pause between the past journey and future journey into the land, much consideration is given to place. Deuteronomy is concerned with where the people have been in contrast to where they will go, and addresses how that change informs Israel's identity as God's people. Deuteronomy describes the physical qualities of the land with such precise language that the intended location is unquestionable. The texture and quality of the land is a component that impacts social dynamics. The relational qualities of place are shaped by the Torah that is be lived out within it, thus influencing individuals as well as the larger society and the surrounding landscape.

The three placial studies of Deuteronomy by McConville and Millar, Geiger, and Carrière have provided three different approaches to place in Deuteronomy, but the nuances provided by a philosophical view of place have not yet been considered in Deuteronomic studies. This land is where Israel belongs, where they will become rooted, and where they will continue to develop their self-identity. This placial structure includes but is much more than the singular chosen place. Place involves all the people and all the land. Because place is a primary element to humanness, one would expect place to have an effect on identity and memory as well as a sense of belonging and rootedness. Incorporating a nuanced perspective of place to the following analysis of Deuteronomy illuminates how Israel is to belong to place, influence place, and develop relationships in place in such a way to reflect and to reinforce her identity as God's people.



## CHAPTER 2

### The Physical Place of Deuteronomy

#### **Introduction**

As an analysis of Deuteronomy's placial structure unfolds, the physical reality of the land cannot be bypassed. The previous chapter introduced the importance of place to understand the essence of human *being*, and this chapter will examine the particularities of the land that will affect Israel's *being*. As Lefebvre and Soja both acknowledged, the measurable, objective qualities of place are an important component to a larger understanding of place, but these qualities should be understood, not as boundaries within which social space is produced but as equal contributors to the complex matrix of place.<sup>1</sup> This land with its variety of micro-climates and diverse landscapes contributes as much to Deuteronomy's complex system of place as the prescribed social ordering and narration of place in the law code. This chapter describes the physical texture in which Israel is to become rooted. The following chapters will address the specifics of Deuteronomy's placial structure, but this structure must be worked out in this physical context.

The influence of the land on people and events was observed by George Adam Smith in his written descriptions of the geography of the land of the Bible.<sup>2</sup> His book has been through several editions and multiple re-printings, which speaks to the impact of his book on religious studies as well as to his talent for creating vivid mental pictures in his writings. He astutely gives one of his chapters the title 'The Form of the Land and its Historical Consequences,' already aware that place is not just a backdrop against which events happen but instead influences the events that happen within it.<sup>3</sup> More than sixty years after Smith wrote, Denis Baly (who

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 1, pp. 14–17.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–62.

spent fifteen years in what is now modern Jordan and Israel) wrote a detailed geographical and geological description of the land to help his Bible students visualise the biblical environment.<sup>4</sup> He understood his work to be unique to Bible atlases that remain more historical than geographical in nature. Baly states that the land ‘is a complex and powerful thing, strongly influencing the lives and thinking of its people....’<sup>5</sup> These scholars understood that the people and place were intertwined, neither being completely independent of the other.<sup>6</sup>

From the philosophical point of view, Malpas says humans are tied to their surroundings.<sup>7</sup> To be located in place is not only the pre-condition of experience, but it also emphasises one’s finitude and ultimate dependence on place.<sup>8</sup> Geographical context shapes humans and their perceptions. Events, people, and ideas evolve according to the dynamics of their particular place. In this section, the land, regions, and physical characteristics are described, although not to the same detail as in Smith and Baly’s writings. Limited archaeological data are included primarily as evidence of how people lived in the land. The intention is to become familiar with the qualities of the land so as to recognise it within the greater placial network.

### **The Land Between North and South**

The outer limits of the territory of interest is created by the swath of habitable land that bends from the Persian Sea north and west to the Mediterranean Sea and south to the Red Sea. This is the Fertile Crescent, which is anchored in the north and the south by large, riverine, population centres. The Tigris and Euphrates supported several Mesopotamian empires in the north, and the Nile supported Egyptian empires in the south. Each of these rivers flooded annually and deposited fertile soil

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<sup>4</sup> Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1974). A more recent, albeit abbreviated, discussion can be found in Philip R. Davies and John Rogerson, *The Old Testament World* (2nd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 3–23.

<sup>5</sup> Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, xiv.

<sup>6</sup> See also Gustaf Dalman, *Work and Customs in Palestine*, vol. 1 and 2. (trans. Nadia Abdulhadi-Sukhtian; Ramallah: Dar Al Nasher, 2013); Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*; James Monson, *The Land Between: A Regional Study Guide to the Land of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Institute of the Holy Land Studies (now Jerusalem University College), 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 192.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

on the river banks. The rich soil and availability of water gave these communities the necessary resources to support the local population. Cooperation and easy communication between people meant that large areas of villages sharing similar lifestyles could be united. Excess produce led to increased trade and monetary resources. Good communication, open horizon lines, rich agriculture, and access to trade networks facilitated a strong empire. History shows that, within this area of the world, the oldest and strongest empires were rooted in these rich, riverine lands.

However, the land between these northern and southern anchor points is vastly different. It creates a seam between the continents of Asia and Africa, being affected by both and yet not fully belonging to either. The habitable land was compressed between seventy and one hundred miles wide, bounded on the east by the Arabian desert and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea. In this middle section of the Fertile Crescent, no mighty river exists to unite communities or to facilitate the production of agricultural products. Instead, the land is mountainous and multi-faceted due to the layers of granite, sandstone, and limestone laid over time and pushed upwards with a northeast-southwest orientation. These folded hills were then dramatically ripped apart at the north-south fault line visible as the Rift Valley. Such a textured landscape, with dramatic uplifts and massive crevasses, results in communities isolated from one another due to geographical obstacles, arduous agricultural environments, and cumbersome communication.

The shape of the land with its primary north-south mountain cut down the middle by a deep valley has the effect of shutting out the eastern desert while receiving and trapping the moisture from the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>9</sup> Without access to a large river, the inhabitants of these mountainous lands are forced to become skilled at water management. They rely on collected rainwater or groundwater that filters through the rock to emerge as springs and small streams. The agricultural cycle is vulnerable because it relies on weather systems coming from the Mediterranean Sea while also being in danger of scorching hot winds from the eastern desert. This region has only two seasons: wet and dry. The agricultural calendar begins with the gentle rains of October and November, which soften the hard, sun baked surface of

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 29; Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 32.

the soil and allow farmers to turn over the soil. Rainfall increases from December to February and then tapers off again in March and April. Although the rain completely stops from May through September, a dense dew in June adds the last bit of moisture to an otherwise dry landscape.<sup>10</sup> The climate is regular enough to provoke a methodical approach to agriculture, but it was far from being predictable.<sup>11</sup> Each community relied on good water management skills to get them to the next rainy season, with every community managing a different quantity of rainfall. Agricultural production in this land does not spring from sources controlled by humanity. Instead, humanity is vulnerable to the whims of nature and must be more tenacious than those in riverine communities.

The north-south thrust of the hills creates a dominant line of movement from north to south as people traveled along paths of least resistance, avoiding mountainous routes when possible. Significant international roads passed on the eastern and western edges of the uplifted mountains.<sup>12</sup> This north-south flow of the land is broken by four east-west depressions. Using dominant geographical features and historical cities to name these, Baly lists these from north to south as the Aleppo-Euphrates Depression, the Homs-Palmyra Corridor, the Galilee-Bashan Depression, and the Beersheba-Zered Depression.<sup>13</sup> These east-west depressions mark areas of structural weakness where the mountainous terrain is less imposing.<sup>14</sup> In a landscape naturally structured with a north-south thrust, these depressions are significant for providing corridors in which east-west movement is less hindered by geographical obstacles. The major subdivisions of the land between these depressions are unique ‘realms,’ each with a distinctive way of life dictated by

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<sup>10</sup> Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 31–38. For details on the climate and agricultural calendar see George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 62–79. Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 41–42.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Yohanan Aharoni, et al. *The Carta Bible Atlas* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2002), 16–17.

<sup>13</sup> Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

geography.<sup>15</sup> (The southern portion containing the Galilee-Bashan Depression and the Beersheba-Zered Depression will be described in greater detail below.)

Whereas the large rivers in the north and south of the Fertile Crescent provide a naturally fertile context with resources that can sustain large empires, the land in the ‘middle’ of the Fertile Crescent is rough and textured and where the inhabitants have to pay close attention to water management. The hills—with their elevation, folds, and crevices— inhibit communication between communities leading to suspicion of those who are out of sight. The geographical diversity of the land hinders the development of strong, unified governments and instead produces several small kingdoms. The land does not create the resources necessary to create a world-dominating empire. At a glance, one would think this land was difficult and therefore insignificant. On the contrary, the physical terrain constricted between the unwelcoming desert and the tossing sea forms a narrow land bridge, which gives the land its unique value. It connects the two great population centres in the Egypt and Mesopotamia, and it connects communities beyond the Mediterranean Sea to the exotic goods that come from Africa and Arabia. Every significant trade route, whether by land or by sea, has to cross through this land. Historically, traders and armies needed access to this land, primarily as a gateway to their final destination, meaning the north-south and east-west routes were one of the most valuable commodities of the land.

Many names have been given to this land. Since the sixteenth century, the name *Levant*, taken from the French verb *lever* (to rise), was used in commerce to refer to the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean Sea. The term described the place from where the sun rises. Once brought into biblical studies, the term was used to refer to the land and people groups between modern day Turkey and the Sinai Peninsula. *Levant* is, however, a Euro-centric term, as one must be to the west to think of the sun rising over the Fertile Crescent. Such is also the case of terms such as Middle East or Near East. The Roman Empire called the land *Palestine*, a term frequently used in many older geographies, pilgrimage accounts and biblical discourse. However, since the creation of the state of Israel in 1947, the names

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

*Palestine* and *Israel* carry significant political connotations for modern readers, even if that is not how the names were intended at the time.<sup>16</sup> Ideally, a name should be used that is descriptive of this place while avoiding names with political connotations. To this end, a title that was coined by the biblical geographer James Monson—the *Land Between*— will be used throughout this project. This neutral name encapsulates the land’s function as a bridge between continents, sea and desert, ancient civilisations, traders, and armies.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Archaeological Evidence of Land-Betweenness*

Several archaeological finds support this understanding of the Land Between. Pottery, written records, and other material goods demonstrate the flow of ideas, armies, and traders through the land. Archaeological records mark the exchange of pottery between people groups in the Fertile Crescent. The study of clay and burnishing techniques helps archaeologists pinpoint the pottery’s place of origin, sometimes a great distance from where the pottery was found. Scholars suggest that various handmade vessels with unique shapes and finishing techniques may have been introduced into the land by waves of settlers who, once settled, began to create

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<sup>16</sup> *Holy Land* is also used frequently, but that title gives a qualitative interpretation to the land based on the viewpoint of a select people group who think of the events of the land as holy. It is a term especially potent within the framework of pilgrimage in which people have a heightened awareness of the spiritual heritage of a place, desiring to see and ‘relive’ the events of the Bible in the places they occurred. In all fairness, the land should not even be called the *Land of the Bible*, for the characteristics of this geography are independent of the narrative of the Bible, influencing life and communities pre and post biblical narrative.

<sup>17</sup> Monson, *The Land Between*.

their own version of the local pottery.<sup>18</sup> The Land Between became the place of cross-fertilisation of knowledge, technology, religious concepts, and cultural practices.<sup>19</sup> Artefacts, whether imported into the land or reflecting international influences are plentiful in the form of ivory carved with Egyptian motifs, scarab seals, pottery, and inscribed doorjambs and lintels, stelae, statues, and plaques.<sup>20</sup>

Cuneiform writing facilitated a rapidly growing form of international communication.<sup>21</sup> Two significant libraries of small tablets with written communication have been found. One was at Mari (Mesopotamia) with texts dating to 20–19th century B.C.E. and the other at El-Amarna (Egypt) with texts dating to the 14–13th century B.C.E.<sup>22</sup> The tablets in these libraries contain a wealth of information including trade records and political agreements. The details of the written records convey that the northern and southern edges of the Fertile Crescent consistently were the major players on the international scene, and their interests required connections gained through the Land Between. The blending and merging of the ideas as they passed through the land bridge is even noticeable on some

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, in the Early Bronze Age (3200–2200 B.C.E.) Abydos ware that originated in the southern Land Between ended up in Egypt, probably originally containing grains, wine and oil, but this pottery has not yet been found in Mesopotamia. Beth Yerah ware presents a different phenomenon. It originates in northern Mesopotamia and is found primarily along the international trade routes running through the Land Between, but it never found its way to Egypt: Ben-Tor, Amnon, ed., *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (trans. R. Greenberg; Israel: The Open University, 1992), 107–112. Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 45. Mycenaean pottery from the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.E.) was originally imported to the Land Between, but by the early Iron Age local craftsmen adopted the style and made the wares locally. Lawrence E. Stager, ‘The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 B.C.E.),’ *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (ed. Thomas E. Levy; London: Continuum, 2003; repr. Leicester University Press, 1995), 332–348; William Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 120; Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300–1100 B.C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 30.

<sup>19</sup> Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>21</sup> A minority view suggests writing began in Egypt instead of southern Mesopotamia. See Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Rainey gives an extended bibliography of resources for translations of tablets from Mari, which record interactions with Hazor, and the Amarna Letters, which record communications between cities in the Land Between and Pharaoh: Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 55–56.

cylinder seals that have writing developed in Mesopotamia with northern Semitic names and typical Egyptian scenes.

In addition, the conquering armies frequented these international trade routes. Thus, royal accounts of successful, political exploits are depicted on the walls of temples and palaces in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Powerful kings expanded their empire's territory through extraordinary campaigns.<sup>23</sup> Although many cities located in the Land Between are depicted in these inscriptions, the writings are clear that the primary goal was often other large empires, although by necessity they conquered all who stood in their way.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Land Between**

The focus below is on the geographical features defined by the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon mountains in the north, the inhospitable desert sands to the east, the highlands of the wilderness to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Because this is the land described in Deuteronomy, it is of great importance. Cutting east-west through the northern portion of this designated area is the Galilee-Bashan Depression, which reaches from the crescent-shaped shoreline north of the Carmel Mountains to the basalt-covered plateau that is south of Mount Hermon. The southern portion contains the Beersheba-Zered Depression which stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to the southern end of the Dead Sea and to its termination at the western mouth of the Zered Valley.<sup>25</sup> These two depressions provide the only primary east-west connections through this north-south oriented land. The Rift

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<sup>23</sup> The military campaigns are too numerous to list here but a couple good examples are Egypt's Thutmose III (topographical list in relief in Temple of Amon at Karnak), Seti I (campaign relief at Karnak), Rameses II's battles against the Hittites, and Merneptah's campaign into the Land Between. The Assyrian king Sennacherib described his battles in the southern Land Between in great detail on the walls of his palace in Nineveh: Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*, 21; 91–100; 243–244.

<sup>24</sup> For example, in the mid-15th century B.C.E., Thutmose III campaigned against the Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia. The account of his exploits on the wall of the Karnak Temple depicts movement along one of the primary north-south highways through the Land Between. Similarly, as Mesopotamia became the birthplace of dominating empires such as Assyria and Babylon, those kings set their sights on the borders of Egypt. Inscriptions in their palaces depict major battles through the Land Between fought to secure important routes. These histories are available in many books, but for an excellent cataloging of ancient inscriptions, imperial exploits and interactions with the Land Between, see Rainey and Notley, *The Sacred Bridge*.

<sup>25</sup> Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 8.



Valley separates the hills of the Transjordan in the east from the hills of the Cis-jordan in the west.

### *Soil and Water*

Human interaction with the land is heavily influenced by water and soil. Without a powerful river as a guaranteed water source, the land is completely dependent on rain water. The weather systems come from the west off the Mediterranean Sea hitting the side of the hills and releasing rain. The water in the hills filters through the rocks to emerge elsewhere as fresh-water springs. As the weather system passes over the spine of the hills, the rains and winds taper off (called the rainshadow effect) until the system hits the slightly higher hills of the Transjordan and releases rain again. The quantity of rain varies greatly throughout the land. Territory to the north, or along the western seaboard, which is high in elevation receives the greatest quantities of rain while land to the south, or to the east, or with low elevation receives very little rain. While the western side of the hills may receive fifty to sixty centimetres (19–24 in.) of rain annually (the same quantity as San Francisco or London), the eastern face will receive only ten to thirty centimetres (4–12 in.). This means every community, depending on its location, has to develop appropriate water management systems and plant crops to flourish with whatever quantity of rain they typically receive.

Also affecting lifestyle and crops is the type and quality of soil, which, in turn, is determined by the surrounding exposed rock. The land is formed by layers of granite, sandstone, and limestone that were compressed and pushed upwards when the underlying granite platform bent. This compression created the ‘cigar-shaped arch structures’ that form the heights of the Cis-jordan and Transjordan.<sup>26</sup> The top layers of limestone are subjected to the harsh affects of wind and rain, which relentlessly erode away layers of rock. Because these hills lay perpendicular to the weather systems coming from the Mediterranean Sea, the western exposure is hit the hardest by the natural, erosive elements. The amount of erosion correlates to the exposure to the wind and rain.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 22.

There are three primary types of limestone are visible in the Land Between; these types were formed during the Cenomanian, Senonian, and Eocene periods.<sup>27</sup> The oldest layer of Cenomanian limestone absorbs water, is thick and strong, and can be cut and used as building material. This limestone weathers into a mineral rich *terra rosa* soil especially well suited for agriculture. Senonian is a thin layer of chalk on top of the Cenomanian. It crumbles into a poor, lime-rich soil called *rendzina*. When rain falls, Senonian chalk cannot sufficiently absorb water, which beads and rolls off the surface. Although *rendzina* is easier to plough than the rocky *terra rosa* soil, the lack of minerals and of the ability to absorb moisture creates a taxing environment for anything more than cereal crops. Instead, the land often is given over to shepherding. The younger Eocene period limestone is the newest layer of limestone, appearing as a soft chalk with ripples of meter-thick, hardened minerals throughout. The combination of chalk and minerals weathers into a semi-productive *Mediterranean Brown Forest* soil. The hard mineral layers within Eocene can be used as building materials, whereas the soft chalk can be used for plaster. Because the western face of the hills receives the brunt force of the wind and rain, the limestone layers there have been worn away to expose the older Cenomanian layer while some places on the eastern face still have a layer of Senonian on the top surface. As a result, from the spine of the hill country towards the west, the *terra rosa* soil and the higher volume of rain provide a suitable context for settled inhabitants, who can make a living from farming. In contrast, the eastern face of the hills, with its insufficient rainfall and exposed *rendzina* soil, hinders crop production and is a context better suited for those who make a living from shepherding.

### *Regions*

The Land Between can be described according to four primary longitudinal zones that follow the north-south thrust of the land. From west to east, these zones are the coastal plain, hill country of the Cis-jordan, the Rift Valley, and the hill country of the Transjordan.

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<sup>27</sup> Many more layers of submerged rock exist, but the rock layers named here are the three primary layers of rock, along with the basalt outpours in the north, that are visible and that affect human life in this region. For a more developed description of the 'Depths of the Earth' of this region, see Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 15–42.

## Coastal Plain

The coastal plain stretches south from the base of the Lebanese Mountains south to the desert lands that guard the entrance to Egypt. The plain is broken only once by the outstretched arm of the Carmel Mountain range, which bisects the plain and pushes dramatically into the Mediterranean Sea. Otherwise, the coastal plain provides a wide and unobstructed north-south connection.

The shoreline is smooth but for the crescent-shaped bay immediately north of the Carmel range. Without natural harbours, the people who settled along the coastal plain did not become significant sea traders like their northern neighbours.

The coastal plain has rich deposits of alluvial soil that the rains have washed down from the hills to the east. The quantity of rainfall varies from north to south, as do the soil mixtures.

Generally speaking, all of the coastal plain is suitable for cereal crops, except for a section between the Carmel range and the Yarkon River. Due to parallel lines of petrified sand dunes, called *kurkar*, the land at the water's edge is raised slightly so that the water running off the hills drains onto the flat coastal plain but cannot pass the *kurkar* to reach the sea. The result is a rough, swampy land filled with scrub brush. To stay out of the swamp, the international road which normally follows the shoreline shifts eastward onto the low foothills of the hill country. South of the Yarkon River, however, multiple gaps in the sand dunes allow excess water to drain into the Mediterranean Sea, leaving the coastal plain once again easy to travel and suitable for crops. Water is available to the people who live in this territory via runoff water from the hills or from wells dug down to the water table.

Local structures in the plain are made from mud bricks, which is the most accessible building material. This flat land with easy access to agriculture and suitable access to water supported those traveling along the international routes. The communities here were perpetually in contact with both passing traders and invading armies, reaping both the benefits of money and innovation and also the danger of invasion and dominance.

### Hill Country

Moving to the east, one ascends into the hills and into one of the most richly varied regions of the Land Between: with a multitude of small ecosystems—from lush to arid, sometimes within only a few mile of each other. From north to south the structure of the hills is broken into several uniquely shaped regions of diverse lifestyles. The north is characterised by rugged Cenomanian hills that rise over one thousand metres (over 3,200 ft.).<sup>28</sup> Here, water is plentiful and *terra rosa* soil is abundant, but the crags and dramatic precipices prevent easy access to the small communities isolated in the folds of the hills.<sup>29</sup> To the south along these mountains, the terrain is complicated by the Galilee-Bashan Depression.<sup>30</sup> The mountains drop more than three hundred meters and are broken apart in several places by a series of broad east-west valleys that create several options for connections between the coast and the Transjordan. Although the valleys are filled with fertile alluvial soil, they become quickly waterlogged during the rainy season. The southernmost line of the Galilee-Bashan Depression is marked by the Jezreel and Harod Valleys. These are wide, flat, fertile valleys that are the result of two different northeast to southwest fault lines.<sup>31</sup> The influence of the Galilee-Bashan Depression is most noticeable in these valleys. In contrast to the major north-south orientation of the Land Between, these valleys create a wide and easily traveled east-west corridor between the coastal plain and the Transjordanian plateau. This valuable east-west connection intersects with the international north-south routes, making these valleys strategic to control. They provided food and water and ease of travel for all people passing through. People living in communities here were open to foreign influences in the form of invading armies or international commodities. Strong garrisons of soldiers anchored

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<sup>28</sup> Monson, *The Land Between*, 46. See also James Monson and Steven Lancaster, *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible* (Rockford, Ill.: Biblical Backgrounds, 2008), 2–3. Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 154–157.

<sup>29</sup> Baly interprets this uplifted island away from the primary roads as a ‘region of escape.’ Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 156.

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed analysis of the structure of Galilee see Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 157–163.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

imperial interests in the area with only the strongest governments able to control the region. Baly calls this area the great crossroad of the ancient world.<sup>32</sup>

Moving south, away from the powerhouse urban areas in the Galilee-Bashan Depression, the hills rise in elevation. Although they form a long, continuous mountain range, they cannot be characterised as homogenous. The ridgeline south of the Jezreel Valley is marked by the Eocene hills of Ebal and Gerazim and by a few small, local valleys that provide access out of the hills to points of contact with trade arteries. Farther south, however, the hills rise in elevation and the valleys slowly disappear, giving way to deep and mangled wadis etched into the Cenomanian hills; a rough tangle of thickets may have originally covered the fertile land when it was left to grow wild.<sup>33</sup> The hills have a long, gentle fall towards the coastal plain in the west but a steep, precipitous drop into the Rift Valley to the east. In this valley, the hard limestone provides strong building material and the ground is ideal for agriculture as long as it is terraced and cleared of the tangled brush. Building terraces is labor intensive and requires constant maintenance, but they effectively transform the sloped hills into valuable agricultural terrain. The terraces create retaining walls that prevent the erosion of the nutrient rich *terra rosa* soil and catch rainfall, allowing the water to soak into ground. This land is farming territory where permanent communities are sustained as the residents harvest crops such as grains, nuts, summer fruit, grapes, pomegranates, and olives.

Adding to the diversity of the land are two additional geographical features that are unique to the southern half of the hill country. The first geographical region is to the west between the hill country and the coastal plain. There, low, rolling hills are divided by six east-west valleys—the Shephelah, or ‘lowland’—composed of Eocene limestone that has not yet given way to the erosive elements that have rubbed the rest of the hills down to the Cenomanian layer. The six valleys not only funnel the runoff water from the hills towards the coast, collecting valuable alluvial soil in the process, but also connect the local routes from the hill country to the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 106.

international route on the coast.<sup>34</sup> The second geographical region is to the east of the spine of the hills, where the rainshadow has prevented the Senonian chalk from eroding away. The deep cuts of the wadis display the Cenomanian underneath. The exposed chalk and the corresponding *rendzina* soil is light beige or white and, just like writing chalk, crumbles easily. The poor mineral content and inability to absorb water prevents this surface from supporting an agricultural community and instead looks like a wilderness moonscape. Even when rain falls, it does not soak into the soil. This second region is not a wilderness like the vast expanse of Arabian desert or like the sands of the Sahara. This land refuses cultivation because the precipitation is insufficient for rain-fed farming.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the land, scattered like well hidden gems are places where water, having filtered through the heart of the hills, bursts forth in a welcomed life-sustaining oasis. This land is shepherding territory and the location of such fresh water springs is valued information for survival. Small, rough scrub brush can be found in the folds of the hills to feed to the sheep and goats, but shepherds must keep their flocks moving from one watering hole to another.

#### Biblical Negev<sup>36</sup>

The Negev does not belong to the longitudinal zones of the Land Between, but it does mark the southern boundary of the coastal plain and the hill country. The Negev is formed by the Beersheba-Zered Depression, which, like the Galilee-Bashan Depression, provides east-west connections with limited physical barriers between the coastal plain and the Rift Valley. This oblong depression is the southern most limit of inhabitable land in the Land Between. It is sandwiched between the foothills of the central hill country and the gradually elevating hills of the Southern Highlands. Even though the Negev collects runoff water from the hills, water

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<sup>34</sup> Archaeological remains at Tel Beth-Shemesh demonstrate the phenomenon mentioned here. The tel has layers of occupation that belong to several different people groups. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, 'The Archaeology of Border Communities: Renewed Excavations at Tel Beth-Shemesh, Part 1: The Iron Age,' *NEA*, vol. 72, no. 3 (September 2009): 114–142; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20697231>.

<sup>35</sup> Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> The biblical Negev is not to be confused with the modern term Negev that is used to designate all of the land of the modern state of Israel south of the central hill country to the Red Sea.

management is complicated because of the sparse and unpredictable rains that might average twenty to thirty centimetres (8–12 in.).

The soil in the Negev is *Loess*, a fine desert sand blown in by hot eastern winds. *Loess* is suitable for agriculture as long as a farmer can prevent a surface crust from forming, as it will quickly shed water and hinder the absorption of the limited rain that falls. Negev villages survive by diversifying their economic interests. For example, farmers and shepherds must live in symbiosis, because any change in the annual weather patterns greatly impacts each harvest. Despite the inhabitants' difficulty to struggle to exist in the Negev, the territory continually has people living there. They do not come primarily for the agriculture but for the connections.

Access to the Mediterranean Sea was of primary importance for traders who brought exotic spices coming from the Arabian Peninsula and goods coming from the Red Sea. The land south of the Negev is the vast wilderness of the Southern Highland. It receives little water and cannot sustain any type of habitation unless supported by either a natural oasis, such as the one in Kadesh-barnea, or by a strong central government that can organise and afford to supply the area with food and water that cannot naturally be found therein.<sup>37</sup>

### Rift Valley

The Rift Valley resulted from a major fault line that runs through the region. Within the Land Between the Rift Valley is home to swamps, fresh and 'dead' bodies of water, and arid plains. The Rift Valley in this area can be divided into thirds, according to its distinct physical characteristics. The northern third is called the Huleh basin, and is bordered on the north by massive mountains and on the south by

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<sup>37</sup> Archaeological discoveries of forts in the Greater Negev supported by a centralised government is summated by Ze'ev Herzog, 'Enclosed Settlements in the Negev and the Wilderness of Beer-sheba,' *BASOR*, no. 250 (Spring 1983): 41–49; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1356604>. The Nabateans understood the wilderness better than other people group. They were able to establish large cities in the most inhospitable zone of the Southern Highlands. Avraham Negev is one of the leading experts on Nabateans especially in the Land Between. His numerous publications are mostly journal articles dealing with particular aspects of Nabatean society. A summary of his findings is available in his encyclopaedia entry: Avraham Negev and Shimon Gibson, eds. 'Nabateans,' in *Archaeological Encyclopaedia of the Holy Land* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Group, 2001; repr. from Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publishing House, 1972), 355–358.

the Sea of Galilee. The Huleh Basin receives a significant amount of annual rainfall and runoff water from the surrounding hills. This water, with the water from four massive fresh-water springs, supports lush, green vegetation even in the height of the dry season. This abundant water collects on the floor of the valley and slowly drains southward, eventually collecting in a small marsh called the Huleh Lake. From the marsh's southern edge, water escapes and is pushed to the eastern edge of the Rift Valley to create the Jordan River. The Jordan, carving a path between two constricting rock formations, finds its way south to the Sea of Galilee. Because the Rift Valley is well below sea level, it experiences mild winters and long, hot summers. Water is abundant and inhabitants can farm without relying on irrigation. Crops of all sorts flourish here, from grains to fruits and nuts. The region sits in striking contrast to the elevated hills to the east and west, which both experience frost and sometimes snow during the winter; the extreme variations in altitude within a short distance creates vastly different climatic zones in spite of their geographic proximity.

The floor of the Rift Valley continues to drop in elevation. Exiting from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River gradually descends another two hundred metres (656 ft.) before reaching its termination point at the lowest place on earth, the Dead Sea. This section of the Rift is called the Jordan Valley. For the first forty kilometres (25 mi.) sufficient rain falls for cultivation without irrigation,<sup>38</sup> and the river is fordable at several points. Shortly thereafter, however, the Rift Valley is constricted on both sides by the mountains, and the river falls into a low trough. Along the edge of the river, a thick tangle of shrubs grows; in antiquity these shrubs housed wild animals like lions and bears.<sup>39</sup>

The southern Jordan Valley is unlike its northern counterpart. Here, the villages on either side of the river are divided; although the geology and thus the lifestyle of people is shared on both sides of the Rift, the river can be crossed at only two places instead of the multiple options in the north. Therefore, while the north sees an easy ebb and flow of ideas, merchandise, and armies across the valley floor,

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<sup>38</sup> Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 198.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.



the south bottlenecks the exchange through two crossings, and those two crossings become linchpins for any community looking to profit by controlling connections.

South of the Dead Sea, the valley floor rises back to sea level and connects to the Red Sea. This area is called the Arabah, a term that sometimes connotes the Jordan Valley as well. The Arabah climate is hot and dry throughout the year with an average annual rainfall of only two and a half centimetres (1 in.).<sup>40</sup> This scarcity of water dictates travel routes, although east-west crossings of the valley are easy without a river to ford. Thus caravans must plan carefully and journey between watering holes scattered along the edges of the valley.

### Transjordan

Concluding the descriptions of the four longitudinal zones of the Land Between is the hill country of the Transjordan. Like the Cis-jordan, this land is divided into geologically unique territory. The northern section is a large flat plateau dotted with extinct volcanic cones that are responsible for the thick layer of basalt draped over the limestone. Although basalt erodes into a black, fertile soil, the multiple fields filled with large boulders limit where farmers are willing to wrestle with the land. Sometimes, they choose instead to turn the fields over to natural grasses that can support large cattle. The southern edge of the plateau is splintered by the Yarmuk Valley, separating the basalt covered north from the much smaller chalky Senonian plateau to the south.

The southern end of the Senonian plateau merges into a high rounded dome of exposed Cenomanian rock known as the Dome of Gilead. This is the eastern continuation of the hills in the Cis-jordan, and the land here supports a comparable lifestyle to what is found in the western hills. The hillside can be terraced to support the cultivation of grains, grape vines, and olive trees. This dome is bisected by the Jabbok River, which begins near the western edge of the Arabian desert, cuts through the bulge of Cenomanian rock, and drains into the Rift Valley.

South of this dome is a large *mishor* or flatland. Although primarily covered in less-than-ideal *rendzina* soil, enough human attention and rain can coax grains out of the land. Otherwise, the *mishor* is suitable for raising goats and sheep. This

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 206.

territory, like the Biblical Negev, was valued more for the connections it facilitated than for its natural ability to produce abundant agriculture. As the term suggests, the *mishor* presented few geographical obstacles. It became the meeting point for the primary north-south road in the Transjordan and one of the few east-west connections to the Cis-jordan.

The southern edge of the *mishor* is defined by the Arnon Canyon. To the south of this valley lies territory sandwiched between two enormous canyons. With the Arnon Canyon to the north and the Zered Canyon to the south, the Dead Sea to the west, and the desert to the east, this little territory enjoyed an abundance of natural protection.

Finally, south of the Zered Canyon, are rugged, elevated hills with heights reaching as high as seventeen hundred meters.<sup>41</sup> The western edge of this plateau plunges dramatically into the Rift Valley and is gashed in many places due to natural faults, both parallel and perpendicular to the edge, which exposed underlying sandstone in several places. Moving further south, the towns and villages are increasingly pressed into a narrow ribbon of space along the plateau's edge as the eastern desert encroaches upon habitable land.<sup>42</sup> To the south, the great height of the hills declines into a region of desert sands with immense islands of granite shooting up from the fine sand before ultimately giving way to the vast expanse of the Arabian Peninsula.

### *Shepherd and Farmer*

Even this simplified description of the Land Between, illustrates how diverse the landscape is over short distances. From the flat coastal plain to the terraced slopes of the hills or to the barren soil of the wilderness, each area affects lifestyle, fabrication of homes, and communication for the people living therein. Perhaps most notable is the difference between the land of the farmer and the land of the shepherd. The land of the farmer is settled and made subject to cultivation. The land of the shepherd forces continual movement and is extremely difficult to tame. In many areas of the Land Between, the transition from the desert to the sown happens quickly, and,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 235–236.

along these borders, the farming community is continually in danger of the wilderness overstepping its bounds and bringing drought upon the land. In these areas, more than any other, the farmer and the shepherd must live in symbiosis gaining from each other's specific strengths. The farmers supply shepherds with extra grain, grapes, and oil while the shepherds provide wool, milk, and meat. Shepherds also functioned as needed security along the perimeter protecting the farmers from marauding bedouins. Shepherds were granted permission to graze their sheep and goats in the stubble of harvested fields, and the sheep, in return, added needed fertiliser to the fields.

Because arid and arable lands are interspersed throughout the Land Between, the bifurcated view of people being either shepherds or farmers should be resisted. A purely sociological view of societies may suggest a development from shepherding to urban lifestyles with the city as the apex of civilisation, but a geographical study of the land suggests that shifting lifestyle is not so simple. People in marginal lands needed to embrace both lifestyles to survive. The change was not a matter of evolving from nomadism to urban life. However, because habitable land is limited, wealthy societies could manipulate the natural working of the land, forcing it to fit their needs. Although archaeological evidence points to this type of manipulation of the land, it was a difficult task to sustain in the long term.<sup>43</sup> Societies of the Land Between, by necessity, learn to successfully live in their place knowing that in any given year the western sea or the eastern desert can have a greater effect on their lives.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding concepts of place in Deuteronomy requires an understanding of the physical characteristics of the land that contribute to the placial network. Malpas

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<sup>43</sup> Human manipulation of the land can last for the long term under extreme influence where human ingenuity forces nature to work contrary to character. Lawrence Stager, 'Farming in the Judean Desert during the Iron Age,' *BASOR* 221 (February 1976): 145–58; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1356097>; Abraham Faust and Ehud Weiss, 'Judah, Philistia and the Mediterranean World: Reconstructing the Economic System of the Seventh Century B.C.E.,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 338 (May 2005): 71–92; Daniel Master, 'From the Buqeah to Ashkelon,' in *Exploring the Longue Duree: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager* (ed. J. David Schloen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 305–317.

insists that people cannot be understood apart from the places in which they live, and Israel's physical place is diverse and complex. The above description of the four primary divisions of the land highlights the geographical diversity contained within a limited territory. The textured landscape with its dramatic uplifts and massive crevasses, created unequal micro-environments in which social units formed. Everything from climate to rocks, soil, and agriculture changed quickly and dramatically within a short distance.

This was the real land in which people lived, invested, and belonged, but it was also a land that segregated the communities living within it. Some people settled in open valleys with easy access to international influences, others were isolated in hard to reach locations. Some farmers enjoyed plentiful rain, arable soil, and access to trade routes whereas others were more vulnerable to drought and isolation. The land influenced the types of crops grown, the types of animals raised (i.e., large cattle in the north and sheep and goats in the south), and the type of building materials available. The land even influences the size of a community based on how many people can be supported from the produce of the land.

This is the land that will impact Israel, will be woven into her social structure, and will itself be impacted by how she lives within it. And yet, the physical features of the land created stumbling block for achieving unity. The difficulty is recognised by Sarna who says:

It is as though the accidents of geography, topography, and environmental conditions all conspired to produce irresistible centrifugal forces that could not but make for a maximum of ethnic diversity, for the intensification of the rivalry of political and strategic interests, and the interpenetration and interweaving of religions and cultures.<sup>44</sup>

The Land Between's divisive topography posed a particular challenge for the Israelites. How will a diverse group of people live within a diverse territory and be able to create unity among the people? Deuteronomy describes this land with great accuracy, which portrays an intimate knowledge of the quality of the land (these descriptions will be addressed in the next two chapters). However, if Deuteronomy aims to unify the Israelite community in the Land Between, as will be argued in this

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<sup>44</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The World of the Bible in the Light of History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), xxix.

study, then Israel's placial structure must address and overcome the challenges presented by the physical land. Deuteronomy offers a singular view of place that motivates the people to remain unified and to be concerned for the greater good beyond familial or tribal interests.

The way in which Deuteronomy engages the relationship between the people and between the people and the land is unique from other biblical writings. Numbers and Joshua talk about the land in terms of measuring and dividing the land among the tribes.<sup>45</sup> Samuel and Kings move away from the tribal structure and organise the land based on a political and religious centre established by David in Jerusalem and bolstered by Solomon with the building of the Temple. The historical narratives describe how the central monarchy attempted to unify the people across tribal lines despite the land's tendency to divide the inhabitants into smaller units.

Deuteronomy recognises the physical diversity of the land and yet consistently portrays the land as a singular place—as one inheritance for one unified people. Deuteronomy downplays any social or political divisions within the land by calling the people brothers, making them accountable to one another, and unifying them under the same fundamental value system. The entire placial network involves interrelated and interdependent places that may be identifiable, smaller places (i.e., homes, gates, chosen place), but each unit is still considered a part of the whole.

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<sup>45</sup> Joshua, in particular, portrays a familiarity with the particulars of the land using natural geographical features as divisions between tribal lines.



## CHAPTER 3

### Place and Creation

#### **Introduction**

Deuteronomy begins with Moses and the Israelites on the eastern border of the place designated as their land of inheritance (1:1–5). With a quick historical account of the wilderness wanderings and local battles in chapters 1–3, Moses begins to encourage and to teach the people how to live life in the land into which he himself cannot go.

The temporary pause in Israel’s movement on the Plains of Moab underscores the importance of remembering past events even while moving into the future. When the people were in Kadesh-barnea and heard the spies report, they ‘grumbled in their tents,’ saying that God brought them from Egypt only to kill them in the land of the Amorites (1:27). The people believed the narrative of their history and of the land they were to inherit was a narrative of destruction. Israel’s fear is evident in how they evaluate the land with its people ‘bigger and taller than we’ and cities that are ‘large and fortified to heaven’ (1:28). However, on the Plains of Moab, Moses has an opportunity to re-present and re-imagine their narrative about the past and about the place into which they are going. As Israel pauses on the border of an unknown land, Moses orients the people around a new, ideal, placial structure. Moses does this through what Casey calls a ‘settling of place in terms of place.’<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy presents a placial structure that is based on the ideal place of creation instead of the experienced places of the past. By using creation language that refers not only to the bounty of the land but also to the ordered structure of the land, Deuteronomy shifts how the people think about place. The creation narrative contextualises the covenant and also the law in a location and narrative that offers an eschatological hope for a time in the future when all things will be made right. On

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<sup>1</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 5.

the Plains of Moab, Moses explains the solution for the ‘predicament of place-bereft individuals.’<sup>2</sup>

### **Place in Creation Narratives**

Heidegger suggested that to be human is to be in place. Until now, this idea has been presented in light of the modern philosophical and sociological conversations, but it is a concept not entirely unrecognised by ancient societies. Accounting for the origin of place and for the relationship between the divine and the human was an important part of understanding who they were. The fundamental human need for place can be explored through ancient Near Eastern creation stories, which account for the underlying structure of the cosmos. Order is brought out of chaos by acts of dividing, creating, and ordering. Each step moves towards an increased specificity of place. By focusing on what Casey calls the ‘doctrine of place’—that is how humans through time have regarded place—creation narratives reveal the fundamental importance of place in ancient societies.<sup>3</sup> The ‘doctrine’ to which Casey refers is not a specified ideology that is taught from one generation to another as much as an overall concept of place reflected through narrative. This concept can be analysed based on patterns repeated in the significant stories told within the community. The ‘doctrine of place’ that is observable in creation mythologies is the primary focus of the section to follow.

Elemental to creation stories is the initial task of controlling and shaping that which is unformed to establish the present order of the universe with ‘religious centres, its divisions of time, its celestial bodies moving according to proper rules, and with mankind invented to serve the gods.’<sup>4</sup> In many creation narratives, the first act is separation. Separation not only creates place in which people and objects can be located, but also creates context in which subsequent events unfold. Casey observes that, ‘to create in the first place’ is to create ‘*a first place*’ (emphasis

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>3</sup> Casey introduces the ‘doctrine of place’ on page 5, but the concept is the subject of his study throughout the chapter in which he analyses the creation stories from a wide range of people groups including Sumerian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Navajo: Casey, *Fate of Place*, 5–49.

<sup>4</sup> Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 228.



original).<sup>5</sup> Analysing creation narratives often evokes questions of *what* was created (i.e., sun, stars, plants, animals, and humans), but it is less common to ask *where* creation occurred. ‘If things and ultimately the world-whole were indeed created, then they will have to be brought into being (from) *somewhere*’ (emphasis original).<sup>6</sup> The nature of that *somewhere* varies among the cosmological stories told by Israel and her neighbours. Each creation myth accounts for places, the objects that fill places, and the connectivity of those objects with each other and with the environment around them.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, these stories explain the design built into the world from the beginning.<sup>8</sup> They tell of a perceived reality that influenced the world and human destinies.<sup>9</sup> Although it is unrealistic in this project to address all creation narratives, the necessary point can be demonstrated with a closer look at a few selected stories.

*Enuma elish* is the Babylonian epic of creation written on seven clay tablets that were found in the ruins of Ashurbanipal’s palace in Nineveh. Originally an oral story, this epic potentially originated with the Sumerians but was circulated and adapted by different communities. The version found in Nineveh was (most likely) written sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.<sup>10</sup> The story is of a hero-god Marduk, who overcomes the forces of chaos and evil to establish the order of the universe, the hierarchy of the gods, and the formation of mankind to serve the gods.

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<sup>5</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, *Getting Back into Place*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, *Fate of Place*, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist’s Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 30. Sarna explains the meaning of myth as the reality lived. The events recorded in the myth were believed to have happened in primeval time but they continue to influence the understanding of the world: Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 6–7. See also Nick Wyatt, *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature* (London: Equinox, 2005), esp. 38–54.

<sup>9</sup> Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> For history and translations of *Enuma elish* see Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*; Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); and Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 107–108. This myth may have been created to supplant the Mesopotamian flood story of Atrahasis, which explained the origin and mortality of humanity by combining creation and flood narratives. See Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 305–343.

*Enuma elish* begins with a mixing of Tiamat, the female god of salt water, and Apsu, the male god of fresh water, forming an undefined mass that contained all the elements from which the cosmos was created.<sup>11</sup> As the two gods merge, they form a complex matrix that becomes the place where other gods emerge. Things come into existence only with the ‘*merging of two regions of water in an elemental commixture*’ (emphasis original) suggesting to Casey that Tiamat and Apsu could be defined as primeval places.<sup>12</sup> The rambunctious, younger generation of gods emerging from this matrix disrupts the peace of the older gods, which in turn leads to infighting that culminates in a great battle in which Marduk defeats Tiamat. Marduk then forms the cosmos by splitting Tiamat’s body in half and fashioning the earth with one half and the heavens with the other half. The topographies of the earthly and heavenly realms are structured from the shape of her body and ultimately define that which was previously an unfathomable deep. Marduk brings structure to the primordial depth that was ‘the coil of Tiamat’ and proves his mastery over the unruly elemental matrix.<sup>13</sup> After the initial division of Tiamat’s body, other separations, or ‘local differentiations,’ occur. All things are created out of the body of Tiamat, who along with Apsu, formed the primal stuff of creation but whose body is now the container of all creation. Marduk engages the other gods to build his house in Babylon after which they create the humans to be temple servants of the gods.

A ritual tablet gives instructions for *Enuma elish* to be recited during the new year festival in Babylon, when the king’s authority was renewed by the gods. Dalley suggests that the recitation of the epic would have impressed upon the people how an orderly universe and its king should be organised.<sup>14</sup> Schmid says, ‘Hammurabi’s giving of the law comes in this creation context, and so does every ancient Near Eastern legal code with the same structure. The law enacts the establishment of the

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<sup>11</sup> Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, *Getting Back into Place*, 43–44.

<sup>14</sup> Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 231–232. See also Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 5. Sparks explains the praise lauded Marduk by all the other gods reflects the transition of this Mesopotamian tradition of creation myth to a national myth with Babylon as the focal point: Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 315.

order of creation seen in its juristic aspect. In short, ancient Near Eastern cosmic, political, and social order find their unity under the concept of “creation.”<sup>15</sup> The creation narratives not only explain the origin and natural order of the cosmos but also play a part in the ongoing understanding of the contemporary world and of how social order is maintained. They are connected to the emergence of a society with its national ideals and institutions.<sup>16</sup>

Casey highlights two important aspects portrayed in this epic. First, creation begins *from something*. Second, creation concerns *places*.<sup>17</sup> This pattern is consistent in other Near Eastern myths.<sup>18</sup> A Late Babylonian tablet from Sippar preserves a bilingual inscription called *The Bilingual Creation of the World by Marduk*.<sup>19</sup> It describes a time when nothing existed but the primeval sea. Marduk creates places and then creates the inhabitants of those places. In the Sumerian *Song of the Pickaxe*, creation begins with a split between heaven and earth, and, in the *Story of Enki*, a garden paradise is created out of a rudimentary, unformed place. The *Theogony of Dunnu* is useful to show that even when local traditions adapt creation stories for a specific city, the stories still begin with a separation and organisation of place.<sup>20</sup> A single view of how the cosmos came into being did not exist in the ancient Near East, but a similar concept of place was shared. Both Casey and Dalley’s work

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<sup>15</sup> H. H. Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: “Creation Theology” as the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology,’ in *Creation in the Old Testament* (ed., Bernhard Anderson; IRT 6; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 104–105.

<sup>16</sup> Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (CBQMS, 26; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 8–9. See also Bernard Batto, *In the Beginning: Essays on Creation Motifs in the Ancient Near East and the Bible* (Siphut 9; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 36; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 9; Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,’ 103–104.

<sup>17</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 30. Casey describes the transition from ancient to modern thinking as a ‘gradual ascendancy of the universe over the cosmos’ wherein the universe is the ‘totalized whole’ and the cosmos is ‘particularity of place.’ He states that the cosmos is made up of ‘place-worlds’ that can be experienced, but the universe is mapped in physics and objective knowledge. *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>18</sup> Summaries of creation stories can be found in Batto, *In the Beginning*, 17–53; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 61–81. Translations and summaries of the Creation Epic and the Theogony of Dunnu are found in Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 228–281. Short summaries with bibliographies are collected in Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 305–343.

<sup>19</sup> Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 129–132.

<sup>20</sup> Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 278.

with Mesopotamian views of creation suggests that place making was understood to be the necessary first step of creation that would ultimately become the basis for the social structure within it.

The creation narratives in Genesis belong to this ancient Near Eastern cultural context even while presenting a distinct view of both the importance of humanity and the emergence of society and institutions.<sup>21</sup> Genesis has two creation accounts (1:1–2:3 and 2:3–3:24), each being attributed to different time periods. The Documentary Hypothesis typically assigns the first account to P and the second to J.<sup>22</sup> Although recognising these accounts originate in different time periods, the primary goal here is to read Genesis 1–3 as they are currently arranged to gain insight into the Israelite concept of place. Each account will be treated separately, but insight will be drawn from an overall assessment of the concept of place as presented in a singular reading. As Alter emphasises, ‘the two accounts are complementary rather than overlapping, each giving a different *kind* of information about how the world came into being’ (emphasis original).<sup>23</sup> Although presenting different perspectives, the two accounts together constitute a ‘composite narrative.’<sup>24</sup> The cosmogenesis, or generation of the world, is progressively specified with places

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<sup>21</sup> For studies focusing primarily on comparing and contrasting ANE creation accounts with the Genesis accounts (i.e., that God is external to the primordial matrix, or that the focus of creation is to establish an ideal dwelling for humanity instead of creating humanity to serve the gods), see Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*; Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*; John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Establishing dates and chronology between these two sources, especially in Genesis 1–11, is difficult and has not yet found a general consensus among scholars. Although J is typically considered to be the earlier source, there may be reason to believe it presupposed the P creation account. For an argument about why Genesis 2–3 is an expansion of Genesis 1, see John Sawyer, ‘The Image of God, the Wisdom of Serpents and the Knowledge of Good and Evil,’ in *A Walk in the Garden* (eds. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer, JSOTSup Series, 136; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 64–66. For summaries of challenges in dating Genesis 1–11, see reviews in Jean-Louis Ska, ‘Genesis 2–3: Some Fundamental Questions,’ in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and its Reception History* (ed. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–27; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 206–213; Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC; Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1987), xxxi–xlii.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 141.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

created first and then populated with objects and people.<sup>25</sup> Von Rad notes, ‘P is concerned with the “world” and man within it, while J shows the construction of man’s immediate environment and defines his relationship to it.’<sup>26</sup> Working from a cosmic orientation in Genesis 1 to a more specific and anthropological orientation in a garden in Genesis 2, the narratives alert the readers to the distinctiveness as well as the interwoven character of all created things.

Genesis begins with P’s account of the creation of heaven and earth, and this account is cosmic in scope. At the beginning of God’s creating, earth is formless and void (תהו ובהו) a concept not conveying complete nothingness but rather an unformed and unfathomable disorder. Although no definition yet exists to distinguish its identity, the unformed deep is described as having a ‘face’ that darkness covers (השך על־פני תהום). The deep is determinate enough to have a surface over which the spirit of God flutters (רהף).<sup>27</sup> God’s own place is unaccounted for as he exists outside the elemental matrix of place although he has mastery over it.<sup>28</sup> The action of creation begins with the separation (ברל) of unformed chaos. The single act of separating creates two defined objects, and it is an action that will happen repeatedly, resulting in a progressively more defined order (vv. 4, 6, 7, 14, 18).

Although Genesis has more than the separation of place in mind, place is still an important element.<sup>29</sup> Casey summarises, ‘*for creation to proceed differentiation must occur*’ (emphasis original).<sup>30</sup> God separates light from darkness and calls them day and night (1:3–5). Then God separates the waters from the waters to create a distinction between heaven and the earth (1:6–8); however, earth does not gain its full definition until dry land is separated from the seas (1:9–10). Only after these places are created can objects be formed and emplaced in their appropriate contexts.

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<sup>25</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions*, vol. 1 (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 150; cf. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 12; idem, *Getting Back into Place*, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 3. Wright says, ‘Creation, then, is distinct from God its creator, but it is also totally dependent upon God.’ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 109.

<sup>29</sup> Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 8.

The earth sprouts vegetation (1:11), and the heavens contain the sun, moon, and stars (1:14–19). The waters are filled with fish, the sky with birds (1:20–23), and the earth with animals and humans (1:24–26). Similar to other creation epics, P’s creation account is about the order and design brought out of undifferentiated chaos. However dissimilar to other creation accounts, the place-making in Genesis builds towards a suitable place for human flourishing instead of place-making for the gods. God creates and evaluates each step as ‘good’ (טוב), and it is good independent of the human presence within it.<sup>31</sup> The statement is aesthetic as well as an evaluation of the ethos of creation. The order reflects deliberate decisions generated in the ‘moral imagination’ of the creator.<sup>32</sup> ‘Good’ is not simply a part of the dichotomy between right or wrong; it includes an appreciation of the world as it is intended to be.<sup>33</sup> This is a creation that sustains life, is worthy of the creator, and is admired by the creator. When humans are created, they are given the responsibility to be God’s stewards over his ideal design of creation, and, by being created in his image (vs. 26), they are invited to join him in the celebration of what is good in creation.<sup>34</sup> The creation of order out of discord, and the differentiation of places and the structure of creatures within the places, is a holistic view of creation evaluated by God as ‘very good’ (טוב מאד, vs. 31).

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<sup>31</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 107.

<sup>32</sup> Sean McBride Jr. ‘Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch,’ in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 10.

<sup>33</sup> Wright’s comparison of this creation account with a chef creating a delectable meal finely conveys the deep enjoyment God has for his creation. ‘Like a master chef bringing a multicourse banquet before admiring guests, God kisses his fingers with each new delicacy that he brings from his creative workshop, until, after the pièce de résistance, in a seventh and final verdict on the whole achievement, God declares it all “very good”.’ He also states, ‘creation is beautiful as a work of stupendous art and craftsmanship. But it also has a functional sense—something is good when it works according to plan, when it dynamically operates as it was designed to.’ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 106–107.

<sup>34</sup> Being created in the image of God finds a parallel in the Egyptian hymn *Instructions of Merikare*, in which the Pharaoh is preparing to pass his authority to his successor. The hymn teaches the younger king to serve the creator god Re, so Re in return will serve humanity. Likewise, the king is to provide for fellow humans because they are made in the likeness of god, having come forth from his body. Re created place (heaven and earth) and established boundaries for the waters. He provides for humans vegetation, animals and fish for their nourishment. William Kelly Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (3rd ed.; New Haven, N.J.: Yale University Press, 2003), 152–165.

The Yahwist's creation account in Genesis 2:4–3:24 describes the details of Eden and the creation of mankind, who then 'test the limits of the environment Yahweh has made.'<sup>35</sup> The opening line—'these are the generations of the heavens and the earth' (אלה תולדות השמים והארץ)—connects the תולדות of the heavens and earth with the continuation of Genesis' תולדות accounts of humanity up to Abraham and Israel.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in the larger narrative, the origin of place is connected with the history of humanity. Compared to P's version, this creation account records more details of place even though it restricts the focus to Eden, the place where humanity will live. Although the scope is smaller, this account retains a similar theme of separating and establishing relationships.<sup>37</sup> Eden is distinct from what is surrounding it, and within Eden there is a garden planted in the East in which God causes trees that are pleasing to the sight and are good for food to grow (2:8–9). A river flows out of Eden to water the garden and then splits into four named rivers which flow through named lands (2:10–14). These physical details in chapter 2—with names of rivers, lands, and minerals along with the use of cardinal directions—develop a clear sense of 'earthiness' distinct from P's cosmic scope.<sup>38</sup>

The creation of humanity only heightens the earthy focus of chapter 2. Initially, there were no plants and grass in the fields (שדה), because rain did not fall and no humans existed to work the earth. Davis notices that the dependance of the

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<sup>35</sup> Gordon McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology: Genesis–Kings* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 24.

<sup>36</sup> It is not certain if the toledoth phrase in 2:4a concludes P's creation account or introduces J's creation account. If it concludes P's account, then 2:4a creates an *inclusio* with 1:1. See Robert Alter, *Genesis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 7; Ephraim Speiser, *Genesis* (AB, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1964), 5. However, throughout Genesis the toledoth phrase often *introduces* a new cycle of narratives or a new genealogy. If Genesis 2:4 is read as the introduction of the narrative to follow, then verse 4 retains a clear chiasmic structure (heaven-earth-created and made-earth-heaven). The view here follows Wenham who suggests 1:1–2:3 stands outside the literary shaping and 2:4 is the first major section under the toledoth heading: Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 46, 49. Also William Dumbrell, 'Genesis 2:1–17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation,' in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. S. J. Hafemann, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002), 55; McBride, 'Divine Protocol,' 3–41.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Jonathan Magonet, 'The Themes of Genesis 2–3' (in *A Walk in the Garden*, eds. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer, JSOTSup Series 136. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 39–41.

