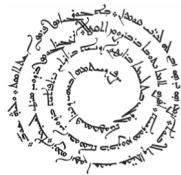


# Dischronology and Dialogic in the Bible's Primary Narrative



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# Dischronology and Dialogic in the Bible's Primary Narrative

David A. Bergen



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## PREFACE

The exigence responsible for the structure and argument of this narratological project was my dissertation research, in fulfillment of my doctoral requirements at the University of Calgary (Canada). In the intervening four years, I have been preoccupied with teaching religion and Bible courses, a task which, while intellectually satisfying, thwarted significant publication work while setting research interests adrift. Yet in preparing this manuscript for publication I have found that there is still much that fascinates, much that beckons further exploration. I hope that by the end of this work the reader might concur.

The theory of narratology employed herein is summarized simply as “someone telling someone about something.” As the “someone” responsible for the communication that follows, I have always been attracted to religion and the Bible, though naïve enthusiasms have now been tempered by deepening skepticism. No doubt, a latent ambivalence is detectible in my interpretation of Deuteronomy and its application to the Genesis-to-2 Kings literary unit. Such is the fate of any who endeavor to view life and its appurtenances with a critical gaze.

The “something” that I have sought to communicate assumes—paradoxically and scandalously, as the reader shall come to see—that the Hebrew Bible contains within itself clues as to how it ought (not) to be read. I acknowledge that my style of communication (or that of my incorrigible implied author) is burdened with scholarly jargon and technological terminology, this despite my best (time-constrained) efforts to ameliorate. Such a disclosure is not intended to deter the reader but rather to forewarn that the unearthing of clues buried deep in the Bible’s Primary Narrative does not come without some patient labor.

To whom is this work directed? My target audience is, of course, the scholars of the discipline of biblical studies, a discourse dialogized with all manner of voices, from the conservative to the heretical. To the members of this discipline I submit this work, adding my voice to a parade of others who have labored in the field, always in celebration of the intellectual freedom of expression and viewpoint that is our privilege to exercise. Ulti-

mately, it is this audience that will engage my reading, to debate whether I have read correctly the implications of Deuteronomy's book-within-a-book structure or to determine whether (or, how) I have repeated the same eisegetical "seek-and-you-will-find" error that so often haunts interpreters of the Bible.

David A. Bergen  
January 22, 2009



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I am fortunate to have friends, colleagues, and family who provided support when needed and perspective when required. Most esteemed are the three women to whom this publication is dedicated: my wife Heather, and my daughters, Cheryl and Rachel.



## ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
BCE	Before Common Era
DH	Deuteronomistic History
Dtn	Deuteronomy
Dtr	Deuteronomist
DtrH	First redaction of DH (Smend/Göttingen School)
DtrN	Second redaction of DH (Smend/Göttingen School)
DtrP	Third redaction of DH (Smend/Göttingen School)
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text



# 1 MOSES' BOOK OF THE LAW IN BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP

For centuries, even millennia, communities of readers have been attracted to the book of Deuteronomy, whether the Dead Sea community who revoiced the document into a promulgation from God rather than from Moses, whether the Jewish communities of the Second Temple and Rabbinic periods who sought to articulate a normative orthopraxic code, whether the Christian community who emulated Jesus' own enthusiasm for the book (Hall 2000:13-14), or whether the much later academic community who proposed earth-bound inspirations for the origin of the Pentateuch. Each of these communities represents a relatively autonomous field of discourse thickly populated with voices sometimes in harmony, other times in tension or even discord with one other. Common to all save the last is the desire to enhance the importance of Deuteronomy, oft by claiming venerable authorship for the book (i.e., the prophet Moses), a claim based in part on reading reflexively the cipher "the book of the law" as a referent to the canonical book of Deuteronomy (Deut 31:9 and 24). The academic community, however, stands apart on the matter of authorship, establishing instead a tradition of skepticism first initiated by Baruch Spinoza and Thomas Hobbes.<sup>1</sup> Over the past two hundred years, members of this community have proposed alternative provenances for the book. Each proposal has had its adherents and its time, and so, like all discourse communities, the academic community is polyphonic, deliberately and continuously so.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Baruch Spinoza (1989:161-72) and Richard Elliot Friedman (1992:618).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Mayerfeld Bell likewise views scholarly disciplines as sites of polyphonic discourse: "My recommendation is that we see research itself as dialogue, as a public conversation with difference, through sameness, [a conversation ... that] is dedicated to keeping the public conversation going by avoiding these tendencies for monologue" (1998:56).

## A. DEUTERONOMY IN BIBLICAL CRITICISM

Before lending my own voice to the academic discourse on Deuteronomy, I must survey those scholars who have addressed matters of pertinence for the book. These voices are generally aligned along two distinct vectors: the relationship of Deuteronomy to extra-textual events and the relationship of the book to intra-textual concerns.

### Extra-Textual Events

Early in the nineteenth century, W. M. L. de Wette suggested that the best starting point for authorial investigations of the Pentateuch was the reported discovery of the “book of the law” during the seventh century reign of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22-3). De Wette’s linkage of Deuteronomy to Josiah subsequently served as linchpin in countless investigations of the compositional history of not only Deuteronomy, but also of the Pentateuch (Stott 2005:15). In 1876, Julius Wellhausen turned the Deuteronomic-Josianic link into a *terminus ad quem* for the dating of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. His logic was simple: 2 Kgs 22-3 claims that the discovery of a book set in motion the centralizing reforms of Josiah;<sup>3</sup> since centralization of

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<sup>3</sup> The significance of the centralization law in the book of Deuteronomy scarcely needs demonstrating, given the many surveys of “centralization” in Hebrew Bible scholarship (McConville 1994:90). Briefly, centralization discussions usually engage a triad of texts: the centralization law of Deut 12, the narration of reforms in 2 Kgs 23, and the altar law of Exod 20:22-6. Scholars are generally divided into two camps on the meaning of the prevalent phrase “the place which Yahweh your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there” (12:5). One group argues that Deuteronomy calls for a exclusive site of worship fixed to single location (the sort idealized in the cultic reforms of Josiah) while the other holds that Deuteronomy’s centralization directive involves a central site that is moveable from one region to another.

Following de Wette, Wellhausen, and company, most scholars have assumed Deuteronomy to be the official manual for cultic operations and reforms authorized by Josiah during the seventh century. Thus, in reading Deuteronomy, the mainstream of biblical studies has maintained a maximal connection between Deuteronomy and Josiah with an exclusive understanding of the cult in 12:17. The Deuteronomic ideology of “one God, one people, one cult” is commonly viewed as the invention of ancient scribes to validate the religious and political policies of the ruling elite of Jerusalem. However, a persistent minority of scholars have resisted this “received view,” tending to synthesize Deuteronomy’s “centralization formula” with the Covenant Code (Exod 20-24) while distancing the Deuteronomic lawcode from Josiah’s court. Adam C. Welch (1924:193-95), Th. Oestreicher (1923), and

worship is also a primary feature of the Deuteronomic lawcode (chs. 12-26),

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Gerhard von Rad (1966:16) questioned the centrality of the centralization formula in Deuteronomy's lawcode, though they conceded that, on its own, 12:1-7 is undoubtedly exclusive in its conception of the cult. Some, advocating a minimal connection between Deuteronomy and Josiah, have argued that the passages containing directives for centralized ritual are simply interpolations within an older text. Others downplaying the Deuteronomy-Josiah link argue that Deuteronomy never intended the cult to be exclusive in nature nor singular in location. J. G. McConville for example, has maintained a distinction between a *sole* sanctuary and Deuteronomy's *central* sanctuary, noting that Deuteronomy's centralization does not exclude other sites (1984:29; see also Gordon J. Wenham 1971:112-15). Ten years after writing *Law and Theology*, McConville revised his understanding of the law from a non-exclusive "central sanctuary" interpretation to one favoring a succession of exclusive sites (1994:120; Peter C. Craigie 1976:217 and Duane L. Christensen 2001:242-44 also favor a "succession" interpretation).

The debate over singular versus multiple, or exclusive versus successive sites is fueled by grammatical ambiguities in the key centralization formulas of Deuteronomy. For example, Deut 12:14 can be interpreted in consonance with the distributive sense of Exod 20:24: "but in every place where Yhwh shall choose in any of your tribes (בְּאַחַד שְׁבִטֹיךָ)"; in 12:14, the definite article in בְּמִקְוֹם has a distributive sense and the indefinite בְּאַחַד a general sense. Justification for the distributive interpretation of 12:14 is drawn analogically from the law of the slave in Deut 23:17, where the fugitive is permitted to dwell "in any place where he shall choose within any of your gates." By extension, the temple of Yahweh's choosing would be in "every place ... in any of your tribes" (cf. Oestreicher 1925:246-49, Adam C. Welch 1924:48ff, and E. W. Nicholson 1967:53-4). Although grammatical ambiguity in Deut 12:14 does permit a distributive meaning, most scholars contend that the literary context of 12:13-19 obviates anything other than exclusive interpretation of the formula. Jeffrey H. Tigay insists categorically that the views of those wishing to harmonize Deut 12 with Exod 20 have long ago been refuted and adds that legislation in 17:8-13 and 31:11 presupposes an exclusive site (1996:535-36). To account for textual anomalies, scholars in both camps of the centralization employ redactional arguments. Those equating Deuteronomy's centralization formula with Josiah's Jerusalem relegate the frequent references to sacrificial rituals in non-Jerusalem locations (e.g., Shechem in Deut 27:1-8) to redactional intrusion. On the other hand, those maintaining minimal connection between the "centralization formula" and Josiah are confounded by the unequivocal mandate for a single site in Deut 12:5, which likewise they view as a foreign interpolation. (For further discussions on the subject of centralization in Deut 12, see Adam C. Welch 1924:250-5, Menaham Haran 1969:251-67, Nicholson 1967:54, Moshe Weinfeld 1967:249-62, 1991:16-17 and 1992:175-8, Wenham 1971:103-18, Craigie 1976:46-54, Anthony Phillips 1973:84-5, Mayes 1991:52, McConville 1994:90-110, Tigay 1996:459-64, Bernard M. Levinson 1997:23f., and Nadav Na'aman 2000:156-61.)

one must conclude that the Deuteronomic lawcode was composed just prior to its discovery in 621 BCE. All that remained following de Wette and Wellhausen was to date the principle sources of the Pentateuch (J, E, and P) relative to this secured seventh century BCE date.

With the authorship of Deuteronomy wrested from Moses and awarded to Josiah, scholars busied themselves with demarcating the contents of the book discovered by Hilkiah in the temple and read to the king by Shaphan (2 Kgs 22:10). A favored strategy was to compare Josiah's religious reforms with the contents of the lawcode in Deuteronomy.<sup>4</sup> Convergence between stated Mosaic directives and reported Josianic policies indexed the contents of the discovered scroll to Deuteronomy itself (Nicholson 1967:3; Weinfeld 1991:77), rendering Deuteronomy the obvious cause of Josiah's reformatory effects. But was Josiah in possession of *the* final-form Deuteronomy available today? Some scholars have concluded that only a portion of Deuteronomy actually existed during Josiah's day, most likely the central legal section of material comprising chs. 12-26. From where did this truncated version of Deuteronomy arise? Multiple theories of provenance for this *Urdeuteronomium* have been forwarded.<sup>5</sup> Wellhausen

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis Bayles Paton (1928:325), Nicholson (1967:3), Horst Dietrich Preuss (1982:4-12) and Ian Cairns (1992:22) catalogue correspondences between Deuteronomy and Josiah's reforms.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to matters of origin, scholars also debate the boundaries of *Urdeuteronomium* (Römer 1994:192). Jack R. Lundbom (1996:312-14) argues for a broad delineation (1-28); Cairns' boundaries (1992:66) are almost as generous (5-30). Nicholson's delineation (5-26, and passages from ch. 28) compares with Lundbom and Cairns, though his original text only includes passages that employ the singular form of address (1967:36). All such broad delineations of the *Urdeuteronomium* follow the lead of Noth who argued that the opening and closing margins of Josiah's book be drawn at 4:44 and 30:20 (1957:16). Most scholars, however, eschew such ample proportions, arguing instead for a narrower delineation of the "original" lawcode of chs. 12-26 (28), to which chs. 5-11 might have been supplemented soon after. But S. R. Driver challenges the supplementary nature of chs. 5-11: "In language and style there is nothing in 5-11 to suggest a different author from 12-26 ... naturally, the legislative terminology of 12-26 does not occur in 5-11; but in other respects ... in tone and style it resembles entirely the parenetic parts of 12-26, and nearly all the distinctive expressions occurring in the latter are found in it as well" (1986:lxvi).

Chapter 28 is widely viewed as the epilogue to the lawcode, with ch. 27 a later insertion. The remaining chapters (29-34) are then considered a series of appendices, perhaps related more to the larger Pentateuch than Deuteronomy itself



proposed that scribes associated with the court and loyal to Josiah's royal (Yahwist) ideology invented the core of Deuteronomy. Most scholars, however, have disputed such "pious fraud"<sup>6</sup> theories and assumed the 2 Kgs 22-3 discovery to be authentic, despite the Chronicler's downplaying of the event.<sup>7</sup> Assuming the discovery narrative to be historically veridical, the question has then been to determine the origin for the book that was found collecting dust. Using the chronological framework provided by the "Historical Books" (Joshua to Kings), some trace an early edition of the lawcode to the eighth century reforms of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4, 22).<sup>8</sup> Others contend that elements within the *Urdeuteronomium* reflect northern concerns and thus, point to an even earlier origin than the seventh century.<sup>9</sup> These scholars argue that a northern Deuteronomistic circle of some description (Levites,

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(Nicholson 1967:21-2). G. Hölscher (1922:161f), John D. Levenson (1975:208), Tigay (1996:58), Weinfeld (1992a:171b), and A. D. H. Mayes (1991:48) offer detailed discussions of the *Urdeuteronomium* debate.

Related to the delineation of the *Urdeuteronomium* is the knotty *Numeruswechsel* phenomenon in chs. 5-31 which combines singular and plural forms of second person address. The matter was first addressed in biblical scholarship by Willy Staerk (1894) and Carl Steuernagel (1923). Continuing the investigation, G. Minette de Tillesse (1962:29-87 and 2000:156-63) argues that most of the plural passages are Deuteronomistic glosses to an *Urtext* that employed the singular form of address (plural passages: 5:1-6:1; 6:14, 16-17a; 7:4, 5, 7-8a, 12a, 25a; 8:1, 19b-20; 9:7b-10:11; 10:15c-19; 11:2-32; 12:1-12; 13:1a, 4b-5, 6b, 8a, 14b; 17:16-20). (For discussions on this grammatical perplexity, see Nicholson 1967:23-28; Norbert Lohfink 1963:27-6; Timothy A. Lenchak 1993:12-16; Mayes 1991:34-8; Weinfeld 1991:15-16; Christensen 2001:xcix-ci.)

<sup>6</sup> According to Van der Toorn (following Karl Marti), the charge of fraud against the book of Deuteronomy is ancient, dating back to the prophet Jeremiah (2007:143).

<sup>7</sup> Weinfeld sees no contradiction between the Chronicler's report and the Deuteronomist's original report of Josiah's reforms. The "impression" of a reform following the discovery of a book in 2 Kings is the result of a later redaction that glorified Josiah and his vaunted obedience to the book of the law. The original account had no mention of the law, maintains Weinfeld (1991:70-2).

<sup>8</sup> See Weinfeld 1967:249-50; 1991:44-7.

<sup>9</sup> Evidence of northerly interests is found in the curtailment of kingly powers in Deut 17:18-20 (cf. Richard Coggins 1999:24) and in the stipulations for a public ceremony at Mts. Ebal and Gerizim proscribed in Deut 11:29, 27:4f and described in Josh 8:30f (cf. Craigie 1976:50-4).

prophets, reformers, or wisdom writers)<sup>10</sup> fled south to escape the ravages of an invading Assyria.<sup>11</sup> Once in Judah, the displaced northern group reactualized old traditions to speak to southern exigencies. In this reconstruction, the book discovered by Hilkiyah constituted an existing document that had been recently revised, tailor-made for a fundamentalist purge of Jerusalem and its countryside.<sup>12</sup> Viewed in this way, the causal sequence narrated in the Bible is reversed: Deuteronomy is not the cause of Josiah's reformation; rather, the book is the literary effect of the king's reformation.

### Intra-Textual Concerns

Beyond extratextual questions of the provenance and demarcation of the book discovered during the regnal years of Josiah, beyond even questions concerning the historical validity of such a report are those intra-textual discussions that address the relationship between the Deuteronomic law-code (Deut 12-26) and the canonical book in which it is embedded. Many scholars have adopted the template of the ANE treaty to describe the treaty structure of the book of Deuteronomy: chs. 5-26 constitute the "stipulations" section of the treaty, chs. 1-4 provide the preamble and historical prologue, and chs. 27-31 constitute the formulae for blessings and curses and the provisions for deposition.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Coggins (1999:27), Norbert Lohfink (1999:36f), and Weinfeld (1992b:26-74) offer discussions on the identity of the Deuteronomistic group.

<sup>11</sup> Such scholars include von Rad (1956:60-9), Nicholson (1967:121-24), John Gray (1970:717), and (to a lesser extent) Weinfeld (1991:53-4).

<sup>12</sup> Moshe Weinfeld argues that authorship in the ancient period differed from the modern: "The concept of 'composition of a book' is meaningless with regard to Israel in ancient times ... The author of ancient times was generally a collector and compiler of traditions rather than a creator of literature, and was certainly not an author in the modern sense of the term" (1991:83). I would argue that little has changed, since dialogic intertextuality and appropriation exist even in the authoring of modern literary creations. Whether ancient audiences were as aware of the compositional mechanics of literary production as their modern counterparts is an interesting question to ponder.

<sup>13</sup> Numerous discussions on Deuteronomy's appropriation of the ANE treaty formula are available: G. E. Mendenhall (1954:50-76), Klaus Baltzer (1971:31-8), Dennis J. McCarthy (1981:157-205), Lenchak (1993:21-25, 34), Eugene H. Merrill (1994:398-99), and Weinfeld (1967:253f). For cautious assessments of the purported relationship between ANE treaties and Deuteronomy, one may read von Rad (1966:21-2), Mayes (1991:33-4), Craigie (1976:22-4), Weinfeld (1992b:156-7), Römer (1994:196-97), or Weinfeld (1992a:169-71).

Operating as an umbrella over most Deuteronomistic discussions has been Martin Noth's "Deuteronomistic History (DH),"<sup>14</sup> a hypothesis that gained tremendous momentum among scholars investigating the connections between the lawcode and Deuteronomy and Deuteronomy to the larger textual unit of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings.<sup>15</sup> In 1943, Noth re-examined prevalent (source-critical) views of the Former Prophets and concluded that commonalities across the Joshua-2 Kings complex mandated a complete reassessment of the entire collection (1957:4-27). Of particular concern to Noth was how the lawcode of Deuteronomy came to reside within a historiography (i.e., Deuteronomistic History) narrating its own discovery (i.e., 2 Kgs 22-3). Noth contended that a single exilic author must have been responsible for the editing<sup>16</sup> and composition of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings (1957:11-14). For Noth, Deuteronomy 1-3(4) originally functioned less as an introduction to the Deuteronomistic lawcode (chs. 12-26) than as a prelude to the history of Israel that began with the commissioning of Joshua for the impending venture into Canaan (Deut 31) and ending with the exile of Judah's last king from the promised land (2 Kgs 25). The insertion of the

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Originally, ANE treaty scholars had hoped to find enough structural congruity between biblical and non-biblical texts to date Deuteronomy definitively to either the first or second millennium. Lately, hopes for a solid reconstruction of Deuteronomy's provenance have weakened as the plasticity of ANE treaty conventions have been made apparent.

<sup>14</sup> Throughout, "Deuteronomistic" is distinguished from "Deuteronomic" in that the former describes those texts which scholars assume bear the influence of the book of Deuteronomy, while the latter refers to the book of Deuteronomy itself. Lately, some have redefined "Deuteronomistic" beyond those texts which are derivative of the stock words and phrases of Deuteronomy, viewing instead the book of Deuteronomy itself as derivative of a deuteronomic ideology rather than the source or cause of a Deuteronomistic perspective (Lohfink 1999:39-40).

<sup>15</sup> Reviews of the Deuteronomistic hypothesis and DH scholarship are plentiful: Mayes (1983:8-20), Terence E. Fretheim (1983:16-27), Gerald Eddie Gerbrandt (1986:1-43), Mark A. O'Brien (1989:3-22), Steven L. McKenzie (1991:1-19), Antony F. Campbell, Walter Dietrich, Thomas C. Römer, and Steven L. McKenzie (in *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, 1994), J. G. Millar (McConville and Millar 1994:17f), Iain W. Provan (1988:2-31), (Coggins 1999:22-35), James Richard Linville (1998:46-73), G. J. Venema (2004:57-61), Römer and Albert de Pury (2000:24-141).

<sup>16</sup> In Campbell's estimation, approximately two-thirds of Martin Noth's Deuteronomistic History was derived from pre-existing sources, edited to fit a new literary context that addressed the exilic preoccupations of Israel (1994:38).

lawcode (Deut 5-30) into the Deuteronomist's historiography, done later, not only interrupted the flow of the original, it also transformed Moses' final address into a weighty treatise on law and obedience and infused the entire Deuteronomy-2 Kings narrative with a distinctive ideological ("Deuteronomic") flavor.<sup>17</sup>

The half century following Noth's hypothesis has engendered a profusion of related hypotheses with varying degrees of fidelity to his "single author" tenet. For many, the sheer size of the DH suggests a more complicated compositional process than Noth himself envisioned (Dietrich 1994:154). Noth's dismissal of textual inconsistencies within the DH as either discrepancies among the Deuteronomist's sources or interpolations by a post-Deuteronomistic hand left his theory vulnerable. To account for these literary problems, most Deuteronomistic scholars posit a series of source-redactional revisions, with two schools of thought predominating. American scholars follow Frank Moore Cross<sup>18</sup> in maintaining an exilic, anti-monarchic reworking of a pro-monarchic Josianic edition. Against Cross's *Blockmodell* approach are the scholars of Göttingen, who, picking up on Rudolph Smend's *Schichtenmodell*, contend that at least three exilic redactions are evident in the DH, beginning with a pro-monarchic (DtrH) redaction, followed by two anti-monarchic redactions (DtrP and DtrN). Both schools view the Deuteronomic lawcode (chs. 12-26) as an exilic insertion into an already existing history. Those associated with Smend posit the insertion of the lawcode during the late "nomistic" (DtrN) redactional level (Dietrich 1972:142-8; O'Brien 1989:7), while those connected to the Cross

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<sup>17</sup> Deuteronomistic scholars frequently argue that the ideology of "Deuteronomy" is especially evident in the lengthy speeches awarded to Joshua (Josh 1:11-15, 24:2-15), Samuel (1 Sam 12;1-24), and Solomon (1 Kgs 8:12-51), as well as in the prominent major narratorial summaries of Judg 2:11-22 and 2 Kgs 17 (Cross 1973:274).