<sup>38</sup> Carol Newsom, 'Common Ground: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 2–3,' in *The Earth Story in Genesis* (ed. Norman Habel and Shirley Wurst; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 63.

fields on the rain establishes the land's existence as an integrated 'natural system' predating humankind. A mist came up from the ground to water the surface of the earth. The surreal, watery beginnings in 2:5–7 change with the formation of mankind. God creates the human (הָאָדָם) from the earth (הָאֲדָמָה), a play on words that can be captured somewhat in the English 'human from humus.'<sup>39</sup> God then plants a garden in Eden to the east, and places the human into the garden to work and to keep it (עָבַד and שָׁמַר).<sup>40</sup> Not only is place created, but responsibility is given to the one who will occupy the place. This relationship between the place and the one emplaced is quite strong. To quote Hiebert, 'Not only does 'ādām cultivate 'ādāmā, he is fashioned by God out of the land he farms.'<sup>41</sup> Commenting on this relationship, Newsom says, 'we share common ground with the Earth because we are *common ground*.'<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Davis recognises the nuances in the localised language used here. Both אָדָם ('ādām) and אֲדָמָה ('ādāmā) are related to the word אָדָם (ādōm), which means *red* or *ruddy* when describing skin.<sup>43</sup> Davis notices both the skin tone of the people and the Israelite hill country's *terra rosa* soil are reddish brown. Thus, in Israel's creation narrative, not only is the human created from the soil of the ground, but he also shares the colouring of the soil.<sup>44</sup> This localised language highlights the special relationship between people and their place. Place is not inert but is seen as something to which humanity belongs to as well as exists in. This should motivate

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<sup>39</sup> Shaping humanity out of clay is common in ANE myths. In *Enuma elish* man is created from mixing the blood of the rebellious god with the dust of the ground. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* the goddess Aruru used clay to form Enkidu. In each story humans originate from the place in which they will live. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Davis points to the wide range of meaning for עָבַד. It commonly means *to work for* someone. It can also refer to the work done on or with material (usually that material is soil). Davis suggests the meaning here can legitimately be 'to work the soil,' although she argues the context may point to a translation of 'working for the soil.' The Bible clearly forbids the worship of nature, so one must be careful to avoid connotations of worshipping the soil when translating this passage as 'working for the soil.' In essence, Genesis communicates humans should acknowledge the soil is worthy of humanity taking care of it. Working for the soil adds significantly to the understanding of humanity truly belonging to place as opposed to just being in place: Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 29–30.

<sup>41</sup> Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape*, 34–35; cf. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Newsom, 'Common Ground,' 63.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Sam. 16:12; 17:42; Song. 5:10; Lam. 4:7.

<sup>44</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 29.



those who live in place to care for that place that sustains them.<sup>45</sup> In essence, place creates a sense of grounding and belonging.

Humanity both needs and is influenced by place. God creates humanity in his image and gives them the responsibility to maintain the order of creation. Richter suggests that the garden *belongs* to Yahweh, but humanity has been given the responsibility to care for this garden under the sovereignty of their divine lord.<sup>46</sup> They are his representatives in the garden. As such, humanity does not transcend the rest of creation but is a part of its ordered nature as God's caretaker. Wendell Berry says of the human condition, 'We have been given the earth to live, not on, but with and from, and only on the condition that we care properly for it.'<sup>47</sup> Humans take care of and manage the ground from which they are made.<sup>48</sup> As Bartholomew states, 'The doctrine of creation alerts us to the interwoven coherence of the whole of creation as well as the ordered distinctions within it.'<sup>49</sup> Each object and animal has its own unique place, and part of humanity's responsibility is to care for God's work so that human and non-human creation flourishes.<sup>50</sup>

These creation accounts, as they have been arranged in Genesis, create a cohesive story beginning with the formation of the cosmos and progressing towards the place of human dwelling and flourishing. As one moves through the narrative, this arrangement continues the overall progression of greater differentiations.<sup>51</sup> God

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>46</sup> Sandra Richter, 'Environmental Law in Deuteronomy: One Lens on a Biblical Theology of Creation Care,' *BBR* 20.3 (2010): 356. Also Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 120–121.

<sup>47</sup> From the forward to Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, ix.

<sup>48</sup> Davis suggests the best interpretation of Gen. 2:15 is, 'the human is charged to "keep" the garden and at the same time to "observe" it, to learn from it and respect the limits that pertain to it.': Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 30. Care for nature is an important corrective to the human tendency to exert power over, dominate, and exploit natural resources. This corrective was brought to the modern consciousness by a critique by Lynn White, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,' *Science*, vol. 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203–1207; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1720120>.

<sup>49</sup> Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Caring for God's work is also an important aspect of Davis' work that aims to read the Bible through agrarian eyes in order to develop more of a land ethic than a productionist ethic. This includes recognising land (or place) comes first and is not inert but is something of which humanity belongs to as well. See Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 24–38.

<sup>51</sup> Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 14; Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 25.

is purposeful in the act of separating chaos to create place. The focus shifts from the cosmos to the garden, and very little concern or attention is given to the details of the land outside the garden. Thus, reading the two accounts together connects the stories through progressive place-making, culminating in the descriptions of Eden as a specific, almost-identifiable earthy place.<sup>52</sup> The created place is ideal for humanity but, more importantly, it creates a context in which a relational God can interact tangibly with the created creatures.<sup>53</sup> In the garden, humanity encounters God.

The very act of place-making and place-filling in Genesis 1–2 creates the possibility of displacement in Genesis 3. When creation includes the proper ordering of the objects in place, a possibility remains that this order will be upset. The expulsion of humanity from the garden reflects a broken relationship with place, which in part, becomes the ‘human inability to use the ground rightly.’<sup>54</sup> The goodness of being emplaced in the right context is overturned. Although humans cannot exist without being in a place, being in the *wrong* place creates a sense of dissonance and discord.<sup>55</sup> Such is the problem when humanity is forced to leave the place from which and for which they were created. The personal connection to place is lost, a loss that fosters a sense of atopia and estrangement and ushers in a need and hope for a restored creation.

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<sup>52</sup> The earthiness and specificity of Genesis 2 have led to a variety of conclusions regarding Eden as a real geographical place or as a mythological place. Dozeman attributes the confusion to reading the text as either Religious Geography or Geography of Religion. The first does not expect to find real, identifiable topographical clues in a mythological text. The latter will look for identifiable and real physical locations to identify Eden. See Thomas Dozeman, ‘Biblical Geography and Critical Spatial Studies,’ in *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography, Narrative* (ed. Jon Berquist and Claudia Camp; New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 87–108. For an extensive review of scholars who view Eden as locatable versus those who think it is mythological see Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 270–286; idem, ‘Heaven on Earth—or Not? Jerusalem as Eden in Biblical Literature,’ in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and its Reception History* (ed. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 28–57. W. F. Albright, ‘The Location of the Garden of Eden,’ *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, vol. 39, no. 1 (October 1922): 15–31; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/528684>.

<sup>53</sup> Terence Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 39.

<sup>54</sup> Dumbrell, ‘Genesis 2:1–17,’ 64.

<sup>55</sup> In fact, the boundary between inside and outside the garden is the boundary between life and death. I am grateful to Dr. Elaine Phillips for bringing this to my attention.

## Creation in the Old Testament

The above review of creation narratives has focused primarily how humans regarded place in the past, but it is easily connected to contemporary scholars who are examining creation theology. In modern biblical scholarship, creation accounts have been significantly marginalised.<sup>56</sup> This is due in part to von Rad who claimed the ‘doctrine of creation’ was peripheral in the Old Testament.<sup>57</sup> He suggested the primordial history of Genesis 1–11 functions primarily as an introduction to the more significant historical narratives in which God is involved in the lives of his chosen people. Von Rad thought the things of creation had an ancillary function serving only as a stage for the human drama of salvation, because significant aspects of Old Testament theology relied on God’s historical acts and not on God’s creative acts.<sup>58</sup> G. E. Wright agreed with von Rad, and, although not addressing creation directly, he wrote that biblical theology was exclusively concerned with human history that opposed and prevented the worship of the nature religions of

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<sup>56</sup> For an introduction to the loss and recovery of creation along with a curated selection of articles that have shifted the scholarly conversation, see Bernhard Anderson, ed., *Creation in the Old Testament* (IRT 6; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Further discussions of changing views can be found in Walter Brueggemann, ‘The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology,’ *Theology Today*, 53 (1996): 177–190; Hiebert, *The Yahwist’s Landscape*, 4–7; Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 21–26.

<sup>57</sup> Gerhard von Rad, ‘The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch,’ in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1984), 1–78. Brueggemann maintains that the social and political struggle between the German church and the ‘Blood and Soil’ religion of National Socialism prompted Barth to articulate the distinctions between faith and religion. Barth’s writings influenced the antagonism expressed in von Rad’s work. National Socialism was transposed with Canaanite, natural religion, and great care was taken to distinguish it from Yahwistic historical religion: Brueggemann, ‘The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology,’ 177–178.

<sup>58</sup> Von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 132.

surrounding peoples.<sup>59</sup> The work of these scholars established a dichotomy between natural religion and historical religion which has not gone unchallenged.<sup>60</sup>

Certainly the Old Testament forbids the worship of nature, but that does not necessitate forcing creation to the background.<sup>61</sup> The issue is not a matter of worshipping either creation or the creator, but of recognising that the creator God is capable of working *through* creation on behalf of his people. With thoughtful works by Westermann, F. M. Cross, and Schmid a shift in theological models began to occur in Old Testament studies.<sup>62</sup> Fretheim credits the continued interest in creation theology to a growing knowledge and appreciation for ancient Near Eastern creation thought, a robust conversation between science and religion, and an awareness of environmental issue which includes a growing sense of the interrelatedness of all creatures.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Both von Rad and Wright believed that by minimising the importance of primordial history Israel avoided the temptation of the nature religion of the Canaanites. Canaanite doctrine of creation and its mythical representation of struggle against primeval chaos were purposefully disassociated from Yahwistic faith which was based on historical acts of redemption: Von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 143; G. Ernest Wright, *The Challenge of Israel's Faith* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944); idem, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (SBT 2; London: SCM, 1950). Cf. Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Their influence is noticeable in Sarna's writings regarding the function of the Genesis creation narratives against those like *Enuma elish*. He wrote that the theme of creation in Genesis 'is nevertheless only introductory to what is its central motif, namely, the Exodus from Egypt. God's acts in history, *rather than His role as Creator*, are predominant in biblical thought' (emphasis added). Like Wright, Sarna holds that Genesis 1–11 serves as a prologue to the more significant historical narratives. It functions to establish the sovereignty of God and to inaugurate the historical process: Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 8–9.

<sup>61</sup> Wenham suggests Genesis 1–11 can be read as a critical commentary against the dominant ideas in the ancient world about the natural and supernatural world. Israel not only shared the same cultural context and thus made use of the common creation and flood stories, but they also were free to critique, change and re-tell these stories. See Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, xlvii–xlvi.

<sup>62</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Schmid, 'Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,' 102–117; Claus Westermann, 'Creation and History in the Old Testament,' in *The Gospel and Human Destiny* (ed. by Vilmos Vajta; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971), 11–38; cf. Brueggemann, 'The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology,' 179–82. Fretheim gives a more extensive list of scholars who have advanced creation theology in Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, xi–xiv.

<sup>63</sup> Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, ix–xi.

Recovering creation theology as a viable lens through which to interpret Pentateuchal narratives is behind Fretheim's commentary on Exodus<sup>64</sup> in which he demonstrates that creation is the key for understanding God's salvific actions to bring his people out of Egypt.<sup>65</sup> He does this by explaining that God's role as creator is essential for properly understanding God's redemptive actions. Exodus portrays an eschatological hope for a full realisation of the goodness of God's created order. The purpose of creation has been overturned by the actions of Pharaoh whose oppressive measures are portrayed as antilife and anticreation.<sup>66</sup> Every sphere of the created order is adversely affected.<sup>67</sup> God's dynamic acts liberated Israel, and the primary purpose was to set right all of creation so that God's name would be made known in all the earth. God demonstrated his control over non-human creation (through the plagues, sea crossing, wilderness provisions, and the Sinai theophany) and defeated the powers of chaos in order to re-establish his intended creative order. As Fretheim summarises, 'Redemption is for the purpose of creation, a new life within the larger creation, a return to the world as God intended it to be.'<sup>68</sup>

Stordalen has also made a noticeable contribution to the recovery of creation theology with his analysis of the significance of garden images for the Hebrew audience. In *Echoes of Eden*, Stordalen reviews why garden images have been marginalised in biblical studies and then works towards recovering its symbolic and metaphorical significance. He begins by exploring various aspects of gardens in ancient Near Eastern writings and iconography and then assesses these findings in their cultural context.<sup>69</sup> On the most basic level, gardens represented desirable places

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<sup>64</sup> Terence Fretheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1991).

<sup>65</sup> For his introduction on how creation theology provides the basic categories and interpretive clues for the divine activity in Exodus, see Fretheim, *Exodus*, 13–14.

<sup>66</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, 'The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster,' *JBL* 110 (1991): 385.

<sup>67</sup> Fretheim, 'The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster,' 393.

<sup>68</sup> Fretheim, *Exodus*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 94–160. For additional studies on the form and function of gardens in the ANE, see Marie-Françoise Besnier, 'Vegetation in Mesopotamian Temple Precincts: Gardens, "Sacred Groves" or Potted Plants?' *JAC* (2004): 59–87; Michael B. Dick 'The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt and Yahweh's Answer to Job,' *JBL*, no. 2 (2006): 246–250; D. J. Wiseman, 'Mesopotamian Gardens,' *Anatolian Studies: Journal of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara*, vol. 33 (1983): 137–144.

of designed plots of land with clearly marked boundaries. They were well watered, had fertile soil, and produced the food necessary to sustain life. They became symbols for blessing and a good life. Sometimes, however, gardens were more elaborate and thus developed a deeper symbolic meaning. The gardens near the king's palace served as political symbols of the nation.<sup>70</sup> An overgrown and untamed land brought under cultivation spoke to the influence of the one who brought such order out of disorder.<sup>71</sup> When a king designed and cultivated a garden it became a symbol of his ability to bring order to chaos. Sometimes the king brought plants from outlying areas to contribute to his grandiose and spectacular garden.<sup>72</sup> This central garden then became a microcosm of the empire as a whole, so that a flourishing garden demonstrated the king's benevolent authority to co-ordinate and organise the entire royal territory.<sup>73</sup> The king was viewed as the ultimate cultivator and establisher of order.

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<sup>70</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 94–102.

<sup>71</sup> Casey argues in his analysis of the place-quality of gardens that a garden is a 'domesticated wilderness,' and when it is tamed, it brings nourishment as well as pleasure. See Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 155. This applies both to vegetation and to wild animals. The symbolic lion hunt allowed the king to fulfil his coronation requirements to extend his power beyond the limits of the kingdom to include the animal of the wilderness. See Dick, 'The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt,' 255.

<sup>72</sup> One such garden, the Park of Assurnasirpal II, was depicted on a stela with an elaborate watering system and with planted trees in an organised landscape. Wiseman suggests that once the plants were established in Assyria, the cuttings and seeds from the royal gardens were provided for public gardens: Wiseman, 'Mesopotamian Gardens,' 142. Additionally, a relief on the walls of the Karnak temple depict grapevines brought from the Land Between down to Egypt, possibly suggesting that Pharaoh was introducing new varieties to Egypt. See Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 102.

<sup>73</sup> Stordalen references Fauth regarding Sennacherib who rejoiced that foreign vegetation flourished more abundantly in his park than its domestic environment: Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 95; cf. Wolfgang Fauth, 'Der Königliche Gärtner und Jäger im Paradeisos. Beobachtungen zur Rolle des Herrschers in der vorderasiatischen Horticultur,' *Persica* 8 (1979): 16. Likewise, kings hosted lion hunts in order to display their power and to reinforce the king's ability to conquer ferocious creatures of the wilderness and to establish order in his land: Dick, 'The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt,' 244–249.

Besides the natural and political components, gardens also took on symbolism in cultic life both in the design of the temple and in the rituals in the garden.<sup>74</sup> The fertility granted by the gods was on display in temple gardens which served not only a pragmatic, economic function but also as a cultic, symbolic context for ceremonies and feasts.<sup>75</sup> Rituals took place in the attached gardens that were aimed at reinforcing the king's power and right to rule over his territory, and thus associating the kingdom's fertility and wealth with the king's power.<sup>76</sup> However, garden symbols were not relegated to manicured nature outside the temple. Internal temple decorations were also designed after lush garden and cosmic mountain scenes. The natural order was depicted by vegetation gods enthroned on mountains from which emerged streams of water. The temple was considered the home of the god, and the temple buildings were sometimes connected to creation mythology in that the sacred building sites were located where forces of chaos were subdued.<sup>77</sup> This illustrated the fertility aspect of the deity and the effects the god had on his/her surroundings.<sup>78</sup> The temple was the liminal and symbolic space between the divine and human realms filled with depictions of lions, mythical animals, trees and geometrical designs and reinforced by the physical layout of the building.

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<sup>74</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 111–136. Little is written about gardens in scholarly material about Mesopotamian cultic life although gardens are alluded to in writings and they are depicted in artwork. Significant work has been done by Besnier to collect and analyse ANE garden references and the extent to which they are tied to cultic life. She has challenged established assumptions that every temple was surrounded by gardens: Marie-Françoise Besnier, 'Les jardins urbains du Proche-Orient antique,' *Histoire Urbaine*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2000): 25–45; online: <http://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-urbaine-2000-1-page-25.htm>; idem, 'Vegetation in Mesopotamian Temple Precincts.'

<sup>75</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 112–116. Besnier states the economic 'yield orchards' are well attested in cuneiform sources while descriptions of the 'sacred garden' are more illusive. Besnier, 'Vegetation in Mesopotamian Temple Precincts,' 61.

<sup>76</sup> Of course, the king's power does not depend solely on ceremonies in the garden or on the fertility of the land, but the relation between them was important, and the ceremonial place of the fertile garden was significant. Besnier, 'Vegetation in Mesopotamian Temple Precincts,' 72–74.

<sup>77</sup> Dumbrell, 'Genesis 2:1–17,' 57.

<sup>78</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 111.

The footprint and design of ancient Near Eastern temples is shared with Israel's temple which also had garden imagery throughout.<sup>79</sup> The close association between the temple and creation narratives invites a nuanced understanding of what is conveyed in Genesis. Wenham suggests that the garden in Genesis 2–3 was not to be understood as fertile farmland but as an archetypal sanctuary where God dwells and where humans worship him.<sup>80</sup> As such, there should be no surprise that both the temple and Eden share many features. Some observed similarities are the tripartite placial design, a possible eastern orientation, and angels guarding the inner most place in which was the presence of the divine. The internal place contains expensive jewels, sacred trees, and a life-giving river.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, the human work associated with the temple and the garden is comparable. As Wenham observes, the verbs *to guard* (שמר) and *to work* (עבד) used in Genesis 2:15 are used elsewhere in the Pentateuch as the responsibilities of the priests and Levites in the tabernacle (Num. 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6),<sup>82</sup> thus equating the cultivation of place with the worship of God in his sanctuary. Beale remarks that the same verbal form of 'to walk' used of God 'walking back and forth' in the garden (Gen. 3:8) also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12).<sup>83</sup> Both the garden and the temple

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<sup>79</sup> For comparisons between Israel's temple and similar temple structures in the ANE, see Amihai Mazar, 'Temples of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages and the Iron Age,' in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel from the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods: In Memory of I. Dunayevsky* (ed. Aharon Kempinski and Ronny Reich; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 199; John Monson, 'The New 'Ain Dara Temple: The Closest Solomonic Parallel,' *BAR*, vol. 26, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 20–35. For descriptions of temple decorations and associations with gardens see Storadalen, *Echoes of Eden*. Comprehensive descriptions of temples can be found in Greg Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Victor Hurowitz, *I have Built you an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOT Supplement Series 115, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 128–171.

<sup>80</sup> Gordon Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,' *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399.

<sup>81</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 70–75.

<sup>82</sup> Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,' 400–402.

<sup>83</sup> Also in Deut. 23:14; 2 Sam. 7:6–7. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66.



represented a microcosm of heaven and earth in which the ideal created order is maintained to allow the divine and human to interact with one another.

Like other ancient Near Eastern temples, the location of the building also took on great significance. The Israelite temple was built in Jerusalem and although it was not on the most elevated point among the surrounding hills, the city took on cosmic mountain significance.<sup>84</sup> The combination of garden, temple, and cosmic mountain references are strong, so while the temple represented Edenic order, some viewed Zion as the cosmic mountain, that is, the primal paradise.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to these significant connections between gardens and political and religious life, Stordalen's work catalogues the numerous Edenic similes, allegories, and metaphors found throughout the biblical text. He concludes that the garden was a 'potent mediator of divine blessing, a symbol of happiness,' and therefore, 'losing the garden in 3:24 is parallel to experiencing the effect of curse and punishment.'<sup>86</sup> Because the placefulness of gardens is significant, the loss of the garden is so potent. Stordalen suggests garden stories were used as statements about both human happiness and blessing and the loss of those things. 'For humans in gardens there is a need to behave religiously and morally appropriate in order to bear the blessing and happiness of gardens.'<sup>87</sup> Human insight when applied according to divine ordinance results in blessing, but human insight applied contrary to divine order leads to dreadful consequences.<sup>88</sup> From establishing the significance of gardens in ancient cultures to exploring the Israelite descriptions of both the temple and Zion as Eden, Stordalen's encyclopaedic work proves that the creation narrative and the placial design of the garden in Genesis 2–3 are far from marginal in Hebrew scripture.

It is important to note that echoes of creation are heard not only in the vocabulary of garden, fruitfulness, and Eden, but also in the designed structure of

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<sup>84</sup> Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 113–120.

<sup>85</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 309, 409–30; cf. Richard Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985).

<sup>86</sup> Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden*, 256.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 471.

place. As explained here comparable designs have been established between Eden and building structures such as the tabernacle/temple, but it is demonstrative as well in the structured place of the Israelite land. Creation is about the beauty and design of place both of which can be perceived in garden images as well as structured places. Deuteronomy's conception of place using creation language emphasises the natural beauty and agricultural provision of land as well as the intended social structure of place. The use of creation language in Deuteronomy evokes a wide range of concepts including the ideal created structure and goodness of creation, the earthiness of belonging to place, and a garden-land reflecting the true established order.

### **Creation in Deuteronomy**

Narratives of the created order of the world and of humanity's place within it are a natural reference point for the book of Deuteronomy which is, in part, focused on the place Israel is going to occupy. The Pentateuch is replete with stories of displacement, but the promise of landedness is at the heart of the Deuteronomic narrative.<sup>89</sup> One could argue it is precisely because the redemptive story in Exodus is cosmic in scope that the anticipation of receiving the land in Deuteronomy is so powerful. For Israel, the wilderness experience is in the recent past, and although the wilderness is vast, it is landlessness par excellence. Its harsh conditions create a formidable environment, and from the human perspective, this barren and hostile territory is chaotic.<sup>90</sup> The predicament of these place-bereft people has almost come to a conclusion as the people pause on the Plains of Moab at the border of the land they are to inherit, and Moses describes to them the created place God is giving to them as an inheritance. The flow of the narrative from the past places of both Egypt and the wilderness (chaos), to the present place on the Plains of Moab, to the future place inside the land (ordered place), emphasises the temporary nature of *this* place

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<sup>89</sup> Even though Deuteronomy anticipates a future time when the people will rebel and will be exiled from the land (Deut. 4:26–28; 28:36; 29:26–28; 30:1–5), the overall focus and anticipation in the book is *arriving* in the land with the possibilities of a good life.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 28.

on the border.<sup>91</sup> Deuteronomy tells of God's work to bring the people out of past places of chaos to an ordered place of the near future, making the narrative itself a creation story.<sup>92</sup> Since Israel has only experienced hostile and chaotic environments, the assurance of a created place intended for their habitation is powerful.

Deuteronomy's narrative of place follows the pattern of the creation accounts above. There are initial differentiations, or separations, followed by a series of more specific differentiations. The sermons of Moses re-present and re-imagine the land of which Israel was initially fearful to a land for which Israel is ideally suited. The first few chapters give details regarding the routes, cities and nations separated from Israel's inheritance by the Jordan River (chapters 1–3). This creates an 'outside' and 'inside' distinction between territories. Details are given about the physical terrain inside the land (especially in chapters 6, 8, 11), and then it details the network of relationships between specific places and people (chapters 12–26). This later bit of placial structuring will receive the bulk of the focus in the chapters to come, but the use of creation narratives to differentiate physical place as well as the social dynamics of place will be addressed here.

### *Creation and Differentiations in Physical Place*

In the first several verses of Deuteronomy the physical quality of place is differentiated with increasing degrees of specificity. Moses speaks these words to the people 'beyond the Jordan', in the Arabah (1:1), in the land of Moab (1:5). To reach this place, Israel has already circled to the southeast around Edom on the Transjordanian plateau. They have passed on the eastern side of Moab and between Moab and Ammon (on what is now considered the Medaba Plateau) fighting with

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<sup>91</sup> The idea of journey is a key argument of Millar who argues that the framework of Deuteronomy (chs. 1–11 and 27–34) presents the idea of Israel on the move. McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 15–88.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 28. This is in accord with Schmid's statement that 'views of creation provide the framework within which assertions about history are made.' Schmid, 'Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,' 109.

Sihon king of the Amorites in order to reach the Jordan Valley (Deut. 2).<sup>93</sup> The Jordan River in the middle of the Arabah Valley is the natural, physical feature that divides territories. The Plain of Moab becomes the liminal place between the past and the future, between the lifeless void of the wilderness and the life-giving rootedness in the land, between sojourning and belonging, and between a memory of slavery and the promise of freedom.

Then Moses distinguishes smaller geographical regions inside the land. For the people gathered in the Arabah, the view of the land to the west is quite limited,<sup>94</sup> but within Moses' speech, the land is well described. Distinct geographical divisions are listed in 1:7 including the Hill Country, the Shephelah (low lands), the Negev, and the western Coastal Plain up to Lebanon and the Euphrates River. The significance of place comes through even in some of these regional names which originate from a placial perspective. The Shephelah translated as 'low land' is a descriptive name referring to the low hills sandwiched between the hill country and the coastal plain.<sup>95</sup> These hills are 'low' only from a perspective of a place where they can be compared to the higher hills surrounding it.<sup>96</sup> The Negev is also a term derived from placial orientation. The term means 'south' which fits the designated region only if one is located in the Land Between. The Negev is the southernmost habitable land beyond which is the Greater Negev, a vast and dry wilderness in which people can

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<sup>93</sup> The route recorded in Deuteronomy makes geographic sense. Edom, Moab, and Ammon have territories with distinct geographical barriers that form protective boundary markers. Although these geographical barriers are not insurmountable—and thus allowing the nation to expand—the geographical features of the land contributed to the formation of the 'heartland' of each society. The 'Medaba Plateau,' as it is currently called, was contested territory that did not consistently belong to any nation. It was an important place of passage, granting access from the Transjordan westward to the Jordan River. The plateau permitted Israel to avoid the inhabitants on the crossroads in the east-west depressions of the Lower Galilee and the Negev.

<sup>94</sup> Situated low in the Rift Valley meant when the people look to the west they see the Dead Sea and the dry land of the wilderness in the rainshadow of the hill country.

<sup>95</sup> The term can be applied to any set of low rising hills, but it is almost exclusively used in the biblical text for the area west of the Judean Hill country and east of the Coastal Plain. One exception is Joshua 11:2 in which the other locations listed in the verse are further north, meaning the reference is likely to the low hills west of the Jezreel Valley in the Galilee.

<sup>96</sup> The reference works for those in the hill country looking towards the west and down onto the low hills as well as for those on the coast looking towards the east and to the hills beyond the Shephelah.

pass through but within which they cannot permanently dwell. By naming these regions Deuteronomy betrays an intimate knowledge of specific and identifiable land.

In his philosophical work on place Malpas stresses how people need a place in which to pass through stages of life and in which to find community. People need a relationship with natural elements, plants, animals, etc., and they need access to the sacred.<sup>97</sup> Such a place for Israel is described with all of its geographical diversity as a ‘good land’ (הארץ הטובה), a description repeated often throughout the book (1:25, 35; 3:25; 4:21; 6:18; 8:7, 10; 9:6; 11:17). The most detailed elaboration of the goodness of the physical terrain is given in Deuteronomy 8:7–10, a section that begins and ends with a reference to the ‘good land.’ The land is attributed with brooks of water and springs from the depths. It has agricultural products like wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey (vv. 7b–8).<sup>98</sup> The land is said to provide enough for the people to eat bread without scarcity, and the earth yields both iron and copper (vs. 9).<sup>99</sup> The ‘good land’ of such provision echoes the land (ארץ) of Genesis filled with its bountiful produce and called ‘good’ (טוב) by God (1:11–12 and 2:4–6).<sup>100</sup> The goodness of the land is commonly described with details of the food and sustenance received from the ground that satiates the bodily appetite. The description in Deuteronomy not only emphasises the Edenic agricultural richness of

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<sup>97</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 14.

<sup>98</sup> There are remarkable similarities between Deuteronomy’s description of the land and that of the Egyptian courtier Sinuhe. The *Story of Sinuhe* is an account of an Egyptian courtier who left Egypt when the king died. He had adventures in the Land Between. He married, had a family, and cultivated the ground, which he calls a wonderful land in which there are figs and ‘more wine than water.’ There was an abundance of honey, olive trees, fruit trees, and barley, in addition to all varieties of cattle. The fruitfulness of the ground is evident in the description, but the intimate familiarity with the pattern of the cycle of life is not as clear as it is in Deuteronomy. See Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 54–66.

<sup>99</sup> For a detailed description of the agriculture of the land that goes beyond the Deuteronomic description in Deuteronomy 8 as well as detailed archaeological notes of methods, implements and containers used by Israel, see Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 87–140.

<sup>100</sup> McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 77; Patrick Miller, Jr. ‘The Gift of God: The Deuteronomic Theology of the Land,’ *Interpretation*, vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1969): 456.

the land but also faithfully represents the true physical features of the land, even to the point of listing the produce in the order of their harvest season.<sup>101</sup>

The agricultural abundance is also depicted in the phrase, the land of ‘milk and honey’ (6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20).<sup>102</sup> The expression functions as a merism recognising the ecological richness of the land. Milk from the shepherding communities who make a living in the dry wilderness areas where few crops grow, and honey, perhaps referring to date syrup, from the farming communities where the soil produces the varied crops mentioned above.<sup>103</sup> The descriptive phrase, ‘a land of milk and honey,’ recognises this place as a land of shepherds and farmers. It is a description that both reflects the abundance of God’s provision and also the specific reality of the land. This truth is also quite apparent in 11:10–12 in which Israel’s inheritance is compared to the fruitful, riverine land of Egypt, a topic to be discussed in more detail in a subsequent chapter. However, it is worth mentioning here that Deuteronomy 11 specifies Israel’s land will drink the rain from heaven in order to produce the agriculture that will support humanity as well as animals. Notably, Genesis 2 reasons the ground was uncultivated and had no shrubs or grains in the fields because God had not yet brought rain upon the earth (vs. 5). However, after God planted a garden and placed humanity inside it, he caused to grow every tree pleasing to the eye and good for food (vs. 9). The goodness of the ‘mixed agricultural economy of rain-fed crops’ emphasises the garden quality of the land

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<sup>101</sup> The features of the land and details of the agricultural cycle were discussed in the previous chapter. See chapter 2, pp. 54, 59; also chapter 4, pp. 121–122.

<sup>102</sup> This is a common description in the Pentateuch used also in Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; Leviticus 20:24; and Numbers 13:27; 14:8; 16:13–14. Outside the Pentateuch it is used in Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5; 32:22; and Ezekiel 20:6, 15. Elsewhere the fruitfulness and security of the land is described as every man under his ‘vine and fig tree,’ two agricultural products that require a certain degree of permanence and longevity in the land. MacDonald notes ‘milk and honey’ is always used to describe the land the people have not yet experienced: Nathan MacDonald, *What did the Ancient Israelites Eat?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 7.

<sup>103</sup> It has long been held that ‘honey’ referred to a thick syrup of fruits, especially dates. Recently, Tova Forti has argued that Deuteronomy speaks of wild bee honey. Tova Forti, ‘Bee’s Honey—From Realia to Metaphor in Biblical Wisdom Literature,’ *VT*, vol. 56 (2006): 327–341. Her argument has been bolstered by the discovery of an industrial-sized apiary at Tel Rehov which demonstrates the land may have supported a bee-keeping industry and that the phrase may actually be referring to bee honey. See Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, ‘Honey and Bee-Keeping in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,’ *NEA* 70 (2007): 202–219; cf. Richter, ‘Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,’ 357, note 2.

God is giving his people,<sup>104</sup> and gardens evokes a range of associations between that which is naturally given and that which is intentionally cultivated.<sup>105</sup> The goodness of the land is a natural characteristic but will require constant cultivation by the people.

These descriptions of the land are too specific to be applicable anywhere else. Deuteronomy describes an Edenic land, but it clearly intends for that land to be associated with this physical place into which the people are going. Kallai suggests a mutual relationship exists between the historical and territorial reality and the literary expression of it.<sup>106</sup> The literary expressions of the land may not prove a factual account of history, but they do convey the familiarity the author had with the land.<sup>107</sup> Literary devices may be used to describe the land, but the reality of place is uninvented and therefore identifiable.<sup>108</sup> The real texture and quality of Israel's land lie beneath the description of this Edenic place. If Deuteronomy wanted to describe a lush, garden-like existence the descriptions would not be of the Land Between but of the riverine communities to the north and south. Clearly the ideal place for Israel is not in those geographically rich riverine communities where it is easier to develop and maintain a strong empire. Neither is it the neighbouring lands. The idealic nature of this place is not because this land has more resources but because this is the place given to the people by God, and under the care of Israel has the potential to be a properly ordered place. There is an uncomfortable reality portrayed here that the choices set before the people are not simple and will be at times inconvenient and non-intuitive. Israel's land of milk and honey is this land that will ultimately challenge and inform their identity as God's people. To say this land is to be Edenic, is to set an expectation about what the created order is and the responsibilities that

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<sup>104</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 31.

<sup>105</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 168.

<sup>106</sup> Zecharia Kallai, 'The Reality of the Land and the Bible,' in *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit: Jerusalem-Symposium 1981* (ed. by Georg Strecker; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1983), 76–90.

<sup>107</sup> Kallai's perspective is similar to that of George Adam Smith almost one hundred years before him. Smith wrote of the 'land's testimony' as a significant contributor to the study of biblical history. 'All that geography can do is to show whether or not the situations were possible at the time to which they are assigned...': Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 88–89.

<sup>108</sup> Kallai, 'The Reality of the Land and the Bible,' 76–77.

come with it. To borrow Casey's phrase, Deuteronomy is settling place in terms of place.<sup>109</sup> It is conveying the intended reality of this land based on the creation narratives. The description is not just a picture of an idyllic land but also of a designed placial structure. This land is Edenic because it is the place to which Israel belongs and for which she takes responsibility so that it reflects the intended created order.

### *Creation and the Social Dynamic of Place*

The physicality of place is only one aspect of place. An ideal placial structure also includes the relational aspects of place. In Deuteronomy 4 relationships are addressed in the order of Israel and the nations, Israel and God, and finally Israel and the land. In Deuteronomy 4:1 Israel is urged not only 'to recall her history but to enter it and actualise her relationship with Yahweh through obedience to the torah.'<sup>110</sup> The details of the law will be listed in other chapters, but the focus in chapter 4 is the nature and purpose of the law 'so that you may live, and go in, and take possession of the land' (vs. 1). Verse 1 holds in tension the free gift of land with the required conditions to dwell in it.<sup>111</sup> The land is not a possession of the people. It is a place in which the people can flourish if they follow the statutes and commandments given by God. The purpose of place goes beyond being a blessing to Israel, however. When the people enter the land and live according to these teachings, the surrounding nations will notice and will attribute to them wisdom and understanding (vv. 5–8; cf. 28:10).<sup>112</sup> This claim is pragmatic as much as idealistic. The description of the Land Between in the previous chapter claimed the land is positioned so that all trade routes on both land and sea cross through this location. Israel's inheritance puts them in the way of all other nations. If Israel fosters a good

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<sup>109</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 5.

<sup>110</sup> Ryan O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah: Epistemology in Deuteronomy and the Wisdom Literature* (FRLANT 225; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 31.

<sup>111</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy* (Abington Old Testament Commentary; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 51.

<sup>112</sup> Even Israel's punishment is visible to the surrounding nations. Israel's geographical location puts her on the crossroads of the ancient world so that both blessings and curses are noticed. See Deuteronomy 29:22–28 in which the nations see the calamity that has struck the land and ask why Yahweh acted with such anger.



place, she becomes an example of what it looks like when creation is set right. Richter suggests, ‘Israel stands as the first model of God’s relationship with a redeemed and landed citizenry in a fallen world.’<sup>113</sup> If Israel is characterised by the covenant made at Horeb, then they will be ‘a highly visible example to the nations both as to the nature of the God they worshipped and as to the quality of social justice embodied in their community.’<sup>114</sup> Even though Deuteronomy focuses primarily on the blessing of place for Israel, the universal promise from Genesis 12:1–3 has not been lost.<sup>115</sup> If Israel lives according to Torah her way of life will be a witness to others of wisdom, understanding, and greatness, and Israel will be an example to the nations of how to structure place with all the agricultural, social, and political aspects that entails. Israel in the land is like a microcosm of the intended blessing meant for humankind in the world.<sup>116</sup>

Chapter 4 associates the spoken words of the covenant at Horeb to the spoken words of creation.<sup>117</sup> The people are instructed not to forget all they have seen (vs. 9). They gathered at Horeb to hear the words of God (vs. 10), and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven and there was darkness, cloud and gloom (vs. 11), but there was no visible form of God. The people heard his words (vs. 12), the covenant was made with the people (vs. 13), and Moses was instructed to teach the statutes and commandments to be lived in the land (vs. 14).<sup>118</sup> The covenant at

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<sup>113</sup> Richter, ‘Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,’ 357.

<sup>114</sup> Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC, Massachusetts, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 13.

<sup>115</sup> O’Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah*, 39.

<sup>116</sup> William Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 122–123.

<sup>117</sup> Moses’ address to Israel in this chapter is sometimes in the second person singular and at other time in the second person plural. The changes have been interpreted as indications of redactional layers. See G. Minette de Tillesse, ‘Sections “tu” et sections “vous” dans le Deuteronomie,’ *VT* (January 1962): 29–87. A growing number of scholars believe that the variations in pronouns is most likely a stylistic device. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy I–II*, 15–16. Additionally, the consistent themes of law and covenant suggest a cohesion of the chapter that is held by many. See Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 148–149; Gordon McConville, ‘Singular Address in the Deuteronomical Law and the Politics of Legal Administration,’ *JSOT* 97 (2002): 19–36; idem, *Deuteronomy*, 101.

<sup>118</sup> Moses is addressing the generation of the wilderness, so this audience would not have been the people who witnessed the events at Horeb. Moses calls the people to an act of corporate imagination so as to bring lessons of the past to bear on the decisions of the present. Cf. Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 77.

Horeb is remembered in terms of the spoken words of God. The people heard God's voice out of the deep darkness, but no form (תמונה) of God was seen (vs. 15). The desire to capture an image or likeness for God is strong, but Deuteronomy insists the creator God is not emplaced within his creation but stands outside of it. Since there was no visible form of God, the people must not fall to the temptation to make an image (פסל) of a form (תמונה) of any figure with the likeness (תבנית) of objects in creation (vs. 16). Deuteronomy lists such possible objects as 'male and female' and includes animals on earth, birds in the sky, creeping things, and fish in the sea (vv. 16–18). Additionally, the people are not to look to the sun, moon, stars, and hosts of heaven and be drawn to worship them (vs. 19). This list of examples from human beings to heavenly bodies is a record of the same objects created to fill the established places in Genesis 1, except they are listed in roughly the reversed order. The reference to the sun, moon, stars and hosts of heaven may reflect a polemic against celestial worship prevalent in Assyrian and Babylonian society,<sup>119</sup> but this vocabulary organised in this order is meant to evoke the creation narrative of Genesis 1.<sup>120</sup> The structure of creation is the primary reference. Although God's creation is to be respected, it is not divine.

With the creation account in mind, Deuteronomy clearly draws the boundaries of the relationship between the creator and his creation.<sup>121</sup> Images of fire form an

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<sup>119</sup> The cult of astral deities was widespread especially under the Assyrian influence, but still the language of the creation narrative has special resonance. Israel has not seen an image of God and they should not be tempted to worship celestial bodies 'ordained by God to exist in cosmic orderliness.' Robert Altar, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 876; cf. Jack Lundbom, *Deuteronomy, A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2013), 243; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 206. The heavenly bodies were thought to represent astral deities, but like all aspects of creation are to be subservient to God. The creation account underscores that these celestial entities were to separate day and night, and they were to act as seasonal markers. Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 123.

<sup>120</sup> 'Male and female, every beast that is on the earth, every winged bird that flies in the heavens, things crawling on the ground and fish in the waters under the earth are all part of the hierarchy of creation called into being by the Creator at the beginning of Genesis and not to be revered as though they had autonomous power as gods.' Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 876.

<sup>121</sup> Wright addresses the sacredness of the non-human creation that should be respected, but creation is still dependent upon God. 'The Old Testament constantly treats creation *in relation to God*' (emphasis original), and to worship the creation instead of the Creator is to supplant the one who is greater by that which is lesser: Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 111–112.

inclusio around verses 15–20. The fire of Horeb contains no image of God, but from the fiery furnace of Egypt God forms his people as a nation. In the fire at Horeb no form of God was visible, and Israel may not create one for him. Listing the objects in reverse order of creation represents an undoing of the created order if Israel were to create an image for God. However, God as creator can rightfully bring Israel out of the fiery furnace of Egypt, to fashion them into the people of his inheritance (vs. 20). God forms Israel as a nation the way he forms humanity in his image. Images are prohibited based on both the encounter the people have with God at Horeb, in which the presence of God and not his image is of primary importance, and also on a recognition of the natural order. Wright summarises these verses of chapter 4 saying, ‘Idolatry not only corrupts God’s redemptive achievement for God’s people (v. 20), but perverts and turns upside-down the whole created order.’<sup>122</sup> Consistent with a broken created order, breaking the covenant relationship with God results in a removal from the land (vv. 25–28). In the creation narratives, place-making and place-filling of Genesis 1–2 creates the possibility of displacement in Genesis 3. The same is true in Deuteronomy. A broken covenant ruptures the people’s relationship with place and the identity and rootedness that comes with it, leaving Israel to once more become a ‘place-bereft’ people.

The idea that covenant faithfulness is tied to the created order is also woven into the Song of Moses. Deuteronomy 32 is like ‘an entire cosmology of the nation of Israel.’<sup>123</sup> Verse 7 harkens back in time to ‘the days of old’ (יְמֵוֹת עוֹלָם) when God gave the nations their inheritances, separated the peoples (בְּנֵי אָדָם) and fixed the borders (vs. 8). Similar to the creation narratives, the beginnings of these nations start with dividing, separating and organising. Each nation has a place to which it belongs, and out of these nations God separates Israel to be his people (vs. 9). The election of Israel is part of the creative sovereignty of God over all mankind.<sup>124</sup> God’s redemptive acts in Israel’s history are told in terms of a creation story (vv. 10–14). Language such as ‘howling waste’ (תְּהוֹ) in verse 10 and ‘flutter’ (רִהַק) in verse

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<sup>122</sup> Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC; Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996), 51.

<sup>123</sup> John Wiebe, ‘The Form, Setting and Meaning of the the Song of Moses,’ *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 17 (1989): 133; cf. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 299.

<sup>124</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 299.

11 recalls the state of untamed chaos before God began his acts of creation (Gen. 1:2). The song progresses towards verses 13–14 which describe the ordered place in which Israel is emplaced. It is a place of agricultural fields and rocks that ooze honey and oil. It is a place suitable for flocks, wheat, and grapes. In essence, this is a poetic representation of the land description in chapter 8. This song's movement from chaos to a land of plenty is similar to the creation narratives of Genesis. Similarly to Genesis 3, the song vocalises the ramifications of forgetting the one who made it all possible, the creator God. A broken relationship with place means the goodness of being emplaced in the right context will be overturned.

Themes of creation are found in many levels throughout Deuteronomy, and the themes discussed so far have been concentrated in chapters 1–8 and in 32. The picture is of a good land, distinct from other territories, containing diverse regions inside with an identifiable characteristics of land. However, Moses is not exclusively concerned with the people's possession of the Edenic place but in their ability to dwell within that place in perpetuity. For while God creates and is outside the creation, the people are contained by and are a part of what God creates. Israel's inherited place is complex in that it is both contained and is containing.<sup>125</sup> In other words, one can speak of Israel's place as both contained by larger territory of the Land Between, and also containing a network of places nested within other places. It is a place of interactions, and Israel is responsible for those relationships. Davis notes the 'detailed scriptural witness regarding how we might live within the intended harmony of God's creation is found...in the legal codes of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.'<sup>126</sup> The land is not just an Edenic backdrop for Israelite history, but is a part of the complex network that will support Israel if she contributes to the created order. The garden-land satiates Israel's needs, and Israel celebrates the bounty of the land by caring for one another and celebrating before God as commanded in the Deuteronomic law.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> See above, chapter 1, note 44.

<sup>126</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 82.

<sup>127</sup> Israel's satiation from and enjoyment of the land comes with the covenant obligation Israel has to God. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 93.

If part of the curse of Genesis 3 is humanity's ruptured relationship with the ground, then the removal of the curse should result in a renewed relationship with the land.<sup>128</sup> As Bartholomew notes, 'After Eden the challenge of emplacement and the danger of displacement are a constant part of the human condition. Humans remain placed, but displacement is a constant threat.'<sup>129</sup> Just as the creation narratives of place-making and place-filling left open the danger of that order being overturned, so too does Deuteronomy recognise that the promised goodness of the land remains in danger (Deut. 4:25-28; 29:21-28). Deuteronomy is a 'book on the boundary.'<sup>130</sup> It differentiates more than geographical boundaries by also establishing ethical, moral, religious, and social boundaries. The echoes of creation warn of the perversion of the created order where the relationships are out of joint between all aspects involved in place. This creates a regenerating cycle of blessing that is counter-intuitive in its relentless care for others, but which generates a place in which the people experience God's bountiful provisions, a topic which will be discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters. The law code in Deuteronomy exemplifies what the 'place-bound character of human life and thought'<sup>131</sup> should be for the Israelites. The land comes with responsibility and when it is neglected, the narrative can also move in the other way, from fulfilment to emptiness, from landedness to landlessness.<sup>132</sup>

The creation narratives in Deuteronomy do more than emphasise the point that the physical land is fruitfulness. The creation narratives are used as the foundational understanding of a God-ordered place. The garden becomes the standard of measure against which Israel's place is measured. It is a place that is structured, organised, and fruitful enough to sustain those within it. A placial network includes the physical land as well as the social structures and engagement with it (people interacting with land and with each other). It is where humanity works to guard and protect non-

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<sup>128</sup> Dumbrell, 'Genesis 2:1-17,' 64.

<sup>129</sup> Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 31. Casey says, 'Displacement threatens emplacement at every turn.' Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 34.

<sup>130</sup> Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 4, 9, 82; O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah*, 22; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 9.

<sup>131</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 14.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 12.

human creation, and experiences the freedom to enjoy the ‘good’ of creation. The benefit is belonging to an Edenic *place* is where God’s presence can be with his people. Associating the place of Israel to the place designed in creation adds a cosmic purpose to the choices Israel makes, for as Fretheim says, ‘The deliverance of Israel is ultimately for the sake of all creation.’<sup>133</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The understanding of place in Deuteronomy is enhanced by Casey’s assertion that there is a fundamental human need for place that is recognisable in ancient creation myths. Ancient stories about the origin of the cosmos deal with creating place and establishing order. Like *Enuma elish*, several myths begin with a division of chaos and progress with greater degrees of differentiations. The created places form the context in which subsequent events unfold. The P creation narrative in Genesis is similar in that places are created, objects are emplaced within them, and social order is established. The J creation narrative with the increasing differentiations place, emphasises the natural belonging on humans to the ground. In ancient societies, creation narratives not only explained the understood origin and natural order of the cosmos but also justified the emergence of a society with its national ideals and institutions.

The placial perspective of ancient creation narratives highlights the echoes of the Genesis narratives in Deuteronomy with references to the bounty of the land, the national narrative that is a progression from chaos to order, the proper social order, and an understanding that covenant faithfulness upholds the created order. The creation narratives underlie the re-presentation and re-imagination of the land for Israel while they are still on the Plain of Moab. These narratives are also significant contributors to discussions that will take place in subsequent chapters regarding Deuteronomy’s views on the responsibility of the population and of those in leadership to maintain God’s created order.

The creation narrative also contextualises this pause on the Plains of Moab. Israel is embedded in a grand narrative of emplacement-displacement and now the anticipation of emplacement once again. Deuteronomy continues the narrative of

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<sup>133</sup> Fretheim, *Exodus*, 13.

emplacement, but with the people on the border of the land, tension exists between the promise of emplacement and the associated danger of displacement. God's gift of land to Israel is both a present reality and a hope. Israel is invited to participate in God's ongoing historical work to make creation right. When Deuteronomy describes the land as a created garden, the book is essentially communicating that the described place is not just an antidote to the placelessness of the wilderness but is the completion of the ongoing narrative of leaving chaos to enter a place where the people can experience a restored created order, but that order does not continue automatically. It must be maintained and guarded, just as the humans had 'to work' and 'to guard' the garden (Gen. 2:15).<sup>134</sup> The land takes on the sanctuary nature of the garden in which God and his people dwell together.

There is a limit to Deuteronomy's use of the creation narratives. Although describing the land as garden-like in its fruitfulness and life supporting quality, Deuteronomy does not portray the land as a temple-garden,<sup>135</sup> nor does it support royal-temple ideology.<sup>136</sup> As will become evident in the course of this study, the fruitfulness of the ground depends on God, not a king. In fact, there is no singular human agent of cultivator of the created order, because all the people are given that responsibility. Likewise, there is no human agent to distribute the produce collected from the land, for that too, is the responsibility of families in the community.

Creation-theology in Deuteronomy is earthy and practical; it supports the actions of the community and their attitude towards the land. Deuteronomy, in part, reflects what Weinfeld identified as a programme of demythologisation—a programme which will be explored further in due course (see especially chapters 5 and 6). Deuteronomy keeps in tension the underlying creation motifs and the

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<sup>134</sup> For the argument that the verbs should be read as 'to keep' and 'to observe' with the understanding the humans learn from the land and respect the limits that pertain to it, see Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 30.

<sup>135</sup> The sacrality of the land is upheld, but the land is not described as temple structure that divides place and organises social divisions of people into incremental levels of sacredness and access to the divine. The analysis of place in Deuteronomy is, therefore, quite distinct from the constructed spaces in the tabernacle that determined and communicated who was allowed to enter differentiated spaces. See George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*.

<sup>136</sup> Deuteronomy refrains from using the creation narratives to support a political structure or to underscore the authority and divine appointment of the king. Feasts and sacrifices are held at an unnamed chosen place, and are, therefore, not a part of royal-temple ideology.

practical and earthy quality of the laws that instruct the people to be fully invested in the local care of place.

Deuteronomy shares the ancient Near Eastern attitude that the law code is established to reflect the created order. The Deuteronomic law teaches the people how to dwell responsibly in the good and created place they have been given. Dumbrell notices that Israel is like Adam in that ‘Israel is given laws by which the divine space is to be retained.’<sup>137</sup> O’Dowd adds, ‘the laws for the land in Deuteronomy reflect God’s primordial intention for humanity (all nations) to live before him in a re-created garden.’<sup>138</sup> The law functions as the divine ordering of chaos on cosmic level actualised in social sphere.<sup>139</sup> Law-keeping, throughout the Torah is connected to the knowledge of the divine sense of ‘good.’<sup>140</sup> By living in the land according to covenant faithfulness, the people maintain an appropriate place where God can dwell with his people. Maintaining the created order of place is possible because of the instructions of the Torah.

This responsibility to participate in the work of creation suggests the restored created order is not concluded by simply receiving the land as a gift from God but continues into the future. There is an eschatological nature to Deuteronomy’s law that anticipates a future realisation of the goodness of God’s created order.<sup>141</sup> The conclusion of Deuteronomy leans towards the future as it does not end with crossing the Jordan and entering the land but with ‘a suspension of the moment before departure.’<sup>142</sup> The conclusion embraces the hope the creation narrative offers, that is of a time when all will be restored to the intended order of creation.

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<sup>137</sup> Dumbrell, ‘Genesis 2:1–17,’ 62.

<sup>138</sup> O’Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 27; Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, 64; Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 104.

<sup>139</sup> Terence Fretheim, ‘Law in the Service of Life: A Dynamic Understanding of Law in Deuteronomy,’ in *A God so Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller* (ed. Brent Strawn and Nancy Bowen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 185.

<sup>140</sup> O’Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 16.

<sup>141</sup> Based on Plöger’s scholarship, McConville states that Israel’s enjoyment of land is not the end goal; enjoying the land belongs to a continual progression of promise-fulfilment-promise: McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 129.

<sup>142</sup> Terence Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 58.



Deuteronomy repeatedly points to the statutes and commandments that will shape Israel's understanding of place, and teach them how to live so that the entire placial network with the interactions between people-land and people-people contribute to something that can be understood as Edenic—something that encompasses both the aesthetic and ethical 'good.' Israel is invited to imagine this land as it could be, an Edenic place, sustaining life, and worthy of the creator. The order established in the land reflects deliberate decisions to follow the 'moral imagination' of the creator and to join in God's celebration of what is good in creation.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> McBride, 'Divine Protocol,' 10.



## CHAPTER 4

### Place and Memory

#### **Introduction**

Interactions between people transpire in place, therefore, when talking about historical events a person also references the places where those events happened. However, the reverse is also true in that place can evoke a memory of an event, interaction, or emotion. The comparison between the events in places of the past (oppression in Egypt) and the behaviour in the place of the future (life in the land) permeate the exhortation chapters of Deuteronomy 5–11. Remembering the past and the places from the past are the foil against which Israel’s place is in stark contrast. Brueggemann says, ‘The intention of retrospect is to make cogent and palpable Israel’s distinct identity in the present, and identity rooted in loyalty to YHWH.’<sup>1</sup> Memory allows for comparisons between places of the past and place of the present and also between social behaviour of the past and behaviour in the present. These comparisons inform Israel’s identity and affect her choice of behaviour in daily life.

The memory of past events that occurred within various placial networks affects the development of self-understanding. Malpas writes, ‘When we come to give content to our concepts of ourselves and to the idea of our own self-identity, place and locality play a crucial role—our identities are, one can say, intricately and essentially place-bound.’<sup>2</sup> Malpas draws attention to place as a complex network of interrelated elements as well as to the significance of the physical location in which the event took place. This is not to say that a particular geography assigns one’s identity, for place is more complex than that. Identity is shaped by the subjective evaluation of interactions within the physical and social network of place, so that people ask ‘how do we to understand ourselves in this place?’ For the Israelites,

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<sup>1</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 177.

their identity is intertwined with more places than the one in which they are currently located. The Israelites understood themselves as slaves in Egypt, and as wanderers in the wilderness. They initially looked at this land and understood themselves to be outsiders and powerless in the face of what was contained in that place. Moses reminds the people of their national narrative, and the narrative includes how they should understand themselves in the new place into which they are going.<sup>3</sup> Even though memories may be painful they should not be forgotten, because the memory of the entire narrative allows for comparisons to be made between the perception of identity as influenced by past places and perceptions of who they are in this new place. On the Plains of Moab, Moses has an opportunity to re-present, re-create and re-imagine this place to orient the people around a new and ideal placial structure. This is the intended place for God's continued work of setting creation right, and the Israelites are his people to join in the work of new creation.

Memory greatly impacts how people make choices in the present. Carasik's work *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* focuses on the internal workings of the mind, including areas related to knowing, remembering, and thinking.<sup>4</sup> Of interest for this study is his work on 'to remember' (זכר) and 'to forget' (שכח). He begins by asserting that mental reality is a powerful force that influences people's behaviour. Concentrating on its use in Deuteronomy, Carasik defines זכר as becoming aware of something in the present. Shifting the conceptualisation of the verb from 'memory' to 'awareness' changes the focus of the psychological effect of memory from external past to the internal present. In other words, one becomes

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<sup>3</sup> Rogerson argues that memory necessarily has a communal dimension. Individuals have memories of those things which affect them personally, but those memories have to be situated in the communal memory of the past which usually takes the form of narrative. 'All communal memories are selective, and shaped by special interests, whether these are transparent or not.': Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, 19–20.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* (SBL 85; New York: Peter Lang, 2006). For critical reviews of his work see David Lambert, 'Review of Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind*,' *RBL* 08 (2007): no page numbers; online: [http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/6041\\_6434.pdf](http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/6041_6434.pdf); Gordon McConville, 'Keep These Words in Your Heart,' in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block* (ed. Jason DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth Turner; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 132–136.

aware of something that now, in turn, influence the actions taken.<sup>5</sup> Carasik acknowledges emotions are often connected with memory, but he states that the importance of the emotion is to provoke the Israelites to obedience to the covenant. Carasik suggests שכח is not just the loss of memory but is the abandonment of knowledge. The loss of knowledge, of awareness of God's word, of his salvific deeds, and of the covenant creates a vacuum which more often than not is filled with self-serving thoughts.<sup>6</sup> Carasik notices that when Israel is asked to remember, Deuteronomy is usually referring to events of history and not to the law, reasoning that God's works evoke proper covenant obedience.