<sup>18</sup> Frank Moore Cross maintained that the Deuteronomist combined two theological themes in his first edition, a negative one emphasizing the waywardness of humans and the retributive wrath of the deity, and the other, a positive theme focusing on the faithfulness of King David and the grace of Yahweh. For Cross, these two themes constituted the essential threat-promise thrust of Josiah's reform policy. In the second edition, an additional sub-theme of hope-through-repentance was added (Dtr<sup>2</sup>) to the Deuteronomist's program to reflect the exigencies of the exile (1973:284-9).

school (e.g., Jon D. Levenson) argue that the lawcode was an exilic (Dtr<sup>2</sup>) interpolation (Levenson 1975:223).<sup>19</sup>

Despite these differences, most biblical scholars of the second half of the twentieth century counted themselves supporters of Noth's hypothesis, agreeing broadly that the books ranging from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings constituted at some level in composition and at some point in history a single literary unit.<sup>20</sup> With each passing decade of research, Noth's hypothesis gained momentum. Elevated from scholarly "construct" to *de rigueur* fact, DH came to monopolize competing methods of research (Knoppers 2000:13). Indeed, its explanatory power was far-reaching: historically, the *Urdeuteronomium* anchored Pentateuchal studies with a seventh century point-of-reference (reinforcing de Wette's argument); textually, Deuteronomy localized the unique ideology and phraseology of the Bible's broadest historiography. In 1989, Mark A. O'Brien ranked the DH hypothesis as "one of the major achievements of modern OT scholarship" (1989:3), while more recently, Thomas C. Römer proclaimed the construct "one of the safest results of critical biblical scholarship" (1994:210). During the past decade, the hypothesis mushroomed into "pan-Deuteronomism" (Robert R. Wilson 1999:68) as scholars discerned the presence of deuteronomisms throughout the canon (Blenkinsopp 1999:85).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cross felt that a Josianic edition of the DtrH must have been influenced by Deuteronomic covenant theology (1973:284). Levenson, however, did not feel that Deuteronomic influence necessitates the inclusion of the book within the DtrH (1975:224). For further redaction-critical discussions of the literary relationship between Deuteronomy and DH, see O'Brien (1989:56f) or Antony F. Campbell and Mark O'Brien (2000:39-99).

<sup>20</sup> Campbell speaks of a "concerted Deuteronomistic industry" rather than a single scholarly DH hypothesis (1994:55).

<sup>21</sup> Faced with an ubiquitous Deuteronomist, Robert R. Wilson concludes: "It would seem, then, that we have a basically Deuteronomistic Bible, and the answer to Friedman's question 'Who Wrote the Bible' is absolutely clear: the Deuteronomist wrote the Bible. Who was the Deuteronomist? Who was *not* the Deuteronomist?" (1999:68). Lohfink's comment on the "pan-Deuteronomism" phenomenon illustrates the trend: "Some years ago, in order to be considered good, an Old Testament specialist had to reconstruct a primitive decalogue or a new festival; today, a self-respecting doctoral student has to find the hand of a Deuteronomist somewhere in the Bible. This is the only way into the guild" (1999:37). For further discussions on the ubiquity of this phenomenon, see Linda S. Shearing (1999:13), Robert R. Wilson (1999:69-78), Coggins (1999:22ff), and W. Zimmerli (1979:351-84).

Therein, however, lies one of the greatest threats to Noth's hypothesis. With the presence of deuteronomisms ubiquitous in the biblical canon, the Deuteronomistic construct threatens to collapse under its own expansion (Coggins 1999:22-3). Robert R. Wilson muses that the definition of "Deuteronomistic" is today so amorphous as to have lost critical utility (1999:82). Another threat to the hypothesis is the lack of historical verifiability (or a dearth of scholarly consensus) concerning the authorial group or social context responsible for this piece of ancient historiography. Various proposals have been forwarded, ranging from an informal system of socio-religious thought to a formal institution within ancient Israel (Coggins 1999:27; cf. also Norbert Lohfink 1999:36ff). Some speculate that there might have existed a Deuteronomist movement composed of diverse individuals whose varied opinions only gradually coalesced into a primary document (Robert R. Wilson 1999:81-2).

And so, not surprising, the over-extension of the DH in both literary and historical terms has begun to erode the formidable Nothian fortress. Römer and (Marc Z.) Brettler observe a discernible shift in scholarship where it has become "fashionable to deny the existence of a [DH] covering the books from Deuteronomy to Kings" (2000:402). Fashionable or not, such criticism is not new. For some time scholars have voiced dissent on literary and historical grounds against not only the received view of Noth's DH, but also against de Wette's linkage of Deuteronomy to Josiah, or even against Deuteronomy's emulation of the ANE treaty format. Arguably the most radical is Giovanni Garbini's assessment that the linkage between Moses and the lawcode of Deuteronomy was the mythological creation of the second century BCE anti-Jerusalem priestly class in Jerusalem, who, in wishing to sever ancient connections between all-things-Israel and Egypt, also created an anti-monarchical ideology whose proof of late origin can be seen in the centrality of the covenant forged between Yahweh and Israel when the norm for such agreements would have been between God and king (2003:55-71).<sup>22</sup> (Then again, a century ago dissenters dated Deuteronomy

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<sup>22</sup> Of the one hundred and fifty-seven chapters of Noth's proposed Deuteronomistic History, none has generated more discussion than the discovery narrative in 2 Kgs 22-3 (Römer 1997:6). Yet even here, long-held assumptions of Deuteronomy's role in Josiah's reform stand in danger of degenerating into outmoded clichés without a revitalized understanding of de Wette's Deuteronomic-Josianic link. Moreover, critical examinations of Noth's Deuteronomistic construct present opportunities to reconsider typical configurations that have divided artificially the

omy to well after the exile, adumbrating the likes of Garbini by negating any involvement of the lawcode (Deut 12-26) in Josiah's reform.<sup>23</sup> This recent shift in critical thinking has provoked intense scrutiny of the historical utility of the Kings account.<sup>24</sup> Jack R. Lundbom has argued for the superior veracity of the Chronicler's version in which the book discovery is given a lower profile in the king's start-up operations (1976:295).<sup>25</sup> Mayes argues that the Kings' account of a book discovery was a pure fiction to advance the monarch Josiah and that references to a "book of the law" ought to be viewed as internal literary references rather than allusions to a historical book known as Deuteronomy (Mayes 1978:45; Stott 2008:81).<sup>26</sup> Lyle Eslinger argues that the parallels between Josiah's discovery of the book of the law (ch. 22) and his responses (ch. 23) redound negatively on the account's historicity. "History may indeed repeat itself," writes Eslinger, "but probably not in the filigreed parallelisms that one finds here ..." (1986:45).<sup>27</sup> Lowell K. Handy's comparison of the Josiah narrative with ANE literature leads him to categorize the former as propagandistic literature: stereotypic,

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canon between Numbers and Deuteronomy (i.e., Tetrateuch and the Deuteronomistic History).

<sup>23</sup> Prominent among these dissenters were scholars C. P. W. Gramberg, W. Vatke, L. Seinecke, S. A. Fries from Germany, D'Eichtal, M. Vernes, L. Horst from France, and J. Cullen, R. H. Kennett from England (cf. J. A. Thompson 1974:66-7).

<sup>24</sup> Thomas C. Römer points out that "book findings" were a common literary strategy in the ancient world designed to infuse royal operations with the lustrous hue of a distant golden age. Thus, while there might be archaeological evidence for a seventh century reformation, the historicity of a book instigating the reform lies beyond the archaeologist's powers of validation (1997:7-10).

<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, Graeme Auld argues that Samuel-Kings and Chronicles share equal veridicality, both derived from a prior shared text (1994:147ff).

<sup>26</sup> A major precept of my investigation is adumbrated by Mayes when he writes:

[“The book of the law”] is the book which the deuteronomistic history has continually presented as the fundamental element in Israel's history, and it is to this book within the literary presentation of the deuteronomistic history that 2 Kings 22f. refers to. This reference is to be explained primarily, therefore, within the literary context of the particular construction of the deuteronomistic history (1978:39-40).

<sup>27</sup> Here, Eslinger echoes Northrop Frye's assertion that "symmetry, in any narrative, always means that historical content is being subordinated to mythical demands of design and form ..." (1981:43).

anachronistic, and unreliable (1995:272).<sup>28</sup> Philip R. Davies too adds his voice of dissension, noting that a certain methodological circularity flaws standard assessments of Deuteronomy's role in Josiah's reforms. The Deuteronomistic claim that a book was responsible for the seventh century BCE reformation is, according to Davies, inherently compromised by the very same book reported to have been discovered. Thus, "a piece of writing which is ideologically and in some places linguistically close to Deuteronomy claims that a law book, which it describes in a way which makes it look very like Deuteronomy, was once upon a time discovered by a king and

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<sup>28</sup> Though A. J. Droge does not mention the articles by Lowell K. Handy or Römer, his explication of the political motivations behind such book-discovery narratives confirms their assessments. After drawing comparisons with the Egyptian *topos* of inadvertent book discoveries, Droge argues that, faced with the luxury of a power vacuum in the Palestine region, Josiah sought to expand his political control and to assert independence from Assyrian with a thorough purge of the cult of Yahweh, bolstered by the myth-making talents of the state's scribes (2003:136-7). The result was a foundation myth that served western imagination while subtly legitimizing pro-Zionist sentiments within the biblical studies discipline (2003:139-41).

Using a similar comparative methodology, Katherine Stott argues that the book-finding story of 2 Kings shares with stories in classical literature a rhetorical function to "secure a bogus authenticity for the narrative within which such books are mentioned" (2005:154). This rhetoric is structured by common themes: a renowned figure from the past authors a document which is subsequently lost and then discovered in a temple; failing to understand the document, guidance is sought, after which the document becomes authorized (2005:165-6; 2008:*passim*). Stott concludes that such comparisons cast doubt not only on the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, but also on the very existence of "the book of the law" or its discovery. She notes: "The association between the book of the law and King Josiah could be purely fictional and designed to enhance the credibility and believability of the story, just as similar associations are drawn for rhetorical effect in classical texts" (2005:166; also 2008:60). Recent propensities to date much of the biblical literature to the Persian, even Hellenistic periods make Stott's cross-cultural comparisons obvious and compelling (2005:159). Such research challenges many of the foundational precepts of biblical scholarship and raises questions about how scholars ought to read the biblical literature, particularly the tendency to read the narrative referentially without critical awareness of its literary and ideological dimensions (Stott 2005:166; 2008:139-41, 113, 121, 139-41).

On the heels of Stott's research is David Henige's (2007) investigation of the internal coherence (or in his words, the "contextual plausibility") of the book-finding narrative wherein the author argues for the artificial nature of the Bible's discovery story. See also Venema's brief discussion of this topic (2004:69-70).



implemented" (1992:40). Davies concludes that any impartial witness must judge 2 Kgs 22-3 to be a "pious legend, barely possible, but highly improbable" (1992:40-1).<sup>29</sup>

Critical deconstructions of the veracity of Josiah's book discovery have had considerable impact in a field preoccupied with the historical world that lies behind the biblical text. In response to the fabricated nature of the Josiah narrative and in reaction to the problematizations of the Deuteronomic-Josianic link and the Deuteronomistic construct, scholars have engaged in a variety of strategies, each in some way decoupling the content of the Bible's narrative from referential correspondence. In reorienting critical questions away from content to genre, many scholars now strive to understand the Bible as (among other things) a post-exilic historiography that constructed a past for purposes of the Second-Temple period.<sup>30</sup> At the opposite end of the scholarly spectrum, a minority of postmodernist scholars engage the world-in-front-of-the-text, content either to analyze the smorgasbord of past receptions or to atemporally engage the text as readers sometimes intrigued, though most times suspicious. Between the new-historical (the world-behind-the-text) and postmodernist (the world-in-front-of-the-text) options are literary critical scholars who heuristically adopt a formalist approach in bracketing out authorial and receptive issues for the purpose of understanding the text within its own framework. It is this kind of world-of-the-text (or synchronic) configuration that my work on Deuteronomy is predominantly engaged.

## **B. PRELIMINARIES FOR A NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF DEUTERONOMY**

Twenty years ago, literary-critic Robert Polzin wrote: "It is my pessimistic view that almost two centuries of research on Deuteronomy and the other books it produces . . . have produced no hypothesis that can be described as historically or literarily adequate" (1980:13). Although literary critical (that is, text-focused or synchronic) studies have become standard fare within the

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<sup>29</sup> Further discussions critical of the veridicality of the book-finding report in 2 Kgs 22 can be found in Henige 2007:5-8 and K. L. Noll 2001:230-6.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Crüsemann argues instead for a pre-exilic dating for the Deuteronomic law (1996:207-12).

discipline,<sup>31</sup> the book of Deuteronomy and its relationship to Josiah await narratological inspection, a lacuna that this study addresses.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The emergence of new literary critical methods within biblical studies produces two rather different orientations within the discipline: a synchronic or text-oriented approach that is holistic in its treatment of the narrative and a diachronic or context-oriented diachronic approach that tends towards atomistic treatment. While different in intent and in operation, David Clines questions the tendency of biblical scholars to polarize the two approaches (1995:52). James Barr also argues against such a bifurcation of biblical scholarship, stating that synchrony (in the Saussurean sense) is actually historical rather than anti-historical (1995:2). Barr points out that it is impossible for a modern reader to access the identical text of, for example, the fifth century BCE reader. The Masoretic edition on which the narrative Deuteronomy is based is itself a product of diachronic development; it is not a timeless snapshot of the literary document read before the common era (Barr 1995:4). Despite the diachronic changes to the MT text, I argue that the same literary figure who divulges the contents of Moses' speech to an ancient readership (i.e., the narrator) does so for all readers, ancient, medieval, or modern, even alien. This argument is, of course, provisional, since (in Barr's words) "all statements about the ancient synchronic state are subject to modification on the ground of new diachronic information" (1995:6). (Further discussion on the topic of diachronic and synchronic approaches can be found in Jacob Hoftijzer 1995:98-114, Eep Talstra 1997:189f, and Paul M. Joyce 1995:115-28.)

While I do not wish to retrace diachronist-synchronist debates, it does seem necessary to comment on charges that literary criticism is "pre-critical" in method, "historical nihilistic" in orientation, or "disdainful" of hard-earned diachronistic achievements (McKenzie 1994:303-4; Knoppers 1993:29). Certainly any work (such as this) premised on the notion that Moses wrote the book of the law is sure to raise eyebrows if not hackles, if not carefully read. However, such a narratological premise is anything but "pre-critical" since it views Moses as a literary construct who might have little (or much, who knows?) correlation with a historical figure of the same designation. To argue as I do here, that a character named "Moses" living within a literary storyworld wrote something called "the book of the law" is wholly different from Merrill's confession: "There can be no doubt that the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles concurred with the witness of Deuteronomy about its [Mosaic] authorship" (1994:22). Nor is a narrative configuration of the book of Deuteronomy an example of historical nihilism, since at some point an ancient writer found it both possible and necessary to communicate to a real-world audience a narrative in which a principle character named Moses writes a book that augments and reflects dialogic conflict with a divine character named Yahweh.

Some scholars argue that the diachronic-synchronic debate is less about validity than priority, that the synchronic method should be given methodological priority over the diachronic (Talstra 1997:192-3; Polzin 1980:5-6). While sympathetic to this reasoning, I would argue that the choice of approaches is predetermined by the

It is within the community of critical debate outlined above that I wish to situate a narratological reassessment of Deuteronomy, one that addresses directly the diachronic preponderance in academic discussions of this book.<sup>33</sup> What will emerge in the following chapters is an argument that on

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questions asked of the text and by the configuration of the text vis-à-vis its context. The present study seeks primarily to ascertain the purposes of the embedded and embedding communications of Deuteronomy within the final-form *narrative* of Genesis to 2 Kings. While most synchronic investigations of this nature focus on the Bible's "poetic architectonics" (Sonnet 1997:xii), extra-textual concerns are not in principle ruled out, but are only bracketed for present considerations.

A final note on the matter: the diachronist-synchronist polemic characteristic of biblical studies today might well be yesterday's news if Lyle Eslinger's assertion is correct. According to Eslinger, biblical scholars need to relinquish this battle for it serves only to valorize continually and uncritically a moral code and cosmological system that in the broader schema of hyperchrony (Eslinger's neologism) has become bankrupt for the evolved human species. I concur with Eslinger's challenge (presented in a paper for the 2008 Canadian Society of Biblical Studies in Vancouver, Canada) for biblical studies to move beyond diachrony and synchrony alignments, a challenge that is itself a response to the call for a theoretical consilience between the social and natural sciences (see Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson's edited 2005 volume on *Literary Darwinism*). Regrettably, for the purposes of this book I must bracket out hyperchronic concerns and in doing so, sever head from body, cognition from biology, virtual literary realities from embodied experiences of life.

<sup>32</sup> The following is a sampling of scholars who have published literary critical readings of the Deuteronomistic History: Robert Polzin (1980, 1993a, 1993b), Lyle Eslinger (1985, 1989, 1994), Ken Stone (1996), Meir Sternberg (1987 and 1998), Paul J. Kissling (1996), Jeffrey Staley (1988), and K. L. Noll (1997).

<sup>33</sup> Obviously, my reading of the Bible counters Venema, who argues that one should "let the text speak for itself" rather than impose upon it some interpretative apparatus that invariably makes the Bible the handmaid of the interpreter and his/her method. In ideal terms, exegesis ought to be preferred over eisegesis, but where does such hermeneutical utopia exist? The poststructuralist debate over the last few decades has clearly demonstrated that texts only speak through the agency of an interpreter (see Jonathan Culler 1975:113-14), a fact noted even earlier by Rudolph Bultmann (1961:287-96; cf. James Kugel 1981:323-3). It is therefore imperative for the interpreter to disclose his/her interpretative method and textual configuration, as I intend to do in this section. Not even Josiah, the Bible's most "ideal" reader according to the narrator, can luxuriate in an unmediated immersion with the text itself, for he too must rely on interpretation, and so Huldah is called to the task. Clearly, by the Bible's own implicit admission, the "book of the law" does not "speak for itself."

the surface appears to affirm traditional confessionalist claims for Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomic law. Yet beneath lies a skeptical reading of the law and its efficacy within the paramount religious economy within the Bible's storyworld.

What is narratology? Narratology (or the theory of narrative) is one theory among many utilized by literary critics to analyze storied texts mediated by a teller whose voice is usually deemed authoritative, even omniscient relative to the characters within the world of the narrated story.<sup>34</sup> Three worlds or dimensions unfold in the process of narrative communication: the world of the narrator, the world of the story, and the world of the implied reader. Restated, a narrative is about someone telling someone about something. As a narrative, Deuteronomy is a telling about (among other things) a farewell speech delivered by Israel's leader (the "something") mediated to the reader by a teller detached from the world where Moses is heard (or overheard) to speak.

### Someone telling ...

From the reader's perspective, Moses' speech appears foregrounded in the narrative. Yet the narratologically sensitive, flesh-and-blood reader must always remember that s/he stands beyond earshot of Moses; it is to the slaves-turned-invaders within the storyworld established by the narrator of Deuteronomy that Moses directs his speech. The reader is only aware of the prophet, his audience, and his world through the ineluctable voice of the narrator who's telling bottle-necks all information about internal characters and events. This ever-present mediator resides (extradiegetically) beyond Moses' epistemological horizon; yet, unlike the reader, the narrator is firmly situated intratextually within the frame of the narrative, a real yet ephemeral

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Complicating the hermeneutical process is the fact that all readings of the Bible are invariably coloured by its status as canonical scripture in western culture, a configuration as foreign to the biblical author(s) as it is familiar to modern readers. No western reader then can read first and process afterwards, for processing has already proceeded the reading (cf. Venema 2004:190). Of course, Venema is astute enough to know this—he admits towards the end of his work that “you cannot bake bread without an oven” (2004:188) and that even his reading proceeds under the aegis of an interpretive method. His disclosure is appreciated, but why must one wait till the end of a work for such an admission?

<sup>34</sup> For narratological discussion on the mediational component of all narrative, see Tamar Yacobi (1987:*passim*), Gérard Genette (1983:212-62), F. K. Stanzel (1984:*passim*), Seymour Chatman (1986:189-204).

voice whose epistemological and ontological realities are neither of this world nor that of the story.

The narrative configuration that I propose here is one that reads Deuteronomy as a piece of ancient literature whose principle mediating agent stands disembodied from the world of the story and its proceedings.<sup>35</sup> From his “extra-diegetic” position, the narrator views the “diegetic” scene of Moses and company with bird’s-eye vantage, holding sufficient powers of cognition to peer into the inner sanctums of the creatures he has devised. As the one who relates the tale, the narrator holds ultimate authority solely by virtue of his role as mediator; without his telling there simply is no tale. But narratorial authority is relative and limited—greater than the personae who populate his story (including Yahweh), yet a far cry from a divinely inspired storyteller. Reading the Bible as literature (rather than as scripture), classical narratology positions the figure of Yahweh firmly within the horizon of the narrated storyworld where the deity-as-character demonstrates measures of power and knowledge greater than any human subject.<sup>36</sup> To read this powerful character as synonymous with the transcendent, omniscient “God” of western theology is to execute a narratological routine possible only to those skilled in confessional gymnastics.

### *Excursus: Situating the Biblical Narrator*

The detached authorial narrator proposed here differs considerably from Sternberg’s “inspired” storytelling agent who narrates the Bible’s “fool-proof” literature with absolute reliability and omniscient (1987:50-3, 90-1).

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<sup>35</sup> Obviously, any work (such as mine) which discusses readerly configurations of texts is one that relies on principles developed in reader-response theory. However, my configuration is not entirely nihilist concerning the recoverability of the text’s intended rhetorical situation. I maintain the possibility that someone at some time in the Second Temple Period intended Genesis to 2 Kings to be read as a skeptical treatise on the topic of scripture. To move from possibility to actuality, of course, would require verification, perhaps through comparisons of other ancient literary texts.