Memory as 'awareness' does not capture the full extent of Deuteronomy's intentions for Israel's wholehearted response to God. Lapsley's study on Israel's love (אהב) for God as expressed in Deuteronomy is helpful in this regard.<sup>7</sup> Against the majority view that interprets love not as an emotion but as covenant loyalty to a suzerain overlord,<sup>8</sup> Lapsley suggests Israel's love for God was just as much an emotional response as much as legal obedience.<sup>9</sup> She quotes Anderson's study that states the strict either-or categorisation of feelings and behaviours distorts the understanding of love in Deuteronomy.<sup>10</sup> As a legal genre the text is necessarily interested in behaviours for which laws can be made to regulate. However, as Anderson notes, behaviour and emotion are bound together so that some actions can

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<sup>5</sup> Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind*, 183–185 and 32–43, 90. See also Edward Blair, 'An Appeal to Remembrance: The Memory Motif in Deuteronomy,' *Interpretation* (January 1961): 41–47.

<sup>6</sup> Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind*, 189.

<sup>7</sup> Jacqueline Lapsley, 'Feeling Our Way: Love for God in Deuteronomy,' in *CBQ* 65 (2003): 350–369.

<sup>8</sup> Lapsley's thesis goes against the much quoted analysis posited by Moran. Moran noticed the close connection between the law in Deuteronomy and the love Israel is instructed to exhibit towards God, and he sought to explain Israel's love for God. Using primarily extra-biblical sources Moran suggested Israel's love for God was covenantal love expressed through obedience to the law: William Moran, 'The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,' *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87.

<sup>9</sup> Lapsley says, 'The people's love for God in Deuteronomy undeniably does entail obedience to the law. Yet the legal significance of loving God does not necessarily obviate its emotional connotations.' Lapsley, 'Feeling Our Way,' 352. Also Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 77; McConville, 'Keep These Words,' 136.

<sup>10</sup> Gary Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); cf. Lapsley, 'Feeling Our Way,' 357–358.

generate a deep emotional response. Lapsley continues the study by analysing God's love for Israel which cannot be said to fall under the category of an intellectual response of loyalty. God's love is freely given and is not a response to Israel's actions (Deut. 7:7–8; 10:15). Love can be characterised by desire, yearning, and longing (אֲהַבָה). Lapsley suggests that if God's love is irrational and mysterious then Israel's love for God should not be stripped of emotion. The command to love God with one's heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5) expresses a holistic emotional and intellectual response that engages one's full capacity to imitate God. Lapsley's work draws an important conclusion that memory is a valuable tool to evoke emotion prompting Israel to imitate God instead of just being obedient to him.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Carasik suggests that memory is a powerful motivator to provoke obedience in the present, Lapsley emphasises that memory can recall what the experience felt like in the past. The recollection of emotion gives one the capacity to imaginatively ascribe that feeling to a stranger in similar circumstances.<sup>12</sup> This emotive aspect of memory is an important factor underlying Israel's expected ethical behaviour that is based on compassion for others that is modeled after the compassionate behaviour of God.

In order for memory to play an important role in Israel, each generation must be taught the national story. The past is known through the narrative taught from one generation to another, eventually becoming a part of the collective consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Teaching the narrative to the younger generation is an important theme in Deuteronomy, because, as mentioned above, the memory of past events whether personally experienced or not, is significant for both covenant loyalty and proper emotive responses to God and people. Davis talks about the power of imagining a shared past and how it allows communities to 're-member,' or to work towards its own wholeness.<sup>14</sup> Through re-imagining history, the health and survival of the community is sustained. Each time Deuteronomy encourages the people to

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Lapsley, 'Feeling our Way,' 363.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel,' in *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 16.

remember the past, it is so they will understand their connection to things larger than themselves—their community, the land, their covenant relationship with God.

### **Form**

Deuteronomy 5–11 has a distinct hortatory tone in which Moses reminds Israel of the journey from Egypt, to Horeb, and to the Plains of Moab. Expectation continues to build for the time when Israel will enter the land and bring an end to her placelessness. These chapters contain several descriptions of the land adding to the growing anticipation for the goodness of the land in which the people will live. This is the view of the land from the outside; one that uses Edenic language to distinguish this land as something designed, purposeful and good. These chapters are connected as a unit by the bracketing phrases in the beginning of chapter 5 and the conclusion of chapter 11 that exhort Israel to remain faithful to the covenant stipulations.<sup>15</sup> Although the ‘statutes and commandments’ are referred to throughout the chapters, they are not expounded upon here. Instead, Moses lays the foundation for the people’s proper attitude towards place that begins with rooting them in the memory of the covenant relationship.<sup>16</sup>

Chapters 5–11 can be divided into three sermons each introduced with the exclamation, ‘Hear, O Israel’ (5:1, 6:4, and 9:1).<sup>17</sup> The first of these sermons contains a repetition of the Ten Commandments. The second sermon emphasises that obedience to the law is not just external observance of the ‘statutes and commandments’ but is ‘an expression of heartfelt covenant loyalty to Yahweh.’<sup>18</sup> The instructions to love God and do so with all your heart (בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ), all your soul

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<sup>15</sup> Deuteronomy 5 begins, ‘Hear, O Israel, the *statutes and commandments* which I speak *today* in your hearing, *you* shall learn them and *be careful* to do them’ (vs.1). (This verse is echoed in 6:3 completing a frame around the Decalogue and ending the first sermon of these chapters.) The conclusion of chapter 11 reads, ‘*You shall be careful* to do all the *statues and the judgments* which I am setting before you *today* (11:32). Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 264–266; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 265.

<sup>18</sup> Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 81; cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

(בכּל־נפּשׁךְ), all your strength (בכּל־מאדךְ) is at the heart of Moses' teachings (6:5).<sup>19</sup>

The third sermon asserts this gift of land is not due to Israel's righteousness but to the Canaanites' wickedness. A strong warning is issued that although God is giving the land to Israel, she may lose it. After all, at Horeb the people provoked God's anger by worshipping the golden calf (9:7–21),<sup>20</sup> and throughout the wilderness they did not listen to God's voice (9:22–24).<sup>21</sup> Their rebellion would have led to their demise had Moses not interceded before God on their behalf (9:25–29). Now as the people anticipate entering the land it prompts a rhetorical question, 'What does Yahweh your God require from you?'<sup>22</sup> The answer is based on Deuteronomy 6:5. The people must 'fear Yahweh your God, walk in all his ways and love him, and serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and keep Yahweh's commandments and his statutes' (10:12–13).

What follows is an examination of chapter 11 with an emphasis on its shared themes with chapter 6. Both chapters explore the practical ways to fulfil the command to love Yahweh with all your heart, soul and might (6:5, 11:8), and both chapters focus on memory. Because memory is intricately tied to place, these chapters also serve as a good introduction to the placial structure that Deuteronomy promotes.

### **Text**

Leading up to chapter 11 Moses has repeated the Decalogue and has emphasised to the people the importance of wholehearted loyalty to God. The focus since chapter 6 has been on the land which is described as good and plentiful. Moses has stressed

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<sup>19</sup> The importance of this teaching to love God with one's heart, soul, and strength is evident by the number of times it is repeated in various forms throughout the book (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 30:2, 6, 10, 16, 20). The tripartite description of loving God describes the holistic manner of humanity's response to God. McConville's study of this command concludes that the לֵב is both intellectual and emotional, the נַפֶּשׁ is the essential being which is inseparable from the physical being, and מְאֹד includes a person's full capacity whether natural ability or resources. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142; idem, 'Keep These Words in Your Heart,' 127–144.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Exodus 32–34.

<sup>21</sup> Places of rebellion are listing as Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah. Cf. Num. 11:3, Exod. 17:7, Num. 11:34.

<sup>22</sup> The rhetorical question here is similar to Micah 6:8. The question is posed and the answer immediately given.



that Israel must remember she is not entitled to this land but that it is a gift from God. The narrative of chapter 11 is forward looking as it uses the past experiences in Egypt and the wilderness as a foil for the promise of fullness of life in the land of inheritance. The chapter concludes with the first specific instruction of what to do inside the land of inheritance. The people are to ratify the Horeb covenant at the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. The text can be divided into four smaller units:<sup>23</sup>

11:1–9	Exhortation to love God based on examples from the past
11:10–17	Description of the Land
11:18–25	Exhortation for Obedience
11:26–32	Covenant Renewal

#### *Exhortation to Love God Based on the Examples from the Past*

The chapter opens with a command to love God, the first of several references in this chapter back to the rhetorical question of 10:12–13. Moses tells the people to love Yahweh and keep his charge (משמרה), his statutes (הקה), his judgments (משפט), and his commandments (מצוה). This is a unique use of משמרה in Deuteronomy, because it is included with the more common terms statutes, commandments, and judgments.<sup>24</sup> This instruction in the opening sentence is supported by the memory of the historical actions of God listed in the following verses.

The syntax of verse 2 presents a challenge regarding which verb is connected with the list of attributes and deeds of Yahweh (vv. 2–6). Verse 2 begins, וידעתם היום, כי לא את-בניכם אשר לא-ידעו ואשר לא-ראו. It contains the introductory phrase ‘know this day,’ followed by כי and the phrase ‘not your sons who do not know and have not

<sup>23</sup> Scholars divide the chapter in many different ways. Von Rad notes the difficulty in deciphering the right points of division. He prefers vv. 1–10, 10–15, 16–32 (the last section all being grouped together as ‘the blessing and curse’); von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 83–86. Craigie suggests the divisions should be based on ‘requirements of God’ which are followed by ‘illustration’ (vv. 1–7, 8–12, 13–17), and a summary (vv. 18–25). Each subsection refers back to the requirements in 10:12–13. Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), 207–208. McConville adopts a similar organisation to Mayes (vv. 1–7, 8–17, 18–21, 22–25, and 26–32); McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 198. Tigay suggests vv. 1–9, 10–21, 22–25, 26–32. The organisation expressed here is closest to Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 398–413.

<sup>24</sup> McConville translates משמרה as the direct object which is further specified by the more common Deuteronomic terms: ‘Keep that with which he has charged you—his laws, statutes and commands—always.’: McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 193. Also Richard Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 129. Lundbom keeps משמרה as one of several direct objects in the list, but he notes it can refer to Yahweh’s commands in general: Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 398–399.

seen,' followed by the long list of God's mighty deeds. There are two ways to read the verse. The first is to interpret the phrase 'your sons who do not know and have not seen' as an interjection, setting them apart from the 'you' (plural) being addressed. This suggests 'you' should consider the deeds of God and not your sons who have neither known or seen. This interpretation leaves the phrase about the sons without an expressed object, leaving the reader to infer that which the sons have not seen. This implies the addressed 'you' and not the sons are to consider the deeds of God.<sup>25</sup> The second option is to read the list of God's deeds as the direct object for the 'sons who have not known and have not seen.' This reading sets the expanded explanation of God's actions in history as the expressed object of what the younger generation has not seen and does not know. This implies a distinction is made between 'you' being addressed 'this day' and the next generation who has no knowledge of the historical deeds of God.<sup>26</sup>

The second reading may be more harmonious with the larger context. Prior to these verses God is described as he 'who did for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen' (10:21). Concluding these verses is the phrase, 'but your eyes have seen all the great work of Yahweh that he did' (11:7). This reading separates the present generation who knows the deeds of God from the younger generation who does not yet know him. Additionally, as previously discussed with Deuteronomy 4, Moses often addresses the current generation as if they witnessed the deeds of God even though that generation died in the wilderness. Sonnet notices, '[T]he play between the two generations represents Moses' rhetorical way of addressing his audience as the trans-generational Israel: the sons were, through their fathers, Israel present at Horeb....'<sup>27</sup> The shared memory preserves the national story and allows the Moab generation to be included in something bigger than themselves. The noticeable distinction made between the past and present generations who have been conflated into one people and the next generation who

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<sup>25</sup> As preferred by Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 127; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy* 398; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 193; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 129; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 81.

<sup>26</sup> As preferred by Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 205; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 110; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 441–442.

<sup>27</sup> Jean- Pierre Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 11–12.

has no knowledge of God's deeds depends on knowledge of the shared narrative. The current generation addressed 'this day' has witnessed God's work in history, and will be called upon not only to act a particular way but also to teach the younger generation.

Verses 3–6 compile a selected list of God's historic works that are the basis for Israel's covenant faithfulness. Each event is recalled in its associated place. In the midst of Egypt, God fought against Pharaoh and his land (vs. 3; cf. Ex. 5–11) where God's power was evident over Pharaoh's political authority and also over the land in his care.<sup>28</sup> On the border of Egyptian land, God fought against Pharaoh's army and caused the waters of the Sea of Reeds to engulf them (vs. 4). God's discipline was not just against the Egyptians. Moses mentions an unspecified 'what he did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place' (vs. 5), and also what he did against Dathan and Abiram 'when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with their household, their tents, and every living thing that followed them in the midst of Israel' (vs. 6). Although the event prompting such discipline of Dathan and Abiram is not specified here, the very acts of nature used against them suggests a rebellion against God similar to that of Pharaoh or the Egyptian army.<sup>29</sup> The ramifications of their actions affected more than the two men but also their families, homes, and animals in their care.

Because memories of these events are connected to places portraying the geographical journey from Egypt to the Sea of Reeds and to the wilderness 'until you came to this place.'<sup>30</sup> The journey was made through places that can be characterised as chaotic environments by Israel and also the God of Israel. Egypt

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<sup>28</sup> The cosmic scope of the redemptive story in Exodus finds parallels here in Deuteronomy where the forces of nature are subservient to God's authority.

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy does not mention Korah the Levite, who was a leader of the rebellion, leading some to attribute the omission as evidence of a separate tradition. The mention of Dathan and Abiram recalls the narrative in Numbers 16:12–14 in which these men challenge Moses' authority and accuse him of bringing the people out of what they viewed as the land flowing with milk and honey (i.e. Egypt) to die in the wilderness. Although their sin and their actions is omitted in Deuteronomy the narrative in Numbers specifies their doubt of God's good acts of salvation. They rejected the promise of the land of inheritance in favour of the provisions of Egypt. Cf. Millar in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 67.

<sup>30</sup> The concept of journey is significant in Deuteronomy and is explored in detail by Millar. *Ibid.*, 87–88.

was a place of slavery and oppression, and the wilderness was hostile and unable to support life.<sup>31</sup> As Fretheim suggests, God brought people out of Egypt to start the process of making creation right, and his control over nature underscores the theme of God as a cosmic God in control of earth and sea.<sup>32</sup> The transition from chaos to provision and order in the land is understood as the ‘implementation of creation and the actualization of the order of creation.’<sup>33</sup> God’s redemptive acts will not be complete until the people enter a structured place in which Israel will become rooted.

The past, present and future converge at this point in chapter 11. Israel’s journey brought them out of Egypt and through the wilderness so as to be in this place where they receive their instructions, ratify the covenant, and continue the journey into the land. The combination of ‘this day’ (vs. 2) with ‘this place’ (vs. 5) draws a clear contrast between the here-now of the audience at Moab and the there-then of Israel’s past. The movement created in these memories pushes towards the future even though at this moment the people are temporarily still. The people have not yet arrived. There is a leaning forward in anticipation of a future time and a future place.

Verses 8–9 shift the focus from memory to future events, marking for some commentators the beginning of a new section (vv. 8–12).<sup>34</sup> However, the historical events are precisely the reasons for the people to keep the commands Moses is giving to them ‘today’ so they can be encouraged to be strong, go in, and possess the land (vs. 8). Taken with verse 1, the instructions to love God in verse 8 form an inclusio around the historical argument in 2–7.<sup>35</sup> In addition, because ‘your

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 28.

<sup>32</sup> For Fretheim’s brief synopsis of the importance of creation theology see Fretheim, *Exodus*, 13–14; cf. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 138.

<sup>33</sup> Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,’ 108.

<sup>34</sup> Craigie makes this division according to the command to love Yahweh that is followed by an illustration: Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 207–208. Clements groups together verses 8–21 saying they belong to a set of reasoned exhortations to obey the commandments: Ronald Clements, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (EC; Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2001), 48.

<sup>35</sup> Lundbom’s rhetorical analysis argues that verses 1–9 are a unit that form a chiasmus with the climax in the centre (vv. 3–4) celebrating Yahweh’s deeds against Egypt: Lundbom, *Deuteronomy, A Commentary*, 399.

eyes' (vs. 7) have seen the deeds of God, from Egypt until this place, 'you shall keep the commandments...' (vs. 8). These commands should be guarded for two reasons. The first is in order that (למען) they may be strong, go in, and possess the land. The second is in order that (למען) their days will be long on the land which God promised to their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey (vs. 9).<sup>36</sup> Only in keeping the commandments will the people enjoy longevity in the land.

#### *Description of the Land*

The place of the past is set in contrast to the place of the future in verses 10–12. These verses elaborate on the concept of the 'land flowing with milk and honey' from the previous verse by clearly distinguishing Egypt from the land of inheritance. The ארץ 'that you are going in to possess' is described twice, once in the negative (what the land is not) and once in the positive (what the land is). The ארץ is not like the ארץ of Egypt 'in which you sowed your seed and irrigated it by foot like a vegetable garden' (vs. 10), a practice made possible with the mud-wall irrigation channels that encircled the fields. When the channels were flooded with water from the Nile, a farmer dragged a heel through the mud wall to create a gap through which the water entered the field. When the land was well watered, the farmer pushed the mud back into place to reseal the channel and to allow the water to flow to the next section of field.<sup>37</sup> In these verses, each action verb is in second person singular with 'you' sowed seed, and 'you' irrigated, so as to highlight the human effort exerted to produce the abundant agriculture.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast, the ארץ into which the people are entering is 'a land of hills and valleys, and by the rain from the heavens it drinks water' (vs. 11). Contrary to a common interpretation of these verses, Deuteronomy is not commenting on the

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<sup>36</sup> This phrase is likely referring to the shepherding industry that flourishes in the arid regions and the farming industry in the well watered regions as discussed in chapter 3, notes 102, 103.

<sup>37</sup> Egypt is wholly an irrigation culture dependent upon the river. Baly recognises the possibility that the phrase 'irrigating it by foot' refers to either raising the water from the Nile with a *shaduf* or by kicking a hole in the mud channels as described here: Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 70.

<sup>38</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (rev. and enl. ed.; trans. Anson Raney; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), 14.

abundance of rain in Canaan versus the difficult irrigation practices of Egypt.<sup>39</sup> Instead the focus is on the *source* behind the production of the bountiful agriculture of the land. The land does not have a large river to facilitate a predictable harvest. Instead, the land depended on rain water, creating a much more tenuous existence for the societies that lived there.<sup>40</sup> As Davis states, ‘Israelite farmers knew that they survived in that steep and semiarid land by the grace of God and their own wise practices.’<sup>41</sup> Their land was an uncertain and difficult land, one that was not capable of supporting a large, world dominating empire, and yet it is the place God promised to give to Abraham and in which he wanted the people to be rooted.<sup>42</sup> Most agriculture was natural farming without irrigation, aptly reflected in this verse in which no human effort is mentioned.<sup>43</sup> However, this is the land Yahweh ‘seeks’ (דָּרַשׁ), choosing it from all others, caring for it, and taking on the role of the ultimate agrarian (vs. 12).<sup>44</sup> Humans are normally the subject of the verb דָּרַשׁ which

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<sup>39</sup> Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 136; Ludbom, *Deuteronomy*, 403; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 208–09; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 85.

<sup>40</sup> The common interpretation suggests that due to lack of rain in Egypt the fields must be irrigated with great effort and with great difficulty. These conclusions are drawn from what is perceived to be bountiful rain water from heaven that creates less arduous work for those in the Land Between. However, this is contrary to how agricultural life functions in the Land Between, and the view must be rejected. Lundbom holds the view of that depending on rain is a benefit for Israel; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 403. In a much stronger assertion of this view, von Rad said that the rain from heaven is ‘rather Utopian’, von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 85. These views should also be rejected for although they recognise the land’s dependence on the rain, the positive assessment of these verses miss the rather uncomfortable point that existence in this place is vulnerable in its dependence on God’s provision.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 26.

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, in the Patriarchal narratives, God leads Abraham and his decedents out of both the northern and southern riverine communities to live in the Land Between. The Israelites’ history is one of being removed from places that support world dominating empires to live in a more faith-challenging place that demands dependence on God. This place becomes an example to others as all the primary land and sea routes must pass through this territory. The lifestyle Israel chooses is literally on display for all surrounding nations.

<sup>43</sup> Aharoni explores the differences between the riverine communities and the Land Between specifically using these verses from Deuteronomy to illustrate how different the lands are. Of the Land Between he says, ‘The land is dependent upon God throughout the whole year...’ Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 13–14. ‘In the promised land, therefore, they would be dependent not on human techniques, but on the provision of God,’ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 210.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Block explains דָּרַשׁ has a nuanced sense of election. Just as God chose Israel out of the people of the earth, so he chose this place. By continually seeking the land God is seeking the peace and well-being of the land: Daniel Block, *Deuteronomy* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2012), 285.

means ‘to seek’ or ‘to inquire,’ but in verse 12, Yahweh is the subject and the land is the object. God seeks the land thus conveying a deep concern God has for his creation, a concern that should be learned and imitated by Israel.<sup>45</sup> The Israelites’ inheritance is God’s land, and it is sustained by water from heaven. As Baly says of this terrain, ‘there is absolutely nothing that man can do to influence directly the source of his life.’<sup>46</sup> Just as the land depends on God for its water, so too the people depend on God for their sustained life in this place.

Once again Moses refers to the important rhetorical question of 10:12 but this time phrasing it in the form of an if-then clause. If the people listen to the command to love Yahweh and serve him (vs. 13), then God will give the rain in its seasons, the early and the later rains (vs. 14).<sup>47</sup> The early rains arrive in October–November, and they soften the ground after it has been baked hard during the dry, summer months.<sup>48</sup> These rains initiate the agricultural year, because they allow farmers to plough the fields and break through the crusty, top layer of soil.<sup>49</sup> Only then can they toss the seed and have them fall into the ground instead of sitting on top of it. The later rains come in March–April and supply the final water that will secure a fruitful harvest. These early and late rains determine the quantity and quality of the year’s agricultural yield. The first cereal crops are harvested just as the rainy season is drawing to a close, with most of the harvest taking place during the

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<sup>45</sup> Although this care for creation is not elaborated on in these verses, it is developed in the law code and will be discussed below in chapter 8.

<sup>46</sup> Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 70.

<sup>47</sup> The Hebrew here and in verse 15 reads, ‘I will give’—meaning Moses is taking on the voice of God. The Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Vulgate and a couple Dead Sea manuscripts read, ‘He will give.’

<sup>48</sup> For descriptions of the early rains and the dangers of them being too early or too extended, see Dalman, *Work and Customs in Palestine*, 119–121. See also Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, 47–51; Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 47–56.

<sup>49</sup> The so called ‘Gezer calendar’ discovered during Macalister’s excavations at tell Gezer in 1908 contains seven lines on small limestone slab. The opposing side shows signs of an inscription that has been scraped off, but the visible poem lists the measures of time in which agricultural activities took place. Although the poem is not meant to be calibrated specifically to calendrical months, the Gezer calendar depicts the natural cycle of the ground as explained in this chapter. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 31–38. For details on the climate of the Land Between and its agricultural calendar see George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 62–79.

dry season.<sup>50</sup> Figs, grapes, and pomegranates are among the summer fruits, and as the final crop (olives) is collected from the trees, the cycle begins again.<sup>51</sup> The most common crops in the order of harvest are barley, wheat, summer fruits, grapes, pomegranates, and olives (cf. 8:8). A common shorthand reference to these crops, as is seen in this passage, is grain, new wine, and oil (also 7:13; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51). This trilogy of produce follows the harvest calendar with the spring barley and wheat, summer grapes and the autumn olives. In addition to the agricultural harvest, God gives grass in the fields for the cattle, and ‘you will eat and you will be satisfied’ (vs. 15). The rain from heaven, the early and later rains, sustains the land, the agriculture and the animals. God’s provision will be the people’s blessing as they eat and are satisfied. For people to flourish, the other elements of creation have to flourish. Living well in place includes being interconnected with the land and animals for which God cares (cf. 7:12–16). Although Israel invests in the work of harvest, they do not create but manage the harvest. People and place are mutually intertwined as they both experience the consequences of the people’s covenant faithfulness. The Israelites are fellow creatures in the land that belongs to God. The people rely on the produce which is in turn dependent on God. No human effort is described, creating a poignant comparison with Egypt in which human efforts produce the same result as what must come from God in this place.

Verse 16 begins with the command to ‘guard yourself.’ Experiencing the benefits of the land as brought to fruition by the actions of God is paired with the necessity of guarding their hearts from being deceived into worshipping other gods. The command is similar to the warning issued in chapter 6.<sup>52</sup> If Israel turns aside from following God, he will shut up the heavens and withhold the rain. The lack of agricultural yield means the people will perish from the land. This is a reversal of the blessing promised in the preceding verses (vv. 13–15). Obedience results in

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<sup>50</sup> Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 57–69.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–133.

<sup>52</sup> When God brings the people into a land he swore to give to their forefathers—with great and good cities Israel did not build, with houses filled with good things, cisterns they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees they did not plant—then they must be careful not to forget the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of slavery to come to such a place (Deut. 6:10–12).



agricultural blessing and becomes a healthy place that can sustain the people. Disobedience results in a lack of produce and ultimately a separation from the הארץ הטבה. Alter notes the promise of the eyes of the Lord constantly keeping watch is double-edged. Yahweh attends to the land causing the early and later rains that allow a bountiful harvest, and Yahweh scrutinises the land withholding the rain when the people are disobedient. Thus a land dependent on rain instead of a river can be both a blessing and a curse.<sup>53</sup> Nature as well as the people experience the consequences.

These verses set up a comparison between land and place. Egypt is a powerful riverine community with land that produces enough wealth to support a powerful Pharaoh. In Deuteronomy the memory of Egypt's land is that of abundance, where human effort can produce the food necessary for survival (11:10–12). However, Egypt as a *place* is remembered as an iron furnace (4:20), a house of slavery (5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5, 10), and a place of sickness (7:15; 28:27, 60). God performed mighty deeds against Pharaoh and his land to redeem his people. Even though by human standards Egypt was a land of considerable wealth, the absence of God's justice meant it was a place of chaos. The contest between God and Pharaoh displayed the ultimate royal authority God possesses.<sup>54</sup> God's gift of land to his people is more than just redemption out of slavery but is redemption to a better place. This distinction between remembering land and place allows for contrasts to be made with the land Israel inherits. Israel's land is a vulnerable and dependent land with physical resources that cannot compare with Egypt's. The Israelite inheritance is not naturally suited to support a large empire, and yet, it is called the land flowing with milk and honey. To understand this land and to consider it to be ideal is a counter-intuitive idea. The land needs water from heaven to produce the food necessary for humans and animals alike to flourish. This is the land for which God seeks and where he is the source of the bounty of the land for both people and animals. Life is sustained by the same God who trumped Pharaoh's power in Pharaoh's land, so life in God's land according to God's rule will be

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<sup>53</sup> The blessing and curse of the land is reflected in the binary opposition of the mountain of blessings and the mountain of curses in verse 29. Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 937, note 12.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 55.

different from life in Pharaoh's land according to Pharaoh's rule. Human domination of the land is not easily exercised in a place where fruitfulness is determined by something outside human control. As such, the *place* into which the people anticipate going must be understood as completely different from the place out of which they have come.

### *Exhortation for Obedience*

The warning issued in the preceding verses leads to instructions to 'place these words of mine on your heart and on your soul' (vs. 18), an instruction similar to 6:6 (which does not include 'soul').<sup>55</sup> The referent for 'these words' is indeterminate, possibly referring to the *Shema* or to the entirety of Moses' teachings.<sup>56</sup> Verses 18–21 are divided into three parts that refer back to 'these words of mine' (דְּבַרֵי אֱלֹהִים; cf. 6:6–9). Although containing the same three examples, chapters 6 and 11 list them in different orders. Both chapters, however, explain in detail what wholehearted obedience to God looks like, addressing in progressively larger and more public spheres of influence the connection between internal devotion and outward actions.

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<sup>55</sup> Geiger writes extensively on the socio-spatial meaning of each place noun in Deuteronomy 6. Although her work is focused on the social production of space (not place itself) her insights on the nuances of these verses are invaluable for the following discussion: Geiger, *Gottesräume*, 142–181.

<sup>56</sup> The immediate context in Deuteronomy 6:6 suggests 'these words' could be the *Shema* in 6:4–5, or because verse 6 repeats that these words are to be written on the heart, 'these words' may refer only to the initial part of the declaration in 6:4 (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד). Similarly, the immediate context for 11:18 suggests the referent for 'these words' is the summary of the commandments Moses is teaching the people, that is to love Yahweh and serve him with one's heart and soul (11:13). However, because the entire section of 5–11 focuses on the 'statutes and commandments' Moses is teaching, 'these words' may actually refer to the entire discourse taught on the Plains of Moab. This final view is held by Merrill and Weinfeld. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 340. For additional discussions of possible referents for 'these words' and the scholars who support each conclusion, see McConville, 'Keep These Words,' 141; Sonnet, *The Book within the Book*, 52–55 and notes.

First, according to 11:18–21, the people are to bind them (‘these words’) as a sign on your hand and a frontlet between your eyes (vs. 18).<sup>57</sup> Speaking of the similar instructions in 6:8, Geiger suggests these instructions refer to some sort of physical representation of the verbal confession to love God.<sup>58</sup> This is similar to the symbolism Tigay thinks is represented in the text. He suggests ‘frontlet’ should be translated as ‘symbol’ which was likely associated with the traditional headdress worn in biblical times.<sup>59</sup> The symbol would be interpreted by the wearer as a singular devotion to one God and interpreted by other viewers as an expression of worshipping and of belonging to one God.<sup>60</sup>

The placement of ‘these words’ is also significant. As Geiger suggests, יד is a common corporal term that has two functions in Deuteronomy. The first is to represent one’s ability to act and exercise power as is seen demonstratively in 15:1–11. The second is to align Israel’s actions with Yahweh’s actions.<sup>61</sup> God has displayed the mighty work of his hand,<sup>62</sup> and the people respond by serving God with the work of their hands.<sup>63</sup> The second most common corporal term in

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<sup>57</sup> The ‘sign’ and ‘frontlet’ are first mentioned in Exodus 13:16. In that verse, the dedication of the firstborn is to be like a ‘sign’ and ‘frontlet’ as a reminder of God’s powerful actions in Egypt. In this verse, as McConville suggests, the ‘sign’ and ‘frontlet’ should be understood metaphorically. McConville notes ‘these words’ in Deuteronomy may be similar to the steadfast love and faithfulness that are bound around the neck and written on the heart (Prov. 3:3), and the teachings of the parents bound on one’s heart (Prov. 6:21; 7:3). He concludes ‘these words’ should take on a similar metaphorical meaning. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142. Also Sonnet, *The Book within the Book*, 55.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Aus dem Kontext in Dtr 6,4–9 kann das Zeichen als körperlicher Ausdruck des verbalen Bekenntnisses in Dtn 6,4 verstanden werden.’ Geiger, *Gottesräume*, 166.

<sup>59</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 79 and further explained on pg. 359, note 30. Lundbom notes that if such a head-*tefillah* was worn in biblical times it would not have stood out from normal dress. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 314.

<sup>60</sup> Geiger, *Gotteräume*, 167.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>62</sup> Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:19; 9:26; 11:2; 26:8.

<sup>63</sup> Geiger explains the combination of God’s actions with the people’s actions is most clearly seen at the chosen place. The people bring the ‘contribution of your hand’ (Deut. 12:6, 11, 17), and the people eat and celebrate together from the ‘work of your hand’ (Deut. 12:7). ‘Am einen Ort verbinden sich die Freude über das eigene Tun (12,7.18), die Gabe an Jhwh (12,6.11.17), das Teilen innerhalb der Hausgemeinschaft (12,12.18) und der Segen Jhwhs (12,7).’ The connection between the work of God’s hand and the work of the people’s hand serves as a deterrent from people thinking in their heart that the blessing is all a result of the work of their own hands (8:17): Geiger, *Gotteräume*, 162.

Deuteronomy, עֵינַי, is associated with bearing witness or judging.<sup>64</sup> Eyes are a significant place of perception, and like the hand, have a symbolic as well as physical significance. ‘Von der Urteilsfunktion des Auges her ist das Platzieren “dieser Worte” zwischen den Augen darüber hinaus als Absicht zu deuten, das eigene Urteilen von Jhwhs in “diesen Worten” niedergelegten Urteilen leiten zu lassen.’<sup>65</sup> Binding ‘these words’ between the eyes is the physical representation of allowing one’s perceptions and judgments to be guided by ‘these words.’ Heidegger suggested that because people are emplaced in their bodies, they can experience and understand place external to themselves.<sup>66</sup> Placing ‘these words’ on one’s hand and between the eyes sets God’s laws on the corporal places that best represent a person’s interaction with the world around them while also serving as a reminder to the person of what should influence such interactions.<sup>67</sup> The requirement, in effect, connects the inner and outer life of the individual.

Second, the people are instructed to teach their children by talking about ‘these words’ when sitting in the house or walking along the way (private place, public place), and when lying down or rising up (beginning and end of day). This teaching is essential in light of verses 2–7 that described the younger generation’s ignorance of God’s work in history. Moses has been the one mediator between God and his people, receiving the Torah at Horeb and teaching it to the people on the Plains of Moab. The teaching will multiply out, however, to cover multiple generations in multiple places when people assume the Mosaic responsibility to teach the next generation.<sup>68</sup>

Third, write the words on the doorposts of house and on the city gate (vs. 20). The words bound to one’s hand and between one’s eyes are also written on the doorpost of the house and on the city gate. ‘These words’ will mark the private place (house) and public sphere (gate). Although it was not unusual to have inscriptions on

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter 1, pg. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Geiger, *Gotteräume*, 173.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 154.

doors and lintels of home,<sup>69</sup> the importance here is that different places are marked by the same words. Geiger draws attention to Deuteronomy's description of Egypt as the 'house of slavery' (בֵּית עֲבָדִים) and to the Exodus tradition in which Israel is separated from 'Pharaoh's house' with the blood that marked the doorposts of Israelite houses.<sup>70</sup> God rescued his people from the house of slavery, and when they go into the land, their houses will continue to be marked on the doorposts as a place that functions under God's laws. They are set aside and are remarkably different from the house of slavery. For Geiger, the spatial concept of בֵּית refers to the physical structure (building) and also the people within the household (social).<sup>71</sup> Social interactions, even on the familial level become informed by the guidance of the Torah and are incorporated into daily activities of the people. In a similar fashion, the city gates will be marked, thus demonstrating the community's submission to God's laws, and ensuring public exposure to God's instructions. The gate was the centre of all public activity, so 'these words' are inscribed where matters of commerce, public announcement, justice, and social welfare take place.<sup>72</sup> They serve as a constant reminder of covenant faithfulness that should be enacted at the larger social level.<sup>73</sup> 'These words' separate Israel from other nations but unite them as one people living according to God's ideals.

Posting these instructions needs to be framed within the complex web of interconnecting aspects of place. The instructions progress through graduating levels of place moving from smaller, private places to larger, public places focusing specifically on the divisions where one transitions from one place to the larger

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<sup>69</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 444; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 343.

<sup>70</sup> Geiger, *Gotteräume*, 159–160.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 155–160.

<sup>72</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 79; Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel*, 123; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (trans. by John McHugh; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 78, 152–154, 166–67; cf. Gen. 23:10–16; 34:20–24; Deut. 17:2–7; 21:19; 22:15; 25:7; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:1–10; 2 Sam. 19:8; 2 Kgs. 7:1.

<sup>73</sup> Although the matter of literacy is debated, making it difficult to know how many people could read the inscriptions on the gates, Tigay suggests their very presence would remind nonreaders of God's authority and the necessity of talking about his laws: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 79. Also commenting on the difficulty of the matter of literacy, Sonnet suggests the 'writing' may have more to do with Israel imitating God's act to write the law at Horeb: Sonnet, *The Book within a Book*, 55–56, 58.

encapsulating place. Place is contained by a larger area and also contains multiple smaller places.<sup>74</sup> This is reflected here where Israel marks the boundaries where one moves from one place to another. Therefore, from internal processing to external interactions, one engages the body. From the family home to the public sphere, one passes through the doorposts, and from the city to the larger region, one passes through the gate. Each place of transition is marked by that which governs that sphere of influence. In other words, all aspects of life are to be informed by these words. The inner life of the individual is inseparable from the external public life. That which a person believes will determine how they behave in the house, in the city, and ultimately in the whole land. Displaying ‘these words’ and talking about them to each generation ensures the days of the people and of their children are multiplied on the land (vs. 21). The blessing of life in the land is similar to verse 9, but here the next generation is also mentioned. Teaching the Torah to the next generation leads to the possibility of their days also being extended in the land.

The purposeful association of narrative and law to significant liminal places plays an important role in the Israelite placial network. The diverse topography of the Land Between was discussed previously, and it was stated that the physical land tends to atomise and isolate the inhabitants. Deuteronomy pushes against this tendency, in part, by marking nested places with ‘these words.’ Regardless of the physical context of each community or their proximity to the chosen place, all Israelite individuals, homes, and gates are unified by their adherence to the same priorities and standards of behaviour. Some religious activities are centralised at the chosen place, but the responsibility to live according to the covenant and to sustain God’s created order is taken up by all people throughout the whole land.

In addition to the instructions to post ‘these words’ on liminal places, Deuteronomy 6 instructs the people to teach the national narrative to the next generation. When the children ask questions about the meaning of the Torah, the parents reply with a story of place using the first person plural pronoun. The meaning of the law comes from understanding the works of God in Israel’s history. The parents not only identify themselves in the narrative but also include the next

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<sup>74</sup> See above, chapter 2, pg. 20.

generation. ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Yahweh brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand’ (6:21). God gave signs and wonders that were great and glorious against Egypt, Pharaoh and his household. God brought them out to bring them into the land he swore to give to their forefathers ‘for our good always’ (6:24). They start with their past location and identity as slaves to Pharaoh, and then recount God’s actions to bring them to a new place. Two reasons are given, and these two reasons connect the past with the future. The first was to show his power against Egypt, the ruler of Egypt and his house, ‘before our eyes’ (vs. 22). The second was to bring them into the land he swore to give to ‘our fathers’ (vs. 23). Even as the story is told, the younger generation is brought into the narrative, in effect teaching them they are in the land only because of God’s actions on their behalf.<sup>75</sup> The concluding two verses have a chiasmic structure. They open and close with the encouragement to observe the commands, and the middle brings into parallel three reasons for obedience: ‘for our good always’, ‘that we may live just as today’ (vs. 24), and ‘righteousness will be accounted to us’ (vs. 25).<sup>76</sup> The parallel between ‘good’ and ‘righteousness’ is striking as they are intended to be synonymous—or near synonymous.<sup>77</sup> Such terminology brings the created order to mind, which is associated with the purpose of the Torah. Associating ‘good’ and ‘righteousness’ with the created (moral) order, underlies Deuteronomic laws and connects several common Deuteronomic elements: the statutes and commands, the blessing of the land, the righteousness of Israel.<sup>78</sup>

Returning to chapter 11 and the promised blessing of the land, verses 22–25 contain another if-then clause similar to verses 13–15. The previous if-then statement stipulates that if the people obey these teachings then God will provide the

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<sup>75</sup> Assmann says, ‘All cultural distinctions need to be remembered to render permanent the space which they construct.’ He continues by saying this memory usually takes the form of master story that informs the tellings and retellings of the past. Assmann suggests that monotheism started in Egypt and influenced Israelite monotheistic beliefs, but in Israelite memory, Egypt was denied any association with monotheism. Assmann contrasts what he views as the historical order of events from the narrative in Deuteronomy in which Egypt is as the symbol of what should be rejected: Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>76</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 144–45.

<sup>77</sup> Idem, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Idem, *Deuteronomy*, 145.

rain so the land will flourish. Here the phrase states that if the people obey the commands then God will dispossess the nations, and the borders will be established from the wilderness to Lebanon and from the Euphrates to the western sea (cf. 1:7). The benefits of the first if-then statement are for the sake of place and the individuals who live within it, and the benefit of the second statement is for the sake of Israel as an established nation.

### *Covenant Renewal*

The final verses of chapter 11 are set apart from the above sections with the exclamation ‘See! I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse’ (vs. 26). The importance of היום in the interpretation of Deuteronomy was initially noticed by von Rad. היום is used prolifically in Deuteronomy to focus on the decision facing Israel on Plains of Moab.<sup>79</sup> Although the narrative refers to places of the past and future, attention is always brought back to the purpose of Moses’ teachings with the use of היום. There has been movement in chapter 11 from God’s works displayed in Egypt and the wilderness to היום when the people have a decision to make. The immediacy and importance of what Moses says in verses 26–28 is accentuated with the repetition of היום in each verse.<sup>80</sup> Moses has set before them a blessing and a curse. This choice refers to the preceding discussion of the consequences of obedience or disobedience to the covenant. These final verses also foreshadow the covenant renewal ceremony with its blessings and curses, which will be explained in chapters 27–28. In effect, the recorded instructions for the covenant ceremony bracket the law code to follow.<sup>81</sup> Moses explains the blessing is received if the people listen to the commandments (vs. 27) and the curse when they do not listen and turn aside from the commandments and follow other gods (vs. 28, cf. vs. 16). Because this

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<sup>79</sup> Von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 26. See also explanations given by Simon DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 164–86; Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 77–78; Millar in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 42–44; O’Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 3.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, 227; DeVries suggests the repetition of ‘today’ is unemphatic; all of the stress is placed on Moses setting the choice before the people. The verse functions to lead to an appeal for decision; DeVries, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 177.

<sup>81</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 205–207.



section is the summary of what has come before, there is no need for Moses to elaborate on what the blessings and curses are. The blessing is the early and late rains that provide a bountiful harvest (vv. 14–15, 23–25), and the curse is no rain (vs. 17). In each case, the land, animals, and people experience the consequences. היום focuses on the generation in the present who, based on what was experienced in the past, will have to make a decision between the blessing and the curse היום.

The exclamation in verse 26, 'See! I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse,' is similar to the statement made in Deuteronomy 30:15–16 in which Moses exclaims, 'See! I have set before you *today* life and good, death and evil. That is I am commanding you *today* to love Yahweh your God, to walk in his ways, and to guard his commandments and his statutes and his judgments....' These are two similar exhortations. The first made at the end of chapters 5–11 that have told a story of God's redemptive work to bring the people to the land. The second is made after the law code in chapters 12–26 in which the people are presented with a well developed concept of life in the land. The choice remains the same. The blessing is life and good. The curse is death and evil. The decision placed before the people is between good and evil, obedience or disobedience. The vocabulary creates a strong connection to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the creation account in Genesis 2. In the garden, Adam and Eve had a choice of obedience and life or disobedience and death. Likewise, the land is a place of choice resulting in life in the land, if Israel remains faithful, and exile if they are unfaithful. The emphasis on the immediate decision היום is evident, but the choice will be continually before the people. McConville notes how this concept of life in the land creates tension between what is factual and what is ideal, a tension that can be described as eschatological.<sup>82</sup> The salvation out of Egypt anticipates completion in establishment of the people in the land so that receiving the land is a completion of the promise to the forefathers.<sup>83</sup> However, being in a fruitful land remains within a continual cycle of promise-blessing depending on the actions of the people, because the true created order is not fulfilled until the actualisation of the harmonious created order in which

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<sup>82</sup> McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 129.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Schmid, 'Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,' 110.

the people play a part.<sup>84</sup> The ‘arriving’ at the land is not the sole focus of the text. Deuteronomy insists that the people must choose a lifestyle congruent with the land in which they will dwell. The choice between a blessing and a curse in chapter 11 infers the work is not complete.

People experience and interact with the physical aspects of place and in doing so are altered by place and are drawn into a collectivity based on that experience. Casey suggests the significance of a specified place for a cohesive collective of people is not in the *arriving* but in the ‘experience of *being* in that place and, more particularly, *becoming part of the place*’ (emphasis original).<sup>85</sup> Place is an ongoing relationship between humanity and other people and objects within their context, and with each interaction place gains historic depth.<sup>86</sup> Israel has not yet had the opportunity to become part of place, but when they enter the land they will be faced with perpetual decisions that will affect the quality of place in which they live.

In verse 29 the Edenic-like choice is fixed to tangible, geographical features of the land. A covenant renewal ceremony will take place on the hills of Gerizim and Ebal, and although the details of the ceremony will be explained in chapter 27, the significance in chapter 11 is the connection between the memory of the covenant at Horeb and the place in which the people are living. Verse 30 gives directions to the location of proposed ceremony using recognisable geographical features, but excluding the city of Shechem.<sup>87</sup> The omission is unusual not only because Shechem was a prominent city on the crossroads in the hill country, but also because the city was significant in the histories of the Patriarchs. Deuteronomy repeatedly connects Israel’s arrival in the land to God’s fulfilled promise to their forefathers, and in these

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<sup>84</sup> Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,’ 110; cf. McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 129.

<sup>85</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 33.

<sup>86</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 32.

<sup>87</sup> Many writers label Deuteronomy 11:29–30 as well as the instructions in chapter 27 as the covenant renewal at Shechem—neglecting to notice the lack of reference to this city. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 411–412; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 206–207; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 214–215. O’Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 82–90. Millar consistently refers to Shechem as one of the important places of decision. Millar in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 68, 77–81, 87.

stories, Shechem was a significant place. It was the first named resting place after Abraham entered the land. It was where God made the initial promise of the land as inheritance and where Abraham set up a stone altar (Gen. 12:6–7). This city was also the first resting place for Jacob when he returned to the land with his growing family (Gen. 33:18), and it will be the final resting place of Joseph’s bones (Josh 24:32). One would anticipate that Deuteronomy would unite the Israelites’ experience of entering the land, building a stone altar and confirming the covenant with Shechem, but in Deuteronomy 11 and 27, Shechem is conspicuously omitted in favour of natural routes and landmarks. The author was unlikely to be unaware of such an important city. The absence of Shechem from these directions must be due to other reasons.

Interestingly, the omission of Shechem falls into a consistent pattern in Deuteronomy, as none of the cities inside Israelite territory are named even though the nature and geography of the land is described in great detail and with obvious familiarity with the place.<sup>88</sup> Take for instance the cities of refuge. The three that are established in the Transjordan are named (Bezer, Ramoth-Gilead, Golan; 4:42), but when Moses gives instructions for choosing cities of refuge on the western side of the Jordan River, the cities are not named (19:2–3). Likewise, when identifying routes taken by Israel in the wilderness and Transjordan, cities are named as geographical markers, but when describing the route to Gerizim and Ebal, cities like Shechem are ignored. Cities are named in Moses’ first speech in which Moses recapitulates a previously experienced journey, but they are not specified in the land people have not yet experienced. Deuteronomy is not opposed in general to the idea of cities, because Deuteronomy specifies that Israel will inherit ‘great and good cities you did not build’ (6:10), and then proceeds to give instructions for how Israel

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<sup>88</sup> Jericho may be the exception to prove the rule. Jericho is named as a reference point for Mount Nebo which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho (Deut. 32:49; 34:1). Jericho is also named among the regions that Moses saw from the top of Mount Nebo prior to his death (Deut. 34:1–3). Zoar is also named in 34:3 but its precise location has not yet been identified, and it is not certain if it was inside or outside the boundaries. Deuteronomy 11:30 contains the only reference in the book to Gilgal, and although Gilgal may refer to a place near Jericho, the reference is likely to a lesser-known place near Gerizim and Ebal. In either case, however, because the name ‘Gilgal’ refers to a heap or circle of stones, the name may be pointing to a distinguishable gathering place more than being the name of an established city. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 117. The complication with Gilgal is also noted by Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 133–34.

should live in cities so as to cultivate God's justice and righteousness.<sup>89</sup> The reason behind the omission of city names is a matter of speculation. Perhaps naming the Canaanite cities recognises locations of power that originally frightened Israel and prevented them from entering the land from Kadesh Barnea.<sup>90</sup> Refusing to name the cities may be directly related to the connection between memory and place. In Deuteronomy 7 and 12, the Israelites are explicitly instructed to remove objects, images, rituals, and places that preserve the memory of the Canaanite placial structure,<sup>91</sup> so ignoring the city names and focusing primarily on the natural texture of the land, may be part of Deuteronomy's intentions to expunge the memories (and therefore power structure and religious practices) associated with different Canaanite places. The reason may also be connected to Deuteronomy's overall portrayal of the Israelite people and territory as one holistic unit. In general, Deuteronomy prefers to call the people brothers, makes few distinctions between the tribes, and hardly mentions tribal allotments, choosing instead to depict a cohesive land under God's law. The strategy behind ignoring city names within the Israelite territory is not clear, but in Deuteronomy 11, the omission of Shechem allows Moses to associate the covenant renewal with the mountains, which creates a clear Horeb-like mountain-covenant association for the people.

The covenant renewal ceremony is the first step for Israel to weave their narrative into *this* place. Casey says the end of every journey falls somewhere between two exemplars: homesteading and homecoming. Homesteading is arriving in a new place determined to make it home, and homecoming is returning to the same place.<sup>92</sup> On one hand, Israel is arriving in an unknown place to which they do not yet belong. On the other hand, they are returning to a place in which the history of their forefathers belongs. The current as well as future generations must have meaningful interactions with their environment to connect their national story to this new place and establish a sense of belonging. Matthews suggests, 'every memory

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<sup>89</sup> Cultivating justice and righteousness is seen here as posting 'these words,' and the additional actions that make the city gates an integral place of justice (17:2-7; 21:18-21) and of social welfare (12:15; 14:28-29; 26:12) will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

<sup>90</sup> Deuteronomy 1:28; 9:1.

<sup>91</sup> This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

<sup>92</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 290.

produced by social interaction leaves a residue of remembrance attached to space.<sup>93</sup> The covenant ceremony connects this present generation to the Horeb generation by creating a shared experience of agreeing to the same covenant. Such a connection to physical place elevates the significance of the memory of Israel's past. The ceremony does not need to happen at Horeb, for the people will gather on two mountains to collectively remember what God has done and to agree to the covenant on which the blessing of their land depends. Horeb is interwoven in a chronology of events, but the memory of it becomes interwoven with a new place, new generations, and new events.

When the people enter the land and go to Gerizim and Ebal to ratify the covenant, memory serves two important functions. Initially it allows the present generation to participate in an experience similar to one of the past generation. Imagining a shared past allows the people to 're-member' the community. Although this generation is not at Horeb, their experience is similar to the historic event as each generation makes the same choice and agrees to the same covenant. The two mountain-places (Horeb and Gerizim-Ebal) become connected within a shared memory of covenant making and become permanent memory triggers in the land.<sup>94</sup> The younger generation becomes connected to something larger than themselves—to a national story that includes God's faithfulness to many generations and to a place that will exist beyond any one generation's lifespan. Participating in the ceremony takes the people beyond the knowledge of the past event to become a personal acceptance of the past and a present involvement in the covenant.<sup>95</sup> The covenant ratification also connects two, physical, real objects to an abstract idea of a covenant agreement with blessings and curses. After the event takes place, the

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<sup>93</sup> Victor Matthews, 'Remembered Space in Biblical Narrative,' in *Constructions of Space IV: Further developments in understanding Israel's social space* (ed. Mark K. George; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 74.

<sup>94</sup> Millar describes each of these places as a 'places of decision' in which the nation of Israel is called to face essentially the same decision. They are to respond to the love God has demonstrated through historical events by loving him in return. Millar in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 87–88. As McConville states, the initial place of the covenant Horeb is used throughout Deuteronomy as the 'archetypal place of decision.' McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 36; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 488.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 53–54.

covenant can be expressed in words or it can be expressed in the objects of Gerizim and Ebal.<sup>96</sup> Because these hills are situated on crossroads along the primary north-south and east-west connections in the hill country their existence triggers the memory of what transpired in a location. As long as the people live in the shadow of these hills or travel along the roads in the hill country, they are reminded of the covenant with God.

### **Conclusion**

Memory and place are intertwined concepts. Understanding the complexity of place means the significance of the physical characteristics of place must be recognised. Malpas states the intricacy of people's identity is essentially place-bound. Every event transpires in place, therefore, the memory of events recalls place, and place recalls events. For memory to play an important role in Israel, each generation must pass the national narrative on to the next generation, eventually weaving the past into the collective consciousness of the people. The places of Israel's past contribute to her identity as much as the place of her present and the promised place of her future. In Deuteronomy 11, the intricate connection between place and memory is tied to Israel's narrative. Israel's redemption out of Egypt and the Israelites' journey through the wilderness create comparisons between the places of their past and the place of their inheritance.

By combining the philosophical analysis of place with the work in biblical studies from Carasik and Lapsley, three statements can be made about the connection between place and memory as evident in Deuteronomy 11. The first statement is that the place of Egypt is set up in distinct contrast with the place of Israel. (As will be evident in the following chapter, the same is true of the place of Canaan.) The contrast emphasises that place involves more than the physical land. Fretheim's work with creation theology makes elements of these chapters resonate with greater reverberations. The evaluation of interactions in these places is codified in a narrative in which even a *land* like Egypt is remembered as a chaotic *place*, and the vulnerable *land* of inheritance is perceived as a good *place* representing God's created order. The benefit of remembering Egypt is recalling Pharaoh's domineering

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 53.

authority. Deuteronomy emphasises that arriving in a more abundant or powerful *land* is not as significant as arriving at a better *place*.

Deuteronomy uses the collective national memory as the motivator for the ethical imperative for living in the land.<sup>97</sup> Israel remembers not only the oppression of Egypt but also God's work to free them. The people recall the character of God and strive to be like him. Israel is responsible for caring for the marginalised and for those experiencing economic hardships, because God redeemed the people to this good place. Therefore, the motivation to care for the poor and needy is not based on kinship connections but rather a recognition that all people belong to the placial structure in which they are responsible for maintaining God's created order. The Israelite placial structure will not be like Egypt's because the land flourishes because God cares for it and society flourishes because Israel remains faithful to the covenant. Therefore, Israel's *place* is preferable to Egypt's *place*.

The second statement is that transitional places are used to keep 'these words' present in the daily lives of people, thus unifying all the people throughout all the land despite their diverse localities. Obedience to the statutes and commandments is essential for the people to remain in the land, and although Deuteronomy has not yet specified what the commands are, it does specify techniques for remembering these commands and for weaving them into every aspect of individual and communal life. Geiger recognises the significance of the placement of 'these words' to influence the individual's perception of others, but the significance of posting 'these words' is enhanced when Geiger's work is combined with Casey's placial understanding. Casey states that there are progressively larger spheres to which any person belongs, and each sphere serves to emplace, anchor and orient a person, and each spheres becomes an integral part of that person's identity.<sup>98</sup> Deuteronomy's instructions to post 'these words' on liminal places between spheres of influence connects significant nested places in the placial network, demonstrating a full saturation of place with 'these words.' Deuteronomy establishes a physical and public standard to

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<sup>97</sup> Deuteronomy 5:15; 6:20–23; 10:19; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22.

<sup>98</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 22–23. Casey's understanding of belonging to place is very similar to Tuan's in this respect. Cf. Tuan, *Space and Place*, 149.

which all people's actions and choices adhere, which allows Israel to critique her own social actions.

By engaging 'these words' in daily activities, the people affirm the importance of the Torah to all people in all places. The people preserve the memory of Israel's past, and by teaching the children in the places of normal life, they connect the past to everyday places.<sup>99</sup> Teaching the Torah assures its continuity at the core of the community, and learning the Torah helps the people live successfully in the land.<sup>100</sup> As each generation brings the Torah to life in such teachings, they are engaging in an ongoing interpretation and reflection on the past.<sup>101</sup> The process of engaging 'these words' in daily activities and teaching them to the next generation is one part of how Deuteronomy creates unity among the people despite the natural characteristics of the land that can otherwise isolate its inhabitants.

The third statement is that the memory of a shared covenant makes it possible to re-member the Israelite community across many generations. Israel continues the process of becoming not just a people with a common story, but a people with a story that contributes to their belonging and rootedness in place. The journey to the land may be drawing to a close, but the people still have to engage the process of becoming embedded in this place. At the core of Israel's identity is the memory of the Horeb covenant, but Horeb recalls a place in the wilderness external to the daily life of people in the land. The covenant ratification creates an experience that embeds the memory of the Horeb covenant into the land, placing the memory of the covenant continually before the people. Israel's place preserves the national narrative beyond the lifespan of any one generation.

Moses stresses in the final verses of Deuteronomy 11 that the people have a choice before them, 'See, I am setting before you this day a blessing and a curse' (vs. 26). The blessings are the results of obedience and the curses are the consequences of disobedience, and these blessings and curses are associated with two hills. The covenant connection to the land helps future generations avoid the dangers of believing that the events of Horeb happened in a different time and in a

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<sup>99</sup> Geiger, *Gottesräume*, 154.

<sup>100</sup> Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind*, 181.

<sup>101</sup> O'Dowd, *The Wisdom of Torah*, 44.



distant place and are, therefore, less applicable to this life in this place. Gerizim and Ebal are a witness in perpetuity to every generation of the blessings of obedience and the curse of disobedience. Memory, community, land, and covenant are all significantly joined in Deuteronomy 11 as foundational elements of place even before Deuteronomy moves into the law code and the placial structure created in tangible ways of life in this land.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **The Chosen Place**

#### **Introduction**

An important turning point in Israel's national story is the transition from rootlessness to rootedness in a place that can be described, in part, by its Edenic-like placial structure. Deuteronomy's narrative situates the people at Israel's critical moment of transitioning into place. The people are on the Plains of Moab about to make the transition from wilderness wanderings to permanent dwelling. When Moses describes the land God is giving to his people as an inheritance, the language used is reminiscent of the creation narratives, not only because of the described fruitfulness of the ground but also because of the conveyed order that is brought into the physical and social aspects of place. Previous chapters have dealt with the external evaluation of the land, which is a view that perceives the land a 'good land' despite the fact that it is a vulnerable land. The land drinks the rain from heaven, and it needs to be carefully structured if 'being in place' is to be life giving for several generations. This chapter begins to explore the placial structure Deuteronomy instructs the Israelites to bring to fruition through their obedient acts of dividing, ordering, and creating.

Deuteronomy 12 marks a shift from external descriptions of the land to instructions for the internal structuring of place. The shift in perspective marks the change from a placeless people to a placed people who belong to their own land. Israel faces the challenge of how to remain a unified people even after settling in a geographically diverse land that contributes to the development of different lifestyles for the Israelites. Deuteronomy addresses how the Israelites will enter the land and still function as one people in one land. The focus of the law code (chs. 12–26) is not just about arriving to and possessing the land but about inhabiting or

dwelling in place.<sup>1</sup> As Carrière states, ‘Le pays est tout à la fois un territoire et une population,’ having, therefore, a physical and a social dynamic.<sup>2</sup> When they enter the land, Israel will no longer be journeying towards promise but will be caring for the promise they have received.<sup>3</sup> Instead of traveling through places, Israel learns to dwell in one place. Passing through place means one is less responsible for place, but when Israel enters the land, they become responsible for caring for place by perpetually making the choice to observe the covenant according to God’s designed created order. If rootlessness is the immediate problem facing Israel, then the law code is the guide for how to belong to place with long term benefits for Israel. The laws instructs the people how to structure place so that this vulnerable and unpredictable land will continue to be a blessing through each generation.

These laws as they appear in Deuteronomy are similar to the law codes in Exodus and Leviticus. However, the unique features of the law, instead of the similarities, identify Deuteronomy’s different perspective on place.<sup>4</sup> One such feature is the required centrality of one chosen place in Israelite life. Because the critical scholarship of Deuteronomy 12 was previously described in some detail, only the scholarship relating specifically to issues of organising place will be discussed here.

Early historical critical work connected the reforms of Deuteronomy to Josiah’s reforms and identified the chosen place with Jerusalem. By locating the chosen place to both a physical location and to a point on a chronological timeline, the analysis of Deuteronomy absorbed the particulars of Jerusalem’s history so that the structure of place and the social affects of that structure were interpreted within

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<sup>1</sup> The temporal phrase, ‘When you come into the land,’ is used throughout Deuteronomy. In the hortatory chapters, God is the subject of the verb with the people as the direct object—‘when he brings you into the land’ (Deut. 6:10; 7:1; 9:28; 11:29)—and it is associated with receiving the land as an inheritance. In the law code, the people become the subject—‘when you enter the land’ (Deut. 17:14; 18:9; 26:3). The actions of the people to care for the gift of land is significant in Deuteronomy. The shift in vocabulary marks a change of perspective from entering the land to dwelling well in the land—a distinction made by Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 210–218.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 210–218.

<sup>4</sup> Parallels between the CC and DC and also between the HC and DC are listed in Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, 198–199.

specific historical parameters. In recent decades, scholars have shown the same data in Deuteronomy that is used to arrive at such conclusions in historical criticism can be interpreted in other ways.<sup>5</sup> Thelle demonstrated the ‘chosen place’ in Deuteronomy should not be assumed to be a veiled reference to Jerusalem as the ‘chosen city’ in the book of Kings. Lohfink challenged Weinfeld’s assertion that Deuteronomy’s reforms were designed to centralise political and religious practices in one place and thus de-sacralised the land. Lohfink articulated how Deuteronomy portrays holiness reaching out into the land so that all Israelite territory is sacralised, not secularised. Richter suggested the Place Name is not about changing perceptions or demythologising God’s presence among his people but is rather a statement about God’s legal claim to place.

Each one of these scholars questioned the specific historical parameters which framed Deuteronomistic placial studies and opened up the possibility to re-address issues surrounding the importance of Deuteronomy’s chosen place without the associated Jerusalem-centric context. The programme of centralisation can now be reexamined to see if it serves a different purpose than the siphoning of religious thought and practice to one centralised place, which leaves the local communities void of importance. The willingness to disassociate the chosen place from the historical and political parameters of Jerusalem is significant because place is more complex than issues surrounding the chosen place. Recognising that complexity allows the analysis of the chosen place to occur within the larger placial construct of Deuteronomy. Naming and locating the chosen place is not nearly as important to Deuteronomy’s placial structure as the development of the correct relationships between places. The chosen place has dominated the conversation of place in Deuteronomy, but the book demonstrates a rich and complex awareness of place of which the chosen place is only one, albeit significant, part of the whole.

Deuteronomy’s laws to distinguish and organise places invites the application of a placial concept used within political science and social anthropology of ‘centre and periphery.’ Edward Shils was a student of classical sociological theory who in the 1950–1960s developed a theory of social power based on the contrast between a

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<sup>5</sup> These were previously discussed in greater detail. See chapter 1, pp. 39–44.

dynamic, powerful, and charismatic centre and the dispersed and less-charismatic periphery. He explored the power structures of societies that allowed for only a few to hold powerful positions in the centre and still unify people in the periphery despite their social, ethnic, and religious diversity. A core set of symbols, values, and beliefs form the central value system around which the members of society are connected, and this connection is possible only because the value system transcends and transforms people's individual experience.<sup>6</sup> In Shils' theory, the powerful in the centre create and maintain the core value system. 'Great power announces itself by its power over order; it discovers order, creates order, maintains it, or destroys it.'<sup>7</sup> Such power can protect or damage human life; it can end life or continue it. Great earthly power is sometimes discussed in terms of the transcendent, natural order, so those who believe in a created order will connect human authority to divine powers.<sup>8</sup> Shils explained that the powerful claim their rule is legitimised by something more ultimate than themselves, the will of the divine.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, institutional roles that are closest to the centre of society and to the central value system enjoy a higher level respect and authority for they are viewed as affecting the order of life. Following this logic, the occupations or social roles that are not esteemed by society are furthest from the centre.<sup>10</sup> So authority is concentrated in the centre but holds influence over the periphery.

Grosby introduces Shils' theory of centre and periphery into biblical studies with his book *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*. Grosby explains that Israelite placial structure developed from 'circumscribed locality' to 'extended territory' as Israelite

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Shils, 'Charisma, Order, and Status,' *ASR*, vol. 30, no. 2 (April 1965): 199–213. Cf. Philip Smith, *Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 86–88.

<sup>7</sup> Shils, 'Charisma, Order, and Status,' 205.

<sup>8</sup> Human power that is connected to divine powers was previously noted in the discussion of ANE creation narratives. Schmid notes that in many ancient societies cosmic, political, and social order are unified in the concept of creation. Creation myths account for the origin and natural order of the cosmos, but they also relay information about social order in the contemporary world: Schmid, 'Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,' 104–105; cf. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 231–2322. The law functions as the divine ordering of chaos on cosmic level actualised in social sphere. See Fretheim, 'Law in the Service of Life,' 185.

<sup>9</sup> Shils, 'Charisma, Order, and Salvation,' 205.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

worship changed from celebrations at local altars to celebrations at the chosen place, which Grosby assumes to be Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> The earlier, sacred places were structured around a vertical relationship with the divine. The altar memorialised a place in which a dream or significant interaction with God took place, but the place had very little influence on the surrounding area. In contrast, as views of nationality within a bounded territory developed, the Deuteronomic chosen place—legitimised because it was chosen by God—developed a horizontal conception of sacrality dispersed throughout a wider territory. All the land is considered to be God’s, so even though the text recognises God’s presence in one location, the whole land is understood to be holy because it belongs to God. The unity of the people becomes a reality when they follow one law and one God within its national territory. By enacting the law, the periphery participates in the sacrality of the centre.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, a proper relationship with God was not limited to one place (i.e. chosen place) but was practiced throughout the land. This relationship between the centre (chosen place) and periphery (city gates) changed the older conception of a vertical relationship with God to a horizontal dispersion of sacrality over bounded territory which created a consistent pattern of life for all within.<sup>13</sup>

Just as Shils was interested in social cohesion, Grosby is interested in the unifying power behind the central value system of Israelite society. Grosby states everything that the Israelites considered sacred, ‘would be infused into the different families and villages, unifying both respectively into a “people” and into a bounded “territory.”’ The vehicle for this unifying dispersion was believed to be the Deuteronomic law, which would be consistently applied throughout an expanded territorial jurisdiction (Deut. 16:18–20; 17:1–13).<sup>14</sup> Boundaries of the land, as recognised by the people living within them, determined the extent of the life-giving, life-sustaining, and life-ordering power. Grosby suggests the relationship between the centre and the periphery should be thought of as mutual instead of

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<sup>11</sup> Grosby does not deal extensively with the documentary hypothesis or historical background to the text. His emphasis is on developing a social-political theory to explain the Israelite experience of nationality: Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 69–91.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

exclusive. ‘The jurisdiction of the center was believed to have been such that it should appropriately encompass the periphery. Indeed, the center designated the periphery as its periphery; and the periphery recognized the center as its center.’<sup>15</sup> Thus Grosby offers an important distinction from Shils’ theory of power. The periphery is not wholly excluded or secularised from the centre but, instead, is considered a part of the sacrality of the centre.<sup>16</sup>

Carrière also makes use of the centre-periphery theory in his work on Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22.<sup>17</sup> Like Grosby, Carrière suggests the centre and periphery inform each other, in which the cities of the periphery have equal access to centre, and the centre informs the significance and the responsibility of the periphery. Using the language of Deuteronomy, his claim means the chosen place and the city gates share a mutual relationship and are not in contradiction with each other.<sup>18</sup>

Although accepting both Grosby and Carrière’s understanding of centre and periphery as it is reflected in Deuteronomy, one important critique needs to be made. Because the theory developed under Shils’ analysis of power structures, the vocabulary of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ implies a concentration of all power at the centre while the majority, marginalised, and non-powerful are found on the periphery. This theory provides a helpful frame of reference for examining the relationship between the chosen place and the city gates, but the associated concepts of assumed power structures need to be minimised. In his study of political and human rights in a centralised Israelite government, Knight cautions that these terms

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Grosby’s view of the connection between the centre and periphery is the opposite of Levinson’s argument that the chosen place functions as a trope for all things cultic while the city gates are a trope for all things secular. Levinson’s argument is similar to Weinfeld’s idea that religious reform secularised activities in the gate and kept the centre as a symbolic holy place. See Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 131; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 233–236. Alternatively, the work of Lohfink is compatible with Grosby’s use of centre and periphery in which holiness and purity reaches out from the centre to the distributed places. Deuteronomy does not create a clean break between that which is sacred and profane but is purposefully blurring the lines. Although there is a designated centre, the entire Israelite territory is connected. Israel is instructed to keep the entirety of her place pure as a statement of holiness.

<sup>17</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 226–239; cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 91.



should not be used at all for they set the centre as the primary point of reference obscuring the other regions peripheral to it. Such bifurcation diminishes the experience of those not located in the seat of power and assumes that one point of view, the centre, is superior to the other, the periphery.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the terminology insinuates that the ‘periphery’ designates a homogenous unit distant from the centre. Such bifocal thinking in placial studies is what Lefebvre, in his critical spacial theory, cautions against, because it results in a flattened perception of place in which all complexity is lost.<sup>20</sup>

This critique is important for this study of Deuteronomy, and Lefebvre’s caution in particular illuminates assumptions that could easily obscure the placial structure communicated in Deuteronomy. The chosen place is the focal point of Israelite society and thus considered the ‘centre,’ but only with the realisation that centrality has ‘nothing to do with geometry and little with geography.’<sup>21</sup> But Deuteronomy does not make the city gates peripheral nor does Deuteronomy minimise the responsibilities of those within them. To diminish assumptions about place, this study will use ‘distributed places’ instead of ‘periphery’ to preserve awareness of the diverse, physical reality of the land. The goal is for such terminology to reduce the bifocal thinking that the centre and periphery are simply two opposing end points. Place must be allowed to account for the in-between, the places through which one journeys, the connections between cities, and the complex structures between public and private places. As has been cautioned by Lefebvre and Soja in their own critical spatial theories, a true exploration of and understanding of space (place) requires an intentional avoidance of such bifocal contrast, because

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas A. Knight, ‘Political Rights and Powers in Monarchic Israel,’ *Semeia* 66 (1994): 99–100, no. 7; online <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B-5-JeCa2Z7hTjQydzY0NExKdnM/edit?pli=1>.

<sup>20</sup> To analyse the production of spaces, Lefebvre thought it essential to move away from all tendencies of scholars to bifurcate the analysis of space. His view influenced the final form of his tripartite method of analysing space. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 7–10.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Shils, ‘Centre and periphery,’ in *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays Presented to Michael Polanyi* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 117.

bifocal categories cannot adequately account for space's complex nature.<sup>22</sup> Thus changing the vocabulary to 'centre' and 'distributed places' helps to create a new type of image more precise to what Deuteronomy is constructing. The chosen place is connected to each individual distributed place, and the distributed places are connected to one another forming an interwoven network of Israelite places. It is an organic network that allows the national territory to expand and to be considered part of the blessing of God (Deut. 11:24; 12:20–21; 14:24; 19:8). Every additional place added to the territory will be connected to the identity shared from the centre. Regardless of the size of the placial network, it is designed to demonstrate Israel's fundamental value to worship Yahweh alone and to enact the teachings of the law code in the daily life of Israel.

Weinfeld's opinion that holiness was centralised at the chosen place thus making the cities profane is similar to Shils' theory that institutional roles closest to the centre of society enjoy a high level respect and authority. Weinfeld suggests Deuteronomy concentrates religious significance at the centre away from the periphery. Lohfink, on the other hand, suggests there was a mutual relationship between the chosen place and the city gates and that the holy and profane distinction was not between the centre and distributed places but between Israel and the nations.<sup>23</sup> Lohfink states that Deuteronomy identifies Israel as a holy people chosen out of all other peoples (7:6; 14:1–2; 26:19; 28:9), therefore, Israel should behave in a fashion that maintains her distinction from other nations. Her holiness is associated with the unity or the oneness of the people set apart from other nations to be Yahweh's possession.<sup>24</sup> Their identity as God's holy people is perpetuated in how they belong together in place. Lohfink states that Deuteronomy concentrates

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<sup>22</sup> Lefebvre acknowledged his theory had the paradoxical ability to both conflate differences and draw distinctions between the three types of space. Although the temptation is to create distinct boundaries between distinctions of space, they actually have an interlocking dependence on one another and must be given equal attention. Ignoring their multifaceted quality flattens the final understanding of space: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 369. Soja suggests the triune analysis of space is advantageous for preventing the historic bifurcated views of space. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Patrick Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 2000), 159.

<sup>24</sup> Norbert Lohfink, 'The Destruction of the Seven Nations in Deuteronomy,' trans. James G. Williams; *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, vol. 2 (Spring 1995): 104–105.

religious significance at the centre, but the sacrality of the centre pours outward to the distributed places so that the Deuteronomic law code extends the subject of purity ‘to all of time and to the entire land.’<sup>25</sup> Lohfink is thus making similar conclusions as the ones by Grosby and Carrière.

Deuteronomy 12 introduces Israel’s internal placial structure with instructions to remove old places of worship along with any associated object that can potentially invoke memories of the old placial patterns. With a clean slate, the introduction of God’s chosen place as something distinct from all other places is highlighted as a clearly significant location. The development of the function of each of these places (the chosen place and all other places) as well as the relationship between them, and the social ramifications thereof, will continue to develop throughout the rest of the law code. Significant elements are introduced in chapter 12, but they should not be read in isolation from their greater context. The purpose of this chapter is to address the underlying structure of place as presented in chapter 12. The details of how this internal structure of place develops will be addressed in following chapters.

### **Form**

Deuteronomy 12 marks a shift from the hortatory chapters (5–11) to the law code (12–26). The hortatory section focuses on God’s faithful actions in the past that have brought the people out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and to this temporary pause on the Plains of Moab. It repeatedly states that such actions require a response from the people to remain loyal to their covenant with God. This becomes the foundation for the law code that contains a more specific explanation of what loving God wholeheartedly looks like within the context of settled life in one land. The command to love God is fleshed out for daily, individual and communal life. Despite the change in tone and subject matter, these two sections should not be cleaved

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 105.

apart. They go together and explain each other.<sup>26</sup> The law code is placed within a greater narrative that explains the motivation for remaining faithful to the covenant by enacting the law. Deuteronomy 12 marks a shift from the persistent encouragement in the exhortation chapters to follow the statutes and commandments (4:1, 45; 5:1, 31; 6:1, 20; 7:11; 11:32) to the detailed explanation of what those statutes and commandments are.<sup>27</sup> Each of these segments is framed by the same expression (the exhortation segment by 5:1 and 11:32, and the law code by 12:1 and 26:16), demonstrating a consistent emphasis on the importance of the Torah throughout Deuteronomy 5–26.

Deuteronomy 12 is also connected with themes pulled from the hortatory chapters, three of which will be discussed here. First, the instructions demand clearing the land of Canaanite worship. Twice in chapter 7 and twice again in chapter 12 the people are instructed to completely destroy Canaanite worship sites so as to not become ensnared by their worship practices. Second, Moses exhorts the people to obey the commands inside the land of inheritance for it will be life for the people (4:1, 10; 5:33; 8:1; 11:8–9; 12:1). Although Moses repeats that exhortation several times in chapters 4–11, it is only the first verse of chapter 12 that identifies the following law code as the statutes and commandments that are necessary in the land. This law enacted in the land will be for the good of all people (6:24; 10:13; 12:28). Third, the singular love of God with one's whole heart, soul and strength, is

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<sup>26</sup> Synchronic readings of Deuteronomy highlight the striking unity of the text. However, even for scholars more interested in diachronic issues in which different language, syntax, and similarities with other texts might suggest different authors, chapters 5–26 are largely regarded as being from the same hand. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, lxvii; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 23–25; James Robson, 'The Literary Composition of Deuteronomy,' in *Interpreting Deuteronomy* (ed. David Firth, Philip Johnston; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2012), 19–59; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, xxv.

<sup>27</sup> Kaufman argued that the literary structure in the law code is modelled after the Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5. Although the Decalogue is not quoted anywhere in chapters 12–25, Kaufman suggests the arrangement of the laws is structured according to the order of the laws in the Decalogue: S. A. Kaufman, 'The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law,' *Maarav* 1/2 (1979): 105–158. Kaufman's theory was supported by Braulik and more recently by Walton: Georg Braulik, 'The Sequence of the Laws in Deuteronomy 12–26,' in *The Song of Power and the Power of Song* (ed. Duane Christensen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 313–335; John Walton, 'The Decalogue Structure of the Deuteronomic Law,' in *Interpreting Deuteronomy: Issues and Approaches* (eds. David Firth and Philip Johnston; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2012), 93–117. This theory has not gone without opposition. The structure seems to break down at the end of the law code where the diverse laws seem less compatible with this organisation. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 79; Miller accepts a relationship of sorts, but he states his reservations in Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 128–129.

the reason for the legal code as it is the people's proper response to the blessings and gracious acts of God on their behalf.<sup>28</sup> The deeds God has done for Israel as described in chapters 4–11 are balanced by the deeds Israel will do for God in chapters 12–26.<sup>29</sup> C. Wright insists, 'All the sections of laws in chapters 12–26 are presented in the light of, or more precisely, in response to, the great truths and principles that have been so eloquently expounded in chapters 1–11 (esp. 4–11).'<sup>30</sup> So although a transition is being made between chapters 5–11 and 12–26, cohesion is still maintained.

Chapter 12 introduces for the first time the primacy of a singular Yahwistic worship place around which society is structured. This concept influences the entirety of the law code, because it not only establishes the structure of worship but also the regulations for life in the land. Israel participates in establishing a place that reflects the ultimate authority of Yahweh in the physical design of place and in the social participation in the created order. Therefore, chapter 12 is important to study in depth, because the underlying structure, which rests on affirming Israel as a holy people and depends on separating and organising place, continues to inform aspects of the law code that will be discussed in later chapters. The relationship between the centre and distributed locations influences the interpretation of preservation of holiness in the midst of the people (ch. 13), regulations for food preparation along with the third year tithe (ch. 14), the care for the poor (ch. 15), celebration of annual feasts (ch. 16), organisation of leadership (ch. 16–18), and care for non-human creation (chs. 19–25). The Deuteronomic law code consistently offers the same argument although from various perspectives.

In Deuteronomy 12, the law code begins by establishing correct worship practices in the land, and, although chapter 12 limits sacral offerings to the chosen place, worship is not limited in the same way. 'Instead, the entirety of life in the land is to be lived before Yahweh and, therefore, is religiously significant and is

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<sup>28</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 203.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 158.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

considered as falling to some degree in the realm of worship.<sup>31</sup> The initial pattern of place laid out here facilitates worship throughout the land that honours God.

## Text

Deuteronomy 12 has a double frame. Verse 1 establishes time and place in which these laws should be enacted. The verse functions as the introduction to the entire law code, but when paired with the partial repetition in 13:1 [12:32, English translations], the two verses form an outer frame around Deuteronomy 12. The internal frame is created by verses 2–4 and 29–31 in which stern instructions are given to completely destroy Canaanite worship sites. The core of the chapter is found in verses 5–28, which call for proper worship at the chosen place. Although these broad divisions are generally agreed upon, the further division of 5–28 varies slightly between scholars due to the large number of repetitions and qualifications, which tie the segment together but create challenges for dividing into precise subcategories.<sup>32</sup> For this study, chapter 12 will be divided into the following segments:<sup>33</sup>

12:1	Introduction to the Law Code
12:2–4	Forbidding Canaanite worship
12:5–28	Introducing Israelite worship
12:29–31	Forbidding Canaanite worship
13:1 [12:32]	Instruction to Guard the Torah

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<sup>31</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 200.

<sup>32</sup> Source criticism has tried to deal with chapter 12's repetitious style, different versions of the place formula, and transitions between second person plural and second person singular pronouns by attributing its complexities to literary and historical growth. This is not the focus here, but summaries of scholarship can be found in Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 231–232; Halpern, 'The Centralization Formula in Deuteronomy,' 20–38; Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 23–50; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 221–222; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 214–215; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 150–151.

<sup>33</sup> Opinions vary about which verses belong to the introduction. Tigay and McConville set aside verse one as connected to the preceding verse (11:32), which now acts as a general introduction for the laws and statutes to be followed in the land. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 213. Tigay further divides the chapter vv. 2–3, 4–7, 8–28, 29–32; *Deuteronomy*, 118–128. Von Rad divides the chapter based on three sets of centralising law in vv. 2–7, 8–12, 13–19 (where vv. 13–19 are traditionally held to be the older version of the centralising law). Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 89; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 151; Christensen *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 233–234.

### *The Outer Frame*

The opening phrase of the chapter, ‘These are the statutes and the commandments’ (אלה החקים והמשפטים), is an introduction to the whole law code to follow. As mentioned above, this short phrase frames the exhortation chapters (5:1; 11:32) and appears at the conclusion of the law code in 26:16. It sets off these two distinct sections of Deuteronomy while unifying them under the same concept becoming an inclusive term for the whole law in chapters 5–26.<sup>34</sup> The laws introduced with this expression in chapter 12 will build on the Ten Commandments (ch. 5) and the Shema (6:4–5), the two guiding principles that should inform how life is led in the land. These are the statutes and commandments the people must be careful to do in the land God gives to his people to possess. The law is now closely linked as the proper response to the gift of the land.<sup>35</sup> In this introduction, an important aspect of structuring place is presented. The people ‘Israel’ who belong to this land will be unified through obedience to the ‘law of the land.’<sup>36</sup> The statutes and commandments are ‘to be obeyed by all those who dwelled within the land; thereby unifying the inhabitants of the land...into the “people” of Israel, and unifying the land...into the territory of Israel.’<sup>37</sup> Thus a significant function of the law is to unify all the people under a singular value system in all the land.<sup>38</sup> The concluding summary for Deuteronomy 12 can also be considered an introduction to law code that follows (13:1 Heb. or 12:32 Eng.).<sup>39</sup> This second exhortation to obey these commands frames the chapter (with vs. 1) and looks forward to the rest of the

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<sup>34</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 159; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 217; McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 126–127.

<sup>35</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 217.

<sup>36</sup> Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 53–55.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–62.

<sup>38</sup> The concept of one people in one land under one law is especially significant in Deut. 16:17–18:22, a section often determined to be Israel’s political constitution. These ideas, although alluded to here, will be developed below in chapter 6.

<sup>39</sup> Driver prefers the Hebrew numbering making this verse an introduction to chapter 13 and the ordinances to follow (also Craigie). The majority of commentators agree with Mayes who states the vocabulary and style of the verse creates a closer connection to the beginning of chapter 1 (including Block, Christensen, Fishbane, McConville, von Rad). Lundbom addresses the ambiguity in the verse by suggesting it plays a dual role of closing one chapter and introducing another. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 420.

law code. The admonition not to add or subtract from the law is the same instruction as in 4:2 where it applies to all of the teachings of Moses.

### *The Inner Frame*

Before a new placial structure can be introduced, Israel must remove the structure currently in place. Verse 2 begins with the instructions to completely destroy (אבד) all places (כל-המקמות) where nations served their gods. The ‘where’ of these places is named as on the high mountains, the hills, and under every green tree.<sup>40</sup> The ‘how’ of the destruction is by breaking down altars, shattering standing stones, burning Asherim and chopping down the images of the gods (vs. 3). These verbs are a close repetition of the verbs in both Deuteronomy 7:5, in which instructions are given to destroy Canaanite objects of worship, and also Deuteronomy 9:21 in which Moses narrates how he destroyed the golden calf. Verse 3 concludes by repeating the verb destroy (אבד), specifying the previous actions are to destroy their *name* from that place. Israel must not worship God in the fashion the Canaanites worshipped their gods (vs. 4). The exact Canaanite practices that are forbidden in verse 4 are not specified, although the focus on כל-המקמות in this context suggests the reference is to the almost indiscriminate establishment of worship places throughout the land.<sup>41</sup> The multiplicity of places, altars, and standing stones is in contradiction to the singular place God will choose that will represent Israelite worship. These instructions are not solely to prohibit Canaanite worship but also to obliterate the structure and memory of their worship. In the previous chapter the interwoven character of memory and place was discussed, and it was noted that place can trigger the memory of what transpired in a location. By destroying the Canaanite objects of worship, Israel is, in fact, obliterating the memory of such worship in those places. Initiating the law code with these instructions invites the Israelites to participate in the first step of removing that which is contrary to Yahwistic worship to create space

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Every green tree’ is perhaps intended to mock the indiscriminateness of Canaanite worship. See McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 218; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 423. Miller suggests the phrase means, ‘...where the worship of god or gods is done in arbitrary and accidental fashion.’ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 131.

<sup>41</sup> The end of the chapter describes the epitome of their contrariness to God as child sacrifice (12:31). Lundbom suggests the forbidden practice refers to not destroying Yahweh’s name from the place he has chosen. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 426.



for an ideal placial network to be constructed according to a different value system and understanding of the God's created order.

If verses 2–4 explain the 'where' and the 'how' of destroying Canaanite worship, then the concluding verses 29–31 explain the 'why.' Moses tells the people to guard themselves lest they are ensnared by the desire to follow the Canaanite examples (also 7:16). When God cuts off the nations before Israel, and they go in and live in the land, they must guard themselves against being enticed to pursue Canaanite practices. The way Israel lives in their land must be completely different from how the Canaanites lived in the land. The phrase 'you shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God' in verse 31 is an echo of verse 4 and marks the inclusio structure of this passage. Two reasons are given for 'not behaving thus.' The first is because Canaanite actions for their gods are abominable to God. The second is because the Canaanites sacrificed their sons and daughters in fire.

Relational aspect of place cannot be studied as if taking place on top of inert land, for the physical qualities of place participate in how social patterns develop. This applies not only for the new structure Israel develops but for the Canaanites who are already in the land. The territory Israel enters is a place already established with cities they did not build, cisterns they did not dig, and fields they did not plant (Deut. 6:10–11). It is not a virgin site; it already has life patterns etched within it. Although new to Israel, the place they will belong to already has its own long history. When Israel moves into the land, new patterns of life must be created in a place that already exists. The physical aspects of place hold memory and, therefore, will require purposeful actions on behalf of Israel to resist falling into the well worn grooves created by the previous occupants. The social and religious structure of people in this land needs to be removed along with those who originally created them to create a new placial structure conducive to Israelite worship practices.

### *Israelite Worship*

Following the prohibition of Canaanite worship, the core of chapter 12 is devoted to describing worship practices for Israel as it involves place. Key elements in this description involve the place God chooses, the sacrifices that are made there, and the people involved. The core of chapter 12 can be further broken down into three

segments (vv. 5–14, 15–19, 20–28) each repeating and slowly developing a similar theme of place. The first segment introduces God’s singular chosen place (הַמְקוֹר) in contrast to the previously mentioned multiple places of Canaanite worship (כָּל־הַמְקוֹמוֹת). The second and third segments introduce the distinction between the centre and distributed places.

Careful attention to how Israel develops a placial structure is important. Place can be instrumental for instructing and remembering past events, so if place can be used positively to reinforce the national narrative, the reverse must also be true. Canaanite places along with associated objects of worship can also hold memory and, therefore, present a danger of tempting the Israelites to inquire after other gods. Canaanite worship is remembered by two things, the locations (high mountains, hills, green trees) and the objects found in those places (altars, standing stones, Asherah, images of the gods). Israelite worship is fundamentally different from this, so that even adding Israelite worship to what already exists in the land would be improper. Israel has to develop a new type of place. There can be no other god worshipped in the land, whether exemplified in physical locations or in social practices. To imitate the placial structure established by the Canaanites would be disloyal to the covenant.

This law is more than a strict numbering of altars. It portrays the underlying value system that is the basis for Israelite life. Deuteronomy recognises the need not only to remove the people from the place, but also to dismantle how those people interacted with place and how they represented their underlying values. ‘The cultic paraphernalia of altars and standing stones cannot be merely abandoned, since they possess in their very bodily existence a memory that always threatens to reawaken in Israel if not thoroughly destroyed.’<sup>42</sup> The people have to choose to follow these statutes and commandments to be enacted in this land while simultaneously rejecting Canaanite practices. The instructions go beyond forbidding the imitation of Canaanite worship to actually ruining the structure and memory of their worship. Israel has an incongruent place structure from the Canaanites, and so the people

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<sup>42</sup> Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 86.

must remove the perversion first before the realisation of the intended place structure can come about.

### Verses 5–14

Deuteronomy 12:5 introduces God’s chosen place with the place formula for the first time. The people must seek after and go to ‘the place which Yahweh your God will choose from all your tribes to set his name there for his dwelling.’ It is mentioned in full here and in various abbreviated forms throughout the chapter (vv. 11, 14, 26). As McConville notes, the word ‘place’ (מִקְוֶה) is capable of referring to a range of meanings including a specific building structure or to a nation’s territory, but it remains ‘tantalizingly unspecific, seeming deliberately to avoid available words for “temple” or “sanctuary”....’<sup>43</sup> Avoiding specific references to the sanctuary not only remains true to Deuteronomy’s subversive programme related to cultic rituals, but it ‘belongs to the particular rhetorical force of the book, which exploits the potential of the word *māqôm* to refer to both “land” and “sanctuary”, and thus to establish a correspondence between the two.’<sup>44</sup>

The place formula is an articulation of placial relationships that can be addressed in three segments. First, the multiple Canaanite places in verse 4 are now contrasted to God’s one place. The singular place requires the people to journey to the chosen place as opposed to worshipping God wherever worship is convenient for them. Second, the place is identified theologically by stating it is the one ‘Yahweh your God will choose’.<sup>45</sup> The special designation of God’s place chosen ‘from all your tribes’<sup>46</sup> belongs to a list of others who are also chosen by God. This

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<sup>43</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 219. This ambiguous referral to with ‘land’ or ‘sanctuary’ will be evident again in Deuteronomy 16:6–7 and 26:9.

<sup>44</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 219.

<sup>45</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 232.

<sup>46</sup> The statement that Yahweh will choose the place is restated in verse 14 and is modified as the place ‘in one of your tribes.’ The difference between ‘from all the tribes’ (vs. 5) and ‘in one of your tribes’ (vs. 14) has led some to suggest vv. 13–14 are an older textual layer less defined than vs. 5. McConville suggests neither was meant to legislate a number nor a place for the sanctuary but is to emphasise God’s choice of sanctuary. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 225. Wenham further explains the view suggested by Welch, Oestreicher (and less convincingly by Greenspahn) that ‘in one of your tribes’ can be understood in a distributive sense instead of a limiting sense as mentioned; see above, chapter 1, note 112. The argument is connected to the interpretation of Deut. 23:17 is discussed below in chapter 8.

includes Israel chosen from among the nations (7:7–8; 10:15), Levi chosen from among the tribes (18:5), and the king chosen from among his brothers (17:5).<sup>47</sup> In each case there are no stated characteristics to make that which is chosen unique from the others except for the fact that God chose it. Although the people destroy the Canaanite places, they do not establish a new place for God. God chooses the place, so the effort is out of the hands of the people and further separates them from the Canaanites who determined the places for their gods.<sup>48</sup> Third, God will ‘set his name there for his dwelling.’ Against the opinion put forth by von Rad that Deuteronomy’s ‘Name Theology’ offers a polemic against anthropomorphising the corporal presence of God,<sup>49</sup> Richter argues that the phrase as read within the ancient Near Eastern cultural context would have been understood as a legal statement of God’s ownership over the whole territory.<sup>50</sup> This should be read against verse 3 in which destroying Canaanite places and objects of worship destroy the name of other gods from land. God is the conquering king whose fame is known through victory in battles and whose sovereignty is unquestionable and is the theological basis for the behaviour to be described in the law code.<sup>51</sup>

Verse 5 identifies the necessity to seek (שׁוּר) the place Yahweh will choose. When שׁוּר is used with the preposition לְ it communicates the sense of ‘turning to’ or ‘choosing’, and is often used of the human choice of God or gods.<sup>52</sup> The command connotes the purposeful pursuit of God’s chosen place and the

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 219–220.

<sup>48</sup> McConville says God refuses localisation based on the Canaanite pattern. The emphasis on God’s choice ‘pre-empts any attempt to manipulate him on Israel’s part’: McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> Von Rad suggests, ‘The name dwells on earth in the sanctuary; Yahweh himself is in heaven.’: Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 90. Weinfeld agrees and suggests that the Place Name was evidence of Deuteronomy’s programme of demythologisation: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 191–209.

<sup>50</sup> Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*; idem, ‘The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy.’

<sup>51</sup> Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*, 205.

<sup>52</sup> Also used in Deuteronomy 18:11; Job 5:8; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3. Without the preposition לְ, שׁוּר can have the connotation of ‘to seek’ or ‘to enquire.’ Deuteronomy 11:12 is unusual for it places God as the subject of the verb which there means ‘to care for.’ See McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 219.

simultaneous rejection of Canaanite places and gods.<sup>53</sup> Reading the place formula in context of what has already been discussed from Deuteronomy 11 is helpful. The land relies on God, and the people should do so as well to demonstrate covenant faithfulness. God seeks this land, and the people should respond by seeking the one place God has chosen for his name to dwell. The exact location does not need to be identified for the command focuses on honouring God's election of the place over against the Canaanite sites that have no inherent sacred quality.<sup>54</sup> This chosen place represents Yahweh's prerogative to choose the place of worship and to establish his legitimate claim of authority over against the claim of other gods.<sup>55</sup> The people seek him there, in effect, affirming what God has already done and embracing the entirety of the covenant. The people set their standards and values according to what God establishes, and this becomes the singular unifying value system in all the land. Yahwistic worship is at the heart of life in the land. The place formula in verse 5 offers a polemic against the religious system in Canaan, identifies the claims of legitimacy by God himself, and replaces the pre-existing placial network with another.<sup>56</sup> Yahwistic worship at the heart of life in the land becomes the basic placial structure set up by God, and the people are invited to live within this structure.<sup>57</sup>

Canaanite land and Israelite land may be the same location, but they are not to be the same *place*. The distinction between physical land and place was discussed in the previous chapter in which the *land* of Egypt was set in contrast to the *place* of Egypt. Similarly, the place of Canaan is differentiated from the place Israel

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 198–199.

<sup>54</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 199. Deuteronomy does not find it necessary to name the place (thus leaving open the possibility of the place requirements fulfilled by a number of successive places), but focuses instead on God's choice being the essential element. Because the place is God's choice, it is not bound forever to a single location. In fact, the succession of places is pointed out by Jeremiah who compares the ruined city of Shiloh to the city of Jerusalem. There is no one place guaranteed to contain God's presence for all times. See McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 122–123.

<sup>55</sup> The often overlooked but significant aspect of God's choice of place is addressed by McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 29–35.

<sup>56</sup> McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 112.

<sup>57</sup> Gary Millar, 'A Faithful God Who Does no Wrong: History, Theology, and Reliability in Deuteronomy,' in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture* (ed. Paul Helm and Carl Trueman; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 12.

cultivates, which is why Israel must eradicate all Canaanite gods when they enter Canaanite land. Destroying worship sites is not simply a display of Israelite imperialism in which they rid the land of Canaanite gods and replace them with an Israelite God. Deuteronomy 12 structures Israelite life around one focal place of worship, and the physical place symbolises the cultural and social reality of Israelite life lived in a covenant relationship with Yahweh. Israel's worship reinforces the underlying value influencing all of Israelite life that is required to be in stark contrast with Canaanite life and values. The initial step after entering the land, which is to remove all Canaanite gods and worship places, is a move to replace the Canaanite value system with Israel's value system.

Israel faces additional challenges, however, as the geographical diversity of the land hinders the development of strong, unified governments, facilitating instead the development of several small kingdoms. The challenges presented to Israel by the texture of the Land Between may be reflected in Deuteronomy 7. Deuteronomy 7 is just as emphatic as chapter 12 regarding the destruction of the Canaanites and their forms of worship (7:1–5). However, chapter 7 mentions another detail, namely the presence of seven people groups in the land (7:1). This detail speaks to the influence of the land on societies where multiple people groups can settle in the diverse segments of land remaining independent from each other. The nature of the terrain with its varied physical characteristics naturally breaks into smaller territories, sometimes each experiencing their own microclimate.<sup>58</sup> If Israel is to live as a nation in this land, there needs to be a strategy to deal with how to keep this coalition of tribes from separating into their own geographical locations and creating their own standards of living.

When the people enter the land designated as Israel's territory, crossing the borders does not automatically mean they are a cohesive nation. After Israel enters the land, some people will have restricted access to the chosen place, so

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<sup>58</sup> See Dalman, *Work and Customs in Palestine, vol. 1*, 133. Sarna observes, 'It is as though the accidents of geography, topography and environmental conditions all conspired to produce irresistible centrifugal forces that could not but make for a maximum of ethnic diversity, for the intensification of the rivalry of political and strategic interests, and the interpenetration and interweaving of religions and cultures.' Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, xxix.

Deuteronomy addresses how to structure place and create a sense of unification and brotherhood. In a physical territory where some people are farmers and others are shepherds, and where some have easier access to international trade, segments of society easily become comfortable in their own nested place and can potentially become disconnected from the larger, national community. ‘The symbols of Yahweh’s presence will no longer be visible to the vast majority of them on a daily basis,’<sup>59</sup> so strategies to help the people remain mindful of God’s presence among them need to be developed. The Israelites need to understand themselves as one people who worship one God, and who pursue God’s created design. Regardless of their physical location they must agree to adhere to a singular underlying value so that although the people belong to tribes and live in a diverse land they can still be one Israel in land of Israel.

Establishing one place of worship facilitates such unity among the people. To this one particular place, Israel brings burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, contributions, votive and freewill offerings, and the firstborn of the flocks (vs. 6), and the people celebrate before God with the whole households (vs. 7). Millar notes, ‘The absence of interest in the location of Yahweh’s place is mirrored by the vagueness marking the Deuteronomic treatment of the sacrifices to be offered (vs. 6).’<sup>60</sup> Deuteronomy is intent on making Israelite worship distinct but is less concerned with specifying the exact details of the sacrifices, which are more characteristic of the Priestly writings in the Holiness Code. Deuteronomy highlights place, community, feasting, and celebration while the Priestly writings emphasise sacral details of ceremonies at the sanctuary. Deuteronomy is much more concerned with the distinctiveness of Israelite worship in this land.<sup>61</sup> These particularities between the law codes will become more evident throughout the study of Deuteronomy’s law code. Verses 5–7 introduce the concept of a chosen place along with the prescribed journey of the people to the singular place of worship. The pilgrimage to the centre is a necessary part of preserving unity among a people

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<sup>59</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 201.

<sup>60</sup> Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 110.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 110–111; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 37–38.

living in a diverse land.<sup>62</sup> The placial structure is further developed in chapter 12 by repeating the tripartite pattern of *place*, *offering*, and *people* as represented in these verses (cf. vv. 11–12, 17–18, 20–22).

An abrupt change in verse 8 brings the audience back to the ‘here and now’ with Moses on the Plains of Moab to set up a comparison between the time and place of the people ‘today’ on the Plains of Moab, and the future time when the people will be in the land.<sup>63</sup> Moses tells the people ‘You should not do as we are doing here today’ that is ‘every man doing what is right in his own eyes’ (vs. 8). Verse 8 draws attention to the moment and the place of Moses’ narration, and to the decision facing Israel on the Plains of Moab, a choice connected to covenant obedience and the associated blessings and consequences (see notes above on Deut. 11:26). The phrase, ‘each man doing right in his own eyes’ is characteristic of book of Judges when the people lacked consistent leadership, but the specific meaning in Deuteronomy is not clear. It may refer to the people having previously sacrificed at any place they choose,<sup>64</sup> or it may refer to the rebellious nature of the Israelites which was only just recounted in Deuteronomy 9.<sup>65</sup> The people ‘here today’ have not reached the ‘resting place’ of the inheritance God is giving to them (vs. 9).

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<sup>62</sup> While one might expect Deuteronomy to speak of the family unit (sons, daughters, servants) within the home or city context, Deuteronomy 12 mentions them only as being present at the centre, and while one might expect the Levites to be mentioned within the context of the chosen place, Deuteronomy 12 calls them the ‘Levites in your gates.’ Although Deuteronomy is clearly referring to the Levites not actively serving in the sanctuary, Deuteronomy is careful not to exclude the Levites from the celebration. In fact, Deuteronomy goes so far as to assign family responsibility to care for the Levite. Deuteronomy takes the people from the gate and names them as participants at the centre, and Deuteronomy takes the Levites who rightfully belong in the centre (cf. 18:1–5) and names them as participants in the city gate. These are not the ‘normal’ places where these people belong, and as such, these descriptions emphasise that all Israelites journey between the chosen place and the city gates.

<sup>63</sup> The significance of *היה* in interpreting Deuteronomy was originally noticed by von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 26. See also DeVries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 164–186; Millar in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 42–44; O’Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 431; Nelson suggests the comparison is between the unstructured practice of Mosaic period and the future practice of sacrificing exclusively at the chosen place. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> McConville also draws attention to the structural correspondence with the history that follows Deuteronomy. The unruliness of the people prior to entering the land is followed by peace at which time worship is focused on the chosen place. Likewise, the unruliness that describes the people in the book of Judges is followed by a time of peace under King David which leads to the building of the temple: McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 224.



Moses' words draw attention to the liminal quality of the pause on the Plains of Moab, and the expectation of behavioural changes that must accompany the geographical change when the people cross over the Jordan River.

The behaviour of the people 'here today' is set in contrast to the behaviour of the people when they dwell in the land. When God brings the people into the land, and when he gives them rest from their enemies (vs. 10), then the people should bring their offerings to the place God has chosen (vs. 11).<sup>66</sup> The distinctions made of the chosen place in verses 5–7 emphasise that it is singular instead of multiple, it is chosen by God instead of by the people, and to this place the people come to worship. The distinctions made in verses 10–11 emphasise time and place. The response of worship is directly correlated with God's actions of bringing the people to the land and giving it to them as an inheritance. The people and their households bring offerings before God and celebrate.<sup>67</sup> The *place, offering, and people* pattern, which is repeated in verses 11–12, includes a shorter form of the place formula followed by a modified list of sacred offerings.<sup>68</sup> An interesting expansion, however,

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<sup>66</sup> In the historical narrative, rest from Israel's enemies first comes about in the days of Joshua (Josh. 11:23; 23:1), and again when David has rest on all sides and wants to build the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:1), which is ultimately built by Solomon (1 Kings 5:4–5). However, the enforcement of the law to go to one chosen place does not seem to be enforced until Hezekiah and Josiah. This fact has played into issues of dating the book's composition as discussed elsewhere. Pitkänen suggests the promise of rest from Israel's enemies subjects the regulations for the chosen place to a time after the conquest and settlement of the land: Pitkänen, *Central Sanctuary and the Centralization of Worship in Ancient Israel*, 97–98. See also Vogt who adds this qualification is similar to Deuteronomy 26:1–2 where the offering of firstfruit is required subsequent to the conquest and settlement of the land: Vogt, *Deuteronomie Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 171. Alternatively, Nelson concludes, 'centralization was to be in effect whenever Israel lived in the land.': Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 156. The notion of rest is bound up with the concept of a pleasant life in the land and contains echoes of the Sabbath rest of creation in which the places and the objects of creation were properly organised, humanity was given responsibility over creation, and when God completed his work and rested. As Dumbrell states, this means 'Israel will enjoy the gifts of creation in the way in which they had been meant to be used.' When the people experience this rest in the land, they are to rejoice before God and celebrate the blessing of his creation: Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 121–122.

<sup>67</sup> McConville and Millar have shown the combination of בוא with מקום is not confined to this altar law. In Deuteronomy 1–11 God brings the people to various places (Kadesh, Horeb, Moab), but within the law code, when the people enter this place God is giving to them, the people respond by bringing objects to God's chosen place. Therefore, the law code makes a shift from the journey to the land to a journey to the chosen place: McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 88, 130–139. Cf. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 33–35; Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 102.

<sup>68</sup> Verse 11 omits the freewill offering and the firstborn of the flock.

is found in the explanation of ‘your household’ which includes sons, daughters, male and female slaves and the Levite in the gate (also 26:11). Feasting from the provisions of the ground upon entering the land is the celebratory response that is required of the whole community and not only property owners.<sup>69</sup>

Verses 13 and 14 conclude this section by stressing that Israel must be careful about *places*. Burnt offerings are not allowed at any of the places the people see but only at the one place ‘in one of your tribes’ that God will choose. Two distinctions of place are reiterated here, namely the ‘many’ versus the ‘singular,’ and the people’s choice versus God’s choice.<sup>70</sup> To worship according to their own perception, that is, ‘at any place you see’ (vs. 13), would not only be ‘doing right in their own eyes’ (vs. 8) but would be similar to the Canaanite structure of worship in ‘all places’ (vs. 2) and is expressly forbidden. There is only one appropriate place for Israel’s worship, and it is at the place God chooses (vs. 14). To this one place the people are to bring sacrifices, and ‘do all that I am commanding you.’

#### Verses 15–19

Following the distinction between the chosen place and the Canaanite places is the distinction and organisation of Israelite places. Although the details will continue to emerge throughout the law code, the fundamental structure around the centre and distributed places is introduced here. The interpretation of the relationship between the places has resulted in host of interpretations from scholars ranging from Weinfeld’s view of opposites to Lohfink’s view of cohesion. This requires closer examination.

The previous verses state that all sacrifices must be brought to the chosen place, but verse 15 grants permission to slaughter and eat meat in the city gates as long as the blood of the animal is poured out on the ground. City gates had both civic and military purposes. Most cities only had one opening in the wall through

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<sup>69</sup> Including Levites in the family unit may be practical, because the Levites were not given a land inheritance of their own, making them dependent on the community (vs. 18 also 18:1–8). Those under the care of the community will be further explained in 14:29, including the alien, orphan, and widow all who are ‘in your gate.’

<sup>70</sup> Arnold says the movement from the many to the singular is the same in 12:2–5 and in 12:13–14. Arnold, ‘Deuteronomy 12,’ 238–239.

which to control traffic in and out of town,<sup>71</sup> meaning it needed to be wide and accessible for residents and traders but narrow and inaccessible to armies.<sup>72</sup> The gate created a weakness in the wall that required additional fortification. Many cities had an outer and inner gate complex both of which were shut in the evening with large wooden doors and reopened in the morning. The courtyard between the gates was used in several ways and became the social hub for the city.<sup>73</sup> Upon entering the city one moved through the outer gate, then the courtyard, and then the inner gate structure, which typically had two or three pairs of chambers flanking its opening. Soldiers were stationed there to guard the city. Deuteronomy's use of 'gate' represents the physical place (through which one enters or exits) and also the community of people found within the walls.<sup>74</sup> If there was a place to represent all members of the community it would be the city gate, a place that should be understood as the heart of the city.

The concession in verse 15 that permits Israel to slaughter (זבח) and to eat meat in the city gates as long as the blood is poured out on the ground like water, has been interpreted by scholars as the introduction of profane slaughter within Deuteronomy's centralising reforms.<sup>75</sup> Pre-Deuteronomic animal slaughters are generally assumed to have been sacral in character and to have taken place at local altars. Deuteronomy's designation of one altar at God's chosen place meant people living in dispersed locations did not readily have access to the altar. Therefore,

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<sup>71</sup> During the recent archaeological dig at Khirbet Qeiyafa an exception to this rule was found. In the city wall two massive gate complexes were found. Numerous publications are available regarding these finds, but the most comprehensive is Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1: Excavation Report 2007–2008* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> For a summary of excavated Israelite gates see Philip King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 234–236.

<sup>73</sup> The gate was the one place through which every person passed—the farmers to attend to the fields outside the walls, the shepherds to take their flocks out to pasture, and traders to buy and sell goods. The gate complex is where the elders met for negotiations (Gen. 34:20; Ruth 4:1–6), where foodstuff was sold (2 Kings 7:1), and where judicial decisions were made by the elders or the king (Deut. 16:18; 21:18–19; 22:15; Josh. 20:4; 1 Kgs. 22:10; Amos 5:15). See Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel*, 48–49, 122–124, 126, 217–218, 233.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 229.

<sup>75</sup> Weinfeld argued pouring the blood on the ground like water was a part of de-sacralising slaughter. It freed Israelite daily life from its ties to the cult: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 213–214.

Deuteronomy initiates a programme of non-sacral or ‘profane’ slaughter. As interpreted by Weinfeld, the centralisation reforms at the chosen place resulted in secularisation of activities everywhere else in the land thus freeing the people from ties to the cult.<sup>76</sup> As evidence that the animal slaughter in the city gates was stripped of religious meaning, Weinfeld points to the command to pour out the animal blood on the ground like water. He suggests the command rejects the traditionally held understanding of the blood of the animal as inherently sacred. He concludes the reform makes the blood no more sacred than water.<sup>77</sup> However, Deuteronomy’s use of the verb זָבַח (to slaughter or to sacrifice) poses complications for interpreters. Because זָבַח is used primarily in sacral contexts in the Old Testament<sup>78</sup> there remains a question regarding why a verb with sacral connotations would be used in Deuteronomy to permit non-sacral slaughter. Levinson states this is an example of the deliberate way Deuteronomy reworks the earlier law code. He explains that the appearance of זָבַח is residual language from previous law code even though Deuteronomy itself is de-sacralising the animal sacrifices in the gates.<sup>79</sup> Milgrom offers a different explanation. He notes the use of זָבַח in Deuteronomy 12:15 and 21 and because one of these references is associated with the slaughter at the altar and the other with slaughter at the city gates, he says Deuteronomy’s intentions behind the use of the verb remains unclear, because the location of the action does not give adequate help to interpret the verb. Therefore, Milgrom looks to the accompanying phrase ‘just as I commanded you’ for clarification, and he asks to which command this is referring.<sup>80</sup> Deuteronomy does not give specific details for sacrifices, so Milgrom suggests the reference must be to the *method* of slaughter (slitting the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 213–214.

<sup>78</sup> Jacob Milgrom, ‘Profane Slaughter and a Formulaic Key to the Composition of Deuteronomy,’ *HUCA* 47 (1976): 1–17.

<sup>79</sup> Levinson concludes the author of Deuteronomy ‘struggles to justify the innovation of secular slaughter in terms of prior textual authority, almost as if the older Exodus altar law itself lexically sanctioned the very innovation that overturns it.’: Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 38.

<sup>80</sup> Milgrom, ‘Profane Slaughter and a Formulaic Key to the Composition of Deuteronomy,’ 1–2.

throat) instead of to the sacral character of slaughtering at the chosen place and the gates.

Alternatively, Lohfink insists Weinfeld made incorrect assumptions of the text when asserting a programme of centralisation de-sacralised the land. Lohfink notices the diffusion of what is holy into the entirety of the land not only explains this altar law, but accounts for other complicated aspects of the law code.<sup>81</sup> The chosen place is distinct from other places, but that does not mean it has to be isolated in its uniqueness, because Deuteronomy does not define holiness based on the rituals at the sanctuary but in Israel's covenant faithfulness to God. Israel is a people chosen by God out of other nations to be his possession. The holy and profane distinction rests primarily between Israel and the nations and not between the centre and the distributed places.<sup>82</sup> Lohfink insists Deuteronomy does not abandoned a single thing to the profane.<sup>83</sup> Vogt agrees with Lohfink's analysis and suggests זָבַח does not need to be explained as a non-sacral action because the sacred connotations may be intended.<sup>84</sup> The use of זָבַח in Deuteronomy expands the realm of the sacred instead of curtailing it. Vogt argues that even if זָבַח describes a profane act in the city gates, the verb points to the sacred act at God's altar. Therefore, although the slaughter of animals is not considered a sacred activity at the gate, it is extending the sacred act to the activity at the gate thus indicating the connection between the chosen place to the city gates.<sup>85</sup> As will become evident with further study of the law code in subsequent chapters, holiness is not limited to the chosen place, but, instead, holiness includes all people and all the land, so that as Vogt says, 'all of life lived in

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<sup>81</sup> The diffusion of what is holy into the land includes Deuteronomy's designation of the people as holy to Yahweh (7:6) without referencing them as a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6). Deuteronomy further compares Israel as holy and distinct from all other nations (Deut. 14:2, 21; 26:18–19; 28:9–10). It also includes the laws of warfare that treat Canaanites outside the land differently than those inside the land (Deut. 20)—suggesting Israel is to be concerned about the purity of the land—and the laws of the unsolved murder in which atonement is made for the sake of the land (Deut. 21:1–9). Each of these will be discussed in subsequent chapters. See Lohfink, 'Opfer und Säkularisierung im Deuteronomium,' 36–37.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 35–36. See also Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 159.

<sup>83</sup> Lohfink, 'Opfer und Säkularisierung im Deuteronomium,' 36.

<sup>84</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 181 and 184–185.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 190.

the land before Yahweh has religious significance.<sup>86</sup> The care taken in slaughtering the animal makes the extended Israelite territory an enlarged sanctuary.

The slaughter at the city gate permitted in verse 15 is connected to the reality of the abundance of God's provision.<sup>87</sup> Although not detailed here, Deuteronomy elsewhere associates this provision with the flourishing land in which the people live. The community is supported by the 'good land,' and from its plentiful grain, wine, oil, and flocks (11:14–15) the people may eat and celebrate, the unclean as well as the clean. The inclusion of all people underscores this is not to be considered a sacrifice, even though it maintains its religious significance in allowing all people to become mindful of God's provisions. The whole community may partake of the bounty of the land that God provides.

Verses 17–19 remind the people that even with the above concessions, their sacred offerings must be brought before God. The tithe from the land, along with vow and freewill offerings must be taken to the 'place Yahweh your God will choose' (vs. 18). These designated offerings are to be enjoyed before God, with the household specified as the sons and daughters, male and female slaves, and the Levite in the gate.