<sup>36</sup> Principles of voice hierarchy resist the reification of storyworld realities or viewpoints to the level of the narrator. For the most, the narrator of the Primary Narrative allows his characters freedom to appropriate Moses’ book of the law as they see fit. Eslinger argues the same point in his interpretation of Solomon’s prayer of temple dedication: “Solomon is quite able to voice the deuteronomic pieties without subscribing to them, or if he does subscribe, to be misguided in his understanding” (1989:124; cf. also Robert Alter 1981:87).

An agent so exalted leads Sternberg to assume two “superpowers,” with God the giver of divine inspiration, the narrator the receiver (1987:88-91).<sup>37</sup> To bolster the inspired status of his narrator, Sternberg finds historical evidence that ancient readers or audiences viewed the process of communication as inherently “inspired.” What worked for ancient readers works equally well for Sternberg’s “inspired” storyteller, the readings and assumptions of the ancient holding precedence for modern readers of the Bible (1987:78-80). But were there no skeptical readers in the ancient world? Were there no writers critical of religious status quo or literary convention, willing to exploit artistic conventions to problematize prevalent views of temple or scripture as I will propose? To my view, Sternberg’s reader perpetuates twenty-five centuries of reception tradition that runs roughshod over narratorial voice structures, inverting voice hierarchies by positing the narrator as obedient servant to the character Yahweh.<sup>38</sup>

Noll criticizes the notion (held by Sternberg and Eslinger) that the biblical narrator is completely detached from a storyworld of his own creation:

Like Huck Finn in Twain’s novel, there is no way that the narrator of the Former Prophets could have invented the storyworld described. Rather, the narrator is bound to that world, living after the final narrated event, and telling a long, complicated tale looking back over many centuries of storyworld time (1997:32).

Noll sees evidence for the narrator’s boundedness to the storyworld in his notices to landmarks or realities present “unto this day”<sup>39</sup> and in his fre-

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<sup>37</sup> Yacobi states that a degree of fictionality governs all narratives: “From the viewpoint of the frame, both speaker and world have been invented only to serve the author’s rhetorical and compositional purpose; hence reliability has no measure, indeed no sense, except in relation to these purposes” (1987:361). Like Sternberg, Yacobi denies fictionality to the biblical narrative since (in his view) the heroes of the narrative are regarded as ancestors to the narrator and his audience. As such, the Bible “challenges our ‘novelistic’ models of narratives; it manages to exploit the privileges of fiction without at all renouncing its absolute claims to historicity, notably to existential continuity” (1987:359 n. 8; cf. Noll 1997:29f).

<sup>38</sup> Burke O. Long asserts that Sternberg’s static and omniscient deity “arises from historical interaction between biblical interpretation and philosophical speculation. The power of the axiom derives from hermeneutical consensus which naturalizes the concept, and thus puts beyond question the reading which it justifies” (1991:82). For discussions critical of Sternberg, see Noll (1997:19-20, 37) and Eslinger (1989:14).

<sup>39</sup> See Noll (1997:29, n. 50) for a list of references on the phrase *עד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה*.

quent reference to other books.<sup>40</sup> Two instances in particular situate the narrator and his addressee in the world of the story: in Josh 5:6, the narrator says “the land about which Yahweh had sworn to their father to give to *us*,” while in 1 Kgs 8:65 the narrator comments “before Yahweh *our* God, seven nights and seven days.” These statements, according to Noll, mark both literary figures as “intradiegetic” to the story world (1997:29-31).

For Noll, any discontinuity between the conditioned narrator's story and his evaluation of the same reveals the subtle behind-the-scenes operations of the implied author whose principal aim is to expose the ideological (i.e., Deuteronomistic) bias and unreliability of the narrator. For Noll, the goal of the narrator is to advocate the perspective of the centralized cult of Moses<sup>41</sup> and to apologize for the deity. The narrator, according to Noll, is only reliable to the point that his claims remain unchallenged by the implied author: “On those occasions when there is a second opinion encoded in the text, the unreliability of the narrator will be readily apparent to the attentive reader” (1997:36).<sup>42</sup> The implied author on the other hand remains objectively aloof and aware of Yahweh's misgivings over Moses' cultic technology (1997:19, 36).<sup>43</sup> Claiming inspired omniscience (via Polzin's mistaken

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<sup>40</sup> Passages where the narrator refers to other books include 1 Kgs 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31; 2 Kgs 1:18; 8:23; 10, etc.

<sup>41</sup> Noll states: “The narrator is a faithful Israelite Yahwist, who claims to recount the story of his own corporate past. At critical moments in the story, such as the entrance into the promised land and the dedication of Solomon's temple, the narrator pauses to underscore his own fidelity with the people about whom he speaks” (1997:31). Noll later writes: “[The] narrator presents Yahweh as the narrator would have the reader believe in Yahweh. And the narrator defends Yahweh's actions in a way that is consistent with the narrator's theological perspective, a perspective dependent upon the authority of Moses in Deuteronomy” (1997:32).

<sup>42</sup> Narratological convention defines the implied author as the reader's *reconstruction* of implicit clues in the story. Noll's implied author, however, seems more concrete than narratological rules permit, a figure residing in the “unvoiced structure” that is encoded in the text itself, awaiting the reader's discovery (rather than the reader's reconstruction). Conversely, Noll's implied author seems too ethereal for Bakhtinian analysis, since as I will note later, an utterance must be embodied in a speaking subject before it has the requisite weight to engage in dialogic exchange.

<sup>43</sup> Sensing the opposing tensions between narrator and implied author, traditional scholarship divides the text into multiple redactional layers that purportedly arose during the compositional process of the Deuteronomistic History (Noll 1997:23).

interpretation of Deut 18:15-18),<sup>44</sup> Noll's narrator is ignorant of carpets being pulled beneath his feet.

Noll's configuration of the narrative structure and process of the Bible is intriguing, though I do have some reservations. For one, shared elements in the storyworld and the world of narrator and the narratee do not in themselves incarnate the narrator into his storyworld. Rather, these details arise *at the level of the discourse* where they serve as rhetorical devices to lend veridicality to the teller's tale, or as points of interest shared between the storyteller and his addressee to draw him/her *to* the story, not *into* the storyworld.<sup>45</sup> That the narrator draws a parallel between a deity believed present in the world of discourse and a deity of the same name present in the storyworld of, say, Solomon (1 Kgs 8:65), focuses his audience's attention to a detail or dimension within the fabricated reality that is of interest for the teller and/or the teller's audience (cf. Noll 1997:29-33).<sup>46</sup> Secondly, al-

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<sup>44</sup> That the narrator might be a spokesperson for Yahwism or a claimant to Moses' legacy does not make him the mouthpiece of Yahweh, as Noll claims (1997:31, 32). Not, at least, in the manner that Sternberg or Polzin might assume, since Yahweh (like Moses) is simply a character in a storyworld whose ontology is dependent on the narrator entirely. True, the "narrator presents Yahweh as the narrator would have the reader [better, "the narratee," since technically the reader is the addressee of the (implied) author] believe in Yahweh" (32), but only in the same way that the narrator wants all facets of his narrative to be "believable." Furthermore, if, as Noll argues, the narrator speaks for Yahweh and defends the deity's actions, why then is the narrator so enthusiastic concerning David's temple?

<sup>45</sup> For example, the narrator's allusion to other books does not necessarily incarnate him into the storyworld, since this inventory of literature resides at the level of narratorial discourse (the mentioning of books is directed to the narrator's audience) and never receives comparable mention by any character at the level of the story.

<sup>46</sup> For narratorial unreliability to convince, Noll must emphasize strongly the importance of the two passages where the narrator speaks in first person (Josh 5:6 and I Kgs 8:65). Instead, might not these two passages be viewed as textual anomalies within the reporting voice rather than an imperative for the narrator's conditionality? The consistency with which third person reporting and evaluation are used throughout the Bible's narrative argues in favor of such an interpretation (compare the ratio of first person narratorial statements in John 1:14-16 and 21:24 against the twenty-one chapters of third person narration in the fourth gospel). As anomalies, these verses may simply and unwittingly serve to "expose the device" of a detached narrator (Lodge 1990:43).



though Noll argues that Eslinger's unconditioned narrator is monotonously ironic to the point of sarcasm (1997:22-3), Noll's own narrator is converted into a straw man whose existence is a mere foil for the implied author's Machiavellian operations.<sup>47</sup> To prevent a possible crisis of authority (can the storyteller be trusted?), Noll's implied author must place in the narrator's voice numerous references to "landmarks," "socio-political realities," and certain "books" present "unto this day." These verisimilitudinal markers "not only anchor the narrator to the storyworld, but have the added effect of giving the narratee *the impression* that the narrator knows what he is talking about, whether or not he does" (1997:30; emphasis added).<sup>48</sup> Yet, in Noll's reading, these articles of persuasion are all-for-not, since the reliability of the narrator is undermined by the implied author's narrative structure.

Both Noll and Eslinger agree that encoded in the biblical narrative text is a voice of critical aloofness, though they differ whether that undertone is to be located in the narrator's ironic statements (Eslinger) or in the implied author's unvoiced position (Noll). Both agree that the words of the narrator ought not to be taken at face value, that something more is being said than a surface reading might assume. As for my own position, I do find Noll's position compelling, but prefer to hold some reservation on the matter, for reasons identified by Eslinger.

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The twofold structure (story and discourse, or tale and teller) of the Deuteronomic narrative bears a couple of notable implications. First, Moses'

To be sure, unreliable narration within the Bible is not impossible, though Noll's contention for such needs more evidence to be compelling, a point made in Eslinger's review of Noll's book:

To make that separation [between an unreliable narrator and an implied author] within the layer of mediation, a reader needs some clear and prevalent guidance from the narrative that there is in fact such a disparity within the mediation and that the author intends the explicit narratorial voice to be subordinate to the overarching, whole-narrative perspective of the implied author. Lacking such indications, the reader assumes conjunction between implied author and narrator ... (1999:125-6).

<sup>47</sup> "[There] is no way that the narrator of the Former Prophets could have invented the storyworld described ... The implied author is a separate, silent voice which has created the story that the narrator merely recounts" (Noll 1997:32; cf. also p. 35).

<sup>48</sup> Noll attempts to salvage the narrator's reputation by asserting that "the narrator's evaluation can be viewed as a tendentious interpretation of events, not a complete distortion of them; the narrator interprets storyworld events in a way that will vindicate his view" (1997:35).

final address is made to serve the purposes of a higher speaker. Deuteronomy contains a single speech, yet, two distinct discourses (Moses' and the narrator's) play before the reader, each presented at two dissimilar levels (storyworld and story teller). Thus, in reading the Deuteronomic narrative, the reader (a voyeur of events beyond or beneath his existential level) eavesdrops on two simultaneous speech events. Second, the storyworld and its characters are utterly dependent on the narrator for their existence. Not only they, for the reader too depends on the same literary voice to relay the (import of the) story. The difference is epistemological: the reader knows (or at least ought to know) that the narrator exists, but the characters within the narrator's story can never ascertain that they are mere constructs of a higher-order agent. In communicating narrative information, the narrator shapes both his story and his storytelling in ways suitable for his rhetorical purpose, a purpose not always consonant with those of the characters (divine or human) within the story itself. The astute narratological reader must note carefully the subtle nuances of the tale's telling if he is to understand fully what is being said (story) *and* what is *really* being said (discourse). Most often, the biblical narrator is evasive concerning his rhetorical purpose or ideological perspective, leaving the reader to elicit such information either from the story itself (content) or from subtleties encoded in the storytelling (form). How then can the reader decode the message beneath the story's surface? The tools that I will use for this challenging task (described below in "Establishing the Frameworks") are dialogic voicing (Bakhtin), expositional mode and chronological deformation (Sternberg), and embedded structuration (Sonnet).