The movement between the city gates and the chosen place described in verses 13–19 is analysed by Altmann, with a particular focus on the celebratory consumption of the offerings. Altmann's study of festive meals in Deuteronomy analyses Israelite celebrations in light of several historical texts, iconographic portrayals, and administrative records from a variety of ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. Altmann identifies how Deuteronomy adapted those elements to suit its own particular setting and purpose by focusing on the differences between the Deuteronomic writings and the ancient Near Eastern texts.<sup>88</sup> Festive meals that were sponsored by the royal court were common among Israel's neighbours and were used by kings to display their wealth to their nation and were the context for

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> The phrase 'whenever you like' can be translated placially instead of temporally (i.e., 'wherever?'). However, because the place is mentioned with the city gates, the phrase is here considered a temporal marker. See McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 211.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel: Deuteronomy's Identity Politics in the Ancient Near Eastern Context* (BZAW 424; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 3.

negotiating deals with a small number of highly placed officials and aristocrats.<sup>89</sup> The celebrations in Deuteronomy are unusual because God's provision of food for the people is emphasised and the people bring their personal contributions to the chosen place and share the offerings with all members of society regardless of social class.<sup>90</sup> All people eat from God's table. The permission to slaughter animals in the gate suggests 'God's table' extends to the distributed places, allowing the feasts to occur in both the chosen place and in the city gates—ultimately ridding the whole Israelite land of non-sacred places. If there are no non-Yahwistic places,<sup>91</sup> then the feasts remind Israel of the generosity of Yahweh while simultaneously wiping out the memory of the Canaanite cult.<sup>92</sup> The very act of celebrating communal meals in the centre and also in the distributed places contributes to Israel's social cohesion.<sup>93</sup> Altmann notices that ancient Near Eastern iconography depicts banquets of rich food and alcoholic drink, with a strong emphasis on the cup, but Deuteronomy repeatedly mentions meat consumption. The provision of meat was perceived as a kingly display of wealth, but Deuteronomy does not give this privilege to the king; Deuteronomy attributes the availability of meat to God's abundant provision for his people.

#### Verses 20–28

This final segment explores aspects of proper Israelite worship that are similar to what has been introduced in the previous section (vv. 15–19). Verse 20 addresses a future time when God enlarges Israel's territory (cf. 11:24). The people may eat meat whenever they desire it, because God has blessed them in the land (see also

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<sup>89</sup> Nathan MacDonald, "'The Eyes of All Look to You': The Generosity of the Divine King," in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature* (ed. Kathy Ehrensperger, Nathan MacDonald, and Luzia Sutter Rehmann; LNTS 449; London: T & T Clark, 2012), 7–8; idem, *Not Bread Alone*, 157–60.

<sup>90</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 9–10.

<sup>91</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 129.

<sup>92</sup> MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 88; cf. Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 129, no. 172.

<sup>93</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals in Ancient Israel*, 2–3. He states later in the book, 'Though oft repeated, communal consumption of the sacred meal works anthropologically to foster inner-group identity...and to distance the Israelites from those absent, namely, from those who might eat in the shade of an alternative deity, political structure, or formulation of Yahwism.' Ibid., 239–240.

7:12–14; 16:17). However, the expanded territory means some communities will potentially live a great distance from the central altar.<sup>94</sup> Deuteronomy makes provisions for such changes in their physical context by permitting the slaughter of animals from the bounty God will provide even if they are too far from the central place. The provisions allow for celebration of God’s blessing by families regardless of where they live and regardless of the time of year (which is in agreement with the permitted community celebrations in vv. 15–16).

The permission to consume meat whenever their souls desire is an unusual statement. Animals were valued as the domesticated animals provided more than just meat (goat hair, wool, milk products), so to kill the animal to consume it was costly to the family.<sup>95</sup> The abundant availability of meat was outside the norm of the modest Israelite diet. Permitting meat consumption in the gates represents Yahweh’s generous provision for his people.<sup>96</sup> The abundance is equally accessible to all people, and as the community shares food, they diminish the social and economic differentiations among themselves.

Wild animals are eaten without being considered sacrificial, and so too are other animals when they are consumed in the city gates (vs. 22) with one important consideration—the blood is not to be consumed because the blood is the life force of

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<sup>94</sup> It is not unusual for Deuteronomy to recognise the size of the inherited land and to make accommodations for the expansion of land. Deuteronomy 14:22–29 gives detailed instructions about tithing and allowance made for those living far away from the chosen place. Likewise 19:8–10 makes provisions for additional cities of refuge to be added once the territory is expanded. Such allowances bring attention to an interesting tension in Deuteronomy between the seemingly immediate conquest and acquisition of land and a more gradual expansion of national borders. McConville notices an analogous pattern in the book of Joshua wherein the conquest seems completed (Josh. 11:23) although Joshua recognises additional work has yet to be done (Josh. 13:1–5): McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 227.

<sup>95</sup> The project of estimating exactly how much meat the Israelites ate is difficult. Various methods have been used to estimate the amount and type of agricultural and animal products were consumed in ancient Israel. These studies are problematic for several reasons that MacDonald outlines in chapter 7 of *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat?* (pp. 43–49). Additionally, the great diversity within Israel’s ecological context is important to remember because it determines the type and quantity of meat that is available to the local population. After accumulating available data (limited as it is) from a variety of sources, MacDonald concludes that multiple Israelite diets must be acknowledged due to the diversity of Israel’s geographical, temporal (both time of year and period in Israelite history), and social divisions (pp. 91–93): Nathan MacDonald, *What did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>96</sup> Altmann compares such generous provision to the restricted amount of meat available when Israel is subjugated by foreign people (Deut. 28:31): Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 73.



the animal. It must be poured out on the ground like water. The people must not drink the blood which is the life-force of any creature (vv. 23–24). Therefore, even when the animal is not killed for sacrifice, the blood must be accounted for by pouring it out like water on the ground. These verses do not diminish the sacrality of the animal's blood by considering it to be comparable to water, as Weinfeld suggested. The verses are primarily forbidding the consumption of blood with the meat. The regulations to pour out the blood addresses the necessary disposal of blood, not the sacred character of the blood.<sup>97</sup>

Once more, verse 26 reiterates that every holy thing must be taken to the place Yahweh chooses. Even when the territory expands, there is only one place where offerings are allowed to be given. These holy things have been explicitly listed in verses 6, 11, and 17, but are simply summarised here as 'holy things' and 'votive offerings.' Verse 27 specifies the burnt offerings presented before God must also account for the blood of the animal by pouring it out on the altar. Therefore, the desire to eat meat is being qualified in both the city gates and at the chosen place by the regulation to pour out the blood of the animal. The very act of the זָבַח, along with 'pouring out blood' and celebrating the bounty of the land with a feast, links the activities of the chosen place and the gate. Although one is sacred because the people are celebrating before Yahweh, the other brings the memory of such reverence for God into common living places.

Obedience to these instructions means it will be well with the people and with the next generation, and they will be 'doing what is right in the eyes of Yahweh' (vv. 25, 28; cf. 6:18).<sup>98</sup> This is the alternative behaviour to what is done outside the land ('here today') each person doing right in their own eyes (vs. 8). The 'then and there' aspect of the chapter focuses on how the people will honour and worship God while enjoying the blessing of belonging to place. As has already been noticed in Deuteronomy, the statutes and commandments are not only for the sake of the present generation but for the good of generations to follow (4:40; 5:29; 6:20–25;

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<sup>97</sup> Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 179–181.

<sup>98</sup> Here is yet another similarity with portions of chapter 11. Obeying 'these words I am commanding you' (Deut. 11:8, 13) results in it being well with them and with the younger generation (Deut. 11:21) in the sight of the Lord.

11:18–21).<sup>99</sup> This is the final contrast in chapter 12 between the ‘here and now’ and the ‘there and then.’ The people ‘here today’ are doing right in their own eyes but life in the place God is giving to them is designed to be lived according to what is right in the eyes of God.

### *Summary of Israelite Worship*

The placial structure as introduced in Deuteronomy 12 presents the foundational concepts of Israel’s life in the land as they transition from rootlessness to rootedness. The chosen place is differentiated from all other places but is not in contradiction with them. In fact, this placial structure facilitates unity among the people even as each place has its own particular function. The way in which this unity is developed is worth a short summary.

### Unification at the Centre

The sacred centre has a distinct unifying function essential for the Israelites in the land. Each family from every tribe gathers together before one God in one location. Underlying this command is the understanding that in response to God’s work to bring the people to the ‘good land,’ the people will choose to seek out God at his chosen place. In doing so, each Israelite embarks on a pilgrimage to the same location. Their effort for the journey is a way to acknowledge God’s legitimate rule in the land, and it is a way for all the people to participate in the sacred. The centre and distributed places are joined together by the people who create well worn paths between them.

The people’s journey to the chosen place is also significant because of the connection between place and memory. The function of such connection with the chosen place is different from what was seen in Deuteronomy 11 with Gerizim and Ebal. The two hills hold the memory of a particular event (covenant ratification ceremony) and of the blessings and curses associated with the covenant, whereas the chosen place is the destination point of a repetitive journey with fellow Israelites

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<sup>99</sup> Chapter 12 is similar to both Deuteronomy 6 and 11 in which the people must educate the next generations. It is characteristic of Deuteronomy to be concerned for the future generation and to teach the necessity to do right in the eyes of God (Deut. 6:18; 13:18; 21:9) because doing evil in the sight of God will lead to expulsion from land or death (Deut. 4:25; 9:18; 17:2; 31:29).

every time sacred gifts are offered or annual holidays are celebrated. The journey represents the commitment of individuals to be obedient to the same beliefs and values as their brothers. Therefore, the exact location of the chosen place is not as significant as making sure that there is only one place that represents one value system that can unite all of Israel.

Gathering in one central place creates a communal identity beyond a familial or tribal one, because the journey prevents people from being exclusively locally focused. The act of leaving one's tribal allotment to seek out God's chosen place creates an element of cohesion and sameness among the people. After all, the parents, the younger generation, the servants, and the Levites celebrate before God, and those people are traveling from various economic and environmental contexts. Israel's diverse landscape promotes diverse lifestyles, and yet the whole underlying value of the Israelite community is built off of one God in one place and his Torah lived out in the land. Regardless of a family's economic status or someone's lifestyle as a farmer, shepherd, or trader (or combination thereof), at the chosen place the people find common ground regarding the God they serve, and the national story they remember. The chosen place belongs to Yahweh and is where the people celebrate before him with produce from the land he has given to them. There will be some variety in offerings from different locations and yet the people experience the same feasts. The Israelites have in common a shared experience of a journey even if it is not the same physical journey. Families come from different locations in the land and see different landscape along the way, and yet each family of each tribe accepts the same priority to go to one location. As such, Israel is unified in the celebratory gatherings and in the experience of being a nation 'before Yahweh.' Public worship in one location unites the people in a diverse land, and this centralised worship is socially inclusive.<sup>100</sup>

#### Unification at the Distributed Places

Enacting the law in the distributed places is a crucial aspect of the people living as a unified community in a land. The back and forth quality of the journey ideologically connects the gates and the chosen place. The actions of the people in daily life in

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<sup>100</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy* 156.

their daily places are informed by the experience of cohesive worship at the centre. The unity experienced by the people at the chosen place for all the reasons listed above, influences the normal, daily activities of the people (more of these activities will be discussed in future chapters as they are specifically addressed in the law code).

Because of the connection each gate has with the centre, the gates themselves are connected. Therefore, the distributed places not only individually relate to the centre, but the fact that all locations view the centre as their centre, means all the locations are connected as a whole. Israelite territory can then be described not just as land defined by boundaries, but as a territory held in common by people sharing the same ideology.<sup>101</sup> ‘Yahewh was to be the only God of Israel, the only God to be found among the people and the only God to be found in the land...the law of Yahweh was to be the only law in the land.’<sup>102</sup> The Torah was applied by all who lived in the land and thus unified the inhabitants under the same law. Political and physical boundaries may exist to divide Israel from her neighbours, but the underlying values that govern perceptions of the land and actions towards fellow inhabitants of the land also separate Israel from her neighbours. Regardless of how far each city is from the sanctuary, they each adhere to the *lex terrae* which has jurisdiction that extends throughout the territory uniting the Israelites together as one people.<sup>103</sup>

The people living daily life governed by the law are the people celebrating together from the blessing of the ground. The people who live under Torah celebrate from the fruitful land. The blessing of this placial structure is communicated in the feasting scenarios in which the slaughter of animals, the care for the spilled blood, and the consumption of meat emphasises the abundant provision of God for his people. The feasts emphasise God as king providing for his people, and the provision extends throughout the whole land. Sharing the feast with others, levels social divisions as everyone is eating from God’s provisions.

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<sup>101</sup> Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 87–88; cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 92.

<sup>102</sup> Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–91.

## Conclusion

Deuteronomy 12 addresses critical aspects of the placial structure that Israel is instructed to develop once they enter the land God is giving to them. The statutes and commandments are given to help the people establish and maintain place—a place that reflects the created order by giving life and allowing for fulfilled human *being*. The primary perspective of place shifts from an external evaluation of place to an internal organisation of place. This organisation, however, must be discussed in light of the physical reality of the land. The geographical diversity of the land should not be forgotten, because it presents many challenges for the development of a strong, unified society. The texture of the land naturally facilitates the growth of individually developing societies, as may be reflected in the list of seven people groups mentioned in Deuteronomy 7. Therefore, Israel must develop intentional and meaningful interactions with place if they want to remain a cohesive people within the land. The instructions in Deuteronomy 12 initiate the discussion of the placial network that will remind Israel of Yahweh's presence among them as well as involve the people in living daily life according to his standards.

Shil's theory of centre and periphery (here called centre and distributed places) was introduced as a framework to help explain this internal organisation. When combined with previously discussed placial concepts—that ancient creation narratives are about creating and ordering place, and that place and memory are inseparable and thus mutually informing—then a two-step process for developing place is perceived in Deuteronomy 12. The first step is given in the frame of the chapter, and the second more complex step is given in the body of the chapter.

The first step Israel takes upon entering the land is eliminating all places and things related to Canaanite worship. Placial structures have a complex interconnected web of contributors, and Israel must prioritise eradicating any Canaanite influences that may ultimately contribute to Israel's place. The people are not allowed to tolerate even a few remnants of Canaanite worship structures, because place and memory are interconnected. The very existence of places and objects can hold the memory of past events and can tempt Israel to absorb some of the Canaanite practices. Only after Israel has removed the Canaanite placial

structures can Israel establish a new organisation based on God's authority at the chosen place.

The second step is to accept God's choice of a singular differentiated place around which to establish a placial structure. The singular place represents a singular underlying value system to which all the people adhere. The chosen place becomes a physical representation of the essential difference between Israel and other nations. Israel accepts only one God, and they worship him in only one place, and they are obedient to only one Torah. Lohfink emphasises that Israel is a holy and chosen people, and their faithfulness to one God is displayed by going to one place to worship him. Therefore, Israel's place is structured with God at the centre.

Deuteronomy 12 focuses on proper Israelite worship in terms of creating relationships between the centre and distributed places. The type of relationship between the centre and the distributed places is developed in Deuteronomy's use of repetitive phrases that essentially expand and contract the law around the concepts of the many gates and the chosen place—each has its own function and contributes in its own way to the overall unity of the people. The people develop a purposeful relationship between the chosen place and the city gates. Each place has its own distinct functions, but they are not considered contradictory.<sup>104</sup> The chosen place is unique, and it is the focal point of Israelite life, but it remains connected to the city gates through the people's pilgrimages, the slaughtering of animals (with the same concern for the blood of the animal), and the feasting from God's provisions. The connections with the chosen place means the distributed places are also connected to the other distributed places because of a shared underlying value taken from the one central place. Therefore, Israel is defined by more than a set physical boundary. Israel is a group of people rooted in place and choosing to be united by a shared set of values.

To conclude, Deuteronomy 12 instructs the Israelites to first wipe out all places and objects that hold the memory of Canaanite worship in the land. Then Israel establishes a placial structure that differentiates the centre from the distributed places. Despite their differences, these places are connected and mutually inform

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<sup>104</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 226–239. Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 77–79; McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 91.

each other. Israelites from each city develop a relationship with the chosen place, and this interaction is the key to cohesion among the people. Regardless of where the cities are located in the Land Between, or how they subsist in the land, or where they fall on the economic spectrum, the repetitive behaviour of journeying to the centre brings all people before God. When they return to their smaller territories where the people are rooted in community, life is oriented around God and based on the same *lex terrae*. They value the same Torah so that their actions in the gate reflect God's purposes. They share together from the abundance of God's blessings. What does it practically mean for Israel as a nation to become rooted in a place? It means each individual can be rooted to smaller portions of land and yet remain unified as one people. The people anchor the nation in place, and they are collectively and individually responsible for enacting the law so as to fulfil the Edenic potential of place.





## CHAPTER 6

### Place and Community Responsibility (Part 1)

#### Introduction

The Deuteronomic law code begins by emphasising the importance of dwelling well in the land. Such dwelling begins by eradicating the memory and placial structure of Canaanite life in the land, because only then can Israel create a place centred around God. Then the chosen place is differentiated from other places and becomes the focal point for Israelite life in the land. Israel's complex placial structure based on the foundation established in Deuteronomy 12 continues to be developed throughout the law code. As discussed in previous chapters, concepts of place are interwoven with memory, land, and identity. Awareness of these complex relationships brings a fresh perspective to the laws in Deuteronomy 13:1–16:17. Even as the intricacies of Israel's place develop, the placial structure never strays from the fact that all of life, including worship at the centre and daily life in the distributed places, is centred around Yahweh alone.

When the Israelites enter and possess the land, they accomplish only the first step to becoming rooted in place. Possession of the land is not the same as belonging to place. Belonging requires investment in the foundational relationships that make up place—relationships with other people and also with the land. Carrière discusses in detail the differences between 'possessing' and 'dwelling.'<sup>1</sup> Both verbs—'to possess' (שָׁרַד) and 'to dwell' (יָשַׁב)—are used repeatedly in Deuteronomy to describe Israel's relationship with the land. The first term refers to ownership, and the second refers to stability inside the country. Carrière states that שָׁרַד conveys Israel's legal right to the land.<sup>2</sup> An act of (dis)possession is required before the Israelites can live in a secured territory, therefore, שָׁרַד has both a positive and a negative connotation.

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<sup>1</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du politique dans le Deutéronome*, 214–219.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 218; Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 40–41; McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 90.

Israel possesses the land of inheritance only by first dispossessing the Canaanites of their land. However, possession of the land is not the only goal. Deuteronomy is concerned with how Israel dwells in the land. *שׁוּב* has an immediate occurrence on the timeline, but the verb ‘to dwell’ (*יָשַׁב*) carries a sense of duration. Possession of the land is for the sake of Israel’s stability through the *longue durée*, but dwelling in the land has a proactive sense of residing purposefully in place so as to establish a sense of self and of one’s own being.

Dwelling in place through the *longue durée* relies on Israel ‘belonging together’ in place. ‘Belonging together’ is a phrase borrowed from Malpas’ discussion of Heidegger’s views of identity, but it pairs nicely with Carrière’s analysis of *בְּיָשׁוּב*.<sup>3</sup> Heidegger used the phrase to discuss an individual’s identity as it is influenced by dwelling in place, but the concept applies just as well to Israel as a nation. The phrase can be analysed from two perspectives, by either emphasising the ‘belonging’ or the ‘together.’ If one thinks of Israel’s identity stemming from ‘belonging *together*,’ then the development of community is prioritised over belonging. In Deuteronomy this perspective is noticeable when Deuteronomy calls the Israelites a chosen and holy people who are held accountable for all that is in their midst. Even so, Deuteronomy does not present a completely homogenous view of the people. The book recognises differences among people’s geographical, economic, and social contexts. Identity can be understood as ‘*belonging together*’ in which the shared relationship with place is what the people have in common. This emphasis on belonging is relational and capable of embracing difference. The land is a gift and all the Israelites have a right to the land and to the provisions from the land. God sustains the land, and, in turn, the land supports the people and animals within it. Several of the statutes and commandments that are implemented in the land require Israel to make selfless decisions because all Israelites belong to the ‘good land.’

The dual concepts summed up by the phrase ‘belonging together’ highlight similar themes that appear in modern discussions of nationality. In his book *Chosen*

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<sup>3</sup> Malpas, ‘Rethinking Dwelling,’ 7–8; cf. Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking,’ in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (ed. and trans. by Albert Hofstadter; New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 145–161.

*Peoples*, Smith says nationhood is defined as a human population that occupies a historic territory and shares common memories, culture, and laws.<sup>4</sup> His definition identifies several of the themes that are prevalent in Deuteronomy's instructions for dwelling in place (themes such as land, memory, worship, and law).<sup>5</sup> Grosby specifies that an important element for Israelite nationality is the belief that its members were primarily 'a people' or 'all Israel' over against their identity based on familial or tribal units. The members belong to a specific territory that is attributed sacredness because it belongs to Yahweh.<sup>6</sup> Grosby adds that the possession of the land is essential to the life of the nation. 'Separated from its land, the nation will die... That is why the territory of the nation is held sacred to the nation.'<sup>7</sup> The 'life-force' of the nation, the spirit of the people, and the traditions of the people all permeate through the land, and thereby transform it into a national territory.

By combining the work of Smith and Grosby, Israelite nationality can be said to require a collective self-consciousness among trans-tribal people who believe they are intimately bound to a trans-local territory and who are motivated to act on behalf of the larger community because of a common memory and history.<sup>8</sup> The Israelites' identity as 'Israel' involved more than a shared ethnicity. Their identity depended on drawing people around a shared set of core values. Nationality is evident in Deuteronomy with the characteristic qualification of all the people as brothers, or 'all Israel.' Deuteronomy fosters an inclusiveness among the people that is rooted in the belief that they are chosen by God and set apart as holy.<sup>9</sup> Nationality is also perceived in references to the national territory as 'all Israel,' an inclusiveness created through the placial structure in which the chosen place and the distributed places inform each other and in which a singular law is obeyed.<sup>10</sup> Thus Israel's

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>5</sup> McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 22–23, 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–62, 65; Smith, *Chosen People*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 53–55; McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 93.

placial structure in Deuteronomy facilitates a sense of ‘belonging together’ that includes all the people in all the land.

The creation narrative as the background of the law code should not be forgotten, because it is the motivation behind dwelling in the land according to the *lex terrae*. Ancient Near Eastern creation epics explained not only the natural order of the cosmos but also the emergence of society with its national ideals. Law codes were, therefore, associated with the established created order.<sup>11</sup> The law code ‘enacts the establishment of the order of creation seen in its juristic aspect. In short, ancient Near Eastern cosmic, political, and social order find their unity under the concept of “creation”.’<sup>12</sup> These associations are also true for Israel. God brought the people out of chaos and to a good place. The Torah is the means by which the created order is maintained thus taking the divine ordering of chaos on the cosmic level and actualising it in the social sphere.<sup>13</sup> Embracing the instructions in the Torah is how the people uphold God’s created order.

### **Form**

Deuteronomy 13:1–16:17 echoes aspects of Deuteronomy 5–11, especially the persuasive speech and the focus on loving God with a whole heart and soul (6:5; 10:12; 11:13). The law was given to the people so that by walking in God’s ways ‘you may live and it may be well with you and you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess’ (5:33). The portions of the law code analysed here should support such a goal. These laws reflect the tangible ways the Israelite lifestyle is influenced by posting ‘these words’ on liminal places.<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy calls for social action on the part of the people. When the people enter the land of inheritance, they should behave in such a way to enforce God’s created design reflected in the creation stories that portray humanity properly rooted in a good place. To imitate God’s creative acts includes the act of separating and ordering chaos to form a placial network healthy for the people.

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<sup>11</sup> Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*, 8–9. See also Batto, *In the Beginning*, 36; Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation’, 104–105.

<sup>13</sup> Fretheim, ‘Law in the Service of Life,’ 185.

<sup>14</sup> See above, chapter 4, pp. 125–128.

Chapter 12 introduced the placial structure to be cultivated in the land, and these chapters continue to explain and develop the practical implications of life lived in distributed places while being connected to the centre. The relationship developed between the cities and the chosen place is the key to unity among the people. People in a variety of geographical locations with different microclimates, soils and lifestyles are instructed to choose to affirm with their actions the gravitational pull of the one place God chooses. Sacred offerings and celebrations are only offered at the chosen place. As becomes evident in these chapters, the centrality of worship at the chosen place does not mean the distributed places are separated from the holiness at the centre.

Deuteronomy 13:1–16:17 is nestled within the much larger and cohesive context of the law code. These statutes and commandments are tangible ways in which the people's worship affected their daily activities so that worship and daily life were not two different things but were inseparable aspects of being God's people in this chosen land. The Israelites worshipped only one God in one place where they remember God's work in history and learn his priorities to return to the community and act like him. As such, the people's identity is taken from the centre, and they are unified with surrounding communities who fashion the way in which they dwell in the land according to same set of standards.

### **Text**

Deuteronomy 13:2–16:17 focus on the people of Israel and their responsibility to contribute to a healthy placial structure through laws applicable to both home and community.<sup>15</sup> Using broad generalisations, the themes of these chapters include Israel's exclusive loyalty to God (ch. 13), kosher laws and regulations around the tithes (ch. 14), the care of the poor by releasing debts (ch. 15), and the celebration of feasts at the chosen place (16:1–17).

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<sup>15</sup> The verse numbering follows the Hebrew text. As noticed in the previous chapter the first verse of chapter 13 works equally well as a logical conclusion to chapter 12 as it does as an introduction to chapter 13. The verse was discussed as a conclusion to Deuteronomy 12, so the analysis here begins with Deuteronomy 13:2.

### Chapter 13

Deuteronomy 12 introduced the primary necessity of eradicating all forms and objects that hold the memory of Canaanite worship. Such concern for apostasy is developed further in chapter 13 with a repeated emphasis on a concern for all that is ‘in your midst’ (בְּקִרְבְּךָ). Deuteronomy 13 insists on the same singularity of worship required at the chosen place in Deuteronomy 12, but the focus is on the distributed communities. These two chapters read together issue a strong statement about how Israel is to dwell in the land. The interrelated character of place is noticeable here where the purity required at the centre is equally required throughout all the land. Whether in the public domain or in the private home, a singular devotion to God must be fiercely guarded.<sup>16</sup> The concern for all that is ‘in your midst’ is best understood with Casey’s observations of place in mind. He stated that place does not always look the same because it varies in size. ‘[P]laces often nest inside each other in a coherently expanding series,’ (i.e., the plaza that is in the neighbourhood, which is in the city, which is in the country).<sup>17</sup> This nested quality of place means Israel has to be equally conscious of the purity in the home as she is of the purity in the community, because the nested places are connected as are the people within them. Therefore, ‘in your midst’ can mean any location in the land, but it can also express the totality of the land and the people.

The instructions in Deuteronomy 13 recognise the importance of maintaining a community that is unified by a shared narrative and motivated to act based on the same identity as God’s chosen people. The concern for all the people in all the land is evident in the repeated phrase בְּקִרְבְּךָ—a phrase that can be interpreted as physical place or the social practices of the people. Even though the chosen place is not mentioned in this chapter, loyalty to God in the midst of all the people and all the land is of utmost importance. Deuteronomy 13 gives three scenarios of confronting apostasy ‘in your midst,’ and whereas forms and objects that hold the memory of

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<sup>16</sup> The focus on a singular devotion to God led Weinfeld to suggest this chapter, with its focus on preventing apostasy among Israel, must have an ancient Near Eastern covenantal structure as the background, because covenants often issued strong warnings against conspiracy and seditious behaviour: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 91–100. Cf. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 227; McConville *Deuteronomy*, 235.

<sup>17</sup> Casey, ‘J.E. Malpas’s *Place and Experience*,’ 229.

Canaanite worship was the focus in the previous chapter, each scenario in chapter 13 cautions against a person who may reinstate such worship. In each scenario the culpable party urges, ‘Come let us worship other gods’ whom the Israelites do not know. In each case the guilty party is severely punished. Capital punishment not only underscores the severity of the crime but translates into a lesson for the whole community (vv. 12, 17).

The first scenario (vv. 2–6) deals with a false prophet or dreamer who is trying to lead the people away from God. Although such prophets will be addressed again within the structure of Israelite leadership (18:15–22), this text focuses on the appropriate response of the community when faced with sedition. A prophet or dreamer may offer ‘a sign or wonder’ (אֵימֹתָ אוֹ מוֹפְתָה), and the sign or wonder may come true (vs. 3), but the words spoken to entice people away from following God are evidence enough of their sin. The temptation to follow other gods tests the people’s true love for Yahweh with their whole hearts and souls, a familiar repetition of Deuteronomy 6:5 that echoes throughout the book.<sup>18</sup> Such devotion is demonstrated by a list of verbs to walk after Yahweh, to fear him, to keep his commands, to listen to his voice, to serve him, to cling to him (a close echo of 10:20; cf. 6:13 and 10:12). A prophet or dreamer teaching rebellion against God, who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, must be killed to purge the evil from the midst of the people (בְּקִרְבֶּךָ, vs. 6). Consistently Deuteronomy emphasises that remembering history underlies Israel’s devotion to God.

The second scenario (vv. 7–12) deals with the most intimate of human relationships including a brother, son, daughter, wife, or close friend (אִשְׁרֵי כִנְפֶשֶׁךָ). Although disloyal and seditious behaviour from these individuals is less public, it is potentially more influential because of the intimate relationship.<sup>19</sup> The nature of the temptation is essentially the same as above, to follow and to serve other gods ‘which neither you nor your fathers have known’ (vs. 7). The one who entices others to sever loyalty ties with God should not be protected from the consequences. Even in such an intimate relationship ‘your eye shall not have pity on him’ (vs. 9), just as the

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<sup>18</sup> Deuteronomy 10:12; 11:13; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 224.

Israelites were not to pity the Canaanites (7:16).<sup>20</sup> Those who have heard the private conversations must be personally involved in the capital punishment by casting the first stone, but ultimately the responsibility will be shared by the entire community (vs. 10). This mutual responsibility between the individual and the community will be addressed again in Deuteronomy 17.

The caution in the first two scenarios warns Israel against any singular person who tries to lead others astray from the way of Yahweh (vv. 6, 11). The suggestion originates from a person who is not loyal to God and is, therefore, considered to be a foreign intrusion that threatens the unity of the people and must be extracted from their midst. The third scenario (vv. 13–19) is unique, because it does not discuss people found ‘in your midst’ but warns against those who ‘go out from your midst’ (יֵצְאוּ מִקִּרְבְּךָ) to draw the entire community after them to follow other gods. This law prevents those who have already severed covenantal ties with God from encouraging others to do the same. In this scenario, an entire city falls into idolatry, and the punishment is not just against the instigators but against the city.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the previous steps to prevent sedition have already failed; the whole community has allowed sin in their midst instead of eradicating it. The harsh punishment against the Israelite community is not taken lightly but is enforced only after a meticulous enquiry has been made and it is found ‘this abomination’ (הַתּוֹעֵבָה הַזֹּאת) has been done ‘in your midst’ (מִקִּרְבְּךָ) (vs. 15). The entire community will be considered חַרָם so that the inhabitants are killed, the city is burned, and the material goods are destroyed (vs. 16). The destruction of the non-human aspects of the city along with its inhabitants emphasises Deuteronomy’s dual use of the phrase ‘in your midst.’ The people and their place are considered to be the same. The burned city is to be left as a memorial, never to be rebuilt (vs 17). This third section does not invoke the memory of Yahweh who brought Israel from the house of slavery, but rather instructs the people to treat the city as if they too were Canaanites for whom the story of the Exodus does not apply. In effect, by choosing apostasy, the guilty city has severed their connection with the chosen place and are, therefore, outside

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<sup>20</sup> Lundbom states, ‘Pity is ruled out elsewhere when death or maiming is the prescribed punishment (7:16; 19:13, 21; 25:12).’ See Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 455.

<sup>21</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 449.



the shared Israelite narrative. If the worthless men are not connected to the centre—the place that represents Israel’s underlying core values—then they are, in effect, ‘the other’ and to be treated as such (2:34; 3:6; 7:2; 12:30).

The final verse of chapter 13 refers again back to chapter 12. Israel must listen to the voice of God and keep his commandments, choosing to do right in the eyes of God (vs. 19; cf. 12:28). Two types of perception of the eye are set in contrast here. Verse 9 cautions against following one’s own judgment and allowing the eye to pity someone who instigates idolatry against God, especially if it leads to covering up for the instigator be it a corrupt leader who can sway a community or an intimate relationships that can sway a whole family. In contrast, verse 19 encourages the people to do right in the eyes of God. The instructions are twofold. Israel must carefully eradicate the danger of sedition and disunity from the place in which they dwell while simultaneously pursuing that which God calls good. Those who have already embraced apostasy have rejected Yahweh as their God and are to be treated as if they were Canaanite. By not pursuing a singular worship of Yahweh throughout the whole land, the covenant is broken, which places the whole Israelite community at risk of being held responsible for what is in their midst. This community responsibility demonstrates the importance of Israel belonging *together* in the land God has given to them.

#### *Chapter 14*

Deuteronomy frequently instructs the people to avoid worship practices, objects or actions that are abominations to God.<sup>22</sup> Similar to the previous chapter in which the people carefully eradicate the abomination (תועבה) from their midst (13:15), Deuteronomy 14 instructs them not to eat ‘any abomination’ (כל-תועבה). The chapter begins with two declarations of the unique identity of Israel. ‘You are the sons of Yahweh your God’ (vs. 1) and ‘You are a holy people to Yahweh your God’ chosen

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<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 7:25–26; 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16.

out of all the other people (vs. 2; cf. 7:6; 26:19; 28:9).<sup>23</sup> The equality the people share in being a part of the holy and chosen people extends to the equal responsibility the Israelites have for the purity of what is in their midst.<sup>24</sup> This identity as a holy and chosen people is repeated in verse 21, thus framing the instruction to maintain holiness and reject all ‘abhorrent things.’<sup>25</sup>

Verse 3 introduces the food laws with the command not to ‘eat any abomination.’ Then starting with land animals (vv. 4–8), water animals (vv. 9–10), birds (vv. 11–20), and a brief mention of insects and carcasses (vv. 19, 21), Deuteronomy divides the clean from the unclean animals for food. A more detailed list is presented in Leviticus 11:2–45; a list that shares a similar division between land, water, air and swarming things.<sup>26</sup> Each category of animal can thus be divided into clean and unclean, and Israel participates in such divisions and organisations of the animal world every time they prepare a meal. The people imitate the actions of

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<sup>23</sup> The second person pronoun is plural in verse 1 and singular in verse 2. Although historically used to identify redaction layers, it is possible to attribute the switch between singular and plural to rhetoric that simultaneously emphasises Israel’s unity and the individual’s responsibility to keep the covenant. The suggestion that the rhetoric simultaneously brings different places into the conversation is not unreasonable. In other words אַתָּה (singular) and אַתְּם (plural) necessarily involve the place of the individual (home) and the place of the community (gate). Each nested place, the home inside the city and the city inside the territory, is essential to Deuteronomy’s placial structure. Every distributed place is connected to the centre in a mutually informing relationship, which means each distributed place is connected because they share a mutual connection to the same centre. Deuteronomy continues to recognise the importance of the community at large as well as the actions of individual households. For a summary on diverse opinions about the use of singular and plural pronouns see McConville, ‘Singular Address in the Deuteronomical Law and the Politics of Legal Administration’; cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 38; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 180.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Driver entitles this section the ‘Holiness of the Laity’ in *Deuteronomy*, 155; cf. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 228. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas has had a large impact on the understanding of the food laws presented in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Douglas argues the classification of animals makes sense only within the Israelite social structure. She notes the focus on the command to be holy in Leviticus which is explained by rejecting abominations. Holiness keeps the categories of creation distinct, and animals that are considered abominations are those that do not fit the proper kind of animal life within the classified places in the creation narrative (earth, sky, sea): Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1966), 57. See also her article on the meaning embedded in meals based upon the social structure. Idem, ‘Deciphering a Meal,’ in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 249–275. For a review and critique of Douglas’ work along with the biblical scholarship that has come out of her work see MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 17–46.

God at creation, not in creating the animals, but in separating and categorising them to establish order. The food laws underscore Israel's unique identity as God's chosen people by being separated from surrounding peoples through daily activity like eating.

Verses 22–27 address regulations around the tithe, which is one of the offerings that can be offered only at the chosen place (12:6, 11, 17).<sup>27</sup> There are many echoes of Deuteronomy 12 in these verses. The place formula is repeated multiple times and in various forms, and it is stated that the celebratory meal is for the whole household, including the Levite 'in your gates' who has no inheritance (14:27; cf. 12:12, 18). Chapter 14 also acknowledges Israelite territory may expand in the future, making access to the chosen place difficult (14:24; cf. 12:20–21), and due to such expansions, modifications to the law are made, although the journey to the chosen place is still required. The modifications are unique to Deuteronomy. They permit individuals to exchange the tithe into money and then purchase 'whatever your soul desires' (vs. 26) at the chosen place. This rule accommodates those making a long and difficult journey. As noticed in Deuteronomy 12, the connection between the chosen place and the distributed places through the journey of the people is significant, for at the chosen place, the people living in disparate locations are truly together as one community celebrating God's blessings as received through the land. Because Israel consumes the tithe together, there is an element of group unification, and the goodness of God's provisions are noted not only in the bounty from the land but in the allowance to share all that is desirable.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Deuteronomy's tithe law is unique from those found in Numbers 18:21–25 and Leviticus 27:30–33. The differences have contributed to the historical-critical discussion of the policies of centralisation. In Numbers and Leviticus, the tithe supports the sanctuary and the Levites therein, but in Deuteronomy, the tithe is consumed by the one who brings it to the chosen place. This has traditionally been used as evidence that the local sanctuaries were dispossessed of their authority displacing local priests and forcing them to the chosen place. Lundbom summarises the differences between the tithing legislation in P and D. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 481–483. Tigay addresses the differences in tithing regulations by tracing the voluntary tithe in Genesis (14:20, 28:22) to the voluntary tithe to the Levites in Leviticus and Numbers, to the obligatory tithe at the chosen place in Deuteronomy. Tigay concludes the holiness of the tithe is preserved in Deuteronomy but also given the new function of providing for humanitarian needs as well: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

<sup>28</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 233.

The annual tithe is taken from all the produce of the field year by year (vs. 22).<sup>29</sup> The people eat in the presence of God ‘in the place which he will choose to make his name dwell there’ (vs. 23), a tithe of the grain, new wine, oil, and the firstborn of the flock (vs. 23). It should be remembered that Deuteronomy has elsewhere described the bounty of the land using the trilogy grain, new wine, oil while also recognising the land gives grass for the flocks (7:13; 11:14–15; 12:17). The agricultural sustenance for the people is possible only because of God’s provision via the rain from heaven (11:14). The tithe is recognition that the land, produce, and animals are not controlled by Israel, but are part of God’s blessings given to the people.<sup>30</sup> The people care for the gift that was given to them, and rejoice in such blessing with a shared celebratory meal. The meal fosters ‘inner-group identity’ and distances Israel from those who are absent, namely those who are not exclusively loyal to Yahweh.<sup>31</sup>

The final two verses of chapter 14 almost seem out of place due to Deuteronomy’s careful instructions to make sure all sacred gifts are offered at the chosen place, even when such a journey is difficult. Verses 28 and 29 create an exception. Every third year, the tithe is not taken to the chosen place but is instead consumed at the city gate with those who have no land inheritance (vs. 28). The celebration before God is forfeited to take care of the needy. Those without direct access to the blessing of the land are not to be excluded from the blessing nor the celebration. The Levite, alien, orphan, and widow are to eat this portion of the tithe so that their needs are satisfied (vs. 29; cf. 26:12–13). Deuteronomy usually

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<sup>29</sup> Lundbom notices a rhetorical structure unifying Deuteronomy 14:22–15:23, which includes the tithe, remission of debts, and firstborns, and is bookended with the phrase ‘year by year.’ Every year the tithe is taken before God (14:22–27), and every year the firstborn of the herd and flock are offered before God (15:19–23). Between these annual gifts are the regulations to set apart the third year tithe (14:28–29) and to forgive debts every seventh year (15:1–18). These two acknowledge God’s blessings when one obeys and acts generously towards the poor: Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 480.

<sup>30</sup> In Deuteronomy 10:12–22, God is the one who provides for the poor—characteristically a responsibility of a king. Richter says, ‘In Israel’s world, a populace was expected to pay a percentage of their produce to the central government and a vassal kingdom was expected to pay an annual percentage of the gross national product to its overlord. In Israel’s pastoral and agricultural world this meant a percentage of their crops and flocks belonged to higher authorities.’ Yahweh is Israel’s suzerain lord, and the land belongs to him: Richter, ‘Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,’ 358.

<sup>31</sup> Altman, *Festive Meals*, 239–240.

describes the blessing of the land with houses, cisterns, trees, and vineyards as given by God so the needs of the people are satisfied (שבע, 6:11; 8:10, 12; 11:15; 31:20). In these regulations, the people give from their abundance so the needs of the poor are satisfied (שבע, vs. 29). The attitude of generosity is rewarded as God will bless ‘the work of your hands’ (14:29; cf. 2:7; 16:15; 24:19; 28:12; 30:9). The people dwell in the land in such a way to imitate God’s acts of provision in a tangible way, even using the bounty of the land to bless others.<sup>32</sup> Behind the Israelites’ generosity to others is God’s generosity to all his people via the gift of land. The people are involved with God to create a placial structure in which the land satisfies the needs of the people, and the greater community supplies the needs of the poor.

Chapter 14 explains how food regulations not only make Israel distinct as God’s chosen people, but they also connect the people to the land. The type of Israelite community envisioned in Deuteronomy is one in which all people experience God’s blessing through the provisions of the land.<sup>33</sup> Those who are not self-sufficient, inevitably those who do not have land ownership, are taken care of by the larger community. At the celebration at the chosen place, the people eat food brought from the rest of the land, and they eat until they are satisfied. The meal is symbolic of the people’s unity in that they eat from the blessing of the whole land, and they share that blessing together in one place. Altmann states that in comparison with various ancient Near Eastern parallels, Yahweh is the analogue to the divine provider of the meal, but instead of a royal figure playing the human host, Deuteronomy assigns each household the responsibility of acting as the human host.<sup>34</sup> The community is, therefore, drawn together through a communal meal at the singular place of worship that represents who they are as God’s people. Unlike her neighbours, Israel’s identity is not associated with a royal household.<sup>35</sup> According to Deuteronomy, belonging to place means recognising the source of the blessing and

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<sup>32</sup> See also Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 234.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 234.

<sup>34</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 135, 203.

<sup>35</sup> Altmann states, ‘This particular emphasis conceives of a corporate identity re-articulated and created afresh with a focus on individual households...rather than a politically centralized focus on the human monarch found in the banqueting of the Ugaritic narratival corpus.’ *Ibid.*, 185.

maintaining a heart of generosity to share with others who belong to the community. The chosen place has connections to the divine authority of Yahweh while ‘the responsibilities for human hosts spread to the various households even to the periphery of Yhwh’s land.’<sup>36</sup> Yahweh’s provisions are distributed throughout Israel’s land through the hands of individuals.

### *Chapter 15*

Deuteronomy insists that the way Israel dwells in the land includes caring for marginalised people. As Weinfeld notices, the humanitarian concern for the needy is an important focus of Deuteronomy, and this is especially evident in this chapter.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the chapter fellow Israelites are called ‘brothers’ (vv. 2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 12), and the people are called to be generous with each other because God’s provision sustains them (vv. 4, 6, 10, 14, 18).<sup>38</sup> Such a view portrays how Deuteronomy thinks of the Israelites ‘*belonging together*’ in this land, because each person belongs to the land and as such they are a community. The land was given as an inheritance (נחלה) to all of Israel, and its resources were meant to be shared by all.<sup>39</sup> As Wright explains, God’s gift of land to the people was enjoyed ‘through secure property holdings in the possession of the households of Israel...Land holdings were the allotments of the divine giver, and therefore were held in trust from God.’<sup>40</sup> Thus the Israelite attitude about possessing the land was not that land was a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market but that the land was the place to which they belonged. Because of their inheritance from God people had a right to the land and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>37</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic School*, 282–284.

<sup>38</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 144.

<sup>39</sup> Von Rad notices that the term נחלה had a long history for Israel, originally designating God’s gift of land to individual families, ‘but Deuteronomy is the first to speak of a נחלה of Israel’s.’: Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 224. C. Wright addresses the importance of God’s ownership and gift of the land in Deuteronomy’s overall description of the land as inheritance. For Israel to inherit the land from God, Israel must be God’s son. But the relationship also comes with an imperative to love God with faithfulness and loyalty: Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 18–19.

<sup>40</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 90.

the right to enjoy the produce of the land.<sup>41</sup> Although this ideal was not necessarily the reality, this formed the basis and reasoning behind the humanitarian concerns in Deuteronomy.

Chapter 15 states three ways to alleviate the suffering of the poor by involving people at the community and familial level. The purpose is to dwell in the land in such a way as to be aware of the needs within the community and to provide for the well-being of the marginalised by addressing extreme difficulties such as the inability to pay off debts, inability to obtain loans, and indentured servitude.<sup>42</sup> Within these regulations are specific examples of how ‘these words’ posted in liminal places (Deut. 6:6–9; 11:18–21) affect the perception and actions of the people in both the private and public spheres. Israel is consistently called to be aware of and concerned for others, because the people belong together in this land. Wenham notes that righteous living is not just refraining from serious sins but is proactively caring for the poor and vulnerable in society.<sup>43</sup> Israel’s lifestyle and priorities demarcate them from others. Israel is not exclusionary; the people continue to interact with the foreigners in their land (vs. 3), but Israel does live according to particular set of standards so that their relationships with their brothers and with the land set them apart from other people.

Verse 4 states the ideal situation within Israelite society is for no poor to be among you (literally ‘in you’), because the land is a blessing of provision. However, this idealised view that all people are satiated in the land is tempered with the realistic view that this is not yet reality, therefore, the community is required to participate in caring for the poor. The concepts of annulling debts and releasing slaves is not unique to biblical writings; they were common practices for kings soon after their accession.<sup>44</sup> However, Deuteronomy places the responsibility to care for those who are marginalised on the Israelite community instead of with the governing

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<sup>41</sup> See Wrights section on ‘Fair Sharing of the Product of Economic Activity’ in *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 149–150.

<sup>42</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 144; See also David L. Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in Old Testament Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Gordon Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2000), 92.

<sup>44</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 257.

elite. Two examples are offered on how Israel can care for the marginalised of society, and in each case the people are warned to be careful regarding the perception of those in need ('your eye is not hostile towards your poor brother,' in verse 9; and 'it should not be difficult in your eyes,' in verse 18). The first example involves the city and the second example involves the home, but they both conclude with a similar understanding that their actions are tied to God's actions on their behalf (vv. 10, 18).

The first example in verses 7–11 deals with the poor who are described as being 'one of your brothers' and 'in your gates' (vs. 7). By embracing the regulations of the law posted on the gates of the city, the people recognised the gate as a place of responsibility.<sup>45</sup> Actions of the community in which the strong take care of the marginalised mimic God's actions with his people, and are a direct reflection of being influenced by 'these words' posted on liminal places. The attitude of the people towards the marginalised is described in terms of their 'heart' and their 'hand,' and can be tied back to the previous discussion on Deuteronomy 6 and 11. Geiger noted the significance of the hand to represent one's ability to act and exercise power.<sup>46</sup> Posting 'these words' on their hands reminded Israel to align her actions with Yahweh's actions. God displayed the mighty work of his hand, and the people respond by serving God with the work of their hands. The people should not harden their hearts so that they close their hands against such brother (vs. 7). Instead, they should open their hands to cover his needs (vs. 8). The thoughts of the heart that limit one's generosity because of the seventh year remission of debts will make the eye hostile toward the brother (vs. 9). Again, Geiger's work is important here for the eye is a significant place of perception, and like the hand, has a symbolic as well as physical significance. 'These words' are to influence Israel's perception of the poor so that they act with compassion and give generously. Then God will bless all the 'work of your hands' (vs. 10).

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<sup>45</sup> Michaela Geiger, 'Fiction and Space in Deuteronomy,' in *Constructions of Space V: Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, (ed. Gert Prinsloo and Christl Maier; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 41–42.

<sup>46</sup> The connection between the work of God's hand and the work of the people's hand serves as a deterrent from people thinking in their heart that the blessing is all a result of the work of their own hands (8:17): Geiger, *Gotteräume*, 162. See chapter 4, note 63.



The second example in verses 12–18 deals with the treatment of slaves within the household. These verses are also a practical outpouring of life that is led according to the standards of ‘these words’ posted on the doorposts of the home. Debt in the form of indentured servitude should be forgiven in the seventh year. This generosity of spirit is to be exemplified not only in the release of the slave but also in provisions given to the slave so he does not go away empty handed (vs. 13). According to the blessing of God to the household, the slave shall be blessed upon his release (vs. 14). This is motivated by the memory of God redeeming the people from slavery (vs. 15).

These laws for how Israel should dwell in place build on the concept of nested places. From the perception of the individual, Deuteronomy moves on to the generous provision of the household given to a released slave. The Israelite household is to be completely different from the house of slavery from which God rescued his people.<sup>47</sup> The doorposts of Israelite houses are marked as a place that functions under God’s laws. Israelite society is shaped according to laws that provide for the debts of the marginalised to be repaid or forgiven so that the borrower can be fully restored to the ideal role of landowner. The provision for the slave is how Israel participates in the restoration of the ideal of all Israel. God rescued the people from oppression to give them a place that functions according to his created order. The gift of the land was for all people regardless of social status. Blessing the slave upon his release recognises that the slave is also entitled to participate in the good place God gave to all the people. These laws conclude with the perception of the eye. One should not consider the slave’s release to be a hardship, choosing instead to see the benefit of the slave’s work invested in the household as compared to the hired man (vs. 18).

Deuteronomy’s placial structure pushes against the isolation and segregation of the poor to actively restore the oppressed and the marginalised to a full participation in place. From the individual’s perception of the poor to the household’s generous provision for the slave, these are the building blocks that contribute to a holistic society that pursues God’s created order. All the people,

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<sup>47</sup> See above, chapter 4, note 70.

without exception, share the memory of God's deeds of redemption, and they should equally share the enjoyment of his provisions.

The chapter concludes with regulations regarding the dedication of the firstborn from the flock. The law presented here is abbreviated compared to the details given in Exodus and Numbers, but it remains consistent with Deuteronomy's emphasis on place and with Deuteronomy's programme to centralise the feasts and sacrifices at the chosen place.<sup>48</sup> Similar to the tithe in chapter 14, the laws of the firstborn connect back to the laws in chapter 12. Because the firstborn of the herd or flock are consecrated to God, the people cannot use it for selfish gain (vs. 19). The animal must be slaughtered before God, and the entire household eats it and celebrates before God at the place which Yahweh chooses (vs. 20). As is consistent throughout Deuteronomy, a portion of the blessing that is received from possession of the land is taken from the distributed places to the centre in order to recognise Yahweh as the ultimate giver of the blessing. There is an ongoing relationship between places that is able to connect the individual's experience of the localised place to the central, national place. The celebration at the chosen place includes the whole family as a reminder that God's gift benefits all the people.

However, if the animal has a defect, which then exempts it from being offered to God as a sacrifice, the animal can be slaughtered in the city gate and shared among the clean and unclean alike as long as the people do not eat the blood but pour it out on the ground (vv. 21–22; cf. 12:15–16, 22).

Although the term 'humanitarian' is a modern word with implications of finding human connection across differences, the definition of 'humanitarian' that can be derived from Deuteronomy gets to the core of the concept of what it means to be a unified community, dwelling together in place. Such unity requires attention to and care for other people even if it is inconvenient, and the concern for others needs to happen in the city as well as in the household. These instructions contribute to how the Israelites develop their identity as God's people by '*belonging* together.' To establish a society based on these priorities is truly revolutionary. Considering the physical land in which Israel dwells, the power of this Deuteronomic placial

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<sup>48</sup> Exodus 13:11–15; 22:29–30; 34: 19–20 and Numbers 18:15–18.

structure becomes more evident—the people have an opportunity to be a positive influence on those around them. Deuteronomy’s radical vision is not like the surrounding communities, and because Israel was located on the crossroads of the ancient world, their priorities shaped by God’s statutes and commandments were on display for the other nations to observe.

#### *Chapter 16:1–17*

Deuteronomy’s lists of pilgrimage festivals is similar to those listed in Exodus and Leviticus except that Deuteronomy uniquely centralises all of the celebrations at the chosen place and also highlights the festivals’ integration with the natural cycles of agriculture. The daily involvement the people have with the land is connected to the singular Yahwistic worship at the chosen place. Integrating the agricultural cycle with the festivals further connects the national memory with the land, and thus underscores Deuteronomy’s placial focus. The descriptions given in these verses are unique because Deuteronomy does not regulate the number of animals slaughtered nor the amount of grains, oil and wine to be given, and the sanctuary along with the people attending to the sanctuary are not mentioned. Of the three festivals listed (Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread<sup>49</sup>, Feast of Weeks<sup>50</sup>, Feast of Booths<sup>51</sup>) Deuteronomy describes the latter two in such a way to be hardly distinguishable from each other except by the time of year in which they are celebrated.<sup>52</sup> However, the lack of sacral focus as compared to other writings does not suggest that the feasts are void of meaning, and neither do they lack a significant role in Israel’s worship practices.

The descriptions of the feasts in Deuteronomy 16:1–17 are consistent with the book’s focus on God’s actions in history, the gift of the land, the cohesiveness of

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<sup>49</sup> Exodus 12:15–20; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6–8; Numbers 28:17–25.

<sup>50</sup> Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26–31. The Feast of Weeks is called the Feast of Harvest in Exodus 23:16 and unnamed in Leviticus 23:15–22.

<sup>51</sup> Leviticus 23:34–43. The Feast of Booths is called the Feast of Ingathering in Exodus 23:16 and 34:22 and is unnamed in Numbers 29:12–35.

<sup>52</sup> Weinfeld notes, ‘The feast of unleavened bread still retains some distinctiveness because of the paschal sacrifice, but the feast of weeks and the feast of booths have been generalized to such an extent that they are hardly distinguishable from each other.’: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 220.

the people, and the provision from God. Feasting from the produce gathered from all over the land is an important symbolic activity for Israel. Eating is a vehicle for memory, and the celebratory feasts bring the memory of the past into the present and connect the past to the present at the chosen place. MacDonald suggests that food is the central means by which to remember Yahweh's past deeds in Israel's history.<sup>53</sup> The communal act of eating connects the memory of the past, which is told within the context of the festivals, with the generosity and provision from God in the present.<sup>54</sup> These feasts demonstrate Deuteronomy's concern to centralise all of Israel's worship at the chosen place while making each festival an inclusive activity for all people in which they can celebrate the provision of the land which sustains them. The historic narrative is tied to the chosen place, because it is the primary symbolic place for Israel that represents the underlying values of Israelite society. Although Deuteronomy states that the pilgrimages are for all the males to appear before God, the individual descriptions of the feasts include the presence the entire community at the celebrations.

The first festival consists of two holidays, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch these holidays are addressed as two independent festivals—the Feast of Unleavened Bread beginning the day after the Passover—leading to much discussion about why they are combined here. Traditionally, it was thought that Deuteronomy reworked an earlier calendar to combine two originally independent festivals.<sup>55</sup> Tigay suggests that because the Passover commemorates the sacrifices made by the Israelites on the night before the Exodus, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates the next day when the people left Egypt, and because unleavened bread was eaten during the Passover meal, to consider the Passover meal as part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is not

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<sup>53</sup> MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament*, 71.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>55</sup> For reviews of critical scholarship on the issue of the annual festivals see Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 53–97; MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 80–83; McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 99–110; von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 110–113.

unreasonable.<sup>56</sup> Deuteronomy 16:1–8 makes it clear that the memory of Egypt as well as the Exodus from Egypt is the foundation for both festivals, and the journey to the chosen place for the festival becomes a significant part of remembering, because it allows the present generation to physically participate in the memory of their forefathers' journey out of Egypt by making a journey of their own.<sup>57</sup>

The celebration of Passover begins with a sacrifice from the flock offered in 'the place Yahweh chooses to establish his name' (vs. 2). Some scholars conclude that Deuteronomy removes the celebration of Passover from individual homes by centralising the celebration at the chosen place. In comparison with Exodus 12:21–27, Deuteronomy 16:5 is sometimes interpreted as belonging to the centralisation programme of Josiah's reforms in the seventh century B.C.E. In Exodus, the Passover has a familial setting, primarily due to the context of the narrative in Egypt prior to Israel having a tabernacle or temple. Exodus 12 states, 'the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel' kills the animals at twilight (vs. 6). Although the people mark their own houses and eat together as a family, they are considered to be acting as one congregation. Deuteronomy's account of Passover has the people united as one people at the chosen place, which creates a similar effect.

The Passover is followed by a feast during which the people eat unleavened bread ('the bread of affliction') to remember 'all the days of your life' the moment they came out of Egypt (vs. 3). Consuming food that is atypical to the norm evokes a memory of the past and brings it to mind in the present. The memory allows people to reengage with the emotion of past oppression and thus feel compassion towards those in the present experiencing similar oppression.<sup>58</sup> Verses 4–8 present an expanded explanation of the holiday with a rhetorical pattern focusing on place and sacrifice. No leaven is permissible in 'all your territory' (vs. 4), and the sacrifice must not be made in 'any of your gates' (vs. 5). The sacrifice must be offered at the

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<sup>56</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 152. Similarly, Craigie suggests Deuteronomy is summarising known festival regulations and, therefore, only mentions certain themes that support the major concerns of Deuteronomy as a whole. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 241.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 199, 201.

<sup>58</sup> See the previous discussion on the work of Carasik and Lapsley who draw out the connections between memory, place, decisions, and emotion as Carasik and Lapsley; cf. chapter 4, pp. 110–112.

‘place which Yahweh your God chooses to establish his name,’ in the evening ‘at the time you came out of Egypt’ (vs. 6). Removing leaven happens throughout all the land to remember all the days of slavery, and the singular sacrifice must take place at God’s chosen place to remember God’s act to redeem his people. Therefore, the instructions take the whole land into consideration. Passover becomes a meal of remembrance of the moment they left. The bread of affliction and the sacrifice memorialise Israel’s salvation from oppression. Sharing from the agricultural harvest with the poor not only contributes to the social good but also demonstrates the Israelites are no longer slaves but have arrived in the land and have benefited from God’s generosity. The sacrifice must be offered and eaten the same night, but ‘in the morning you are to turn and go to your tents’ (vs. 7).

There are two possible interpretations for the phrase ‘turn and go to your tents.’<sup>59</sup> The phrase may be reminiscent of when the Israelites led a nomadic life, while actually intending to instruct each worshipper to return to their individual homes.<sup>60</sup> This interpretation is quite possible given the instructions that no leavening is to be found in ‘all of your territory.’ This suggests the ‘true arena of the feast is the whole land’<sup>61</sup> and all the people whether present at the chosen place or not, are participating in the feast. Because the feast is observed throughout all the land, returning to one’s home to observe the duration of the festival is not contrary to the overall meaning of this festival as long as the Passover sacrifice is offered at the chosen place. If this interpretation is correct, the worshipper celebrates the remainder of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, including the final assembly, at home with his own community. Tigay supports such a conclusion by referring to Joshua 22:4 and 1 Kings 8:66 to indicate that ‘return to your tents’ means ‘to go home.’ He additionally argues a city (Jerusalem) would not have been large enough to hold the pilgrims, so a dispersion back to their homes is practical.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Regarding these two possible interpretations see Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 511; McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 109–110.

<sup>60</sup> The use of tents is unusual for Deuteronomy which otherwise portrays the Israelites as living in homes. Its use may indicate an intentional desire to relate the Passover feast with the Israelite’s experience in the wilderness. MacDonald, *Not bread Alone*, 81.

<sup>61</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 273.

<sup>62</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 372, note 24.

Alternatively, the second interpretation suggests that the people return to their tents that are around the sanctuary, suggesting the worshippers stayed in temporary shelters for the pilgrimage holiday. If this is true, the phrase ‘turn and go to your tents’ indicates the worshipper remained within the vicinity of the chosen place for the entire week until the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Regardless of the interpretation, the regulations clearly require the worshipper to go before God to remember the moment of redemption while returning to their private abode (whether home or tent) for the duration of the week. Deuteronomy does not resolve where they are for the final assembly, but this obscurity is not critical. No matter how it is read, the festival connects the chosen place and the distributed places, making the sacrifice at the chosen place relevant to all people in all places. The tent, even if it is in the vicinity of the chosen place, represents the distributed places. Therefore, worship takes place communally at the centre and then moves to distributed places (real or symbolised) for the final assembly. The distributed places are distinct from one another and yet share a mutual relationship because the observance of the holiday happens ‘in all your territory.’<sup>63</sup> All people remember the same narrative at the same time.

Seven weeks after Unleavened Bread is the Feast of Weeks, at which time a freewill offering is offered before God. The freewill offering is among the offerings that are exclusive to the chosen place, so echoes of chapter 12 should not come as a surprise in these verses. The household here is described as sons, daughters, male and female slaves, the Levite from the city gate (cf. 12:12, 18), and also the alien, orphan and widow who are in your midst (cf. 14:29). They shall all come to ‘the place Yahweh your God chooses to establish his name’ (vs. 11). The reason for the festival is to remember that the people were slaves in Egypt (vs. 12). All the people were slaves, so all the people, even the marginalised, appear before God for the festival. Additional details related to this holiday are surprisingly absent. No specific date is given outside the counting of weeks. There is no duration specified for the feast, and there are no details regarding the amount or type of offering to be given

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<sup>63</sup> A parallel relationship is portrayed in Deuteronomy 5:29–31. Israel moves from the singular assembly to their individual tents while Moses stays with God. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 91–92.

(compare these to Lev. 23:17–22). Instead the emphasis is on rejoicing over God’s blessing that is tangibly evident through the bounty of the ground. All people in society are included in the festival, even those who are not land owners.<sup>64</sup>

The final celebration is the Feast of Booths, which occurs seven days after gathering in the produce from the threshing floor and from the wine vat (vs. 13). Once again, Deuteronomy gives no specific date nor a list of sacrifices and offerings to be given at this feast, and once more the focus is entirely on celebrating the blessing of the land. The entire household including the Levites, alien, orphan, and widow celebrates a feast before Yahweh in ‘the place Yahweh chooses’ (vv. 14–15). The Feast of Booths is elsewhere connected to God’s provisions for the people during their wilderness wanderings (Lev. 23:34, 42–43), but Deuteronomy only mentions the week long celebration as a response to how Yahweh has blessed the work of their hands in this land. Even though no mention of the wilderness is made here, Deuteronomy makes use of the festival name that brings such memory to mind (instead of the Feast of Ingathering as used in Exod. 23:16). Therefore, God’s provision in the wilderness and the celebration of a successful harvest, are closely connected in Deuteronomy even if more implicitly than explicitly. The first two feasts frame the barley and wheat harvests in April–May while this final feast follows the olive harvest in October.<sup>65</sup> Passover marks God’s initial act of salvation and the feast of Booths marks the completed act of salvation when God brings the people into their land of inheritance. The Feast of Booths celebrates the blessing of all of the produce from the agricultural calendar that sustains the community for the

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<sup>64</sup> McConville attributes the unique presentation of the festivals to the ‘habitual deuteronomic themes of blessing (vv. 10, 15, 17), rejoicing (vv. 11, 15), kindness to the poor (vv. 11, 14), and the contrast of life in the land with Egypt (vs. 12).’: McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 111.

<sup>65</sup> Mayes suggests the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths were purely agricultural festivals derived from Canaanite traditions and not originally connected with Israel’s history: Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 257. Certainly the festivals have strong agricultural connections, but Mayes does not account for the significance of the feasts in Deuteronomy. Altmann’s discussion is helpful here, for it draws from the associated ancient Near Eastern banquet texts to highlight the expectation of enjoyment of food and drink. Deuteronomy highlights the meal elements of the festival. ‘This command to rejoice implies something that could be materially expressed, reflected in the actual practice of eating and drinking (rather than an imperative to “feel joyful” or something of that sort).’: Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 205. Altmann highlights the significance behind the agrarian festival that is more than Israel simply assuming a Canaanite festival. Deuteronomy uses the symbolism of feasting to reinforce God’s provision for his people.



year. The feast is a symbolic completion of the drama of the Exodus story from slavery to freedom. However, October is also the time of year the people are concerned with the provision of the early rains that will set the stage for the successful agricultural season of the next year. When the Israelites rejoice over the harvest, they acknowledge God's provision of the early and late rains that produced the bountiful blessing from the land. The timing of the Feast of Booths weaves the awareness of God's past provisions of rain into the awareness of the people's continued dependence on God's provision of rain in the following year. In effect, the festival as presented in Deuteronomy replaces the memory of the wilderness provision with the present reality of the annual agricultural provision.

The cycle of observing the festivals every year alludes to the memory of the journey from Egypt to the land of inheritance. Deuteronomy's calendar helps the people enact their history through the course of the year. 'Israel begins with the feast of Passover-Unleavened Bread in slavery in Egypt, from where it moves to a wilderness experience before receiving the gifts of the Promised Land in the festival of Weeks and Tabernacles. The different foods characterize this historical movement as one from sorrow and affliction to unalloyed joy.'<sup>66</sup> The first festival is specifically linked to a time and a place, to the very night when Israel experienced God's saving power, and the people celebrate by journeying to the one place representative of God's authority in the land. The very act of immediately returning to their tents is itself a significant reminder of quickly leaving Egypt to journey to their place of inheritance. The journey between the chosen place and the tents (whether their homes or their temporary, pilgrimage accommodations) is a reminder of the journey between the salvation from Egypt to the place of inheritance. The final festival rejoices over the produce that is the blessing of belonging to the land.

The festivals as described by Deuteronomy take on a dynamic land orientation. The Feast of Weeks and Feast of Booths are harvest celebrations in

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<sup>66</sup> MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 83. Altmann's rhetorical analysis of the text leads him to the same conclusion. 'In the first eight verses of Deut 16 the text progresses spatially from Egypt (vv. 1, 3, 6) to the singular sanctuary (v. 2), and then again from the land in general ("all your borders" in v. 4 and "any of your gates" in v. 5) to the sanctuary (vv. 6, 7). I would call this movement the "exodus pilgrimage" because it combines a move up out of Egypt with a move up out of one's local setting to the central sanctuary.': Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 199.

which people give as they have been blessed by God. The celebrations include the household and also embrace the poor of society. This generosity is motivated by remembering that they were once slaves in Egypt. The people benefit from the harvest only because God redeemed them from Egypt to this place. Yahweh is the true provider of the abundant produce from the ground, and the celebrations require each household to participate in the feast and provide for others in the community thus fostering a communal identity of Israel.<sup>67</sup> From the beginning of the harvest season to the end, the people remember their dependence on God for their freedom from oppression as well as for their sustenance from their land of inheritance.

### **Conclusion**

In these chapters, Deuteronomy has established the framework for the proper way for Israel to possess and dwell in the place, a concept that pairs nicely with Heidegger's musings on 'belonging together.' Deuteronomy emphasises the significance of both the individual belonging to place and the community's responsibility to care for one another in place. All of Israel is a community with a shared responsibility for place, because they all possess the same inheritance. The concepts of 'belonging' and 'together' are mutually related in that the Israelites recognise not only their individual rights to the land but also the rights of their fellow Israelites.

'Belonging together' (or dwelling well in the land) shares characteristics of nationality that are identifiable when Israel develops a sense of belonging that extends beyond tribal loyalties and is motivated towards the well-being of the whole. Deuteronomy's placial structure creates the necessary cohesion among the people even though Israel lives in a diverse landscape. The sense of belonging to the larger group begins with belonging to place. Israel has one central place to which they journey and where they reinforce the underlying values they hold true. Laws regarding the chosen place required families to journey to the centre and reinforce their shared identity with the larger population, but the laws in Deuteronomy 13:1–16:17 suggest that 'belonging together' is more complex than what is shared at the chosen place.

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<sup>67</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 207.

Belonging demands responsibility, making Israel necessarily responsible for all that is literally in their midst—the physical context of the land and the community—and what is figuratively in their midsts—the moral and ethical decisions made by the individuals within the community. Israel is required to dwell in the land so that the singular Yahwistic worship represented by the singular chosen place is reflected throughout the land. Unlike other Pentateuchal law codes, Deuteronomy centralises the sacrifices associated with the firstlings and the Passover, but this centralisation does not bolster human authority nor does it absolve the local communities of religious significance. The activities centralised at the chosen place support the national memory of God's acts of redemption, and the memory then affects how Israel dwells together in the distributed places. Because the community belongs together in a complex interdependent placial network, they must be vigilant about the perceptions and attitudes that are developed towards God, their fellow Israelites, and the land, and they must eradicate all that undermines the order of place that properly represents God's created order.

Malpas insists that understanding the essential belonging of humans to place must go beyond concepts of proprietorship or authority over places. Place is not a static object over which ownership is asserted, even though belonging to place may stir up a sense of protection, preservation, or guardianship.<sup>68</sup> Because humans are embedded in place, a perpetual interaction and mutual dependence exists between place and human being that should lead to a sense of human responsibility to respect and care for (but not dominate) place. Israel possesses the land because it was given to them as a gift from God, but they also must dwell in the land in such a way to recognise their mutual dependence on the place they occupy and the people with whom they share that place. The importance Deuteronomy attributes to belonging to place is crucial for understanding the laws regarding the poor. Care is taken to protect the dignity of those who would otherwise be on the periphery of society.

The concept of the physical aspect of place organised around the centre and distributed places is applicable to human relationships in Israel. Just as care is taken not to draw bifocal distinctions between the centre and distributed places, so too,

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<sup>68</sup> Malpas, 'Place and Human Being,' 21–22.

care is taken not to draw a bifocal distinction between landowners and the poor, making them two separate entities of society. Deuteronomy calls all of the Israelites brothers, and Deuteronomy states that there should be no poor in the midst of Israel. For those who have entered indentured servitude, or for those who are orphaned or widowed, the Torah protects their ‘belonging’ to place, and their belonging ‘together’ with the rest of society. Orphans, widows, and the poor are not a different class of society; they are members of the same society, and they should experience the dignity of belonging to place that is not devalued by the consumption of wealth by others. Rather than pushing those who are not landowners to the periphery, they are enveloped by the rest of the community. The Torah requires all people to be attentive to the needs of the poor, and it provides ways for their debts to be repaid or forgiven so that the borrower can be restored to the intended position of landowner. When indentured servants are released, they are given provisions that validate their service and contribution to the household. From the bounty of the land the people celebrate before God, and it is from the bounty of the tithe that each community has an opportunity to mimic God’s actions by providing for the poor in the city gates.

Food and eating also underscore how all of Israel belongs together in place. Food creates powerful connections with memories, land, and politics. At the most basic level, the people of the land eat from the produce of the land. They are, therefore, sustained by the very land for which they care. They separate the clean animals from the unclean animals, an act that requires constant evaluation of the food they consume as well as a constant awareness of the reason why they separate food—they too have been separated as holy from other nations.

The Israelites share with one another from the bounty of the place, regardless of the disparity of wealth within the local communities or between the distributed places. Local feasts foster a sense of belonging among local communities, and national feasts create cohesion among all who live in the distributed places. At the chosen place, people are temporarily removed from the locations that determine their roles as landowners, slaves, or poor, and they appear before God to celebrate the gift of the land by partaking of the fruit of the land as one community. Because there is no political intermediary to assume the role of human host on behalf of God for his people, each household is given the role and responsibility to be the host and

to make sure the larger community is served from God's table and eats from his provisions. Therefore, Israel's eating habits separate them from other nations, but they also bridge social divisions within their own society. The blessing of the land is not supposed to be a source of division and hierarchy among the people. God's people belong together in their place of inheritance.

The association of the pilgrimage festivals with the chosen place and the agricultural calendar is also a significant indicator of how Israel should belong together in place. Memory and place are intertwined, and these three significant pilgrimages interlock the memory of Israel's chronological history to the repetitive natural cycle of the land. The connection allows all generations to cycle through a re-enactment of the national narrative, which allows them to find themselves within the larger story. As they engage in the daily work of managing the land, the agricultural harvest becomes a memory trigger of God's work in Israel's past. But importantly, the individual's memory is blended with the larger community's when situated in the communal narrative told at the chosen place. Therefore, Israel is able to develop continuity with the past and also 're-member' individuals in the community through the shared act of pilgrimage and subsequent memory of the national narrative.<sup>69</sup> The people's identity as reinforced by the narrative ultimately informs the choices they make in their respective distributed places. Landowners remember with compassion that they too were once enslaved and impoverished but then rescued, and they, in turn, help the poor become restored to their rightful role as landowners. When the Israelites are in their distributed places, their experience of place should match the narrative that is remembered at the centre.

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 16; see above, chapter 4, pp. 112–113.



## CHAPTER 7

### Place and Leadership

#### **Introduction**

Only after Deuteronomy has laid the foundational structure that allows Israel to belong together in place are the leadership roles introduced into the placial structure. According to Deuteronomy's narrative, an Israelite leadership structure is necessary because Moses cannot go into the land with the people. Moses led the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness, but he will not be the one to lead them through the process of becoming rooted in place. The one who led the Israelites out of Egypt and guided them through the wilderness will not be the one to lead them in their new place. Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 answer the dilemma of who or what will assume his responsibilities within the placial structure established in the land. Prior to Moses' death the law is written down, authority is passed to Joshua, and these leadership roles are established to create stability among the people even after Moses dies.<sup>1</sup> Olson argues that Moses' death is a recurring theme in Deuteronomy—a theme with a significant impact on how the book is understood.<sup>2</sup> Olson suggests Moses' death is an important paradigm that exemplifies Israel's own human limitations and struggles. Deuteronomy portrays Moses as an ideal leader who exemplifies dying to his own self-interest for the benefit others (Deut. 9:14), and yet, he is also an example of human finitude and limitation.<sup>3</sup> Moses is not God.<sup>4</sup> Although he was God's appointed leader to bring the people out of Egypt and to usher them through the wilderness, Moses will not go with the people into the land. His death is a caution against idolising human achievements (even in such a positive

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<sup>1</sup> McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 96–97; O'Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 82–90.

<sup>2</sup> Denis Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2005; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Olson, *Death of Moses*, 17, 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

example of a leader) because God is the one working through individuals to bring about his purposes.<sup>5</sup>

These dual themes associated with Moses' death, that of human limitations and of a positive example of sacrificial leadership, are pertinent in the study of Israelite leadership. In Deuteronomy, the power associated with leadership roles is limited and prevents the people from trusting in others for that which only God can do. Israel's dependence on God alone is important, because when Israel is finally rooted in a place of freedom and security, the people will be tempted to trust political and military might, economic influence, and moral or ethical power—all of which emerge as a benefit from belonging to place, but, in and of themselves, are not the blessing God is giving his people. God gives Israel the blessing of place so they can experience the goodness of his created order, not only for their own benefit but also so they can be as an example to others of God's good design.

Deuteronomy's unique leadership organisation has garnered a diverse array of scholarly conclusions regarding the reasoning behind the division of responsibilities. These conclusions can be organised into two general categories—pragmatic and utopian—even though there is great diversity of thought within these categories.<sup>6</sup> The pragmatic view concludes that leadership roles were developed by Deuteronomy to accommodate current events. However, identifying what those 'current' events were and how Deuteronomy reacted against them is problematic. If one looks to the unique features within Deuteronomy for historical placement, then, as McConville argues, it may be possible that the leadership roles reflected in Deuteronomy were developed in pre-monarchical Israel. The reason is three-fold. Yahweh, and not the king, is in power, the people have an influential role in the leadership structure of the country, and there is a prophetic emphasis on the central

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

<sup>6</sup> It is recognisably simplistic to fit scholars' work into such broad categories because their ideas are much more nuanced than the categories allow. The goal here is not to explain the details of their work but to introduce their general approach to analysing the leadership roles. For more detailed explanation of the nuances of their work see Vogt, *Deuteronomical Theology and the Significance of Torah*, 33–69. For a similar summary that focuses specifically on the role of the king see Dutcher-Walls, 'The Circumscription of the King,' 603–604 with notes; Gary Knoppers, 'Rethinking the Relationship between Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History: The Case of Kings,' *CBQ* 63 (2001): 393–415.



role of Torah.<sup>7</sup> Weinfeld veers towards a later date saying that the political organisation in Deuteronomy reflected a time in which the monarchy was viewed in a positive light.<sup>8</sup> He concludes that the religious and judicial reforms were the result of centralisation, which had sweeping consequences through the whole social structure of Israel. Halpern takes a different approach and focuses on the social context that could provoke Deuteronomy's drastic reforms. He suggests social changes were made at the hand of a reformer king who used Deuteronomy as an instrument of revolution to create a new social structure focused on Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Dutcher-Walls also focuses on the social context but focuses primarily on the complications surrounding the limited role of the king. She thinks the reforms were not a result of changes to Israelite ideology as much as they reflected the reality of Assyrian domination. In contrast to the idea that a new leadership structure solidified a power base in Jerusalem, Dutcher-Walls suggests the changes were due to the survival of a vassal king who was forced to acquiesce to the power of Assyria.<sup>10</sup>

Other scholars suggest that the leadership roles in Deuteronomy are more utopian than they are pragmatic. The utopian view suggests that the division of leadership did not reflect current events as much as an ideology that was never fully realised historically. This opinion is held, in part, because of Deuteronomy's description of the responsibility of the king; it is believed that Deuteronomy's extreme limitations on monarchical power were not likely tolerated by any kings. Levinson suggests that the threat of Assyria required the authors of Deuteronomy to rework conventional structures of clan piety and to reject royal ideology. Local sanctuaries were abolished and royal powers were minimised to unify the people

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<sup>7</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 34.

<sup>8</sup> Weinfeld suggests the negative attitude towards the king came not because of a negative view of kingship but from a scribal rebuke against a king like Solomon. Weinfeld thinks an anti-Solomonic tendency lies behind the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 168–169.

<sup>9</sup> Halpern, 'The Centralization Formula in Deuteronomy,' 20–38.

<sup>10</sup> Dutcher-Walls, 'The Circumscription of the King,' 615.

against the growing threat of Assyrian ideology.<sup>11</sup> Perlitt argues that the prescribed monarchy would have been unworkable in the ancient Near East, therefore, the political text must have been written in the exile after a failed monarchy and loss of land.<sup>12</sup> Mayes takes a wholly different approach, and argues that Deuteronomy addressed ‘no actually existing Israel’ but ‘an Israel that should exist,’ and should function under a theocracy.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Carrière concludes that the depictions of institutions in a text like Deuteronomy are necessarily symbolic, rather than descriptions of reality, and are thus inherently utopian or theoretical. As is evident, there is no consensus on how to interpret the unique features of these chapters.

Whether pragmatic or utopian, the leadership structure in Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 is generally interpreted as a programme to reinforce a power structure that is focused at the centre (often determined to be Jerusalem) so that ‘all Israel’ is subsumed under the ruling elite while the authority and symbolic importance of the distributed places are devalued. As such, elders were allowed to judge in the city gate, but complex issues were deferred to leaders in the centre. The king is thought to have resided in the political centre along with the priests who served at the temple instead of in local sanctuaries. Therefore, all influential leadership positions were focused around Jerusalem.

However, analysing these chapters through a placial lens reveals that many theories of centralisation assume a power structure similar to Shils’ theory of centre and periphery in which the powerful elite hold political influence over an extended territory.<sup>14</sup> Shils suggests a central value system connect all members of society, but the powerful in the centre are the ones to create and maintain this core value

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<sup>11</sup> Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 144; idem, ‘The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History’s Transformation of Torah,’ *VT*, vol. 51 (October 2001), 533.

<sup>12</sup> Lothar Perlitt, ‘Der Staatsgedanke im Deuteronomium,’ in *Language, Theology, and The Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* (ed. S. E. Balentine and J. Barton; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 182–198; cf. Knoppers, ‘Rethinking the Relationship,’ 399, note 19.

<sup>13</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 5,

<sup>14</sup> Shils’ theory of centre and periphery was introduced in the previous chapter. See Shils, ‘Charisma, Order, and Status.’

system.<sup>15</sup> Even in ancient Near Eastern societies, as Geertz states, the expansive and grandiose objects of the state ‘mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built. The gravity of high politics and the solemnity of high worship spring from liker impulses than might first appear.’<sup>16</sup> In particular, the royal process in which the king took symbolic possession of his realm was significant for establishing society’s centre.<sup>17</sup> These views of power structures have influenced how Deuteronomy has been interpreted so that centralisation is conceived of in terms of differentiations that elevate those in power and give them priority over local sanctuaries, leadership, and organisation.

This view of centralisation is at odds with Deuteronomy’s placial structure in which there is a close connection between the centre and ‘distributed places’—a relationship that should change how Deuteronomy’s leadership structure is understood.<sup>18</sup> The responsibilities held in both the centre and distributed places affect each other and ultimately influence Israel’s sense of ‘belonging together.’

Carrière’s study on Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 is especially valuable regarding the analysis of leaders and place. He recognises the Israelite political order was more than a sum of the parts. ‘...Le politique ne désigne pas seulement l’organisation concrète des institutions, mais aussi l’ensemble des conditions qui déterminent les attitudes et les actions des citoyens.’<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Carrière separates the institutional role from the individual ‘citizen’ who fulfilled the role.

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<sup>15</sup> Eisenstadt’s thesis is similar. He analysed the development of ancient societies that formed political and cultural-religious centres that become autonomous from the periphery. Although people on the periphery may have had access to the centre (even if symbolic), their own power and self-sufficiency was diminished: S. A. N. Eisenstadt, ‘Observations and Queries about Sociological Aspects of Imperialism in the Ancient World’ in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. by Mogens Larsen; Mesopotamia, Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology, vol. 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 23–25.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford Geertz, ‘Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,’ in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 124.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. Dalley suggests the new year festivals also bolstered the king’s authority and the present social order. Dalley, *Myths of Mesopotamia* 231–232.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 226–239; Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 69–91.

<sup>19</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 28.

Political activity involved individual Israelites who were a part of Deuteronomy's collective of 'all Israel,' but who were differentiated from their brothers due to the leadership positions they held. The leaders were not an isolated elite class that held all political power; they were citizens, like their brothers, and they belonged to the same community, and they strove towards the same goal of maintaining God's created order.

Deuteronomy protects the voice of the people by emphasising the community's role in political decisions. Instead of being ruled from above, they take an active role in building the national identity. The role the citizenry plays is crucial because, like the placial structure introduced in Deuteronomy 12 in which differentiated places remain connected and mutually informing, Deuteronomy's leaders, although differentiated from others, remain accountable to the rest of the population.

Framing the analysis of leadership roles within the placial structure already discussed in Deuteronomy is beneficial. Although Deuteronomy's placial structure supports national unity over regional self-sufficiency, it stops short of permitting a singular imperial rule in the centre. A balance is struck somewhere in the middle, creating a holistic view of the people as a nation belonging together in place, observing the *lex terrae*, and refusing to allow a singular institution to represent the nation.<sup>20</sup> The relationship portrayed in Deuteronomy between God and his people rejects religious and political tyranny, because as McConville notices, 'the required loyalty to Yahweh operates against the concentration of power and liberates the citizen for participation and responsibility.'<sup>21</sup> Deuteronomy cuts across tribal lines so that the sense of what means to be Israel and what it means to belong to place is distinctive from the rest of the Pentateuch, historical narratives, and the ancient Near East.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Grosby often uses *lex terrae* in his work stating, 'The existence of both the conception of a consistent pattern of life and the image of a bounded territory were facilitated by and required the dispersion of the "knowledge of Yahweh." In ancient Israel, this included the codification and promulgation of the law. This would be the law of the God of the land, or the *lex terrae*.'; Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 79.

<sup>21</sup> McConville *God and Earthly Power*, 98.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, *Deuteronomy*, 281.

## Form

The discussion surrounding leadership roles falls at the end of the first block of laws in the law code (chs. 12–18). It follows the instructions to seek the place God will make his name dwell (ch. 12), to eradicate false forms of worship (ch. 12 and 13), to observe dietary restrictions (14:3–21) and sacral dues (14:22–29; 15:19–23), to establish systems of social and economic justice (15:1–18), and to participate in national religious festivals (16:1–17). The laws instruct Israel to live out the ideals of justice and righteousness in the social arena, a goal that the structure for human leadership must support.

By placing these laws in the middle of the law code Deuteronomy is already making a statement about life after Moses. The Torah is established as God’s instructions for the people. God gave these instructions to Moses at Horeb, and Moses writes them down and gives them to the people. Torah is posted on doorposts and gates as the *lex terrae* of the land unifying the people under one set of core values. The leadership roles discussed in 16:18–18:22 are encapsulated by the responsibility all the people have in all the land.

This portion of the law code in Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 is generally agreed to be a unique and independent unit. It is the only portion of the law in which the responsibilities of individual leaders are addressed. By clustering these roles together, Deuteronomy draws attention to the distribution of power among leaders in various places.<sup>23</sup> The systematic explanation of leadership creates a section of the

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<sup>23</sup> In 1748 Charles Baron de Montesquieu published a book entitled *De l’Esprit des Lois*—a book Lohfink attributes to popularising the idea of distribution of functions of power. The ideas expressed by Montesquieu have become integrated into the modern political discussions of governmental structures, and his ideas have worked their way into the accepted analysis of Deuteronomy’s political system. It is not uncommon to read of Deuteronomy’s ‘distribution of power’ or its ‘systems of checks and balances.’ Norbert Lohfink, ‘Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Offices in Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22,’ in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song* (ed. Duane Christensen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 336.

law code that has a distinct political element.<sup>24</sup> It is considered by some to be Israel's constitution even though there is no evidence this text ever existed outside this form within Deuteronomy. There are no introductory or concluding phrases to set this section apart. On the contrary, it is well integrated into the surrounding text with repeated phrases and themes.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the leadership structure must be designed to work within the overall placial structure presented in the book. Deuteronomy develops leadership roles that foster unification of the people who are settled throughout diverse territory. Although the leadership structure is the primary focus, this section fits within the designated responsibilities of the citizens discussed in chapters 13–16 and in chapters 19–26.

### **Text**

When examining these chapters, many commentators divide the text based on the institutional roles of public officials. Deuteronomy 16:18–17:13 introduces the judicial system, 17:14–20 regulates the activities of the king, 18:1–8 establishes the rights and provision for the priests, and 18:9–22 addresses the role of prophet.<sup>26</sup> Divisions based solely on these roles can be awkward, especially because of the diverse issues subsumed under the judicial role. Interspersed through that section are short interludes on forbidden worship (16:21–17:1), the community's involvement in the city gate (17:2–7), and the court of higher authority (17:8–13). Lundbom

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<sup>24</sup> Even as early as Josephus, Deuteronomy was described as *politeia*. Using this term brought the Torah into comparison with Hellenistic concepts of polity or national constitutions, arguing for Israel's priority in human development of models of government. For a detailed analysis of the Deuteronomic law code as Israel's constitution, see Sean Dean McBride, 'Polity of the Covenant People. The Book of Deuteronomy,' in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*, (ed. by Duane Christensen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 62–63; McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 85–86.

<sup>25</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 280–281.

<sup>26</sup> It is good at this point to acknowledge Fleming's caution regarding a modern text-based study of ancient society. Of his own work he says, 'I have tried to respect the word embodied in each ancient word, from "town" to "elder" to "king," recognizing that the reality behind every term is distant from anything in the modern world, so that we are too easily seduced into inappropriate interpretive frameworks.' Fleming tries to avoid the fallacy of thinking leadership roles are fixed institutions. Thus it is important not to impose a modern understanding of judge, king, priest, and prophet onto what is read in the Deuteronomic text. Every term has its own social category embodied within it: Daniel E. Fleming, *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors: Mari and Early Collective Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20. Cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 11.

suggests these miscellaneous laws have no apparent relation to the discourse on major officeholders and ‘must be judged intrusive.’<sup>27</sup> Levinson reports the scholarly consensus is that Deuteronomy 16:18–17:13 is ‘marred by disruption and interpolation.’<sup>28</sup> Some scholars try to use the ‘disruptions’ as clues to redactional layers, but others suggest that the association of miscellaneous laws were common in antiquity and the orderly presentation of laws is only a modern requirement.<sup>29</sup>

However, the verses on worship at the chosen place and the community’s involvement in justice, disrupt the judicial structure only if leadership is studied to the exclusion of how people relate to place. If these chapters are studied according to place, a familiar pattern emerges, making them less random than is typically believed.<sup>30</sup> This can be seen in the following organisation of the chapters:

- 16:18–17:13 Alternating Focus Between City Gates and the Chosen Place
- 16:18–20 Judges and officers in the gates
- 16:21–17:1 Prohibited worship practices at the chosen place
- 17:2–7 Israel’s responsibility to purge evil from their midst at city gates
- 17:8–13 Difficult cases taken to the chosen place
- 17:14–18:22 God’s Choice Creates a Distinctive Israel
- 17:14–20 God chooses a king for Israel
- 18:1–8 God chooses the tribe of Levi
- 18:9–14 Prohibited Canaanite worship
- 18:15–22 God chooses a prophet

The judicial segment from 16:18–17:13 follows the pattern developed in chapters 12–16 in which there is an alternating focus between the centre and the distributed places, displaying mutual responsibility and participation of the people in creating life in the land according to God’s design. In this place the rule of God is evident in the pursuit of righteousness by all people in their communities and in their leadership. While the positions of judge, king, priest, and prophet are not unique to Deuteronomy, the organisation presented here is distinctive because of its concern

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<sup>27</sup> Lundbom follows Driver who says that these verses are unrelated to the subject of justice, and that it is reasonable to suppose they have been displaced from their original position: Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 201; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 519, 526.

<sup>28</sup> Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 248. See also Lohfink who says organisation of laws was based on an association of ideas; Lohfink, ‘Distribution of the Functions of Power,’ 344.

<sup>30</sup> Block makes a similar point although through a literary analysis showing coherence throughout. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 401.

with place. Leadership roles remain embedded within the overall goal of establishing righteousness and holiness in both the city gates and the chosen place.

The second half of this text shifts to focus on God's choices that not only establish order and structure but create difference between Israel and other nations. 'Deuteronomy submits the whole organisation of Israel to the criterion of Yahweh's choice, giving priority to his choice of his people,'<sup>31</sup> and submitting all leadership roles under the authority of Torah.<sup>32</sup> This point of view in no way minimises these leadership roles, but instead offers a new perspective for understanding their function in Israelite society.

### *16:18–20 Judges and Officers in the Gates*

The leadership structure begins with appointing judges (שפטים) and officers (שטרים) in the gates to judge with righteous judgments (vs. 18). The exact procedures to bring a case before the judge are inconsequential in light of the primary concern—the pursuit of righteousness. There are two closely related concepts brought up with the judges and officers, that of justice (משפט) and righteousness (צדק).<sup>33</sup> The root שפט has to do with judicial activity and legal action. It connotes the pronouncement of guilt and innocence along with the legal consequences of the verdict.<sup>34</sup> The term צדק, as explained by Reimer, indicates the 'right behavior or status in relation to some standard of behavior accepted in the community.'<sup>35</sup> צדק is used theologically as 'verbal shorthand for something true about God,' and it regularly deals with human

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<sup>31</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 298.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

<sup>33</sup> Reimer summarises that the ANE use of the root of this term applies to right status or behaviour according to an implied standard. צדק can be both active and static—one 'acts rightly' or one can 'be righteous': David J. Reimer, 'Sdq,' *NIDOTTE*, vol. 3 (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997): 746. Snaith says צדק (masculine) and צדקה (feminine) have the same meaning, and they should not be considered an abstract idea but rather an action or something that can be observed: Norman Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 1983), 77.

<sup>34</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 256.

<sup>35</sup> Reimer, 'Sdq,' 750.



behaviour that is in accord with the natural law or an assumed standard.<sup>36</sup> Schmid indicates צדק does not refer to specific acts of justice but to the harmonious order of the world, an idea closely connected to keeping the commandments.<sup>37</sup> Wright adds that when צדק is applied to human behaviour it is not referring to an abstract idea but to the actions required by the nature of the relationship or situation.<sup>38</sup> It is because one is righteous or that one pursue's God's righteousness that justice results.<sup>39</sup> Righteousness is the proper standard, and justice is bringing life in line with that standard.<sup>40</sup> The law code establishes the legal precedent for משפט, so it is understood that the law code functions to uphold the created order.<sup>41</sup>

Judges and officers are addressed directly in verse 19 with three imperatives to prevent the compromise of righteous judgment (משפט-צדק).<sup>42</sup> Do not pervert justice

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 746. 'It is used literally of objects that are or do what they are supposed to be or do.' Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 255. Snaith's study of the righteousness of God suggests all knowledge of right-actions is not primarily driven by ethics but by the knowledge of God's character. He connects the character of God to what is known of him primarily through creation, but also through what God continues to do especially with reference to his chosen people: Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, 59–60, 76.

<sup>37</sup> Schmid later adds that the blessing involved in obeying the commandments is the harmonious world order of creation: Schmid, 'Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,' 108–110.

<sup>38</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 256; cf. Reimer, 'Šdq,' 750.

<sup>39</sup> Snaith says צדק refers to God's will as he has established or will establish it in the land, and only secondarily does it refer to the resulting legal judgment or משפט: Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, 76. See also Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, vol 21B (ABC; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 111–114 and 119–120; cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 522.

<sup>40</sup> Wright states that there is much overlap and interchangeability between the words 'righteousness' and 'justice,' but 'mišpāṭ is what needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with šedeq / šēdāqā.' Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 257.

<sup>41</sup> Deuteronomy 4:8 asks which nation has statutes and judgements more righteous (צדיקה) than this Torah. Only the Torah perfectly represents God's intended order for the creation. In Deuteronomy 6:20–25 the children ask what the meaning of the Torah is. The conclusion states that it is 'for our good' (לנו טוב) and 'it will be righteousness to us' (צדקה תהיה לנו). 'Good' and 'righteous' are in parallel. Following the Torah's guidelines is good for the people and also they will be imitating God's character. when they in the right way of living — in the pursuit of the created order. Cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 78–80.

<sup>42</sup> The three imperatives are what von Rad calls a 'model for judges': von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 115. However, the second person pronoun could apply to all the people, which, in fact, will be the case in Deuteronomy 17:2–7. See similar prohibitions that apply to all people in 24:17 and 27:19. In these verses (Deut. 16:18–20), the judge takes on the responsibility of all of Israel 'by virtue of their being "Israel".' McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 95. See also Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 378.

(לֹא תִכִּיר פְּנִים (בְּשֹׁפֵט), do not show partiality (literally ‘do not recognise faces’ לֹא תִכִּיר פְּנִים), and do not take a bribe, because bribes blind the eyes of the wise and subvert the words of the righteous (צְדִיקִים).<sup>43</sup> The emphatic repetition of ‘righteousness, righteousness’ (צְדָקָה) at the beginning of verse 20 emphasises that righteousness alone is an indispensable condition to inherit and to live in the land God is giving to his people.<sup>44</sup> Often this phrase is translated as ‘justice, justice.’ Perhaps this is because the two terms are closely related or because a judge is expected to pursue justice.<sup>45</sup> But that translation loses the nuance of the verse as well as the force of the repeated term in this short paragraph. The focus is on צְדָקָה, God’s character and his created order. צְדָקָה is a highly relational word, and the pursuit of righteousness is the pursuit of right relationships between people and with the land and with God.<sup>46</sup> Truly the judges are required to bring about justice, but as designated leaders they are to pursue *righteousness* in the gates without allowing the pursuit to be distorted. If these judges and officers do their part to establish God’s will in the land, then justice will indeed be a result.<sup>47</sup>

A similar judicial system is described in Deuteronomy 1 in which Moses distributes responsibility to additional leaders when the people were in the wilderness (1:13–18; cf. Ex. 18:19–26).<sup>48</sup> At that time, Moses instructs the people to

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<sup>43</sup> Bribery and deception in the judiciary system was a problem for all ancient nations. For a review of ANE texts of such incidents see Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 524.

<sup>44</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 161; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 212.

<sup>45</sup> Lundbom is the exception to the rule: Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 519, 522. Snaith says מִשְׁפָּט leads to צְדָקָה in that people learn about God’s norms through experience or through the law: Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, 76.

<sup>46</sup> Wright quotes Gossai as saying, ‘In essence then *ṣdq* is not simply an objective norm which is present within society, and which must be kept, but rather it is a concept which derives its meaning from the relationship in which it finds itself. So we are able to say that right judging, right governing, right worshipping and gracious activity are all covenantal and righteous, despite their diversity.’: Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 256; cf. Hemchand Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets* (AUS, Series 7; Theology and Religion, vol. 141; New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 55–56.

<sup>47</sup> Olson, *Death of Moses*, 80; cf. Robert Wilson, ‘Israel’s Judicial System in the Pre-Exilic Period’ (*JQR* 74, 1983), 229–248. Schmid notices that righteousness in the law is not about specific acts of justice but focus on the harmonious order of the world; Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,’ 107–108.

<sup>48</sup> The Exodus narrative says Moses’ father gave the organising strategy to Moses. He is left out of the narrative in Deuteronomy.

choose wise and discerning men from each of the tribes (1:13) and to appoint them as leaders of the people. He assigns two distinct leadership roles. The first is to the commanders (שָׂרֵר), who organise the people into groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, along with the officers (שָׂטְרִיִּם). This style of organisation is typically used in military situations, which has a pragmatic function in the wilderness as the people move through unpredictable terrain (1:15).<sup>49</sup> The second leadership role is assigned to the judges (שֹׁפְטִים) who listen to cases and judge without partiality (1:16). Any case too difficult to decide is taken before Moses (1:17). Even before entering the land, Israel has a structure of leadership that involves more than the singular figure of Moses. This is retained in the land when the people appoint leaders to serve in the gates. Deuteronomy 16:18–17:1 assigns a singular role to the judges and officers which implies these positions now have the same responsibilities.<sup>50</sup> The commander (שָׂרֵר) listed in chapter 1 is absent from chapter 16 along with the organisation of the people into military units, but this may be due to the change in context. The people are no longer in the wilderness, but are becoming rooted in the land where it is no longer necessary to organise the people in army units.

Deuteronomy 16:18–20 introduces an interesting dynamic highlighted by what Carrière calls the responsibilities of the citizen (the ‘tu’ or second person singular pronoun).<sup>51</sup> ‘Le citoyen... participe d’une manière ou d’une autre à ce qui incombe aux rôles institués, et ce particulièrement pour ce qui concerne la justice et la prophétie....’<sup>52</sup> Every Israelite is a citizen who is required to contribute to the placial structure by belonging together in place. They share the responsibility of upholding the *lex terrae*. Leaders too are citizens with their brothers responsible for exercising

<sup>49</sup> Weinfeld is reluctant to conclude this is a military reference because the title is used in ANE inscriptions for leaders over work crews: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy* 137–138.

<sup>50</sup> Von Rad holds that the authority granted to ‘elders’ rests on tribal constitutions while the juxtaposition of ‘judges’ with ‘officers,’ who he calls ‘officials of the State,’ must make the office of judge a politically appointed one: von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 114. Mayes and Lundbom agree the city elders are distinguished from the judges as being the primary guardians of justice within the tribe. Mayes concludes that the ‘elder’ does not need to be mentioned here for their involvement in local administration of justice would be assumed. Deuteronomy’s phrasing ‘you shall appoint’ and not ‘you shall have’ suggests the ‘judges’ are appointed by the central administration to look after the affairs of the state on behalf of the king: Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 264; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 520.

<sup>51</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 245–249.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

their institutional roles (judge, king, priest, prophet) according to the Torah. The citizen belongs to the collective ‘Israel’ who appoints judges and officers within the community but can also be the person called upon to fulfil the leadership roles.<sup>53</sup>

*16:21–17:1 Prohibited Worship Practices in the Chosen Place*

Although the next three verses do not use the place formula, the mention of the altar of Yahweh and the sacrifices offered before God are enough to infer these regulations deal with God’s chosen place. Levinson suggests these verses are problematic because they bear no relationship whatsoever on justice within the Israelite community, and he believes them to be disruptive to the logical flow of this segment on Israelite leadership.<sup>54</sup> However, these regulations are a part of the ebb and flow between the centre and the distributed places. The righteousness sought at the gates is connected to the holiness preserved at both the centre and the distributed places.

Like the above section—in which three commands are given to prevent unseemly, judicial activity—these verses specify three unseemly objects to be kept from God’s altar.<sup>55</sup> Verse 21 prohibits the Israelites from planting a tree as an Asherah pole next to the altar of Yahweh. Likewise, setting up standing stones ‘which Yahweh your God hates’ is forbidden (vs. 22). An ox or sheep is an acceptable sacrifice before the Lord, but if the animal has a blemish or defect it is not an acceptable sacrifice for it is an abomination to Yahweh (17:1; cf. 15:21). These are familiar regulations. Deuteronomy has previously instructed the people to completely destroy Asherah poles and standing stones upon entering the land (7:5; 12:3) not only to prohibit Canaanite worship but also to obliterate the structure and memory of such worship. Israel must not syncretise worship by incorporating such symbols alongside the altar of God, and they should not minimise worship by offering blemished sacrifices to God. These verses are consistent with Deuteronomy’s overall disgust of foreign worship, considering it to be an

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 248–249.

<sup>54</sup> Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 100. See also Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 201; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 519, 526.

<sup>55</sup> Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 115.

abomination (הַתּוֹעֵבָה) to Yahweh (7:25; 12:31; 15:19–23; 18:9). Abominations of any sort must be eradicated from the midst of Israel (12:31; 13:14; 14:3).<sup>56</sup> The purity of worship at the chosen place is crucial because the horizontal dispersion of sacrality, if compromised at the centre, could have far reaching affects in the distributed places.

#### *17:2–7 Israel's Responsibility to Purge Evil from their Midst at City Gates*

The cohesiveness of the community, noticeable with the repetition of the phrase ‘in your midst’ (מִקִּרְבְּךָ; cf. ch. 13), is the primary focus of these verses. Verse 2 initiates an if-then statement to focus on the consequence of the one who transgresses the covenant with God. The opening phrase, ‘If it is found in your midst, in one of your gates Yahweh is giving to you,’ not only reminds the people that God is the giver of the land, but it also reinforces that the gate is a place of responsibility. If a man or woman does evil in the eyes of Yahweh and transgresses his covenant by walking after other gods and bowing to them, the sun, moon, or hosts of heaven (cf. 4:19), then the man or woman must be brought to the gate and stoned to death (vs. 5, remembering the gate is a place of justice in 16:18). The offence is similar to the instigation of apostasy in chapter 13. To be in the midst of the people, in the inherited land, acting in a contrary way against the one who gave the land, is equal to breaking the covenant. The citizens go through the judicial procedure to examine the veracity of the accusation, and if such an abomination is in Israel (הַתּוֹעֵבָה הַזֹּאת הַבְּיַשְׂרָאֵל) then the person is executed (vs. 4).<sup>57</sup> Grosby points out the phrase ‘in Israel’ refers not only to what is in the midst of the people but also to the whole land unified under the law (17:4; 19:8; 22:21).<sup>58</sup> Evidence from two or more witnesses (vs. 6) is necessary to establish guilt, and those witnesses carry the responsibility of initiating the punishment (vs. 7), even though the whole community ultimately takes

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<sup>56</sup> The remainder of the law code will continue to identify and forbid abominable practices along with the people who do them (Deut. 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16).

<sup>57</sup> Craigie suggests הַתּוֹעֵבָה is equivalent to ‘crime’ in this context because of the transgression against God’s covenant. However, such translation obscures the insistence throughout the law code to prevent abominations of all sorts in the midst of the community of Israel: Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 250.

<sup>58</sup> Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 87.

part. Thus the holiness of the nation is protected by actively removing evil from their midst.<sup>59</sup>

By purging evil from the gates, the citizens play an active, judicial role in the decisions that affect society. They participate in legal decisions by searching evidence, hearing testimony, deciding a verdict based on justice, and carrying out the sentence.<sup>60</sup> In effect, they collectively fill a similar role as the judges who are appointed in the gates.

#### *17:8–13 Difficult Cases Taken to the Chosen Place*

Deuteronomy 17:8 begins with an if-then statement. If the case is too difficult to determine at the city gate, then it is taken to the chosen place and placed before the priest-Levite and judge ‘who is there in that day’ (vs. 9). The following verbs are directed at those with the dispute. Go to the priest and judge, receive the judgment, and immediately observe the decision. Twice Deuteronomy emphasises that the decision declared from the chosen place must be followed (vv. 9–10) without turning to the right or to the left (vs. 11). The person who acts presumptuously (תַּרְסִי) against the priest who stands to minister before Yahweh will be killed.<sup>61</sup> Death is the punishment for those who reject God’s authority and his established order in the land (13:5, 9, 15; 17:5). The person is killed to purge evil from among Israel (vs. 12) and to be a warning to the people who will hear and fear and not act presumptuously again (13:11; also 19:20; 21:21). Justice in the centre cannot be ignored, because it is connected to the justice upheld in the city gates. In contrast to the previous section in which the citizen was actively participating in the community, here at the chosen

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<sup>59</sup> The command to remove evil from the midst of Israel is initiated in Deuteronomy 13, but it is repeated throughout the law code (Deut. 13:6; 17:12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21–22, 24; 24:27).

<sup>60</sup> The verbs demonstrate that the citizens actively participate in legal decisions, and they participate in similar activities to determine a true prophet (Deut. 18:15–22). Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 269.

<sup>61</sup> The one acting presumptuously rebels in the same manner as all of Israel when they tried to enter the land without God’s presence (Deut. 1:43). Caution against presumptuous acts will be issued again regarding any prophet who does not faithfully represent the words of God (Deut. 18:20, 22).

place, the citizen plays a passive role submitting to the authority of those who are positioned there and ultimately submitting to the authority of the Torah.<sup>62</sup>

It is important to note this court is not an appellate court. Although sometimes described as a higher court of appeal, Deuteronomy says nothing of overturning a local decision but only of solving troublesome cases.<sup>63</sup> The position of the citizens and the authority of the local judges should not be diminished nor undervalued. Instead, the chosen place is the higher court, because it is the central place of holiness for the whole nation. It is where God is ‘intensely present’ and where the officials are most informed about God’s righteousness. Involving the priest is also a move towards ‘sacral authority and direct appeal to the covenantal will of the covenant-envisioning God.’<sup>64</sup> It will be the place where the written Torah is kept (31:9, 24–26), making it the best place to pursue God’s wisdom in difficult cases.<sup>65</sup>

This entire section on righteousness (16:18–17:13) is reminiscent of the original leadership structure Moses set up in the wilderness. The righteous leaders handled the cases of the people, but the difficult decisions were taken to Moses (1:15–17). Changes have been made to adjust for living in the land, but the leadership structure is similar. The judges and officers decide cases in the gates, and when the decision is too difficult, it is taken to the chosen place. The Levitical priest and the judge in the chosen place have a similar role to the one of Moses when the people were in the wilderness. Their instructions (התורה) are given the same credence as the words of Moses. In both cases the people are instructed to follow without turning to the right or to the left (5:32; 17:20; 28:14).

The judicial portion also includes movement between the distributed places and the centre reflecting a familiar journey in the Deuteronomic law code. Israel is asked to honour the covenantal relationship and to live in pursuit of God’s righteousness. The Torah does not dictate every action in daily life as much as it

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 247–248.

<sup>63</sup> Calling the chosen place a court of appeal potentially came about because of the tendency to think of Deuteronomy according to modern systems of checks and balances. The central court does not overthrow judgments made at local courts but makes decisions that are too difficult at the local level. Lohfink, ‘Distribution of the Functions of Power,’ 340. Also Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 163.

<sup>64</sup> Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 181–182.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 163.

encourages the people to pursue righteousness. The citizenry participates as well as the priest and the judge, because they acknowledge the centre as the place of authority beyond the localised authority of the tribe. As such Deuteronomy pushes across tribal loyalties as the people recognise a greater, central source of national identity.

*17:14–20 God Chooses a King for Israel*

The leadership role of the king is listed after the judiciary role of the judges, citizens, and priests, and it is mentioned only in anticipation of the people's desire for a king because of the nations around them. Knoppers says, 'the monarchy is the only social institution whose existence is deemed to be optional... Because the monarchy is not essential to the national constitution, Israel can do quite well without it.'<sup>66</sup> McConville notices, 'Its late appearance in the sequence corresponds to the role that is given to the king in Israel's constitution.'<sup>67</sup> In addition, feasting texts in Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 16 have already emphasised Yahweh as the primary provider with all the people not only enjoying equally in the provisions but also assuming the typically royal responsibility of providing for others. The monarch's authority as typically portrayed in ancient Near Eastern societies has already been obscured in the Deuteronomic law code prior to addressing the specific role of the king. The restrictions to the monarchy found in these verses are unique in the Pentateuch and are completely counter-cultural to other monarchies in the ancient Near East. Deuteronomy minimises the authority associated with the role to

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<sup>66</sup> Knoppers, 'Rethinking the Relationship between Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,' 398. See also Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 209.

<sup>67</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 283. See also Lohfink, 'Distribution of the Functions of Power,' 347.



ensure the king does not become a symbol of human power. It focuses instead on the attitude and character required of the one who fills such a position.<sup>68</sup>

The opening sentence contains several phrases that should be addressed individually.<sup>69</sup> The conditional phrase begins, ‘When you come into the land,’ a familiar introductory phrase in Deuteronomy that acts as a temporal-placial marker distinguishing the here-now from there-then. Outside of the law code, the phrase has God as the subject and the people as the direct object (‘when he brings you into the land’; 6:10; 7:1; 9:28; 11:29; 30:5), which builds anticipation for receiving the gift of land. Within the law code, in which life in the land is presupposed, the people are the subject, ‘when you enter the land’ (vs. 14). This draws attention to their responsibility of dwelling well in place. The land is modified with the phrase ‘Yahweh your God is giving to you to possess and to dwell in it’ so as to not lose sight of the fact that God is the true owner of land, and it is he who gives it to the people as a pre-condition for them to enter and live within it.<sup>70</sup> The inheritance of land has a familial connotation, because Israel must be God’s son to inherit from

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<sup>68</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 253. Critical scholarship has not come to an agreement about the interpretation of the role of the king in Deuteronomy. The analysis is often done within the historical-critical view that the chosen place is Jerusalem where the temple and the king’s palace are located. This leadership portion of Deuteronomy is read in light of centralisation policies in Jerusalem. While some scholars think the limits on the king’s authority means Deuteronomy is against kingship, others think Deuteronomy is supporting the ruling authority in Jerusalem. Clements reads this passage in favour of kingship drawing connections with the cult and kingship in royal psalms: R. E. Clements, ‘Deuteronomy and the Jerusalem Cult Tradition,’ *VT*, vol. 15 (1965): 300–312. Driver says the laws here neither define the political constitution nor limit the autocracy of the king. The law is intended to emphasise that the king is subject to theocratic principles as much as the rest of the community: Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 210. Nicholson reads the law as against kingship: Ernest Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 58–82. Dutcher-Walls reads the section as a limitation of the king’s authority because of the imposed Assyrian rule: Dutcher-Walls, ‘The Circumscription of the King.’

<sup>69</sup> For detailed attention to the ideas summarised here, see Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 210–218.

<sup>70</sup> As Richter demonstrated, the place name formula of 12:5 has the effect of establishing God’s ownership of the land: Richter, ‘The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,’ 342–366; cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 89.

him.<sup>71</sup> The two verbs ‘to possess’ (יָרַשׁ) and ‘to dwell’ (יָשַׁב) reflect Israel’s relationship with the land. As Carrière summarises, ‘to (dis)posses’ has an immediate timeline, but ‘to dwell’ carries forward into the future indeterminately.<sup>72</sup> It involves intentionally residing in place. In this first verse of the laws for the king, a complete list of verbs that indicate the relationship of Israel with the land is given: to give, to enter, to possess, to dwell.<sup>73</sup> God is the grantor of land, and their existence in the land relies on him and not a human king whom they will appoint only after receiving, possessing and dwelling in the land.

After entering the land the people will say, ‘I will set a king over me,’ a statement reflecting their desire to be like the surrounding nations (כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם). Imitating other nations is expressly forbidden in Deuteronomy, and yet an exception is made to allow for a king. When the people enter the land and desire a king, then one is permitted, but God will choose the king ‘from the midst from your brothers’ (מִקִּרְבֵּי אֶחָיִךְ). Only one who is an Israelite may be king. God’s acts of separating, distinguishing, and ordering all areas of Israelite life is manifested through separating Israel from the nations (7:7–8; 10:15), and the chosen place from the rest of the land (12:5), and Levites from the tribes (18:5). God’s choice is set against any claim on Israel’s part to build a nation and to structure authority according to her own terms. Even the appointment of a king is subsumed under God’s authority over Israel’s affairs.<sup>74</sup> The king chosen ‘from the midst of your brothers’ minimises any prideful exclusivity, for he is one of the people. This king may be appointed because of a desire to be like the nations, but the king will not look like the kings of other nations.

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<sup>71</sup> Christopher Wright addresses the importance of God’s ownership and gift of the land in Deuteronomy’s overall description of the land as inheritance. For Israel to inherit the land from God, Israel must be God’s son. ‘In the light of the prominence of the gift of the land in Deuteronomy, the sonship of Israel consequently has a much more central place in the theology of this book than one might deduce from the sole direct reference...and the more figurative references....’ The relationship also comes with an imperative to love God with faithfulness and loyalty: Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 18–19.

<sup>72</sup> See above, chapter 6, pp. 179–180.

<sup>73</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 218.

<sup>74</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 220.