### ... Someone ...

To whom is the narrator communicating his story?<sup>49</sup> Synchronic exegetes of the Bible frequently posit some sort of "reader" (first reader, ideal reader,

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<sup>49</sup> The levels of mediation constructed by narratologists are intricate and abstract: real author, implied reader, narrator, text, narratee, implied reader, real reader, as spelled out in the communication process of the narrative. For this study, I will assume (but with some equivocation, given Noll's point) that the narrator and implied author are synonymous, so too the narratee and implied reader. Of course, when dealing with texts as ancient as the Bible, further complications arise: Is the reader an individual or a corporate group? Does the reader "read" the document or is it more appropriate to speak about listeners hearing the document read orally? Moreover, contemporary readers ought always to remember that s/he is not the intended recipient of Deuteronomy while mindful of Alice Bach's contention that

super recipient,<sup>50</sup> second reader, or implied reader) to function as a focal point for their interpretations, demonstrating John A. Darr's point that "readers build characters, and critics build readers" (1993:46). In this study, "the reader" is shorthand for that ahistorical, genderless,<sup>51</sup> "extrafictional" figure *implied* by the biblical narrative and reconstructed by a narratologically-informed interpretation of the Hebrew Bible's final (Masoretic) form (cf. K. L. Noll 1997:19).<sup>52</sup> The distinction between real and implied readers (as well as authors) is formalist and heuristic, a distinction predicated on the assumption that every text implies a reader which can be reconstructed from the surface of the narrative itself. I argue here that the narrative of Deuteronomy implies a reader who is capable of deciphering the chiasmic or concentric structures presented by the narrator,<sup>53</sup> who can distinguish the

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contemporary readers ought to resist the implications of the text's ideology rather than simply adopt the compliant posture inherent in implied reader configurations (1993:62).

<sup>50</sup> The concept of a "super-receiver" is one proposed by Bakhtin (Todorov 1984:111).

<sup>51</sup> For simplicity, I will use masculine pronouns to refer to both narrator and implied reader.

<sup>52</sup> Where biblical versification differs between English and Masoretic texts (e.g., ch. 29), this study will follow the MT sequence.

<sup>53</sup> Balance and inversion are key ingredients in the ancient art of inverted parallelism (i.e., chiasmus), a phenomenon first noted by Nils Lund (John W. Welch 1981:9). Chiasmic logic assumes that "the character of the form itself merges with the message and meaning of the passage" (John W. Welch 1981:11). As one interpretive key to ancient meaning, the primary idea is usually placed at the centre of the chiasmic structure, often functioning as a turning point in the meaning of the passage (Radday 1981:51). Scholars disagree on the definition of a chiasmic pattern, whether A-X-A', A-B-X-B'-A', A-B-B'-A', or A-B-C-C'-B'-A'. At issue are whether a chiasmus requires a pivotal idea around which the inverted parallels coalesce, whether distinctions should be made between "ring patterns," "mirror patterns," "concentric patterns," "chiasmic patterns," or "inclusio" (see Lenchak 1993:175, n. 17), and whether a chiasmic structure ought to be based on key words or thought patterns (Lundbom 1996:300). Although conceptual concentricity is common in ancient writing (John W. Welch 1981:12), this study will (where possible) present chiasmic structures based on key-word parallels.

The interpretive utility of chiasmic analysis lies in its potential to reveal the rhetorical intentions of the speaker, *as interpreted by the biblical reader*. It is important when searching for chiasmic patterns within a narratological reading to respect principles of voice structure by not constructing chiasmic interpretations across the storyworld/discourse boundary. The narrator, however, is free to interweave his chias-

hierarchy of voicing between the narrator and his characters, and who can disentangle temporal variances to establish the sequence of events underlying the narrator's dialogical presentation.

### ... about Something.

A teller (the biblical narrator), telling someone (the implied reader of the book)—but what is being told? Within Deuteronomy, the narrator relays a story of consequence to a people about to take up their long-promised inheritance. Yet, to read the book of Deuteronomy within its canonical setting is to be aware of an even wider literary context. And, from a narratological perspective, consistent linguistic markers (i.e., vocabulary and prose style) extending from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings indicates a larger narrative unit than Deuteronomy alone. Narratologically then, Noth's literary Deuteronomistic History construct is *apropos*, for a unified spatio-temporal continuum (cf. Sternberg 1978:175) persists from Genesis to 2 Kings, consistently narrated from a third-person situation.<sup>54</sup> To the point: the same representing figure who mediates the writing of the "book of the law" (סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה) also mediates the story of Hilkiah's discovery and Josiah's response in 2 Kgs 22-3. A number of characters reside within this narrative continuum whose lives and/or actions develop across arbitrary canonical divisions: Yahweh (Genesis to 2 Kings), Israel (Exodus to 2 Kings), Moses (Exodus to Deuteronomy), Joshua (Exodus to Judges), and David (1 Samuel to 1 Kings). Both Moses and the narrator allude to or quote from speeches made earlier in the Hebrew Bible's Primary Narrative, weaving the

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tic rhetoric with character statements from within the storyworld. (See Christensen 2001:63-4 for examples of narratologically inappropriate chiasmic analysis.)

Are chiasmic symmetries the intention of the Bible's author, or do they merely manifest what Kugel describes as "the ingenuity" of the interpreter (1981:224)? I would argue that the symmetries presented in this work hold at least the possibility of having been intended and/or perceived in the Primary Narrative's original rhetorical situation. Of course, the proof of such literary delicacies cannot be had without an actual pudding (i.e., independent evidential witness).

<sup>54</sup> Noll argues more or less the same position for the "Former Prophets," stating that while the Hebrew Bible might constitute the archival collection of ancient librarians, "one wonders at the care with which the ancient archivists have ordered the material into a single, continuous narrative complete with chronological indicators, albeit internally inconsistent ones, and literary cross-references of an almost infinite variety" (1997:26-7; cf. Weinfeld 1991:83 and Venema 2004:72).

narrative complex of Genesis to 2 Kings into an intertextual tapestry.<sup>55</sup> An example of such intertextuality is the primary focus of this study: Moses' rehearses (in Deuteronomy) the Covenant Code presented earlier by Yahweh in Exodus.<sup>56</sup> Moses' reiteration of the law includes a narration of Israel's recent history while at the same time directing the attentions of the Moab audience (and indirectly, the reader) towards the conquest. When the narrator speaks much later with a Mosaic accent (most clearly in 2 Kgs 17), he does so through stylized quotation of concepts and terms lifted from Moses' speech.

The logic of narrative continuity and intertextual allusions throughout the Primary Narrative compel the reader to read the full length of the literary unit, confident that "the assumption of unity endows the entire text with intentionality" (Staley 1988:30). Within this broad narrative frame, the book of Deuteronomy plays a pivotal role, particularly on the subject of divine presence.<sup>57</sup> A watershed in divine-human relations arises when Yahweh announces to Moses and Joshua that he intends to hide his presence from a people who will turn and follow other gods (Deut 31). Divine presence—a vital commodity in the Bible's divine-human economy—is one

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<sup>55</sup> Canonical configurations, governed by extratextual concerns, frequently do violence to the narrative flow of Genesis to 2 Kings. For example, Judaism's orthopraxic focus isolates the first five books of the Bible as its primary "Torah." But as David Noel Freedman notes: "The formal division between Torah ... and the Former Prophets ... was artificial and dictated by nonliterary, theopolitical considerations" (2000:ix). Von Rad recognized the truncated nature of the Pentateuchal and advocated a "Hexateuchal" (Genesis to Joshua) configuration that brought to a climax the numerous predictions of conquest in Deuteronomy. Scholarship too has been guilty of atomizing the Bible's Primary Narrative, the "Deuteronomistic" construct divorcing Deuteronomy from the Tetrateuch being a prime example.

Freedman claims to have first discovered the Bible's "Primary History" (1976:226; 2000:ix), though earlier Otto Eissfeldt labeled the same group of texts (minus Ruth) the "Enneateuch" (1965:136, 156). Freedman's "Primary History" is a now familiar concept in synchronic scholarship (Fewell and Gunn 1992:1023, 1993:3). While indebted to Freedman for his "Primary History" construct, I prefer to label the Genesis to 2 Kings as "Primary Narrative."

<sup>56</sup> Yehuda T. Radday notes that the book of Deuteronomy "assumes that the reader has passed the propaedeutic stages by Genesis and that he has accepted the juridical injunctions of the three central books" (1981:84).

<sup>57</sup> See Christensen (2001:lxxxix-xcii) and Freedman (2000:*passim*) for discussions on the various ways that Deuteronomy "bridges" large portions of the Hebrew Bible.

which humans can ill afford to let slip, especially when conquest stakes ride high. On the other hand, Yahweh remains interested in maintaining (if not escalating) his autonomy, reluctant to commit his benevolent presence unnecessarily. Between these contrasting agendas, human and divine, arises many a dialogic collision as each party altercates over an issue of mutual concern.

### C. ESTABLISHING THE FRAMEWORKS

Three principle interpretative tools will be employed to discern the altercations that arise within the narrative of Deuteronomy: the theory of dialogic described by Mikhail Bakhtin, the principles of expositional modes and temporal deformations developed by Meir Sternberg, and the concept of textual embeddedness articulated (directly for Deuteronomy) by Jean Pierre Sonnet.

#### **Embedded Voicing in Deuteronomy (Bakhtin)**

What better method to analyze the voice structures of Deuteronomy and to articulate the struggles between humans and deity than Bakhtin's theory of dialogic, especially in a book where so much of the narrative centers on dialogue rather than action? As the principle interpretive tool employed in my analysis of Deuteronomy, Bakhtin's dialogism enunciates the dynamics and possibilities reverberating in all conversational dialogue with an open-ended theory that revels in diversity and difference and values the relational truth situated between (and even within) speaking subjects (Clark and Holquist 1984:9-10). The primary building block of dialogic theory is the utterance, defined by Bakhtin as any statement clothed within discourse and embodied in a clearly-defined speaking subject (Bakhtin 1983:324-25, 1984:184; Clark and Holquist 1984:10; Holquist 1990:60; McCracken 1993:35-7).<sup>58</sup> But an utterance on its own does not constitute a dialogic event. For such to occur, two utterances must collide in some way—their voices must intentionally address each other (Holquist 1990:60).<sup>59</sup> However,

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<sup>58</sup> "Dialogic relationships . . . must clothe themselves in discourse, become utterances, become the positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relationships might arise among them" (Bakhtin 1984:183).