Verses 16–19 modify the role of king. He may not ‘increase for himself’ horses nor require the people to return to Egypt. The king must not increase the number of wives or his heart may turn aside (same warning given to all the people in 7:3–5), and he may not increase silver and gold (vs. 17).<sup>75</sup> Nothing is said about granting the king military authority.<sup>76</sup> In contrast to these forbidden activities, the king is required to write for himself a copy of ‘this law’ (הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) before the Levitical priest (vs. 18).<sup>77</sup> This is the first mention of the words of Moses being finalised and written in a book (although readdressed in 28:58 and 30:10). The copy will be with him so he can read it all the days of his life and fear Yahweh his God and guard the words of the law and to do them (vs. 19). The king who copies ‘this law’ neither makes the law nor stands above it.<sup>78</sup>

The Torah plays the same role in the life of the king as it does for the people (10:12–13). They both live covenantally, so they will have life according to the promise of God.<sup>79</sup> The people have ‘these words’ posted on the doorpost to the home and on the gates of the city, and they talk about them day and night (6:9; 11:20).

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<sup>75</sup> Each of these prohibitions were elements of Solomon’s reign, which leads to the interpretation that these laws are a commentary against Solomon: Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, 384–385; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 212; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 540, 543. Weinfeld holds that the negative attitude towards the king in this passage is not a negative view of kingship but is a scribal rebuke against a king like Solomon: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 168. Mayes argues these regulations must pertain to the general monarchy because several kings built up an army and entered into political marriages to bolster the kingdom. These prohibitions are best viewed as a comment against the whole picture of king and the typical markings of success: Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 272; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 284, 294.

<sup>76</sup> Likewise, in Deuteronomy 20, in which the greatest number of laws related to war are listed, there is no mention of a king. The priests and army commanders are the only leaders mentioned. The enemy in chapter 20 is depicted with horses and chariots, and Deuteronomy commonly refers to Egypt’s Pharaoh with his army, chariots, and horses. These symbols of human power are no match for God’s power: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 186. Although Deuteronomy 17 does not state that God is the warrior God whose presence determines future battles, the chapter is clearly refusing the Israelite king those military and monarchical symbols of power.

<sup>77</sup> The written aspect of ‘this law’ may be a reference to the book Moses is still to write (Deut. 28:61) and place under the care of the priests (Deut. 31:9); McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 295. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what is meant here by ‘this law’. It could refer to the laws related to the king, to Deuteronomy as a whole, or to the Deuteronomistic law code. Despite the ambiguity, it is important that the copy is made under the supervision of the Levitical priest. See Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 256; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 168.

<sup>78</sup> McBride, ‘Polity of the Covenant People,’ 74; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 295.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 184.

After Moses writes down ‘this law’ it is to be read to the people every seven years at the Feast of Booths, so they learn to fear Yahweh and observe the law as long as they remain in the land (31:9–13). So too, the king has a copy of the law from which to read and learn to fear Yahweh all the days of his life. Moses tells the people not to turn from the right or to the left of his instructions, and those seeking justice at the chosen place may not turn to the right or to the left from the decisions given (5:32; 17:11; 28:14). Likewise, the king’s heart must not be lifted above his brothers, and he must not turn from the right or to the left of the commandments so that he may remain in his kingdom in the midst of his people (17:20).

Carrière suggests that the king possesses a certain amount of autonomy. He works outside the system of justice and is some distance from the religious sphere, but he is not completely alone. The priest-levite looks after him as he meditates on and is submissive to the authority of the Torah.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, like the people of Israel, keeping the Torah will allow the king and his descendants to reign in the land just as the preservation of justice will allow people to have life and inherit the land (16:20). This regulation underscores the importance of the Torah as the only law to be lived in the land (*lex terrae*). As the singular law, it unifies all the people including the king and his household.<sup>81</sup>

The Israelite king is completely set apart from the role of monarchies of the ancient Near East. Other kings in surrounding nations claimed to be the son of the gods, fulfilling the role of social benefactor, creator of the laws, and source of supreme authority.<sup>82</sup> Kings were often strategically placed in palaces near the temple, or they were depicted in the throne room flanked by divine messengers, so that their locations reinforce their elevated status and connection to the divine order

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<sup>80</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 249.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 25–26.

<sup>82</sup> Schmid says, ‘Upon him and his acts depend the fertility of the land as well as the just social and political order of the state.’: Schmid, ‘Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,’ 105. For a categorisation of the roles of Israelite kings that are both similar and dissimilar to ANE kings see Levinson, ‘The Reconceptualization of Kingship.’ For a comparison between the Deuteronomic role of king and the ANE kings see Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 269–279; Knoppers, ‘Rethinking the Relationship,’ 404–405; Norbert Lohfink, ‘Distribution of the Functions of Power,’ 347; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 150–152.

of the cosmos.<sup>83</sup> Grandiose banquets added to the king's prestige.<sup>84</sup> The king sat with a small number of highly placed officials and aristocrats, but a large number of people were supplied from his table.<sup>85</sup> MacDonald notes 'the royal table was a central institution for the redistribution of economic resources which were traded for loyalty and prestige.'<sup>86</sup> Taxes, tributes, and spoils of war were collected by the king and redistributed as he desired. This control bolstered the royal authority and contributed to expression of the king's cosmic domain. The king's table is a political microcosm where food and participants represent the diversity under his authority.<sup>87</sup>

Interestingly, Deuteronomy's most subtle limit to the king's power is the lack of place from which to rule. One could argue a place does not need to be mentioned because the king rules over all the land, but with Deuteronomy's awareness of place and attention to the relationship between the centre and distributed places, the omission is peculiar. Carrière notices, 'Il n'est rien dit de la position du roi dans cette structure, même si on peut supposer que le roi se trouve au lieu central: mais pour autant, il ne joue pas de rôle dans le rapport local-central.'<sup>88</sup> The only indication that the king could be located at the chosen place is the presence of the priest-Levite. However, this is not an adequate indicator, because although the Levites' place of authority is the chosen place, they are found in residence throughout the land. The king is not necessarily established in the chosen place, and he is not even described in a palace or in a royal garden. There are no ceremonies to

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<sup>83</sup> See for instance Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Given that the cosmos was viewed as a temple, a king's placement in or near the temple places him near the established cosmic centre. See for instance, Greg Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Hurowitz, *I have Built you an Exalted House*. The king was positioned between the human and divine realms. He was the human agent between the divine and human realms, and he was protected by the gods. For a summary of roles of kings, see John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2006), 275–286. Stager describes reliefs of a variety of kings who collected trees for private, royal gardens fed by water provided by the gods: Lawrence E. Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden,' *BAR*, vol. 26, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 38–47; repr. of 'Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden,' in F. M. Cross Festschrift, *Eretz-Israel* 26, 1999: 183–194.

<sup>84</sup> Altmann, *Festive Meals*, 95.

<sup>85</sup> MacDonald, 'The Eyes of All Look to You,' 7–8; idem, *Not Bread Alone*, 157–160.

<sup>86</sup> MacDonald, 'The Eyes of All Look to You,' 8.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 249.

validate the authority of the king, and no royal banquets from which he symbolically provides for the needs of the people or enjoys a display of royal authority. He is not the symbol of the wealth, viability, and political prowess of the nation, and he is certainly not the earthly guarantor of the order of creation. Neither the fertility of the land nor the social, political, or judicial order depends on the Israelite king.<sup>89</sup> This counter-cultural leadership structure is not designed to facilitate an empirical expansion for the benefit of the king. In addition, loyalty to one God is not represented by one person (unlike what is portrayed in the royal psalms) but by all of the people living according to God's laws, pursuing his righteousness, and executing justice.<sup>90</sup> It is the people of Israel who are considered God's son, not the king, and it is the vitality of place that portray God's favour on the nation, not the prosperity of a king in a central city.

The restrictions in Deuteronomy are unique because they do not allow for the possibility of a monarch to impose a divine decree on the people while he himself stands above the law. Just as Deuteronomy reminds the people that they are a chosen and holy nation and must guard against the seduction of foreign worship, it now addresses the king as chosen and set apart from the seductive pull of foreign *politeia*.<sup>91</sup> These regulations make Deuteronomy a radical document in the ancient

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<sup>89</sup> Levinson, 'The Reconceptualization of Kingship,' 512–514; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 34.

<sup>90</sup> The focus on the people living according to God's law is different from the royal psalms that suggest the monarchy had a divinely appointed role to uphold God's justice in the nation. The 'royal imitation of divine *šdq* accounts for the status of the king enjoys,' Reimer, '*Šdq*,' 760. For instance, Psalm 2 places the king in Jerusalem, so that the king is God's son in Zion, which is God's dwelling place. The king and the city together represent God's favour on the nation (cf. Ps 72, 89:26–27). McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 293–294. The role is also different from what is portrayed in the Deuteronomistic History. David and Solomon make sacrifices, anoint kings, lead national assemblies, and pray on behalf of the nation. Several other kings are represented as the supreme judicial authority. See Knoppers, 'Rethinking the Relationship between Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,' 405–406; Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*, 138–141. Idem, 'Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy,' 520–523.

<sup>91</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 417.

world.<sup>92</sup> The Deuteronomic covenant is between God and Israel and is unmediated by the king. Instead, the king represents a model citizen. He is a fellow citizen, a brother, and subject to the law whose life and reign depends on his faithfulness.

### *18:1–8 God Chooses the Tribe of Levi*

The priest-Levite has already been mentioned in connection to justice and to the monarchy, but in these verses the role of priest-Levite is explained in greater detail. The priest-Levite's role is described in two parts. Verses 1–5 focus on the inheritance of the tribe of Levi, and verses 6–8 focus on the unity and equality within the tribe of Levi.<sup>93</sup>

Verse 1 begins with a statement that the 'Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi,' will have no land inheritance among their brothers.<sup>94</sup> The burnt offerings to Yahweh

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<sup>92</sup> McConville says, 'The picture of the king's responsibilities is not a post-exilic picture of ideal piety, but a powerful concept of the supremacy of Torah, or constitutional law, in the life of the people. This is the distinctive characteristic of Deuteronomy in the ancient Near East, namely to empower and protect the individual in the political community.' Gordon McConville, 'King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,' in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013; repr. from Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 281.

<sup>93</sup> Sometimes the verses dealing with the inheritance of Levi are further divided into vv. 1–2, in which the Levites receive no land inheritance, and vv. 3–5, which name the specific portions of sacrificial foods that belong to the Levites. Because these both deal with the proper inheritance for the tribe, I have grouped them together.

<sup>94</sup> The phrase is literally 'the priests the Levites,' an awkward phrase that leaves room for interpretation, because there is no singular depiction of the history and character of the priesthood. This phrase can be read as the priests who belong to the tribe of Levi, or it can be read as the priests who are differentiated within the tribe of Levi. This latter interpretation is due, in part, to the references in Exodus and Numbers that specify that the priests are from the line of Aaron thereby being a select group from within the tribe of Levi. However, since Deuteronomy's views of the priests are summarised in this chapter and because it is natural to read the phrase 'all the tribe of Levi,' as a true apposition, it is reasonable to interpret this verse as referring to all the priests who must belong to the tribe of Levi. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 258; Lundom, *Deuteronomy*, 433–434, 544; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 275–276; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 296–297; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 149.

(אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה)<sup>95</sup> will be their inheritance (vs. 1; cf. Josh 13:14).<sup>96</sup> The Levite has no land inheritance in the midst of his brothers because Yahweh is his inheritance (vs. 2; 10:9; cf. Num 18:20). The tribe of Levi is the only exception to Israel’s land-holding laws, which only serve to emphasise the importance of land inheritance as a defining feature of Israel.<sup>97</sup> Although the Levites do not receive property, they still receive blessings from the land via the portion of the sacred offerings brought before God by the people. This includes portions of the sacrificed animal (vs. 3), grain, new wine, oil, and the first shearing of the flock (vs. 4). All of these objects belong to the familiar Deuteronomic description of the blessing from the land, and now these gifts and offerings are part of the inheritance of the priests. From the blessing of the land the people dedicate a portion to the chosen place, and the Levites partake in the blessing. This inheritance is because God chose the Levites to minister in the name of Yahweh; he and his sons all his days (vs. 5).

Verses 6–8 emphasise the Levite’s unity and equality at the chosen place. Whereas the previous sections stresses the Levites are brothers with the rest of Israel, these verses establish the brotherhood within the tribe because of their special inheritance.<sup>98</sup> The syntax of verses 6–8 is difficult to interpret due to a string of clauses that compile an if-then clause. The phrases begin with ‘if’ but the ‘then’ clause is not clearly indicated. The three key phrases in these verses are as follows: if a Levite travels to the chosen place (vs. 6), he can serve before Yahweh (vs. 7), and he may have equal portions to eat (vs. 8). If the apodosis begins after verse 6,

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<sup>95</sup> אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה is mentioned as a part of the sacred offerings given at the chosen place in Deuteronomy 12.

<sup>96</sup> The Hebrew literally states, ‘the fire of Yahweh and his inheritance they will eat.’ The presence of the conjunction makes the interpretation of the personal pronoun unclear. Driver interprets ‘his’ to be Yahweh thus referencing the offerings brought to the chosen place that the priests are permitted to eat. S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (ICC, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), 214. Others follow the LXX’s interpretation which omits the ‘and’ and takes ‘his’ to refer to the priests’ inheritance (‘the fire of Yahweh is his inheritance’). McConville says this reading is preferable for it produces a good balance between ‘they shall have no [land] inheritance’ and ‘the burnt offerings to Yahweh are his inheritance.’: McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 280. Also Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 544.

<sup>97</sup> This is in contrast to Joshua 21 that instructs each tribe to give cities and pasturelands from within their tribal allotments to the Levites.

<sup>98</sup> Other Pentateuchal law codes separate the priests through their clothing, responsibilities, and rituals in the sanctuary, but Deuteronomy emphasises their uniqueness is due to their inheritance.



then the verses state that if a Levite travels to the chosen place, then he may serve and enjoy equal portions with his brothers. This interpretation is favoured if Deuteronomy's centralising programme is read within the context of Josiah's reforms in which the local altars were destroyed and the local priests were removed from office (2 Kgs. 23:8–9). Within this framework it is thought that Deuteronomy shapes the structure of priestly authority by supporting the newly displaced and unemployed priests, granting them the same status as the priests in Jerusalem.<sup>99</sup> Mayes suggests this is an unlikely interpretation of these verses since 2 Kings 23 specifies the priests were of the high places who would have been considered impure and unfit for service at the central sanctuary.<sup>100</sup>

The alternative interpretation is more congruent with Deuteronomy's overall views of place. Within verses 6–8, if the apodosis begins after verse 7, then the verses state that if the Levite goes to the chosen place and if he serves before God, then he shares an equal portion with his brothers.<sup>101</sup> In this case, the issue is the right of all Levites to travel to the chosen place and to enjoy certain benefits because of their priestly duties.<sup>102</sup> The immediate Deuteronomic context is addressing the inheritance of the tribe of Levi and not the status of individual Levites. In actuality, nothing within Deuteronomy's placial structure supports hierarchical differentiation among the people or within any of the tribes, so it would be incongruent with the rest of Deuteronomy to read these verses as a centralising policy to affect the status of individual Levites.

From 17:8–13 it is known that the Levites hold a significant position interpreting the law for justice, and from 17:18 it is known they stand in the presence of the king, but the Levites have no territorial allotment and cannot build large family holdings to pass on generation to generation. Their prosperity depends on Israel's continued obedience to give cultic offerings. The Levites' dependence on Yahweh is more conspicuous than for the rest of Israel, because their survival comes from their brothers and not through the medium of the land. McConville notes that

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<sup>99</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 545–546.

<sup>100</sup> Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 278–279.

<sup>101</sup> Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 217; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 278; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 299.

<sup>102</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 299.

their lifestyle is an example to Israel of the reality of their prosperity through dependence on God.<sup>103</sup> Instead of a land inheritance to pass to the next generation, their service before God is their legacy.

The relationship between the centre and the distributed places is exemplified in the regulations surrounding the priest. The crux of their responsibilities and their sense of belonging to place is found at the chosen place, but they belong equally among the Israelites in the distributed locations. The priests, who serve before God at the chosen place, are a microcosm of the entire Israelite territory where the people serve God by following the Torah.

#### *18:9–14 Prohibited Canaanite Worship*

Prohibitions against imitating the abominations of surrounding nations create an inclusio around this section (vv. 9, 14). Deuteronomy previously addressed the rejection of foreign worship by the people in terms of tearing down or refusing to build foreign altars, but here the regulations deal with false religious leaders. The position of these verses is appropriately flanked by roles and responsibilities of Israelite priests and prophets who embody appropriate roles in worship.<sup>104</sup> The abomination described in this section is those people who claim magical powers to commune with the divine. Lohfink suggests this placement is purposely situated after the priestly roles because the abominations listed were common ancient Near Eastern methods of seeking a divine word at a local temple. Deuteronomy recognises Israel's desire to interact with God, but it is provided through different means.<sup>105</sup>

Deuteronomy lists examples of abominable practices that include making children pass through the fire (vs. 10; cf. 12:31), and activities such as divination, witchcraft, omens, sorcery, spells, or necromancy (vv. 10–11). Due to these

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<sup>103</sup>McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, 151; cf. Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 128; Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, 83.

<sup>104</sup> Craigie notes the placement of this text is significant for the interpretation. Two legitimate types of religious leadership are set against this illegitimate type of worship: Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 260. McConville suggests the organisation of the section in this way is itself a lesson in the separateness of the life of Israel from the surrounding Canaanites: McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 302; See also Block, *Deuteronomy*, 438–439.

<sup>105</sup> Lohfink, 'Distribution of the Functions of Power,' 336–352.

abominations in the land, Yahweh is dispossessing the nations before Israel (cf. 9:4–5; Lev. 18:24). Israel must be blameless before God (vs. 13) for although the nations practice such things, they are not permissible for Israel (vs. 14). Heard within this section are the cautionary words that the blessing of the land is not a permanent guarantee. The Canaanites are dispossessed of their land because they defiled the land, and it no longer reflects God’s will for creation. Israel will dwell in the land only by obeying these instructions, but if they become like the Canaanites by rejecting God’s righteousness, Israel puts herself in danger of being dispossessed of the land.<sup>106</sup> Israel is expected to participate in maintaining a placial network that exemplifies how they as a people are set apart and holy from the nations. The Torah is not just rules to follow but is the law of the land, unifying the people in all distributed places and exemplifying God’s created order.

*18:15–22 God Chooses a Prophet*

These instructions for the prophet are in direct contrast to how the other nations seek after divine words. ‘The function of making contact with the deity is taken away from the priests; this now belongs exclusively to the prophets.’<sup>107</sup> Once again, however, it is God who initiates the appointment by choosing a prophet ‘from your midst from your brothers’ (מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאֲחֵיךָ) just as he did with the king (17:15).

Although the role of prophet is introduced here for the first time, the narrative has already established a precedence for such a role through the figure of Moses. Verse 15 states that God will choose a ‘prophet like me,’ a phrase that invites interpretation. The immediate qualification is that he must be an Israelite (like the king). He will be the primary means by which God speaks to his people, just as the people desired, when at Horeb Israel asked not to hear the voice of God nor see the great fire for fear of death (vv. 16, 18; cf. 5:25–31 and 9:18–20, 25–29). Tigay suggests that being like Moses implies that the prophet will intercede on behalf of Israel (Deut. 9:25–29), speak with God (Deut. 5:28–31; Ex. 20:18–20), and teach the

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<sup>106</sup> The people almost lost their chance to enter the land before they entered it due to their rebellion at Horeb and in the wilderness (cf. Deut. 9:4–24; Lev. 18:28).

<sup>107</sup> Lohfink, ‘Distribution of the Functions of Power,’ 349.

people God's words (Deut. 4:14; 5:31).<sup>108</sup> Noticeably, there is no location associated with the prophet, because the interaction between the prophet and God is not confined to a place.

From those who do not listen to the words of God spoken through the prophet, God will exact punishment ('I will require it of him'), and the prophet who acts presumptuously (רַי) to speak the words of God will be killed. This punishment is not unexpected for two reasons. Death is the punishment of presumption in the face of the teachings of God (17:12), and it is the punishment of prophets who speak on behalf of other gods (13:1–5). Because the prophet's authority comes from speaking what is understood to be God's words, the prophet who abuses that authority misrepresents God. That prophet should be killed. In anticipation of the logical question as to how the people will know if a prophet is speaking God's words or not, the simple answer is if the word comes to pass, it is from God, and if not, it is not of God, and the prophet has spoken presumptuously (vs. 22). The role of the prophet is justified as it is modelled after Moses, but the claims of the prophet must be measured against stringent standards (cf. 13:2–6).<sup>109</sup>

Like the king, the function of the prophet is somewhat autonomous. There are no other leadership roles put in relation to the prophet, creating a certain amount of solitude and distance from other institutions.<sup>110</sup> Carrière suggests the prophet does not need territorial location because his job as a fellow citizen of place is to distinguish 'you' (all of Israel) from the nations.<sup>111</sup> The prophet's leadership role seem somewhat autonomous, but the people are still actively involved with the prophet. The prophet is chosen by God to be an intermediary figure, so the people must pay close attention and respond to the prophet. The community listens to his words at the danger of receiving God's punishment, but their response to the words must be calculated. The community retains the same responsibility in the interaction

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<sup>108</sup> Although Moses was never directly called a prophet in the Pentateuch, Tigay specifies that the comparison refers 'to the prophetic role that Moses played as God's spokesman,' Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 175.

<sup>109</sup> McBride, 'Polity of the Covenant People,' 75.

<sup>110</sup> Carrière, *Théorie du Politique dans le Deutéronome*, 249.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

with the prophet as they have in the city gates. They have to listen attentively, judge the prophet's words carefully, and respond appropriately.

Completing the leadership section of Deuteronomy with the responsibility of the prophet is appropriate. Israel needs a leadership structure that can work in the land and expand with the people as they figure out how to belong to this place. The leadership roles are shaped after the example of Moses' leadership with the priest and judges participating in the judicial role of deciding difficult cases from the local level, and the prophet becoming an intermediary, intercessor, and teacher of the Torah.

### **Conclusion**

The foundational structure for Israel's place was introduced in Deuteronomy 12, and each subsequent sections of the law code builds on that foundation. The leadership structure specifies positions of leadership located in the distributed places and at the chosen place, and individuals from the larger citizenry are appointed to those positions. The leaders in Deuteronomy are not exclusive-separatists who are elevated to a new rank of society; they are considered to be a part of the citizenry, a fellow brother. Their roles may be specialised, but they remain a part of the community.

Carrière's work is helpful for appreciating this connection between the general population and the citizens appointed to positions of leadership. Each leader fills a specialised role in society, but he remains a part of 'all Israel.' The leaders are accountable for listening to God's teachings and acting upon them. They are examples for the people of what justice, holiness and responsibility look like, so that the people will behave in the same way. Leaders pursue righteousness, and they judge fairly. They submit to the instructions of Torah, and they seek God's voice. They themselves are citizens who take on the responsibilities of the leadership roles and become representatives of an ideal Israelite.

Analysing the leadership roles in Deuteronomy with an eye towards place highlights two points often overlooked in the traditional conversation of Israelite leadership. The first observation is that the community is not passive when it comes to the organisation and leadership of the nation. Community involvement should not

be a surprise since Deuteronomy places such a strong emphasis on all of Israel belonging together in place. If, on one end of the spectrum, the poor are not marginalised as a different class of society, then, on the other end of the spectrum, the leaders are not separated either, because they too are citizens of place. Leadership positions are established within Israel, but the larger community is called to assume many of the same responsibilities that the leaders assume. The people are involved in appointing judges and officers in their gates, and the people are also given the responsibility to participate in maintaining the holiness of community. The people appoint a God-chosen king to rule over them. They provide resources for the Levites, and they critically listen to the prophets. Instead of removing power and influence from the local arena, Deuteronomy's leadership structure creates space for all of Israel to pursue righteousness and execute justice. The people living in distributed places participate in an organisation that unifies the people in a truly unique fashion.

The second observation about leadership that is highlighted by place is that only two out of four institutional roles are tied to identifiable locations. Since place informs the roles and responsibilities assumed by people, and because Deuteronomy is obviously aware of place, the identification and omission of place must be purposeful and, therefore, deserves attention.

Two roles, the judges and the priests, are given specific locations of responsibility at the distributed places and the centre. Judges are citizens in the community who are appointed by the people, and the judges' responsibility is the pursuit of righteousness in the city gates. One can assume the majority of those acting as judge are located in the city gates, but at least one judge travels to the chosen place to work alongside the priest to rule on difficult cases. Priests are appointed by God, and, although they live among the greater Israelite community, their primary responsibility is service at the chosen place. The Levite in the gate (הלוי אשר בשער) is allowed to travel according to his heart's desire to his place of inheritance at the centre. The chosen place is the one location in which the Levites are unified as a tribe. They live among the people but are not land owners. They take the central ideals of justice and holiness that are upheld at the centre and disperse the ideals to the distributed locations. The mutual connection between the distributed

places and the centre is maintained in the dynamic relationship established with the judges and priests in these specified locations. The same individuals are traveling between places, and they both represent the interrelated nature of the centre and distributed places.

Two roles, the king and the prophet, are not given specified locations of responsibility, an omission with different affects on each role. The lack of place for the king is highly unusual. Deuteronomy severely limits the possibility that the king will be the focal point of the nation by not giving the king a place in which he can contextualise and bolster his power. Kings commonly draw attention to their power through activities, ceremonies, feasts, and symbolic places, but Deuteronomy portrays a humble role for the Israelite king who is appointed by the people (17:14–15), accountable to the Torah (17:18–19), and unable to collect the symbolic items associated with human displays of dominance (17:16–17). Keeping the Torah allows the king and his descendants to reign in the land, just as preserving justice allows the people to possess the land (16:20). Therefore, the lineage of the king is subsumed under the more significant rule of Torah.<sup>112</sup> The role of king is not modelled after the surrounding nations but is modelled after an ideal Israelite.

The fact that the prophet is not given a specified location of responsibility is less surprising; he is not a representative of the people but a representative for God.<sup>113</sup> God chooses the prophet to be an intermediary, and he must be allowed to travel wherever necessary to speak the words God gives to him. Location does not support the prophet's authority, because the prophet's authority is authenticated when God chooses to speak to him and those words come true. The role is distinct because the prophet communicates the words of God, and that responsibility is not restricted to place. The prophet, who is to be like Moses, does not have a place just as Moses was a leader outside of any permanent placial structure. He led the people out of the chaos of Egypt and through the wilderness but is not permitted to enter the land with the people. Like Moses, the prophet will be the intermediary between God and the people, calling the people to unwavering loyalty to their God.

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*, 54.

<sup>113</sup> Lohfink, 'Distribution of the Functions of Power,' 349.

When aligning Deuteronomy's leadership structure with its placial structure, the power play within a human hierarchy is eliminated. The structure Deuteronomy presents is far from the royal-temple way of governing people in the land, which is how Deuteronomy's centralising programme is typically interpreted. Deuteronomy presents a leadership structure that is a counter discourse to what is normal in the surrounding nations. The description of Israelite leadership is a critique against oppression and the abuse of power. Righteousness pursued in the city gates and holiness preserved at the centre are equally important and are pursued by both the people and the leaders so that God's righteousness will be reflected in all Israel (both people and land). Deuteronomy pushes against the idea that all human authority should be located in one place, and it prevents both an indiscriminate exertion of power and any form of hierarchical structure of power that elevates one above the rest. Deuteronomy's leadership structure should not be understood as a triangular power structure in which authority flows from a single entity on top to the wide population base on the bottom. Instead, the leaders are pillars arising from the midst of the people upholding the social structure of Israel and allowing the people to truly be 'the people holy to Yahweh your God' (7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19).

How does one address the fact this structure does not seem to be present in the historical narratives? In particular, the role of the monarchy as described in the historical narratives seems to be fashioned according to the monarchies of surrounding nations more than according to the Deuteronomic ideal. Remembering the setting of these leadership descriptions is helpful. The leadership roles are embedded within the law code in which the stated purpose is to help the people understand the best way to live in the place. The law code shapes the views of Israel. The laws are utopian in that the Torah establishes the ideal standard of leadership that works within Deuteronomy's placial structure—a structure that upholds the unity and integrity of the community. However, the ideal design is not necessarily unrealistic. The Torah is persuasive precisely because it is attainable. Deuteronomy presents what should be the key values of Israelite society in a similar fashion that modern, western societies hold to the belief that all people are created equal, even though in reality people are discriminated against based on gender, ethnicity, age



and education. Deuteronomy presents the best case scenario, but it is left up to the people to work towards such a reality.



## CHAPTER 8

### Place and Community Responsibility (Part 2)

#### Introduction

The second half of the Deuteronomic law code (chs. 19–26), differs from the first half in a couple ways. The organisation and rhetoric of these laws is unlike the first half, but, perhaps more noticeably, the chosen place retreats from view even though its existence can be inferred in some passages.<sup>1</sup> The presentation of placial structure in the second part of the law code shifts from establishing the right relationship between the chosen place and the city gates to nurturing the proper relationship between the Israelites and their inherited land. This shift, however, does not ignore what was previously established. Two familiar placial issues are evident in these chapters. The national collective memory of oppression in Egypt is an ethical motivator for belonging to and investing in a place that reflects God’s created order. Additionally, living according to the Torah and remaining faithful to the covenant means Israel is responsible for all that is in her midst. Each nested place is connected to the whole, and all distributed places are connected to the centre, so Israel’s faithfulness is required throughout the whole land and not just at the chosen place where Deuteronomy has centralised certain activities. The connection between the centre and distributed places is upheld even as the laws in Deuteronomy 19–25 primarily relate to the distributed places. The second half of the law code continues to address the proper placial structure Israel should develop in the land, but the primary focus shifts to the relationships developed in the social and physical realms of the distributed places.

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that the chosen place retreats from view may be anticipated if one follows Kaufman and Braulik’s supposition that the law code is edited according to the Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5. According to such an analysis, Deuteronomy 19–25 follows laws six through ten of the Decalogue, which are arguably more focused on civil life. Cf. Kaufman, ‘The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law’; Braulik, ‘The Sequence of the Laws in Deuteronomy 12–26.’

Specific references to the chosen place are missing in these laws, and a comparison with similar laws in the Pentateuchal law code demonstrate that concern for cultic content is also missing. Only a few laws in Deuteronomy 19–25 have comparable laws in the other Pentateuchal law codes, but of these laws, the sacral associations that are present in other versions of the law are omitted. This unique quality in Deuteronomy led Noth to conclude that Deuteronomy’s laws show a ‘distinct lack of interest in the observance of the cult.’<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Weinfeld commented on Deuteronomy’s lack of cultic material stating that the Priestly writings, with their focus on the Tabernacle and all associated rituals, codify sacral legislation, but the Deuteronomistic writings are more concerned with the civil sphere.<sup>3</sup>

The separation and comparison of source material has not been the primary focus in this study, but they cannot go completely unnoticed in these chapters. Diachronic issues are mentioned because some of the laws in Deuteronomy 19–25 contain evidence of possible pre-Deuteronomistic writing. For example, Deuteronomy 21:23 instructs the people not to ‘defile’ (בטא) their land (a Priestly concept used only this one time in Deuteronomy), and Deuteronomy 23:18 mentions the ‘house of Yahweh your God’ (בית יהוה אלהיך) instead of the familiar Deuteronomistic chosen place formula. Such unusual language may be evidence that earlier forms of the text were received and edited into the Deuteronomistic law code.

These unique qualities in the text can be indicators of the history of the text itself, but caution will continue to be used regarding the traditional historical critical evaluations of these texts. In the past, historical critical studies analysed these laws based on the presentation of place as either sacred or profane, thus making conclusions based on a bifurcated understanding of place. However, in the contemporary studies of place, discussions regarding the complex and varied aspects of place do not allow for such black and white understandings of place. An analysis based within the context of the law code in which the laws are presented is more

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<sup>2</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 93; cf. McConville, *Law and Theology*, 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> For an extensive categorisation and discussion of the differences between the Priestly writings and Deuteronomy, see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 30–37; idem, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 191ff. See also Driver, *Deuteronomy*, iii–xix.

conducive to the study. The greater context of Deuteronomy influences the ways in which place is discussed so that the presentation of laws in Deuteronomy takes on a unique Deuteronomic form. The sacral material found in other writings is downplayed in Deuteronomy, but the interconnected quality of all aspects of place means Deuteronomy's concept of place that is governed by the Torah establishes a sanctuary nature for the whole land.

The first half of the law code situates the chosen place at the centre of the law, and thus deals with a significant amount of sacral material including the chosen place, sacrifices, tithes, firstlings, and festivals. The second half of the law code places the entirety of the land at the centre of the law but does not forget that the centre and distributed places have a mutually informing relationship. This overall placial structure suggests the unique features of Deuteronomy may not be evidence that the book is completely eliminating sacral connotations, but that such connotations have been shaped and presented according to the Deuteronomic emphasis on the moral order that is established in the land to develop a good place that represents the created order. Thus, the theme of place surfaces differently in Deuteronomy 19–25 so that care of people and of non-human creation is of primary importance.

Deuteronomy makes the distinction between possessing the land and dwelling in the land. Casey states that truly 'dwelling' in place involves personal investment in and cultivation of place, which he calls 'localised caring.'<sup>4</sup> Personal involvement allows one to fully belong to and become rooted in place. As each family localises care for land and becomes embedded in the 'ecological realities of its surrounding landscape,' they become 'native' to their place.<sup>5</sup> The personal investment for the long term, as Davis points out, is essential for Israel's survival in the narrow, arid land that depends on the grace of God and on the people's wise practice. This is unlike the riverine communities of Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon that had a larger

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<sup>4</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 175.

<sup>5</sup> Davis refers to Wes Jackson who speaks of the importance for the modern world to learn to become native to our places: Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 82; cf. Wes Jackson, *Becoming Native to This Place* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 3.

margin for ‘negligence, ignorance, or error.’<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy’s concept of place, as it applies to the whole land, ultimately comes down to the interconnected network of specific and localised places.

Localised care requires the occupants of place to recognise the inherent value of the non-human aspects of place and to respond to that value. Honouring the inherent value of the physical aspects of place is what Casey calls an ‘ecocentric ethic,’<sup>7</sup> a modern term that aptly describes Deuteronomy’s views of place. An ecocentric ethic is the natural outcome of pursuing God’s righteousness (צדק)—a term referring to right behaviour as determined by the standard of the harmonious order of the world.<sup>8</sup> Davis supports a view similar to Casey’s ‘ecocentric ethic.’ She says, ‘Agrarians know the land, not as an inert object, but as a fellow creature that can justly expect something from us whose lives depend on it.’<sup>9</sup> Understanding humanity’s inextricable tie to the natural environment is a significant part of analysing a complex placial network.

Deuteronomy 19–26 has a strong focus on the natural world without neglecting the social justice that has been a consistent theme in the law code. Deuteronomy prioritises the care of all people across familial or socio-economic divisions, even if such care is inconvenient. This leads, in part, to what Weinfeld calls the ‘humanism’ of Deuteronomy in which the distinctions between genders and social classes are minimised.<sup>10</sup> Although the terms ‘humanism’ and ‘humanitarian’ are modern words with implications of finding human connection across differences, it aptly describes the way Deuteronomy not only minimises the differences but cultivates a sense of belonging between all the people.

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<sup>6</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 264.

<sup>8</sup> See above, chapter 7, notes 33, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Weinfeld’s conclusion is due to social concerns in Deuteronomy as well as the previously mentioned ‘secularisation’ of Deuteronomy: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School*, 282–297. Weinfeld was not the first to point out Deuteronomy’s concern for all individuals in society. See Driver, *Deuteronomy*, xxiii–xxv. Rogerson suggests, ‘the more humane humans become...the closer they become to what the Old Testament calls the “image of God,” (Genesis 1.27).’ Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, 174.

Analysing the laws in Deuteronomy 19–25 as well as the concluding liturgical celebrations in Deuteronomy 26 must be done with the broader placial structure of Deuteronomy in mind. As such, Deuteronomy 19–26 fosters a rich sense of community and of ‘belonging together’ with particular attention to what belonging to the natural environment looks like. The chosen place is not central to the laws here, and yet Deuteronomy maintains the importance of preserving the integrity of the entire placial structure, because each nested place, and the people within them, are connected. Therefore, the theme to carefully guard all that is ‘in your midst’ (as introduced in the discussion of Deuteronomy 13) is significant in this half of the law because within the complexity of place, the impurity located in the land or among the social actions of the people affects the entire placial structure. Deuteronomy insists the whole territory is one land, so if Israel defiles one aspect of the land, they defile it all.

### **Form**

These final chapters of the law code (chs. 19–26) enhance the placial structure as established so far with additional relational matters pertaining to the community. The diversity of laws brought together in chapters 19–26 continue to develop layers in the complex relationships in place, and, as mentioned above, the focus is on the whole community in all the land.

These chapters read differently than those that precede it, due primarily to the diverse laws addressing a large variety of subjects and themes. The organisation, which includes miscellaneous laws interjected into major laws, seems to obscure a clear pattern of composition and gives this section a less hortatory tone than the previous chapters of the law code.<sup>11</sup> Tigay notes the arrangement of the law ‘does not follow systematic principles of the sort that modern readers expect, such as keeping to a subject and completing it before going on to another, and arranging laws about a subject logically or chronologically, or in some other systematic way.’ He also states that scholars have difficulty recognising Deuteronomy’s organisational system ‘due primarily to the fact that our own canons of coherence are almost exclusively topical and linear. In the ancient world, a wider variety of

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<sup>11</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 308.

factors was used for organizing subject matter,<sup>12</sup> (i.e., ideas, key words, phrases).<sup>12</sup> The first half of the law code contains several laws that are similar to those of other Pentateuchal law codes, while this half has a greater number of laws completely unique to Deuteronomy. Many of these are, as Lundbom says, ‘humanistic in character.’<sup>13</sup> However, in the few laws with parallel regulations, Deuteronomy maintains its own unique presentation.

Deuteronomy 19:1–21:9 addresses judicial matters over which the judges, elders, and priests have jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 21:9–25:19 is more difficult to categorise due to the miscellaneous nature of organisation. Tigay labels the entire section ‘laws on civil and domestic life’ whereas von Rad suggests the section should be broken down further to 21:10–22:30 dealing with respect for life within the familial context, and 23:1–25:19 addressing purity and humanitarian behaviour.<sup>15</sup> The Deuteronomic law code draws to a conclusion with a covenant ratification ceremony on the Plains of Moab. Deuteronomy 26 has three distinct divisions. Verses 1–10 and 11–15 deal with two liturgical declarations centred around the celebration of first fruit and the third year tithe respectively. The final division in verses 16–19 draws the entire law code to a conclusion. The verses contain repeated phrases and themes that appear in the frame around Deuteronomy 5–11, finding a particular affinity with chapter 11 and the call to ratify the covenant.<sup>16</sup>

The discussion below is not meant to be an exhaustive study of all of the laws mentioned within these chapters but instead a focused look at the organisation of life in place according to God’s standards of justice and righteousness. The analysis roughly retains a sequential progression through the chapters, although this is not

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<sup>12</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 449–450.

<sup>13</sup> For his codification of the unique laws in Deuteronomy, see Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 48–50. For how several of Deuteronomic laws relate to other ANE law codes as well as the other Pentateuchal law codes, see Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands?*

<sup>14</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 564; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 178.

<sup>15</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 193; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 226, note 86.

<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 5–11 begin with the Ten Commandments, progress into exhortations to love Yahweh with one’s heart, soul and strength, and conclude with instructions for a covenant ratification ceremony to take place inside the land at Gerizim and Ebal. Deuteronomy 12–26 expound upon the law to love Yahweh and connects the love for Yahweh with obedience to the law in the land.



strictly maintained to discuss similar laws together. The categories below will focus on the systems of justice, rules of warfare, ethical care of creation, and social welfare. It concludes with two liturgical declarations to be made in the land and the covenant ratification made on the Plains of Moab.

## **Text**

### *Systems of Justice*

Chapter 19 begins with a conditional clause to establish time and to focus on place. When God cuts off the nations and gives Israel their land, and when Israel dispossesses the Canaanites and dwells in their cities and houses (cf. Deut. 6:10), then they must separate (בָּרַל)<sup>17</sup> three cities in the midst of their land to be a refuge for the one who commits an unintentional homicide (vs. 2).<sup>18</sup> The verb בָּרַל is the same verb used in P's creation account in which God created order out of undifferentiated chaos by establishing places with greater degrees of differentiations.<sup>19</sup> Now Israel, when they have settled in the land, will participate in God's creative acts by separating and organising their land to make justice available to all people. Three cities of refuge were set apart in portions of the Transjordan previously conquered by Israel (4:41).<sup>20</sup> From south to north these are Bezer on the Medaba Plateau, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in Bashan—one designated city in each major geographical unit. The instructions in Deuteronomy 19 do not name the

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<sup>17</sup> In the Genesis creation narratives, God's acts of separating and differentiating places provided appropriate places to contain the objects of creation. In Genesis בָּרַל is used only in the Priestly creation narrative referring to separating and differentiating places. In Deuteronomy בָּרַל is used to speak of differentiating the cities of refuge in chapter 4 and 19 and in singling out of tribe of Levi.

<sup>18</sup> See Exodus 21:12–14, which establishes the difference between intentional and unintentional murder (Num. 35:11–28; Josh. 20:7–9). The basic view is that no one should be condemned unjustly as a murderer. Cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 309.

<sup>19</sup> As discussed above in chapter 3, Casey says of the connection between place and creation, 'for creation to proceed differentiation must occur' (emphasis original). Casey, *Fate of Place*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua 20 seems to indicate all six cities were appointed at the same time. Cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 566.

cities to be appointed nor the geographical locations<sup>21</sup> but focus instead on the justice that is dependent on the equitable distribution of refuge. The instructions to measure the territory so that the cities of refuge are equally distributed throughout the land has a distinct ‘trans-tribal’ quality in which the land is viewed holistically instead of as a collection of tribal allotments.

Verses 4–6 state why these cities are necessary. The manslayer (הַרצֵחַ)<sup>22</sup> who commits unintentional murder should flee to one of these cities to preserve his life. The city has a pragmatic function to prevent the avenger of blood from exacting revenge ‘when his heart is inflamed,’ even before the killer’s intentions are determined. Giving refuge to the manslayer prevents the blood avenger from shedding innocent blood in the midst of the land, which would bring bloodguilt on the community (vs. 10; cf. 21:8–9).<sup>23</sup> The refuge granted the manslayer is in contrast to verses 11–12 in which the killer’s intentions are discovered to be purposeful.<sup>24</sup> In that case, even if the killer flees to the city of refuge, the elders remove him from the city and turn him over to the blood avenger. The cities of refuge provide protection for the innocent, but they do not shelter the guilty from going unpunished.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Not naming cities inside Israelite territory is similar to the lack of tribal distinctions. The land is described as a single entity with no internal borders separating the people from each other or from the chosen place. The fact that Deuteronomy does not name cities that are inside the land—as opposed to the plethora of cities named outside the territory—was discussed previously. See chapter 4, pp. 133–134.

<sup>22</sup> A manslayer is differentiated from a murderer by the intention to kill. A manslayer unintentionally commits homicide, and the designated cities function as a temporary place of refuge before the case is adjudicated. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 566–567.

<sup>23</sup> Shedding innocent blood defiles the land and the inhabitants (Gen. 4:10–12; Num. 35:33; Jer. 26:15): Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 570. The act of vengeance outside the judicial system is considered a crime and must be prevented because the spilling of blood will make the land impure and the people are responsible for all that is in their midst. In verse 10, the innocent blood can be that of the manslayer who, because he killed without intention, does not deserve death: Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 973–974.

<sup>24</sup> Little is said about the specific regulations of the trial. Numbers 35 places the trial before the congregation who decides the verdict, and if it is determined the death was not premeditated, the killer can stay in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. If the killer leaves the city limits before then, the blood avenger may seek vengeance. Joshua 20 specifies the trial takes place in the gate of the city of refuge before the elders of that city, again specifying the manslayer stays in the city until the death of the high priest. Cf. Weinfeld, ‘On “Demythologization and Secularization” in Deuteronomy,’ *IEJ*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1973): 233.

<sup>25</sup> Exodus does not permit the protection of the guilty, and ‘not even the sacred protection of the altar can be invoked amorally,’ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 182.

Similar laws of asylum are also listed in Exodus and Numbers, although each presentation of the law is slightly different from the others. Exodus 21:12–14 mentions that a place of refuge will be chosen, and this place is an altar rather than a city.<sup>26</sup> Importantly, Exodus differentiates between intentional and unintentional murder, so that the asylum of the altar is available only to the one who is innocent of pre-conceived murder.<sup>27</sup> Intentional homicide always has the penalty of capital punishment. Differentiating between premeditated and accidental injury is significant in each presentation of the law, but both the Priestly writings and the Deuteronomic writings shift the place of refuge from the altar to a city. In the Priestly writings, six Levitical cities are granted the status of cities of refuge, which implies a degree of sanctity (Num. 35:6). A manslayer is given asylum only if he reaches the city before the blood avenger reaches him.<sup>28</sup> A trial is held before ‘the congregation’ (הַעֲדָה)—a common term in the Priestly writings referring to the cultic assembly of Israel, but which is normally eliminated from Deuteronomy’s

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<sup>26</sup> ‘I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee’ (Ex. 21:13b). If the manslayer is found guilty of intentional killing, ‘from my altar you shall take him that he may die’ (Ex. 21:14b).

<sup>27</sup> Tigay says ANE laws did not make this differentiation. Any person could seek the asylum of the altar: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 179. McConville notes Deuteronomy, unlike other ANE laws, does not make a distinction of penalty based on the differentiation between slaves and free people. The Code of Hammurabi (laws 15–19) states the reward for returning a slave and also the punishment for harbouring a runaway slave. McConville observes that all of the ANE law codes dealt with the issue: McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 309, 351.

<sup>28</sup> Without local altars providing refuge, the manslayer had to run to the nearest city of refuge. ‘This procedure, which leaves the killer’s safety to chance instead of directly prohibiting the blood avenger from harming him before a trial is held, reflects the social conditions of the time.’ Tigay believes the time period reflected is when communal authority replaced the authority of kinship groups. Tigay suggests the communal laws prevent the blood avenger from immediately exacting revenge, and yet it upholds the family’s traditional rights by handing the killer over to the family if he is found guilty: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 179.

writings.<sup>29</sup> All innocent blood that is spilled creates bloodguilt, so even though the killer is not handed over immediately to the victim's family, appropriate punishment must be exacted. The city protects the killer but also plays a punitive role because the manslayer is confined to this place until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:25).<sup>30</sup>

The Levitical and High Priest associations with the cities of refuge are eliminated from Deuteronomy, making the cities of refuge in Deuteronomy 'non sacral urban safety zones.'<sup>31</sup> The cities serve a pragmatic function to protect the manslayer from vengeance until his innocence has been established.<sup>32</sup> Instead of the Levitical association, the cities are differentiated according to major geographical areas. The importance of providing accessibility to all people regardless of where they live is evident in Moses' instructions to set aside three additional cities if God enlarge Israel's territory (vv. 8–9). The success of the cities of refuge depends on equal geographic distribution as well as a certain sense of Israelite nationality in which the people recognise the viability of a system of justice with authority stretching beyond the local tribal structure.

All three Pentateuchal presentations of the law prioritise distinguishing the intentions of the killer and preventing the unjust punishment of the innocent, but the places of refuge themselves are described in different terms. Deuteronomy is wholly

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<sup>29</sup> When Deuteronomy refers to the assembly of Israel, it uses the term קהל, except in this one verse where it uses the term עדה. Tigay states that עדה and קהל are synonymous: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 209–210. In contrast, Weinfeld says קהל is a broad term used in 'all strata of biblical literature and applies to all periods of Israelite history.' He states that the term קהל generally refers to a large group of people (therefore, the term's inclusiveness of all people supports Deuteronomy's inclusive laws). Weinfeld further states that עדה 'mainly occurs in a sacerdotal context and is restricted to the pre-monarchic period,' making this term appropriate for a small, representative group at the sanctuary: Moshe Weinfeld, 'Congregation (Assembly),' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2nd ed., vol. 5; ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik; Farmington Hills, Mich.: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 159; cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 646. The use of עדה in this context is highly unusual for Deuteronomy and may point to pre-Deuteronomistic material.

<sup>30</sup> The punishment for unintentional killing is the forced exile from one's familial land, and the punishment for intentional killing is death. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 179. Weinfeld suggests confinement to the city functions as the method for the manslayer to atone for his sin, because living apart from his family and land is his punishment: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 29, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 239.

<sup>32</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 33–34.

concerned with differentiating places and organising the land to establish equal justice for all people. When Deuteronomy's laws are interpreted according to the larger placial structure, it can be said Deuteronomy is presenting the law of refuge according to place. The cities of refuge are significant not because of sacral reasons but because they provide justice through a fair measurement and organisation of land. Therefore, all the people in all the land not only have access to refuge but also are protected from the guilt shared by all if innocent blood is shed in the land. So Weinfeld's idea that Deuteronomy downplays holiness language may be correct but the reason may not be due to Deuteronomy's intentions to eliminate sacral connotations, as much as it is due to the presentation of the law being governed by the larger context in which Deuteronomy emphasises the holistic nature of people and land under the Torah.

Deuteronomy 19:15–21 continues to expound on justice in the land. These verses elaborate on what was previously established in Deuteronomy 17:2–13. However, instead of primarily focusing on the accused person, Deuteronomy 19 focuses on the potential of a malicious witness abusing the judicial system. A person in the community can be accused of wrongdoing only if the crime is verified by two or more witnesses (19:15; cf. Deut. 17:2–7; Num. 35:30). Without adequate witnesses, when the case is one person's word against another's, the case is taken before God. Both the accuser and the accused go to stand 'before Yahweh' (לפני יהוה) and before the priests and the judges who are in office (vs. 17).<sup>33</sup> The judges makes

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<sup>33</sup> Even without specifically mentioning the chosen place, two things suggest it is the appropriate context for this text. The presence of the priest and judge is in line with the regulations of difficult cases judged at the chosen place (Deut. 17:9–12), and the cases that are tried before God do not depend on witnesses (Deut. 19:16–21). Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 242. Additionally, the accused goes לפני יהוה which is the phrase often used to describe the people appearing at the chosen place (Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; 14:23, 26; 15:20; 16:11; 18:7; 19:17; 26:5, 10, 13). Deuteronomy 24:4 and 13 are exceptions, because the references are not to a person's physical presence before God in his chosen place but of a general perception of righteousness before God. Wilson's study of לפני יהוה is helpful on this issue. He concludes that the reference to standing before God in these verses (Deut. 19:16–21) serves the dual purpose of designating the location of the inquiry and also emphasising the seriousness of the inquiry on account of it taking place in God's presence: Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire*, 176–177. The unspecified reference to the chosen place should be compared to Deuteronomy 25:1–3, which also refers to an unnamed 'place of judgement' (vs. 1), but there are multiple people present, the judge determines who is righteous and who is guilty, and there are no priests present. The natural reading of this text suggests the location is in the city gates where criminal decisions are mostly made.

a thorough inquiry (19:18), and if the witness is found to be maliciously motivated, then the punishment he originally intended for his brother will fall on his head. This punishment serves two purposes. It purges evil from the midst of the people, and it deters the rest of the community who will hear and fear and will not allow such evil in their midst (vv. 19–20).<sup>34</sup> Millar notes, ‘The need to purge and deter may suggest that, for the Deuteronomist, [perjury is] potentially as serious as apostasy’ (cf. Deut. 13).<sup>35</sup> Although the dispute is settled at the chosen place, the people in all the distributed places will hear and will maintain righteousness in their locations. This reinforces what has been seen before that the whole land is unified by upholding the justice of the centre in all the distributed places.

Israel is responsible for purging evil from their midst, and in most cases, the source of the impurity is known and eradicated. A murderer who is identified and tried before the elders of his city and found guilty, pays for his crime with his life and thus the people ‘purge the blood of the innocent from Israel’ (19:13). If the identity of the murderer is unknown, then the blood of the killed person is left unaccounted for. Atonement must be made for the sin, because the Israelites are responsible for all in their midst. McConville states, ‘the spilling of blood has the consequence not only of making the murderer liable to judicial penalty, but also of making the land itself ritually impure.’<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 21:1–9 addresses how Israel

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<sup>34</sup> This is now a familiar statement of Deuteronomy (Deut. 13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:13, 21:21; 22:21, 24; 24:7).

<sup>35</sup> Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 131.

<sup>36</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 327. The guilt that comes with spilled blood is similar to Genesis 4:10 in which innocent blood cries out to God from the ground. Without a known murder to pay retribution for the crime, an alternative must be found. See Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 593.

should respond when the guilty party is unknown.<sup>37</sup> The elders and judges measure the distance to the surrounding cities to determine who will take responsibility (vs. 2), and the elders of the city closest to the body take on the representative role to atone for the murder (vs. 4).<sup>38</sup> The priests are also present, because God has chosen them to minister before him (vs. 5).<sup>39</sup> Their presence serves to emphasise the sacrality of all the land not just the chosen place. The elders testify to their innocence of both the deed and the knowledge of the culprit, and they ask Yahweh to atone for his people by letting the blood of a slain animal atone for the innocent blood spilled in their midst (vv. 7–8). Even if the larger community is not guilty of the crime nor are they knowledgeable of where to place the blame, they are still responsible for atoning for the shed blood because it is in their midst. Israel as a people are one, and they belong to a particular land being united in the pursuit of God’s righteousness. The lack of evidence that prevents placing the blame on one individual does not dismiss the need for all of Israel to seek atonement. Shedding

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<sup>37</sup> Tigay likens this ritual to the Hittite laws (nos. 400, 401, 405, 441, 454) in which a killer is handed over to the victim’s family who can choose the type of punishment exacted. The family can accept monetary compensation or they can demand that the killer is executed. If there is monetary compensation, the place where the killing happened has to be purified, but if the perpetrator is executed the place is purified. Inferably, in a case where the killer is unknown, an act of purification is mandatory: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 472–474, and notes for Excursus 19, pg. 539, no. 1. Feder gives a detailed account of the similarities between Hittite and Israelite blood expiation rituals. Of Deuteronomy 21:1–9, in particular, Feder says the victim’s unatoned blood incriminates the whole community, forcing them to compensate for the spilled blood (similar to Hittite Law §6). The city is implicated with the guilt of the unknown killer, but the guilt is expiated by means of ritual: Yitzhaq Feder, *Blood Expiation in Hittite and Biblical Ritual: Origins, Context, and Meaning* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), esp. 176–186, 239, 269.

<sup>38</sup> The required presence of the elders and judges may be due to an underlying assumption that the perpetrator came from the nearest city; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 192. In verse 4 the instructions for absolution include breaking the neck of the heifer in the wadi, washing their hands, declaring their innocence and praying for forgiveness. Such procedures do not fit any other ceremonial form of sacrifice. Von Rad suggested that this rite was more similar to sending the scapegoat into the wilderness on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:10, 22), but this is a forced analogy. Tigay notes the process of breaking the neck of the animal is used for those specifically not offered as a sacrifice (Ex. 13:13; 34:20): Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 192, 472–476; also Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 256. Block suggests it must be a ritual reenactment of the murder with a goal to remove the land’s defilement: Block, *Deuteronomy*, 490. The exact meaning of the ceremony remains unclear.

<sup>39</sup> Weinfeld suggests the priests are present to guarantee the religious aspect of the ceremony by presiding over it, though they do not perform any rituals: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomical School*, 211; cf. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 243. Milgrom says that the priest is not performing a sacrifice, because breaking the neck is not sacrificial. The priest is there because D requires the priest to adjudicate all criminal cases: Milgrom, ‘The Alleged “Demythologization and Secularization” in Deuteronomy,’ 159.

innocent blood contaminates the land making the people guilty until reparations are made.

Deuteronomy then addresses injustice within the family unit. The law of the rebellious son (21:18–21) is similar to the laws of 13:6–11 in which family members are responsible for what is in their midst even though the trial and punishment is decided by the elders in the city gate. Consistent with Deuteronomy's views of interconnected places, the household is not independent of the rest of the community. The household is contained by the larger community being a part of 'all Israel.' Because place is both contained and containing, the home is a smaller piece of the community fabric that makes up the larger social structure. It is possible that because families held modest portions of land and engaged in subsistence agriculture the son's lazy and disrespectful behaviour threatened the social fabric of the family as well as the family's ability to perpetuate long-term sustainability on the family land.<sup>40</sup> The parents are responsible for bringing their son's behaviour before the community at the city gate. Potentially behind this law is also the recognition that the father-son relationship is exemplified in Israel's relationship with God (1:31; 8:5).<sup>41</sup> A rebellious son is analogous to Israel rebelling against God, and persistent rebellion is not tolerated.<sup>42</sup> If the parents conclude the son will not reform his rebellious ways, and if the elders of the city gate agree, the son is executed. Like all capital punishments, the public display has two purposes. First, the punishment reinforces that the community is responsible to purge evil from their midst. Second,

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<sup>40</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 102; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 333. This law follows after the laws protecting the rights of the firstborn (vv. 15–17), and this section protects the family from careless actions of the son, because the relationship between Yahweh and Israel was vested in the socioeconomic fabric of the household. The family unit assumes much of the responsibility for the fulfilment of that relationship, so protecting what is in the midsts of the family is critical. However, Deuteronomy limits the parental power by placing the authority to execute the son in the hands of the court: Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 77–78, 81–89, 230–231.