<sup>59</sup> "The word in living conversation," says Bakhtin, "is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer word. It provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction" (1983:280). The borders between utterances are, as in living conversation, drawn by a change of speaking subject. Utterances are

the prerequisite for addressivity between two speaking subjects is obviated somewhat when, through the technique of quotation or embedding, a single discourse becomes “doubly voiced.” Through quotation (direct or indirect), the voice that quotes becomes internally dialogized, setting off complex ripples of polyphonic appropriation resonating with agreeable, disagreeable, subversive, or hostile overtone (cf. Barbara Green 2000:40-1).<sup>60</sup> This potential for a voice to internalize and address the utterance of another, even though the quoted interlocutor is absent spatially and/or temporally from the speaker, is important for the interpretation of Deuteronomy where Moses embeds within his speech material appropriated from Yahweh’s Sinai address. This double-voiced potential is also important when exploring the possibility of dialogic collisions between a storybound character and the narrator who resides beyond the transgradient horizon of the character’s world (for example, in Deut. 31:2 and 34:7), since the storyworld is really little more than utterances and statements bound up within the all-encompassing voice of the narrator.<sup>61</sup>

Bakhtinian theory offers the interpreter of literature a rich constellation of terms and concepts: chronotope, polyphony, heterology, architectonics, transgression, carnivalesque, genre, exotopy, and so on. But Deuteronomy is no Dostoevsky, Moses is no Ivan Karamazov, the Primary Narrative is no novel.<sup>62</sup> In explicating the mediated tensions between humans and Yahweh within the Primary Narrative, this study will merely sip

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never indifferent to each other, nor are they self-sufficient; rather, they are always aware of and mutually reflect each other and are filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the commonality of the sphere of speech communication (Bakhtin [1986:69, 72, 91, 94-5, 99]). (Many have noted the resemblance between Bakhtin’s understanding of dialogic and Martin Buber’s philosophy as outlined in *I and Thou*. Indeed, Bakhtin was introduced to Buber’s early work while only a teen [Honeycutt 1994:7].)

Dialogic can be defined by its opposite, *monologic*, an approach that, in an effort to establish unity through reduction and totalization, abstracts propositional truth from the speaking subject (Bergen 1999:2; Clark and Holquist 1984:241; Newsom 1996:293-95).

<sup>60</sup> As Barbara Green states, “[Dialogism] indicates double-voicedness, double-wordedness, both a general property of language and also a specific engagement of two voices in a single utterance” (2000:35).

<sup>61</sup> “Transgradient” (also spelled *transgradient*) was a term first used by Johannes Cohn and adopted by Bakhtin (1984:249; Reed 1993:36).

<sup>62</sup> McCracken voices the same point in terms of the New Testament gospels (1993:36).

from Bakhtin's theoretical and philosophical well, leaving deeper draughts for other Deuteronomic interpreters. I concur with Simon Dentith, who says:

I am doubtful whether some of Bakhtin's distinctions can be sustained in any very hard and fast way, but the point is not to give the reader or critic some elaborate set of pigeon-holes into which stretches of novels can be slotted, but to provide some vocabulary for understanding the diverse ways in which the immersion of novelistic prose in a multiplicity of voices can be understood (1995:47).

A straightforward application of some basics of Bakhtinian vocabulary is to be expected in the pages that follow—straightforward, yet ample enough to highlight the complex tensions between Yahweh and Moses, Yahweh and Israel, Yahweh and the book of the law. The terms of relevance for my project are these: dialogic of agreement, hidden polemic, dialogic tensions, dialogic angles, dialogic collision, dialogic event, dialogically-opposed speech centers, and polemic.<sup>63</sup>

### Expositional Modes and Temporal Deformations (Sternberg)

Following formalist Russian literary theory, this study makes much ado about the distinction between the plot presented by the narrator (*sujet*) and the actual chronology of the story (*fabula*). Meir Sternberg defines the *fabula* of a narrative as a “reconstruction of *sujet* components according to a pre-

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<sup>63</sup> While limiting the role of Bakhtin might run the risk of caricaturizing his conceptual framework, it also avoids two common problems prevalent in interdisciplinary biblical studies: either the target text (i.e., the Bible) is devalued to a mere test-bed upon which to exaggerate the prowess of the interpreter and to demonstrate the power of the selected interpretative machinery, or the Bible's fecundity is confessionally viewed as inexhaustible so that no method, no matter how sophisticated or anachronistic, can ever out-harvest its interpretive yield. The latter approach is quite common in biblical studies, an approach that must inevitably ask whether “to read the Bible in the light of Bakhtin is to hold a candle in sunshine” (Walter L. Reed, 1993:ix)?

Others who have found Bakhtin's dialogic theory useful for biblical interpretation include: Barbara Green (2000, 2003a, and 2003b), Mary E. Shields (2004), Carol A. Newsom (1996, 2002 and 2003), Keith Bodner (2003), Stefan Schorch (2003), Patricia K. Tull (2000), K. L. Noll (1999), Christine Mitchell (1999), Yvonne Sherwood (1998), Dennis T. Olson (1998), Seth Sykes (1997), R. P. Carroll (1996), Hugh S. Pypers (1996), Francisco O. García-Treto (1990), and Robert Polzin (1993a).



conceived, 'natural,' logical-chronological frame of reference" the deviations of which in the *sujet* highlight the modes of presentation chosen by the work" (1978:10).<sup>64</sup> A defining method for this study will be the working through of the *sujet* to unravel the logical sequence of the *fabula*. Through this process of "rechronologization," the reader comes to understand the mode of presentation selected by the narrator, thereby potentially decoding the message that lies beneath the narrator's surface telling.<sup>65</sup> The task to which Deuteronomy's narrator calls the reader requires active engagement with the curiosities of the narrative, alert attention to minute detail, in short to the patient perspicacity of the detective who remains committed to re-reading until no gaps are left agape.

### Embedded Textuality in Deuteronomy (Sonnet)

In addressing Moses as promulgator of the lawcode in Deuteronomy, historical critics are forced by the logic of their historical undertaking to adopt some "pious fraud" variant<sup>66</sup> by configuring Deuteronomy as "a kind of fiction placed in the mouth of Israel's founder and lawmaker" (Nicholson 1967:16; Lenchak 1993:2; Droge 2003:125).<sup>67</sup> What then does the literary

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<sup>64</sup> For further definition and discussion on these terms, see J. A. Cuddon (1991:323-3, 351-2) and Sternberg (1978:8-10, 34). In terms of application, Staley distinguishes between discourse order and story order in his interpretation of the Gospel of John (1988:20, 74-94).

<sup>65</sup> The task of decoding the narrative code is relatively straightforward. However, the reader of Deuteronomy must attend to two rhetorical events operating at two levels within the narrative, asking simultaneously what rhetorical purposes are at work in both Moses' and the narrator's speeches. For an investigation as this interested in rhetorical importance of the "book of the law," the importance of the lawcode for the storyworld audience is obvious. Less obvious is the purpose behind the narrator's purpose in mediating Moses' final speech event to the reader of Deuteronomy.

<sup>66</sup> Droge argues convincingly that the "pious fraud theory" is itself fraudulent, a "catechretic" construction invented by conservative scholars to function as a straw man in an academic polemic against those who are held to denigrate the religio-historical authority of the Bible (2003:134). "[It] is conservative scholars," writes Droge, "who are in fact leveling a charge of 'fraud' against a criticism that refuses to treat the Bible 'as the Bible'—that is, refuses to ratify *their* claims to its sacrosanct status" (2003:127).

<sup>67</sup> Many have noted the sermon,ic, parenetic, or didactic qualities of Deuteronomy, as extensively documented in Lenchak's rhetorical study (1993:2, fn. 7). The

critic make of Deuteronomy's claim that Moses spoke the words of the law and wrote them down in a book? Such a reader celebrates what historicists reject, adopting the factitious nature of Mosaic authorship of the book of the law as an interpretive point of departure.<sup>68</sup> While no doubt an ancient contrivance with a convoluted and fragmented literary past, the synchronic interpreter assumes that at some point the biblical text stood full-fledged and that the author of the completed narrative envisioned an audience capable of (or interested in) reading the lawcode as the discursive property of Moses.<sup>69</sup> Although Deuteronomy has been categorized variously as a code of law, a sermon, a vassal treaty, or a valediction (von Rad 1966:20-23), narrative theory synthesizes these various generic configurations within an overarching narrative structure, subsuming all into the rhetorical design of the storyworld character Moses. From a narratological perspective, it is the character Moses who has chosen a valediction that can be understood variously as a lawcode, a treaty, and/or a homily.

Any final-form assessment of the relationship between Deuteronomy and Josiah's discovery must take into account the Deuteronomistic investigations of Polzin and Jean Pierre Sonnet. In 1980 Polzin introduced narratology to the study of biblical narrative with an interpretation of the voice structures and mediational qualities of the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>70</sup> Polzin's

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rhetorical aspects of the text are most often attributed to the book of Deuteronomy itself rather than to its primary speaker Moses (cf. Lenchak 1993:2-6).

<sup>68</sup> Historical-critical scholars concede it was likely the redactor's intention that Josiah's discovery be considered (whether historical or not, probably the latter in their estimation) identical to the document written centuries earlier by the prophet Moses. From a narratological perspective, there is no other way to read these two significations to the book of the law (2 Kings 22 and Deut 31).

<sup>69</sup> As Noll succinctly writes, "Even if the text is a composite of disparate sources, one must attempt to make sense of the final whole" (1997:24). John Van Seters' solicitation for wholistic analyses of the Bible concurs with Noll:

What is sorely needed in the study of historiographic prose in the Old Testament is not the splitting up of prose works into various "traditions" in a highly speculative and uncontrolled fashion but a careful study of those literary qualities that the Old Testament shares with [Greek prose] works from antiquity. Given the level of prose development for its time, the Dtr history is a literary work of superb accomplishment . . . Noth's recovery of this author is commendable, but Noth did not go far enough. He still attributed too little of the work to the author himself and too much to his sources and "traditions" (1983:358-59).

<sup>70</sup> Polzin divides Deuteronomy along hierarchies of voicing which see a mere fifty-six verses awarded to the narrator, with the remainder of the text the property

reading of Deuteronomy and the relationship between the book's loquacious hero and its reticent narrator was provocative, though flawed by an eccentric understanding of the ontological plane separating storyworld and story teller (1980:61-63).<sup>71</sup> Recently, Sonnet has picked up where Polzin left off, employing narratological theory to delineate Moses' book of the law. In his *Book within a Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (1997), Sonnet provides the necessary corrective to Polzin's work while arguing that a clear distinction must be made between the book of Deuteronomy and the book of the law that lies embedded within the canonical text (cf. 1997:235, 251-2). Sonnet interprets Deuteronomy as a "wheel within a wheel" communication that

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of characters within the storyworld (namely Moses and Yahweh). The fifty-six reporting verses of the Deuteronomic narrator are: 1:15; 2:10-12, 20-23; 3:9, 11, 13b-14; 4:41-5:1a; 10:6-7, 9; 27:1a, 9a, 11; 28:69; 29:1a; 31:1, 7a, 9-10a, 14a, 14c-16a, 22-23a, 24-25, 30; 32:44-45, 48; 33:1; 34:1-4a, 5-12 (Polzin 1980:29).

<sup>71</sup> Polzin's narrator (= the Deuteronomist) is a real-world reincarnation of the storyworld prophet (Moses), in fulfillment of Deut 18:15 (1980:32, 61). Bach's narrator too blurs the synchronic-diachronic line: "Although the narrator doesn't like to cast his shadow across the biblical narratives, one instance of his performing as a character is to be found in the book of Deuteronomy, when he assumes the persona of Moses preaching directly to the community of Israel" (1993:67). Jean-Pierre Sonnet rightly states that Deuteronomy's "prophet like Moses" can only refer to a person resident within the same plane of representation as the arch-prophet Moses (1997:239-9, 242). For similar misgivings, see Talstra (1997:101-2).