<sup>41</sup> Bellefontaine notes the specified complaints against the son—that he is a drunkard and a glutton—are not part of the commandment to honour one's father and mother, and so she rejects the fifth commandment as the background to this law. However, the description of being stubborn and rebellious make use of adjectives often attributed to Israel. She concludes this law must be a metaphorical warning to all of Israel: Elizabeth Bellefontaine, 'Reviewing the Case of the Rebellious Son,' *JSOT* 13 (1979): 13–39.

<sup>42</sup> Israel as the rebellious son could be the legal background for Yahweh's indictment against Israel in Isaiah 1:2; 30:1. See von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 138.



the rest of Israel will hear of it and be deterred from such behaviour (vs. 21). The connection between interconnected places is evident here where a matter threatening family life affects the larger community and then becomes an example to the larger social group.

The final two verses of Deuteronomy 21 create a thematic inclusio with the first verses of the unaccounted for murder (vv. 1–9).<sup>43</sup> The instructions given in both accounts are for the benefit of the land so that it is not left defiled. If someone who has committed a crime is punished by death and is hung on a tree (vs. 22), the body is not allowed to remain on the tree overnight but must be buried the same day. The one who is hung is cursed by God, he has been punished for transgressing the covenant, but it is the land that is defiled (טמא) if the body is not removed before the sun goes down. The law may intend to avoid prolonged humiliation of the perpetrator after death, but it also protects the sanctity of the land (vs. 23).<sup>44</sup> This is an interesting law, because, like the unaccounted for murder, the law does not primarily deal with exacting justice but with guarding Israel's place from becoming defiled.

The piel form of טמא as used here is unusual language for Deuteronomy. טמא is reminiscent of the Priestly writings in which it is used extensively to distinguish clean and unclean objects and people. However, in light of Deuteronomy's avoidance of sacral language, the phrase 'do not defile your land' is unexpected language. And yet, as is evident in many of these laws, Israel is responsible for the sanctity of their land and is accountable for what is in the midst of 'all Israel'—meaning both the people and the land. The land God gives to his people is a good land, and the people participate in preserving God's created order. Minimising the discussion of 'pure' and 'defiled' as used in the Priestly writings does not mean Deuteronomy is opposed to such concepts. The presence of טמא may be due to pre-

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<sup>43</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 332.

<sup>44</sup> A body left and exposed to the natural elements further degraded the criminal and may have been intended to deny the criminal a proper burial. The humiliation was a public warning (Gen. 40:19; 1 Sam. 31:10; 2 Sam. 4:12): Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 262. Deuteronomy does not require the practice of hanging the bodies of criminals, but it does recognise that such practices existed and so established laws to protect the land from becoming defiled. Tigay suggests defilement could happen when a decaying body, left to decompose, is scattered by birds and animals throughout the territory: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 198.

Deuteronomic material that has been absorbed into this context, but it is used here to emphasise a greater ‘placial’ point that Deuteronomy is making. In fact, the larger context of the book suggests Deuteronomy does in fact absorb sacral concepts but presents them in such a way to focus on the sanctuary nature of the whole land instead of the singular sanctuary in the midst of the people. By allowing a dead body to remain exposed overnight the whole land can become defiled. Deuteronomy is thus re-calibrating the sacral language to fit within the established views of the mutually informing relationship between the chosen place and distributed places.

### *Rules of Warfare*

The laws concerning conduct during war are primarily found in chapter 20 although additional aspects are addressed in 21:10–14, and 23:9–14. Chapter 20 is organised in three principal segments each starting with the casuistic ‘when/if...you,’ and each addresses different stages of military activity. Verses 1–9 describe the preparation of the army for battle, verses 10–18 address conduct in war, and verses 19–20 discuss ecological considerations of war. The overriding lesson is that Israel should not trust human, imperial forms of power for true authority belongs only to God.

When Israel goes out to battle against their enemies, they are not to fear power displayed by numerous horses, chariots, or warriors, all objects used in Deuteronomy to describe the power of Egypt (vs. 1; cf. 11:4; Ex 15:1).<sup>45</sup> Israel should not fear because Yahweh, who has already exhibited his power by bringing the people out of Egypt, is with his people (vs. 1; cf. 1:30; 8:14; 11:3–4), and God’s authority trumps all human authority. God’s presence is decisive in battle, a lesson Israel learned in the failed attempt to enter the land (cf. 1:41–45). Before engaging in battle, the priest reminds the army that the battle belongs to God who is going before them to fight on their behalf (vs. 4; 23:14). Because Israel depends on God for victory, the officers can allow some men to be excused from military service. They ask a set of four questions each beginning with the phrase ‘who is the man who...’ followed with ‘he is to return to his house, lest he die in battle’. The ones dismissed are those who have built a house but not yet dedicated it (vs. 5), those

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<sup>45</sup> Such displays of human power were also forbidden for the Israelite king (Deut. 17:16).

who have planted a vineyard but have not enjoyed the fruit (vs. 6),<sup>46</sup> and those who are betrothed but have not finalised the marriage (vs. 7; also 24:5). Likewise, the man who is fearful should return home, not for the sake of his own household but so he does not make ‘the heart of his brothers melt’ (vs. 8).<sup>47</sup> Of these laws Millar states, ‘Even war should not inhibit the enjoyment of Yahweh’s land, and an exemption from national service is extended to those who have not had the opportunity to enjoy his provisions, be it house, vineyard or wife (verses 5–7).’<sup>48</sup> Although his evaluation is correct, these laws are more than a chance to enjoy the provisions of the land. They allow families to become fully rooted in place, so that even in times of war, the house is built, the family name is established, and the fields are fruitful enough to sustain the family when the male is gone. These laws place priority on establishing stability on the home front even over the military interests of the nation.

When war is necessary, place dictates the rules of engagement and limits wanton destruction of communities. The cities that are far away, or outside Israel’s territory, may be offered terms of surrender in which no blood is shed even though forced labour may be enforced (vv. 10–11). If the city refuses to surrender and it is defeated, only the men, the ones most likely to rebel in the future, are to be killed (vv. 12–13).<sup>49</sup> The army may take as reward the women and children, although chapter 21 will regulate such actions to prevent rape and malicious destruction in the

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<sup>46</sup> It takes more than two years for a vine to produce fruit, but according to Levitical law one may not eat the fruit from a new vine until the fifth year (Lev. 19:23–25). See Jacob Wright, ‘Warfare and Wanton Destruction: A Reexamination of Deuteronomy 20: 19–20 in Relation to Ancient Siegecraft,’ *JBL*, vol. 127, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 428–430; online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25610132>; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 584.

<sup>47</sup> The only other time this phrase (יִמַּס אֶת-לִבָּב) is used in Deuteronomy is in Deuteronomy 1:28 when the report of the spies made the people’s hearts melt, and they refused to enter the land. Cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 585.

<sup>48</sup> Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 132. McConville agrees saying, ‘people have an inalienable right to enjoy the basic elements of the blessings promised in the land.’: McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 318.

<sup>49</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 186.

fervour of war (21:10–14).<sup>50</sup> Captives from battle are brought into the household, which means they enter a place governed by God’s laws. They are given time to mourn but then are brought legally into the family unit.<sup>51</sup> Alternatively, war has a different theological significance for cities *within* the land of inheritance. The local population poses a threat to Israel’s identity and religion, so Israel destroys the cities and inhabitants so they will not to teach Israel to do according to their abominable practices (vv. 16–18, cf. 7:1–2 and 12:29–31).<sup>52</sup> The severity of the law underscores the significance of Israel guarding all that is in her midst. To offer the Canaanites the same terms of surrender as those outside Israel’s land would only allow ‘seeds of apostasy’ in the land.<sup>53</sup> The established network of place makes the whole territory responsible to upholding God’s laws. Therefore, Israel is required to purge all that does not properly represent God’s holiness and justice.

The final two verses address ecological awareness during a seige. If a city is besieged for a long time, the fruit trees may not be harmed.<sup>54</sup> The fruit may be eaten, but the tree must not be cut down and destroyed (vs. 19). ‘Is the tree of the field human to come before you in war?’ (האדם עץ השדה לבא מפניך במצור, vs. 19). The answer to the rhetorical question is obviously no. The tree is not antagonistic towards people, so it should not be destroyed by acts of war. If the tree is a non-fruit producing tree, then it can be cut down and used for siege equipment (vs. 20). These instructions are in stark contrast to the customs of the ancient world where war was

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<sup>50</sup> Instead of approaching this difficult text with authoritarian and domineering expectations, Josberger analyses these laws with an eye towards the required responsibilities of Israel at all times, not just in war. She explores how righteousness is displayed in this text despite its real world context of war, and suggests the desire is to protect victims by limiting the actions of the victors in war. Rebekah Josberger, ‘Restraining the Rights of the Victor,’ in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block* (ed. by Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth Turner; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 165–187.

<sup>51</sup> The captive woman is given the legal role of wife, thus connecting this law with following laws on inheritances for the one who has multiple wives. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 597.

<sup>52</sup> Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 249.

<sup>53</sup> Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 133.

<sup>54</sup> For a catalogue of descriptions and use of fruit trees in the Land Between during the Iron Age—including fig, pomegranate, olive, date palm, sycamore, carob, almond, pistachio, and walnut—see Oded Borowski, *Every Living Thing: Daily Use of Animals in Ancient Israel* (Walnut Creek, Cal.: AltaMira Press, 1998), 114–133.

commonly fought on two fronts, first against towns and people and second against the place that supports the people. Often a warring king displayed his unstoppable prowess in battle by destroying everything in his path and leaving behind him looted and demolished cities in a denuded and ruined landscape.<sup>55</sup> The army crippled a community for decades beyond the actual assault. Roberts explains that the desertification of place assured that the inhabitants would be suppressed for many years to come. Communities had to replant and cultivate orchards, a task that took several years to be fully realised<sup>56</sup> with benefits not always experienced by the planter as much as by the second or third generation.<sup>57</sup> Because the land had such a high economic importance for the inhabitants, destroying place ruined the people in the place. It took decades for the community to recover from the destruction caused by invading armies.

Deuteronomy's laws protecting fruit trees demonstrate awareness of 'the magnitude of potential environmental devastation that could result from siege warfare.'<sup>58</sup> Nature was used to bolster a king's symbolic authority over a land, whether that was in collecting trees from foreign lands to cultivate them in his garden as a symbol of the expanse of his empire, or if it was in destroying

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<sup>55</sup> See J. Wright's description of 'incidental destruction' of civilisations during warfare, as well as Assyrian psychological warfare: Wright, 'Warfare and Wanton Destruction', 428–430 and 442–443. Also Janet Roberts, "'Centering the World": Trees as Tribute in the Ancient Near East,' *Transoxiana* 11 (Julio 2006): no page numbers; online: [transoxiana.org/11/roberts-near\\_east\\_trees.html](http://transoxiana.org/11/roberts-near_east_trees.html).

<sup>56</sup> Roberts, 'Centering the World,' no page numbers. According to King and Stager, the olive tree flowers after five or six years, but several more years are necessary for olive trees to become mature fruit-producing trees. Even then, olive trees only produce a good crop every other year: King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 96. A long time passed between the investment (planting trees) and the yield (harvest), and while this time can be as little as a year for cereal crops, the fruit trees take much longer. Baruch Rosen, 'Subsistence Economy in Iron Age I,' in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (ed. I. Finkelstein and N. Na'aman; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 345–346.

<sup>57</sup> 'It is commonly said that one plants an olive yard not for one's self but for one's grandchildren.': King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 96. J. Wright explains a date palm tree will not reach maturity until it is between fourteen and thirty-five years old, but it will produce fruit for more than a century, and olive trees considerably longer: Wright, 'Warfare and Wanton Destruction,' 434.

<sup>58</sup> Aren M. Maeir, Oren Ackermann, and Hendrik J. Bruins, 'The Ecological Consequences of a Siege: A Marginal Note on Deuteronomy 20:19–20,' in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever* (eds. Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J. P. Dessel; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 243.

communities and wiping out the economy as a ruthless display of domination.<sup>59</sup> J. Wright says of the Assyrian king that he ‘could “build up” and create life by establishing cities and planting lush, exotic gardens, and he could also “tear down” and annihilate life by flattening cities and uprooting orchards.’<sup>60</sup> It is noticeable that in the laws on warfare there is no Israelite king involved. Instead, God leads his people into battle and fights on their behalf. His presence determines their victory and simultaneously limits the destruction of nature. God’s authority as king is exemplified in Deuteronomy through his redemptive acts to preserve life and restore creation.<sup>61</sup>

Deuteronomy’s instructions to protect the trees goes against the imperial practices of destroying the place in which the enemy lived. The Israelite army was not allowed to violate the land so as to punish the inhabitants of the land. The laws on warfare foster an awareness and respect for nature, an awareness that acknowledges God’s authority over all creation. To go to war against the land, as a means of hurting the people living in it, destroys the goodness of creation. For Israel to pursue God’s righteousness she has to be involved in the restoration of the created order. As McConville concludes, the trees have a place in the natural order, so Israel, even in waging war, is not justified in ruining the ecosystem.<sup>62</sup> If the Israelites refuse to respect the inherent value of creation, they refuse to respect the one who created it. According to the framework of the creation narratives, humans should not exude power over nature, because they are the caretakers of what God has created.

One additional section deals with the army’s conduct during war, except instead of dealing with humanitarian or ecological issues, Deuteronomy 23:10–15 [9–14] deals with a sacral attention to cleanliness within the army camp. As mentioned above, God promises to be with his people and to fight on their behalf (cf. 7:21–22; 20:4). The army is to refrain from any ‘bad thing’ (רַבַּר רַע), a phrase

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<sup>59</sup> The use of gardens to bolster the authority of the king was discussed previously; see above, chapter 3, pp. 87–89.

<sup>60</sup> J. Wright, ‘Warfare and Wanton Destruction,’ 442.

<sup>61</sup> Deuteronomy 11 says the eyes of Yahweh seek after the land, and God is the one who provides for it by sending the rain to produce food for animals and humans (vs. 12).

<sup>62</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 322.

used in 17:1 of a blemished animal unacceptable for sacrifice.<sup>63</sup> God's presence is with the army, so anything designated as unclean, whether nocturnal emissions or excrement, must be separated from that which is clean and removed from inside the borders of the camp (23:10–13). Verse 15 [14] specifies the camp must be holy because God is walking about (מַהֲלֵךְ) in the midst of the camp to deliver them from their enemies. The only other use of the hitpael form of the verb 'to walk' in the Pentateuch is in Genesis 3:8 when God is walking about in the midst of the garden. The sanctuary nature of garden where God is present with humanity is parallel to the sanctuary nature of the camp where God walks. God's presence with his people will determine their success in battle, but God's presence also requires the camp to be holy. Just as Israel is responsible for cleanliness in the midsts of her land, the army, as a small representation of Israel, is responsible for cleanliness in their camp. God's presence with the army in their camp is similar to God's presence with the people in their land. Deuteronomy uses sacral language to emphasise the sanctuary nature of the camp, which is similar to what is true of the sanctuary nature of Israel's whole territory.

#### *Ethical Care of Creation*

Deuteronomic laws address multiple aspects of place including the animals in place. Israel's responsibility within her placial structure includes developing concern for both domestic and wild animals. If an ox or sheep is found, one is obligated to take care of it until the animal can be restored to the owner (22:1–4). The care for the animal may be costly, but the preservation of its life and the respect of other people's belongings is of a higher value. This neighbourly responsibility is crucial for small

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<sup>63</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 652. Tigay says that the phrase is used in a representative sense so that the army should avoid all things unacceptable to Yahweh: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 213–214. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 538.

agrarian and shepherding communities who depend on each other and their animals for daily sustenance and profitability.<sup>64</sup>

If a bird's nest is found, the eggs or the young birds may be taken, but the mother must be spared (22:6–7). The underlying reason for this law is not clear but the concern for generations of animals is not unusual in the text. Although von Rad states this law should be attributed 'to humane motives and hardly to considerations of utility,'<sup>65</sup> it would be more consistent with the Deuteronomic view of place to suggest the aim is to preserve life to sustain the long term interests and sustainability of the community.<sup>66</sup> In other words, the mother's life preserves the natural food chain. This allows the bird to continue to 'be fruitful and multiply' (Gen 1:21) and to fully function within its created purpose. Knowing that the land and the creatures within it are a part of the good and ordered structure of God promotes a valid concern for nature.<sup>67</sup>

Respect and care are also to be given to domesticated, working animals. They should be given sufficient provisions of the ground, because it is their work that allows for greater yield from the earth. Richter notes that preserving the lives of animals with whom Israel shares the land reflects wisdom. After all, multiple participants contribute to a healthy placial structure, and humans are only one part.<sup>68</sup> Physical qualities of place play a significant role in the interdependent placial structure, so nature cannot be thought of as 'something out there,' a physical world separate from human actions. Instead, non-human creation should be cared for

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<sup>64</sup> Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 219. For a detailed catalogue of animals that were a part of life in ancient Israel, both wild and domesticated, see Borowski, *Every Living Thing*. See also Block who builds on a discussion initiated by Robert Wennberg. Block focuses only on the theology of animals as portrayed in Deuteronomy, addressing the classification of animals and the human relationship to both wild and domesticated animals: Daniel Block, 'Recovering a Deuteronomic Theology of Animals,' in *The Old Testament in the Life of God's People: Essays in Honor of Elmer A. Martens* (ed. Jon Isaak. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 283–305; cf. Robert Wennberg, *God, Humans, and Animals: An Invitation to Enlarge our Moral Universe* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 289–295.

<sup>65</sup> Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 141. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 251.

<sup>66</sup> J. Wright concludes this law, along with not destroying fruit trees in times of siege (20:19–20), were a part of Deuteronomy's condemnation of taking the source of life with its fruit: Wright, 'Warfare and Wanton Destruction,' 456. Also McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 337.

<sup>67</sup> Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 220.

<sup>68</sup> Richter, 'Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,' 371.



because it a valuable contributor to the well-being of all who belong to place. Deuteronomy specifies the ox should not be muzzled to prevent it from eating while threshing the grain (25:4). This comes at quite a cost to the family. Richter quotes the work of Baruch Rosen who calculated the possible loss to the family whose ox consumes grain while working, a loss estimated at about 3–5 kilos (6–11 lb.) a day. This would be a significant sacrifice for the farmer whose livelihood relies on the cereal crops. In a subsistence economy, every kilo counts.<sup>69</sup> The respect and care towards the non-human elements of place have to be balanced with the social concern for all people who belong to that place as is found in the laws discussed below.

### *Social Welfare*

Although the laws for creating a just society in the land Israel inherits often deal with how Israelites treat one another, there are instances, like in Deuteronomy 23:16–17 [15–16], when Deuteronomy’s inclusive social justice is displayed. Israel is told to have compassion for marginalised people, and, in this case, the compassion includes runaway slaves. Deuteronomy 23:16–17 [15–16] provides asylum to slaves, who can be assumed to be entering Israel from a foreign country.<sup>70</sup> Extradition clauses in international treaties dictated terms for returning fugitive slaves,<sup>71</sup> and yet, Israel is told to allow the slave to remain in the land. The slave is allowed to dwell

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 371–372; cf. Rosen, ‘Subsistence Economy in Iron Age I,’ 347–351.

<sup>70</sup> Tigay states that the slave must be from a foreign country or else Deuteronomy would use the terminology of ‘brother’ or ‘kinsman’: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 213. Lundbom says that because the slave will dwell ‘within one of your gates,’ it can be assumed the slave is from outside Israel: Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 654–655.

<sup>71</sup> Craigie suggests such extradition agreements with foreign nations would infer a political agreement with them and thus go against the singular treaty Israel has with God: Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 300–301; cf. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 350–351; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 655.

‘in your midst, in the place that he will choose in one of your gates’ (vs. 17).<sup>72</sup> This law turns the whole land into a refuge in which slaves who are escaping the tyranny of their masters can find refuge.<sup>73</sup>

Deuteronomy 24:6–18 contains a variety of laws that can be categorised as part of a social code to protect the integrity of humanity and to provide justice for all people.<sup>74</sup> The social concerns in these verses are tied thematically to chapter 15 which addresses the remission of debts (vv. 1–3), sufficient provision for the people by the land (vv. 4–6), and an attitude of generosity towards the poor (vv. 7–11). Similarly, Deuteronomy 24 brings the interests of the marginalised to the forefront. Loans may be given, but a pledge that further diminishes the impoverished’s ability to live with dignity may not be taken from them (24:6, 11–13).<sup>75</sup> Wages are due to workers before the sun sets so as to not exploit the poor (vv. 14–15). Human life should not be disregarded for profitable gain. Justice, or the willingness to set things right, should not be perverted against the poor, alien, orphan, or widow (24:17), because all the people were once slaves in Egypt and God redeemed them. The Israelites must remember their past and respond in the present with compassion to the poor (24:18). In so doing, they personally invest in their own community and strengthen the social fabric that contributes to their place.

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<sup>72</sup> The wording of this phrase is comparable to Deuteronomy 12:14 in which Yahweh chooses the place of worship ‘in one of your tribes’ (instead of ‘gate’ as in Deut. 23:17). McConville states the translation of באחד can be either ‘in any’ or ‘in one.’ The similar phrasing in 12:14 and 23:17 brings into question the issue of the exclusiveness of the chosen place. The question is if ‘one’ (אחד) means ‘singular’ or if it means ‘any.’ Although this is not an issue to be solved here, the point McConville raises is that ‘in one/any of your tribes’ may not require a singular, central altar as commonly thought. Deuteronomy possibly legislates a central sanctuary without necessitating its exclusiveness: McConville, *Law and Theology*, 28–29; idem, *Deuteronomy*, 351. Regarding the interpretation of Deuteronomy 12:14 see Welch and Oestreicher (and less convincingly Greenspahn) who state ‘in one of your tribes’ can be understood in a distributive sense instead of a limiting sense; see above, chapter 1, note 112.

<sup>73</sup> The law to give refuge to runaway slaves continues the humanitarian treatment of slaves expressed towards Israelite slaves in Deuteronomy 15, but now extended to foreign slaves. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 544. The instructions make Deuteronomy’s law revolutionary in light of other ANE laws in which slaves are not usually protected: Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 213.

<sup>74</sup> McConville, *Deuteronomy* 356.

<sup>75</sup> Weinfeld notices a distinct humanitarian focus to these laws. The Covenant Code has a similar law in which a creditor who has taken a debtor’s garment must return it before sundown. According to Deuteronomy, the creditor does not have a right to select the article he receives as security and is even forbidden to enter the debtor’s house to collect it (24:11): Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 22.

Deuteronomy 24:19 transitions from ‘defensive prohibitions of injustice to offensive guarantees of economic well-being for the vulnerable.’<sup>76</sup> Restraint when harvesting the community’s primary crops is a practical way to care for the poor.<sup>77</sup> Deuteronomy’s description of the ‘good land’ in 8:7–10 attributes the satiation of people to the produce of the land. The barley, wheat, grapes, figs, pomegranates, and olives are provisions of the land, characteristically summarised in Deuteronomy as grain, wine and oil.<sup>78</sup> These crops are the economic backbone of the community. Restraint in harvest practices protects the integrity of the landless giving them opportunities to work and to receive sustenance from the fields. When landowners reap the grain, they should not double back to make sure they have gathered in every possible grain, but they should allow the sojourner, orphan, and widow the privilege of gleaning in the fields. In Leviticus, similar harvesting laws are embedded in a list of actions required of Israel because ‘I am Yahweh.’ (Lev. 19:9). The physical action of obedience that is so important in Leviticus is presented in Deuteronomy in light of establishing a spirit of generosity for the poor.<sup>79</sup> Leviticus mentions fields and vineyards, but Deuteronomy adds the olive groves, therefore remaining consistent with the Deuteronomic description of the land (grain, wine, oil). As a result of sharing the harvest with the poor, God will bless the work of their hands. Likewise the olive trees (vs. 20) and the grape vines (vs. 21) should not be stripped of all their fruit, but a small portion left for the poor. Each time the crop is mentioned, be it the

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<sup>76</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 571.

<sup>77</sup> For a detailed discussion of compassion for the poor expressed through harvesting practices, see Richter, ‘Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,’ 361.

<sup>78</sup> Deuteronomy 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51.

<sup>79</sup> Leviticus 19:9–10 (also 23:22) instructs the landowners to leave the edges/corners of the field unharvested and not to gather in the fallen grapes in the vineyard but to leave all of that produce for the poor. Davis makes an interesting observation that the laws in Leviticus teach about human life in a particular place, extending the boundaries of ethical behaviour to include non-human creation. The holiness laws of Leviticus deal with practical matters and practices. Davis notes the proscription of trimming both the corners (קַצֵּץ) of the fields (Lev. 19:9) and also the corner (קַצֵּץ) of the hair on the man’s temple and beard (Lev. 19:27), both of which are physical manifestations of obedience. The two laws on trimming might seem fanciful to interpret together, but for an agrarian mind, the laws invite the people to imagine the connection between the laws of personal conduct and that of agricultural conduct: Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 80–100, esp. 90–94. Block suggests Deuteronomy’s instructions not to collect dropped produce demonstrates a generosity beyond Leviticus’ law to leave the edges of the field unharvested (that is, if the edges are considered inferior produce mixed with weeds): Block, *Deuteronomy*, 571–572.

wheat, grapes or olives, Deuteronomy emphasises a portion is to go to the sojourner, orphans, and widows. The significant crops that sustain the people and function as a major portion of the local economy are not exploited to the individual's benefit but are used to provide for everyone including the marginalised among them.<sup>80</sup>

The harvest plan mentioned here is remarkably counter-intuitive because Israel is told to have restraint in harvesting the land's most economically viable crops.<sup>81</sup> Deuteronomy is clear that this good land and its produce belong to Yahweh, and that the people of Israel are his tenants, appointed to their inheritance according to his good pleasure.<sup>82</sup> The very act of eating is receiving sustenance from the land. As previously mentioned, Malpas states that the essential belonging of humans to the places they inhabit must go beyond concepts of proprietorship or authority over places. Place is not an object over which ownership is asserted, even though belonging to place may stir up a sense of preservation or guardianship.<sup>83</sup> A perpetual interaction and mutual dependence exists between place and human being that should lead to a sense of human responsibility to respect and care for (but not dominate) place. Malpas' explanation is similar to Carrière's distinction in Deuteronomy between possessing and dwelling. *שָׁרַף* conveys Israel's legal right to the land, and *בָּרַךְ* carries a sense of duration.<sup>84</sup> Deuteronomy's regulations prevent Israel from exploiting the land and taking everything they could. Moderation and care for place allows the poor among them to be sustained by an unexploited land. Receiving God's blessing of provision goes hand in hand with social concerns for the marginalised, because the blessing of a fruitful place follows the people's pursuit of God's righteousness and the established created order. As mentioned in previous chapters, righteousness is not a reference to particular acts of justice but to the

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<sup>80</sup> Richter, 'Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,' 361–363.

<sup>81</sup> King and Stager state the olive oil industry accounted for much of the prosperity of the region. Surplus oil was exported to Egypt, Phoenicia, and perhaps Greece: King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 96. See also Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, 102–114, 118–126.

<sup>82</sup> Richter, 'Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,' 361. Wright comments that the property laws of Israel are based on receiving the land as an inheritance from God, and because the land holdings were given by God, they were held in trust from God: Wright, *Old Testament Theology for the People of God*, 90.

<sup>83</sup> Malpas, 'Place and Human Being,' 21–22.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 218; Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 40–41; McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 90.

principle of cosmic order. A lively sense of a communal identity is required for individuals to be willing to make such personal sacrifices for the sake of the poor.<sup>85</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, however, the harvest laws allow the poor to participate in the harvest, and thus protect their dignity, and to experience together with the rest of the community the cycle of agriculture and the blessing of receiving provisions from the ground. They harvest when others are harvesting. They feast when others are feasting. The poor know they belong to the land and are seen, valued, and cared for by the larger community, and they, like the larger community, remember the national narrative that is intertwined with the agricultural calendar.

Israel's active generosity towards the poor is motivated by the memory of their slavery in Egypt (vs. 22), and in remembering, Israel becomes presently aware of God's faithfulness, which in turn motivates her compassion for the poor. McBride suggests that Deuteronomy consistently states that each member of the community 'must be treated with the dignity due someone whose life is infinitely precious.'<sup>86</sup> Likewise, Davis speaks of the power of the imagination, or memory, to fracture or to unify people. Imagination regarding a shared past allows communities to 're-member,' or to work towards its own wholeness.<sup>87</sup> Deuteronomy encourages the people to remember the past and to understand their connection to things larger than themselves—their community, the land, their covenant relationship with God—and in belonging to the larger narrative, they become a re-membered community. Millar suggests that if Israel were to forget the redemptive acts of God, then the drive for personal gain would surely have obliterated economic generosity in an instant.<sup>88</sup> Actions in the present are conditioned by what is recalled from the past.<sup>89</sup> God redeemed the people from Egypt to restore the broken created order, and Israel, in return, pursues God's righteousness, his established will for the land.

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<sup>85</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 260. Nelson points out, 'This is not voluntary almsgiving; the poor have a legal right to access the three most important products of the land: grain, oil, and wine.': Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 293.

<sup>86</sup> McBride, 'Polity of the Covenant People,' 76.

<sup>87</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Millar, 'A Faithful God who Does no Wrong,' 12.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Blair, 'An Appeal to Remembrance,' 43; Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind*, 183–185, and 32–43, 90.

### *Liturgical Declarations and Conclusion to the Law Code*

Chapter 26 describes two liturgical declarations, which conclude the law code, both using agricultural gifts as a means of thanking God for his fulfilled promise to bring Israel into a land of inheritance. The ceremony personalises the national story of arriving in this place making it similar to the storytelling used in Deuteronomy 6 when parents teach their children the value of the Torah. The national story is conveyed as a personal memory of past events using the first person plural pronouns.

Chapter 26 begins with a familiar contextual phrase. When Israel goes into the land, to possess it and to dwell in it (11:31; 12:29; but most similar to 17:14), they should take from the produce of the land and go to ‘the place which Yahweh your God will choose to make his name dwell’ (26:2).<sup>90</sup> This is the first explicit reference to the chosen place since Deuteronomy 18, and it is an appropriate reference here at the conclusion of the law code. The law began in Deuteronomy 12 with establishing the Israelite placial structure with the chosen place as the centre, and the law now concludes at the chosen place celebrating belonging to place. The individual appears before the priest who is serving before God in those days, and declares, ‘I have entered the land that Yahweh swore to our fathers to give to us’ (vs. 3). Throughout the law code Moses has spoken about the time ‘when you enter the land’ (17:14; 18:9; 26:1) and about the laws that need to be observed ‘in the land’ (4:14; 5:31; 6:1; 12:1). Now the individual recognises ‘I have entered the land,’ thus personally receiving God’s gift of inheritance, which in effect, recognises God is the true landowner (cf. 12:1).<sup>91</sup> This is the first time the land promise has been uttered by Israel instead of Yahweh (1:8, 35) or Moses (1:21; 4:1), and the transposition of the

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<sup>90</sup> The first fruits of the harvest are associated with the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Num 28:26) although Deuteronomy does not explicitly make this association (cf. Deut. 16:9–12 in which it is a celebratory feast to remember freedom from slavery). At the time of the Feast of Weeks, only the cereal crops would be harvested as the grapes and olives are harvested in August and October respectively. Instead of the details of the festival, Deuteronomy 26 focuses on the ‘credal statement’ of what God has done for the community. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 119–120.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 724.

land-promise formula to Israel's lips mirrors the shift from Moses' sermons to Israel's offerings and confession.<sup>92</sup>

The offering is set before the altar of God, and the individual states before Yahweh a declaration of Israel's dependency written here in rhythmic prose,<sup>93</sup> 'A wandering Aramean was my father...' (vs. 5–10a).<sup>94</sup> In each aspect of the retold narrative, the individual places himself into the story and tells the story as if the events happened to him personally. As Tigay notes, 'the farmer is led from his immediate situation to a recognition of the land's fertility as merely one aspect of the larger picture, namely God's guidance of Israel's history from its humble beginnings, freeing it from oppression and giving it the land.'<sup>95</sup> The story brings to mind the unsettled, uprooted and placeless part of their history. Israelite forefathers wandered with no land of their own. When they were in Egypt, they increased and became a great nation, but it was the wrong place for them to be rooted (vs. 5; cf. 10:22), as exemplified in their oppression. In verse 7, the first person singular pronoun changes to first person plural. 'We cried' to Yahweh who heard 'our voice', saw 'our affliction' and 'our toil' and 'our oppression' and 'brought us' to this place.<sup>96</sup> Even though the individual is in the land, he remembers the past, chaotic places from which Israel came, and even though the individual places himself in the narrative, he recognises the greater community shares the same national story. The

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<sup>92</sup> Hwang, *The Rhetoric of Remembrance*, 65.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 68–70; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 721; cf. Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (trans. by Linda M. Maloney; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 269–273.

<sup>94</sup> Craigie suggests the translation should read 'An ailing Aramean was my father,' a reference applied to Jacob who was an old man ready to die when he went to Egypt with his sons: Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 321; also J. Gerald Janzen, 'The "Wandering Aramean" Reconsidered,' *VT*, vol. 44 (1994): 359–375. Tigay says the Aramean could refer to Jacob, Jacob plus his whole family, or more generically Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 240; also Block, *Deuteronomy*, 601. Regarding the whole story recited in Deuteronomy 26:5–10, von Rad considered this a core Israelite creed summarising her salvation history and accepting her identity as Yahweh's holy people: von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 121–122; idem, *The Problems of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 3–8 and 55–56; George E. Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (SBT 8; London: SCM, 1952), 70–72.

<sup>95</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 238.

<sup>96</sup> The account of redemption for the sake of coming to this land, celebrating before God, and loving him by obeying the covenant is similar to what is found in Deuteronomy 6:20–25. MacDonald states this particular declaration made by the individual links the 'I' of the present with the 'we' of the past: MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 77.

placedness of the individual currently enjoying the blessing of the inheritance is set in contrast to the placelessness and near death of his ancestors. The narrative reinforces that the land was not always Israel's but was given to them as part of the covenant relationship.<sup>97</sup> The declaration of past dependency on God and acknowledgement of God's fulfilled promise of the land is also a recognition that Yahweh is dependable.

In verse 9, the individual remembers that God has brought us 'to this place' (הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה), and has given us this land, a land of milk and honey (vs. 9). The use of מְּקוֹם is pregnant with meaning here.<sup>98</sup> Because מְּקוֹם does not always have the same referent in Deuteronomy, the location must be taken from the immediate context in which it is found. The ceremony is happening at the chosen place, and the declaration is made לְפָנַי יְהוָה, so מְּקוֹם could be referring to the sacred place of worship where the individual is currently standing. In the law code (chs. 12–26) the reference for מְּקוֹם is almost always the singular chosen place introduced in 12:5.<sup>99</sup> However, the verse places אֶרֶץ in parallel with מְּקוֹם making אֶרֶץ a natural referent.<sup>100</sup> הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה has marked 'contemplative pauses' along the journey out of Egypt in locations progressively closer to the land, and it is now tied explicitly with a ceremony celebrating Israel's locatedness in the land.<sup>101</sup> Wilson states that לְפָנַי יְהוָה refers to the

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<sup>97</sup> Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 728.

<sup>98</sup> The ambiguity may be deliberate, making it similar to what is found in Exodus 15:17 in which 'the mountain' is in parallel with 'the place' and 'the sanctuary.' The place and the sanctuary being considered the same location which can be interpreted in Exodus as the tabernacle or the land. In Exodus 23:20, הַמְּקוֹם clearly refers to the land of Canaan (also Ps. 78:54). The inference in Exodus is that the whole of the land is singled out as divine sanctuary reinforcing the imagery of the land as Eden recaptured. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 103.

<sup>99</sup> Deuteronomy 12:21, 26; 14:24–25; 16:6; 17:10; 18:6; 26:2.

<sup>100</sup> הַמְּקוֹם has also been used to refer to liminal places outside the land of inheritance, but this option can be excluded as a possible referent in this verse for two reasons. First, the use of הַמְּקוֹם to refer to places outside the land occurs outside the law code (Deut. 1:31 refers to Kadesh Barnea, and Deut. 9:7 and 11:5 refer to the Plains of Moab. Deut. 29:7 most naturally refers to the Medaba Plateau in general although could be intending the Plains of Moab). Second, the introductory phrase stipulates this ceremony has to happen once the people are in the land (26:1).

<sup>101</sup> If this interpretation is correct, it demonstrates a progression within Deuteronomy of הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה from the Plains of Moab into the land itself as suggested by McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 130–131. See also Hwang, *The Rhetoric of Remembrance*, 22.



activities of the people at the chosen place, but only because the phrase refers to God's real presence with his people. It does not limit the presence to the chosen place.<sup>102</sup> The people have stood before Yahweh at points along the journey, which is significant because it means God's presence traveled with the people. Additionally, in Deuteronomy 6 when the parents explain to the child the purpose of the Torah, they conclude with, 'It will be righteousness to us if we are careful to do all these commandments *before Yahweh* our God' (6:25; emphasis added). This certainly does not mean the commandments only have to be followed at the chosen place.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the logic of 26:9 works regardless of the chosen referent (chosen place or the land). The ambiguity is possibly intentional to allow the reference to infer both the sanctuary and the land. Verse 9 could mean that God has brought the individual to this chosen place *and also* to the land flowing with milk and honey, or it could mean that God has brought the individual to this place, *that is* the land flowing with milk and honey.

The individual's narrative moves from the unplacedness of the ancestors to the recognition of God's gift of land. It concludes with the statement, 'I have brought the first produce of the ground which you, Yahweh, have given to me' (vs. 10), which forms an *inclusio* with verses 1–2. The individual recognises that he is capable of bringing such produce only because God has given them the land. 'With these words the speaker has taken his place in the story of salvation, and...has acknowledged himself to be a direct recipient of the act of salvation which was the gift of the promised land.'<sup>104</sup> God's promise has been fulfilled, and the individual responds by returning a portion of the blessing from the land back to him.

The second liturgical declaration in chapter 26 is also introduced with a conditional phrase. 'When you have finished paying the tithe of your produce, in the third year, the year of tithing' (vs. 12), giving the tithe to the Levite, stranger,

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<sup>102</sup> Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire*.

<sup>103</sup> Hwang, *Rhetoric of Remembrance*, 133–134.

<sup>104</sup> Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 159. Wright notes that, 'the focus and climax of the recitation is the gift of the land, for the land was the monumental, tangible proof of the LORD's dependability...[an Israelite] could unify all of this history and harvest under this single theme of the fulfilment of God's promise in the gift of the land.': Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 87.

orphan, and widow so that they may eat and be satisfied (cf. 14:28–29), then the people make a declaration that their actions have demonstrated complete loyalty to Yahweh. Deuteronomy repeatedly states that the blessings of the land are from God to satisfy (שָׂבַע) the needs of the people (6:11; 8:10, 12; 11:15; 31:20). Although the people regularly respond by giving tithes and offerings back to God, their faithfulness is also demonstrated in the third year tithe that is distributed among the poor. From their abundance the people give so that the needs of the poor are satisfied (שָׂבַע, 14:29 and 26:12). Verse 13 continues with the individual's confession of loyalty that by separating the sacred portion from the household goods and by giving it to the poor as commanded by God, he has not transgressed nor forgotten the commandments. The tithe that should go to the chosen place has been given to the poor, meaning the people imitate God's provision to the people. They copy God's actions which reflects their identity as the people of God created in his image (cf. 4:15–20). The confession concludes by imploring God to look down from his holy habitation, from heaven, to bless both the people Israel and the land (הִאֲרַמְּהָ) flowing with milk and honey (vs. 15).<sup>105</sup> This marks the only time in Deuteronomy when the people address God directly without a divine-human intermediary.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Weinfeld thought this verse contributed to the polemic against anthropomorphising the corporal presence of God and the ultimate demythologisation of Deuteronomy (contributing as well to his views of Deut. 12:5 in which Weinfeld says God's presence is in heaven, and only his name resides at the chosen place). Weinfeld's study seems to struggle between an either-or answer to if God is present on earth or in heaven. Wilson notes that it is a false assumption that God's dwelling in heaven rules out his presence on earth. He evaluated Deuteronomy's use of the phrase 'before God' to conclude Israel believed God was fully present in their midst: Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire*, especially pages 181–191. Israel stood before God at Horeb, in the wilderness, and now in the land as the people go to the chosen place. Thus Deuteronomy is able to hold the paradox of God dwelling in heaven and yet providing a specific place to journey to recognise the sacrality of the whole land: McConville in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 115, 132–137. Levenson says, 'The fact is that the Temple and the world, God's localization and his ubiquity, are not *generally* perceived in the Hebrew Bible as standing in tension. On the contrary, the Temple is the epitome of the world, a concentrated form of its essence, a miniature of the cosmos.': Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 138.

<sup>106</sup> The direct address also anticipates Israel's direct access to God in the land, representing a reversal of their request at Horeb that Moses should serve as God's intermediary (Deut. 5:25–27). Hwang, *The Rhetoric of Remembrance*, 65, 72.

Remarkably, the land receives the blessing along with the people, recognising the connection between the people and the place supporting them.<sup>107</sup>

The final verses of chapter 26 are the statements of covenant ratification that take place on the Plains of Moab. The use of ‘today’ (היום) breaks away from the future liturgical confessions in the land to the covenant ceremony taking place now.<sup>108</sup> The law code has been primarily focused on the future responsibilities of the people inside the land of inheritance, but verse 16 marks a shift back to Moses’ current audience on the Plains of Moab and to the decision facing Israel היום.<sup>109</sup>

In Deuteronomy 26:16, Moses exhorts the people to carefully obey the statutes and judgments, observing them with their whole heart and soul, because the Torah guides them in pursuing God’s righteousness.<sup>110</sup> The conditions of the covenant have been set, and now, each party makes declarations of agreement to the relationship. In verse 17 the people ‘declare today’ (האמרת היום) that Yahweh is their God, and they will walk in his ways and carefully keep his statutes and commandments. The following two verses share a similar structure as verse 17. They repeat the declaration, the relationship, and the action, but with God speaking.<sup>111</sup> Yahweh ‘declares to you today’ (האמירך היום) the people are his treasured people (cf. 7:6; 14:2,

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<sup>107</sup> Brueggemann suggests that the term ‘bless’ appeals to the creation narrative in which God infuses the earth with abundance, so the land will enjoy the same generosity Yahweh decrees for all of creation: Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 248.

<sup>108</sup> The Deuteronomic use of ‘today’ was noticed by von Rad who said it highlighted ‘emphatic contemporaneity.’: von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 26. See also explanations given by Millar in McConville and Millar, *Time and Place in Deuteronomy*, 42–44; Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 77–78; O’Dowd, *Wisdom of Torah*, 3.

<sup>109</sup> The use of היום draws attention to Moses’ immediate audience on the Plains of Moab and to the decision set before them to choose to obey God. The choice is similar to the scenario in Deuteronomy 11:26–28. In addition, Deuteronomy 11 concludes with instructions to enter the land and ratify the covenant at Gerizim and Ebal, and Deuteronomy 26 is followed by instructions to go to Gerizim and Ebal and agree to the blessings and curses of the covenant.

<sup>110</sup> Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 244.

<sup>111</sup> See Block on the parallelisms in these verses: Daniel Block, ‘The Privilege of Calling: The Mosaic Paradigm for Missions (Deut 26:16–19),’ *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct–Dec 2005): 391–392 and 394.

21). Then with a clear distinction of his authority, God promises to set his people above other nations (vs. 19; cf. 28:1).<sup>112</sup>

The liturgical declarations described in Deuteronomy 26 are like all Israelite ceremonies described in Deuteronomy (including covenant renewal ceremonies and the annual pilgrimage festivals) in which stories are told to remember who they are and to reaffirm their identity in the place in which they are located. At one time they were slaves in Egypt. That was a different time, a different place, and a different identity. Instead of obliterating that oppressive time from their past, Israel embeds it into the narrative taught to every generation. God brought them out of that context to bring them into a place promised to their forefathers. Israel's story becomes intertwined with the story of the land, so that the land can remind Israel of her past. 'Israel's involvement is always with land and with Yahweh, never only with Yahweh as though simply to possess and manage, always *with land* and *with Yahweh*, always receiving gifts from land...always being both nourished and claimed, always being of the family of earth....'<sup>113</sup> The annual harvest is a physical display of God's provision for his people. Sharing a feast at the chosen place, in effect, eating from God's table, is a sign of receiving his favour, and the act of sharing meals with the poor means his favour is distributed to all members of society. The wellness of the land and the health of all members of society reflect back on the goodness of the divine provider.

## **Conclusion**

The laws in Deuteronomy 12–18 focus on the established relationship between the chosen place and the distributed places, but Deuteronomy 19–25 switches the emphasis to the relationships that must be developed among the people in the community and between the human occupants and the non-human creation around them. The absence of the chosen place does not negate all sacral importance from the laws discussed here. Comparisons made with other Pentateuchal laws highlight

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<sup>112</sup> The declaration is similar to what is declared by God in Exodus 19:3–6. Block suggests three primary themes connect these two declarations. The basis of Israel's calling, the essence of Israel's calling, and the keys for the fulfilment of Israel's calling: Block, 'The Privilege of Calling,' 388.

<sup>113</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 49.

Deuteronomy's tendency to downplay sacral language, but it does so in order to highlight the placial structure developed throughout the book. Deuteronomy's unique presentation of the laws may not be due to a secularising tendency in Deuteronomy as much as to Deuteronomy's interest in subsuming all the people in all the land under the regulations of the *lex terrae* to establish the sanctuary nature of the entire land.

The theme of place surfaces in a unique way in Deuteronomy 19–25. Because of the emphasis on distributed places in these chapters, care for people and for non-human creation is of primary importance. The interconnected network of people and place is noticeable in several laws, and although Deuteronomy does not use sacral language in the same way the Priestly writings do, the book manifests a sanctuary nature of place. The laws in Deuteronomy 19–25 are largely focused on civil life and the preservation of the social order and the natural order so that Israel's place as a whole retains a sacral quality. The cities of refuge make justice equally accessible to all people and, in doing so, minimise unjust revenge that will bring bloodguilt on the whole community. The laws regarding witnesses demonstrate that the intentional malice of the false witness can be as destructive as apostasy and must be eliminated from the midst of the people. The unsolved murder leaves the whole community responsible for atoning for spilled blood, even if they are not to blame for the sin. Similarly, care is taken to bury bodies so as to not defile the land. Laws of warfare differentiate the treatment of people inside and outside Israel's territory, and Deuteronomy prevents unchecked and wanton destruction of nature. This awareness of place even extends to forbidding the use of nature as a weapon against communities.

The Deuteronomic laws, with their practical instructions for interacting with the physical world, have a certain 'earthy' tone. 'Taken as a whole, biblical law seeks to inculcate a precise awareness of physical being: of human life in a particular place, the land of Canaan, shared with other creatures—trees (Deut. 20:19) and birds and animals (Deut. 22:4, 6–7; 25:4)—whose own lives are precious and vulnerable.'<sup>114</sup> Israel is in a land God calls good, and the people are tasked with

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<sup>114</sup> Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 82.

making sure the land flourishes, because when it does, the people will flourish as well. Nature is not something to be inappropriately controlled or dominated, because it is intertwined with humanity's livelihood. The agrarian understanding of place recognises the complex interdependent relationship between plants, animals and humans. This perspective of long term viability of non-human creation purposefully restrains one's desires in the present for greater sustainability in the future. After receiving the gift of inheritance, the focus of the law is not on the subsequent rights and privileges of ownership of the land but on the responsibility to care for the inheritance.

Non-human creation and social interactions are both necessary aspects of a restored created order so that one cannot exist to the exclusion of the other. Israel is told to pursue agricultural programmes that support the communal well being, because all of Israel belongs together in place. Involvement in the ecological realities of the local landscape go hand in hand with the people's sense of nationality and belonging. Cultivating the ground that sustains her is essential for Israel and so is the pursuit of justice throughout the whole land. This dual pursuit creates a placial context that contributes to Israel's self-understanding as God's people. If the land is truly Edenic, then this is the place in which people will meet with God and experience the goodness and 'rightness' of creation. Social order and natural order are both a part of cosmic order.<sup>115</sup> The statutes and commandments given to Israel extend beyond her own survival from the land to develop a land ethic in which all of creation (human and non-human) flourishes.

The entire placial network in Deuteronomy is strengthened when the stronger care for the weaker (be it those who are marginalised in society or the non-human parts of creation). Such awareness of people and objects in place, brings about a co-existence between humans and the land, and between natural and cultural spheres. The way in which families care for their individual land allotments affects the larger community. Caring for the long-term fertility of the soil is also a way of caring for

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<sup>115</sup> 'In view of the symbiotic relationship between cosmic and social orders, the law is a means by which the divine ordering of chaos at the cosmic level is actualized in the social sphere, whereby God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.' Fretheim, Exodus, 204.

the poor whose survival comes from the bounty of the earth.<sup>116</sup> The counter-intuitive decisions to live with inconvenient generosity is the very thing to guarantee the health and viability of the place in which Israel lives, and by enacting such generosity, Israel is reminded that they are the recipients of God's generosity. But the difficulty of the reality of these choices should not be glossed over. There are regulations against self-indulgence so that a sense of moderation and pursuit of what is good for the community can flourish. Place is not a zero-sum game in which a person's gain is equivalent to another person's loss. Individuals, community, and land are mutually beneficial, so strengthening one adds to the viability of the whole. Respecting the integrity of all creation ultimately serves to strengthen the entire placial network. When humanity assimilates that perspective and lives accordingly, place is affected and thrives at its highest potential.

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. Richter, 'Environmental Law in Deuteronomy,' 365.





## CONCLUSION

Place is everywhere and people are always in place. The sheer ubiquitousness of place makes it easy to take for granted, to categorise as a backdrop to human events, or simply to ignore. But place is an essential part of life, and a growing number of disciplines are exploring the mutually influencing relationship between people and place.

Place has not been ignored in Deuteronomic studies, but it has been studied as a part of Deuteronomy's programme of centralisation that is perceived in contrast to other Pentateuchal law codes and in light of Josiah's reforms. However, applying a sociological and philosophical analysis of place to Deuteronomy allows a more holistic approach to place that takes into consideration the complex network of interrelated contributors to place, including climate, geography, and social organisation. This placial perspective calls into question some assumptions previously made in Deuteronomic scholarship.

A true placial analysis begins with an understanding of the nature of place before it engages with the full spectrum of contributing factors to place, including the consideration of the particular *somewhere* that influences how humans dwell together in place. Deuteronomy displays an intimate knowledge of the particularities of the place in which people live, invest, and belong. The descriptions of the land found in Deuteronomy are specific enough to indicate that the law code is intended to be lived out in a real and specified place. The Israelites are on the verge of entering a diverse, complicated, and good land, but the geographical diversity tends to atomise and isolate those who live within it. Deuteronomy pushes against this natural tendency of the land by creating a placial structure that depends on more than the physical features of the land. Deuteronomy establishes that all the people belong to and are responsible for all the land. This perspective is different from other biblical writings that either focus on measuring and dividing the land among the

tribes or focus on the monarchy's attempt to unify the people across tribal lines despite the land's tendency to divide the inhabitants into isolated units. The way Deuteronomy instructs the people to dwell in the land creates unity not only among people from a variety of microclimates but also among generations of Israelites from different social levels in the community.

The goal of this study was to use the sociological and philosophical work that has been done on place to introduce a new perspective on how Deuteronomy discusses, values, and structures place. Chapters 2 and 3 suggested that the echoes of creation narratives that underscore the importance of Israel's participation in placemaking, and the deliberate use of memory to create the ethical motivator for dwelling together in place, allow Deuteronomy to create a placial structure that involves all people in all the land. Deuteronomy understands place as something bigger and more complex than the central place, even though the central place is an important contributor to place. The placial structure in Deuteronomy challenges both an individualistic and localised perspective of dwelling in place and also a politicised and centralised perspective of dwelling that diverts responsibility from the majority of the people. Deuteronomy focuses on the whole land and makes all the people liable for one another and for the non-human creation in their care.

Deuteronomy engages all levels of place, from the inner, private spheres to the outer, public spheres. Chapter 4 demonstrated that by marking significant liminal places (i.e., hands, between the eyes, doorposts, and gates) with 'these words,' Deuteronomy joins all places through one underlying value system. The natural texture of the land suggests that the Israelites will live in a variety of microclimates with their own particular blessings and challenges, and yet, an individual's perception of the world and way of dwelling in place is shaped by 'these words.' Individual, familial, and communal conduct is shaped by the standards specified by 'these words,' thus setting the standard of behaviour for all people in the land.

Deuteronomy certainly suggests a unique programme of centralisation in which sacral activities such as sacrifices, tithes, firstlings, and festivals are focused at the chosen place, but centralisation is not used to bolster the leadership and authority given to an elect portion of society. Chapter 5 demonstrated that Deuteronomy does not polarise the chosen place from the distributed places, nor

does it dismantle local authority. Deuteronomy insists on the sacrality of the whole land and of the people within it. The chosen place is established as the primary point of cohesion within Israelite society, but this differentiated place must be understood in combination with the individual places that are marked by ‘these words’ that remind the people of their responsibility to relentlessly pursue the same righteousness of the centre in their distributed places. The responsibility to enact the laws, to maintain a pure place, and to restore people to the ideal Israel belongs to the people. Israel possesses the land as caretakers of the gift God has given to all the people, and dwells in the land with the chosen place at the centre of society and with the rigorous demands of purity throughout the land.

When it comes to a study of who or what will assume Moses’ role in this new place, a unique Deuteronomic leadership structure comes to light. Chapter 7 showed that Deuteronomy’s placial structure is not about isolating authority within an elect portion of society. Leadership is not even congregated in one location. Instead, all the people in the land are responsible for sacrality of the land and of all that is in their midst. With this expectation of all the people, select individuals, who are themselves citizens of place and responsible for the *lex terrae*, are appointed as visible examples of what all people are to be doing. Deuteronomy diminishes the importance placed on an elite class of society, including the king who is not given a central physical or social place that could enhance his authority.

Israel actively cares for place, which includes the care and restoration of all who would otherwise be marginalised. The community responsibility given to all the Israelites was discussed in Chapters 6 and 8. The poor belong to land and are allowed to contribute to the community as much as landowners. Those who would otherwise be marginalised in society receive the same blessings of belonging to place. The people share with one another from the bounty of place regardless of the disparity of wealth among individuals. In addition, the national festivals, which are celebrated at the chosen place, are tied to the natural cycle of the land. When all people in the community are involved in the work of the land, the agricultural harvest becomes a reminder of God’s work in Israel’s past, and this memory should be available to all people regardless of their economic status. The poor harvest when others harvest, they eat with the local community from the bounty of the land, and

they celebrate the same festivals with the national community. Feasts are not used for political favour or advantage.

Deuteronomy's instructions for dwelling in place so as to reflect God's created order require the people to advocate for the poor and disadvantaged, because they are all a part of the same community, and they all belong together in place. The forgiveness of debts and the release of slaves is all a part of the pursuit to live according to God's created structure. Therefore, Israel actively restores those who are oppressed and marginalised to full participation in place. The social laws strengthen the fabric of the community, making Israel's place stronger.

The personal investment of all the people in place allows individuals to fully belong and become rooted in place. The localised care for place develops a heightened awareness of the non-human aspects of creation that also influence place. Nature is not controlled but is cared for. The ecocentric ethic is a result of pursuing God's righteousness, a term that refers to the status or right behaviour as determined by the standard of God's created order. As humans live in the land, react to the environment, and use the physical resources around them, they, in return, are influenced by place. Their actions reverberate outwards into the natural environment with effects that eventually have a reciprocal impact on humanity.

This study concluded that although Deuteronomy tends to downplay sacral language typically associated with the sanctuary, the unique presentation of the laws actually subsumes all the people and all the land under the Torah to establish the sanctuary nature of the entire land. This conclusion when coupled with the strong echoes in Deuteronomy of the creation narratives in Genesis invites a more thorough comparison with sacral, Edenic qualities of the sanctuary that is communicated in the Priestly Writings. Deuteronomy's place as well as the tabernacle and Temple are described according to the placial themes of the creation narratives, and they are both considered sacred. A placial analysis may be an appropriate framework within which to focus such a future, comparative study.

This study benefited from the insight garnered from other fields outside of biblical studies, and a study of Deuteronomy's place can have a reciprocal influence. The ecological awareness and social justice that Deuteronomy's place fosters is applicable to the ongoing conversations in philosophy, sociology, ecology, and

theology. Insights from Deuteronomy's perspective of dwelling in place could have a significant influence in how modern programmes are developed to solve urgent social problems.

This study used a placial analysis to draw attention to the unique perspective Deuteronomy brings to place. The results of the study conveyed a nuanced perception of place that includes a complex web of land, memory, narrative, law, and covenant. Deuteronomy's place is not about the leaders in contrast to the citizens, and it is not about the chosen place in contrast to the distributed places. Deuteronomy's place is about all the people in all the land actively investing in place to represent God's created order.



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