The distinctions drawn by literary critical scholarship require continual reinforcement, since the abstractions of voice hierarchies or narratorial frames are easily misunderstood. For example, in their collaborative article Thomas Römer and Mark Z. Brettler argue that the discourse recorded by Joshua in the "Book of the Law of God" (Josh 24:26) is a reflexive reference to the real-world Hexateuch (2000:413). Ironically, the authors employ Sonnet to validate their aberrant interpretation, even though Sonnet's *The Book within the Book* problematizes reifying represented (storyworld) documents to the level of the representing plane of discourse (cf. especially 1997:252-59). Unfortunately, transgressions of ontological boundary occur with even the most narratologically committed critic. Sonnet himself is caught making this specious deduction: "The irony is that Moses himself, in his retelling of the Horeb event, provided the narrator with the pattern of his own course of action" (1997:138). As if Moses knew of the narrator's existence and could proffer him the pattern—thus, not even Sonnet is immune from Polzinian infections, despite Sonnet's criticism (1997:250-2) of Polzin's narrator as the prophet-like-Moses. Not surprising, Venema too trips over the transgradient divide between Moses and the narrator when he notes: "[T]he book of Deuteronomy *as a whole* is put into Moses' mouth" (2004:4; emphasis added).

embeds Moses' represented communication within the narrator's representing discourse. Sonnet's analysis of the poetics behind Deuteronomy's dual communication highlights the oscillating dynamic between the framed "book" authored by Moses and the framing "book" of Deuteronomy (1997:3, 261). Sonnet explains:

Deuteronomy is not only a book about "words," it is also a book that tells of another "book." [Moses'] references to [סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה] , "this 'book'," and the telling about Moses' making of the Torah "book" are not meant to confuse the reader. The "book" in question, being an element of Deuteronomy's represented world, is distinct from Deuteronomy's framing book (1997:246).

Sonnet's point is critical. The book composed by Moses within the narrator's represented storyworld is not identical with the fifth book of the Pentateuch held by the reader in the real world (Diagram 1.1).

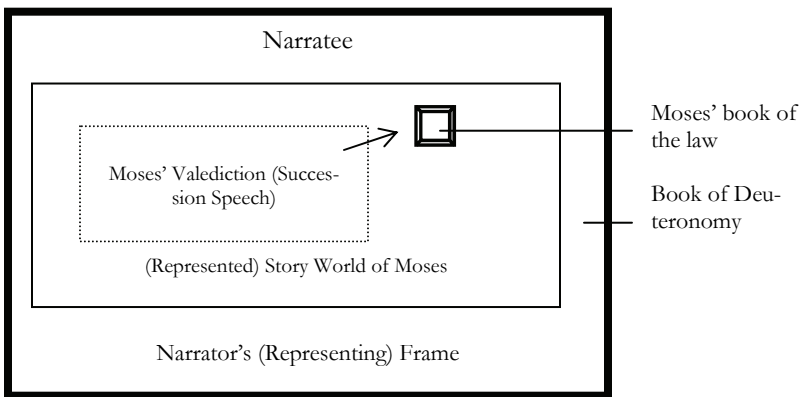


Diagram 1.1 – Relationship between Deuteronomy and Moses' "Book of the Law"

Moses' injunction to the Levites to "take this book of the law" (31:26) is not a reflexive reference to the canonical book of Deuteronomy, but rather a reference to a book embedded *within* canonical Deuteronomy, real to

Moses' audience, virtually real to the narrator's addressee. For most of the Deuteronomic narrative, the reader listens, courtesy of the narrator's mediation, to the prophet's recitation of the contents of his book of the law. All the while, it is the Israelites within the story who are intended recipients of the prophet's address; the reader merely eavesdrops on the discourse event at Moab. Were it not for the narrator's representation of Moses' speech, the reader would have scant knowledge of the actual contents of the book launched by Moses within the storyworld (Deut 31:24).<sup>72</sup>

#### D. READING BEYOND DEUTERONOMY

Sonnet's righting of Polzin's wrongs opens the path for further narratological investigation in Deuteronomy.<sup>73</sup> In particular, Sonnet's analysis of Deuteronomy's book-within-a-book phenomenon invites a reassessment of the assumption that the book of Deuteronomy is connected to the discovery made during the reign of King Josiah.<sup>74</sup> The by-product of the narrator's communication of Moses' address falls to the implied reader: a framed copy

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<sup>72</sup> Although Deuteronomy is not the only biblical book to contain embedded texts within its storyworld, Deuteronomy *is* unique for divulging before the reader the contents of the inner book. Sonnet describes this trans-fictional phenomenon thus:

The Torah "book" to which Moses points within Deuteronomy's represented world ... is a record on the narrative scene, and, as such, it is not "open" ... to the eyes of the reader. Elsewhere, such a designation on stage in the character's domain would be the reader's despair—the book becoming inaccessible, as far as its content is concerned, precisely when exhibited. Yet in Deuteronomy the aporia is overcome by the narrative's architectonics ... As in a *Gestalt* tiddle, Deuteronomy thus oscillates between two designs ... (1997:261).

Deuteronomy's narrative poetics have resulted in numerous misreadings of the narrator's reporting of (the promulgation of the contents of) Moses' written document. Scholars who (in addition to those already noted) erroneously assume Deuteronomy to be synonymous with Moses' written document include Lenchak (1993:1, 32), Talstra (1997:102), and Christensen (2001:13-14).

<sup>73</sup> In my view, Sonnet's study does not exhaust all literary issues within the book of Deuteronomy, nor does it adequately account for the dialogic tensions between Moses and Yahweh.

<sup>74</sup> Edgar W. Conrad's approach starts off on the same foot as mine: "[Historical] critical scholarship has often used the mention of books in the Old Testament ... in literalistic ways to buttress theories about diachronic development of Old Testament books, contemporary scholars are predisposed to look for historical rather than rhetorical significance of the Old Testament's representation of books" (1992:45).

(i.e., the canonical Deuteronomy) of the same book read by characters internal to the storyworld. Thus, two distinct, yet mutually dependent books play before the implied reader, one written by Moses within the storyworld for the benefit of internal readers, the other the real-world canonical book of Deuteronomy. Remarkably, the implied reader can reach across the fictional barrier and engage in comparative hermeneutics with his intrafictional counterparts. But the interpretive game is tilted, for the global perspective of the narrator ensures that the implied reader will always hold the upperhand, granting him superior understanding of the part within the whole compared to intrafictional readers who can read Moses' law without benefit of the narrator's frame. From a narratological perspective, there can be no room for the canonical book of Deuteronomy in King Josiah's court, or for that matter anywhere else within the intrafictional realm. The thirty-four chapters of canonical Deuteronomy constitute a real-world, three-dimensional text held in the hands of the reader; the Mosaic book stored beside the ark and later discovered in Josiah's court is a literary entity held within the two-dimensional fictional frame of the narrator (see Diagram 1.2 below).

The book of Deuteronomy and the book written by Moses belong to "incommensurate planes of representation" (Sonnet 1997:3).<sup>75</sup> But Moses' inscription is more than just a book within the book of Deuteronomy; it is also a book embedded within the Primary Narrative. By definition, any *narratological* demarcation of the contents of the book of the law in Deuteronomy is identical with the scroll read by the characters within the Joshua to Kings narrative.

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<sup>75</sup> To reiterate the by-now obvious: the text which Shaphan reads to Josiah in 2 Kgs 22 is not Deuteronomy (*contra* Provan [1995:271]), but the book of the law of Moses. S. Dean McBride Jr. makes a common mistake when reading references to the book of the law in the Deuteronomistic History: "[Deuteronomy] stands apart as the only individual book of Scripture whose text is expressly referred to elsewhere within the Hebrew Bible itself" (1993:66). Canonical "Deuteronomy" is not mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; only the "book of the law" (an embedded portion of the book of Deuteronomy) appears in the Primary Narrative, alongside such volumes as the "book of the covenant," a distillation of Yahweh's Sinai address written by Moses earlier in his career (Exod 24:7).

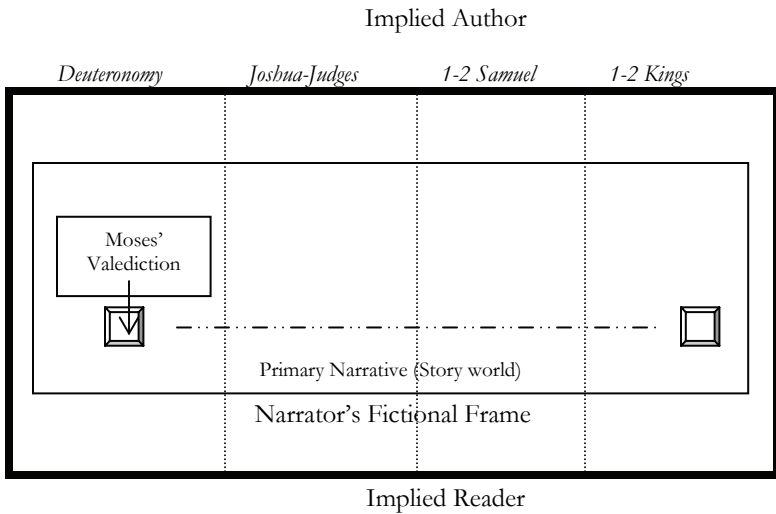


Diagram 1.2 – Narrator’s Representation of the סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה (“book of the law”)

All “book of the law” references within this large-scale narrative refer to an identical object residing within a consistent space-time continuum that spans the entire narrative from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. One can rephrase Davies’ circular argument to restate the essential: if the reader accepts at face value the historicity of Josiah’s reform, then he is obligated, from a narratological perspective, to accord the same degree of authenticity to the narrator’s report of Moses writing a book and placing it next to the ark. Ultimate semantic authority cannot be bought and sold on a whim by the reader.<sup>76</sup> Thus, if the narrative of 2 Kgs 22 is deemed “true,” then the same

<sup>76</sup> In their shared desire to read the text referentially for extratextual realities, historical critics and precritical/confessional readers read against the narrative grain, disagreeing only on the degree of reliability in the Bible’s representation. Narratologically, the teller of the 2 Kgs 22 story carries the same authority as the one reporting the writing of the “book of the law” in Deut 31. If it is “true” that a book discovery led to the reforms instituted by Josiah (as many scholars believe), then it is also narratologically “true” that Moses wrote the book of the law. From a historical critical point of view, such a statement sounds woefully pre-critical, even confessional. Of course, the real-life veridicality of the entire narrative is neither asserted nor denied in a narratological reading. If the Josianic narrative is royal propaganda as some think, on what basis do critics isolate the veridical from the non-veridical in the Deuteronomistic History? Why should critics find it more

degree/kind of truth must be accorded to the writing event reported in Deut 31:26 (“Moses wrote this law in a book to the very end”).

Contrary to scholarly narrations of the evolution of the *Urdeuteronomium*, each character in the Bible’s narrative (whether Joshua, David, Hilkiah, Shaphan, Josiah, or Yahweh) accesses precisely the same document as that written by Moses on the far side of Jordan. Though the prophet has died, his last testament lives on, to be read by audiences never seen, intended, nor imagined. Willed by Moses, the Israelites are to assemble every seven years “at the place which Yahweh shall choose” for the purpose of a public reading of “this law” (31:10-11). Compliance with the prophet’s directive will ensure conformity to the life-giving lawcode (32:46-7). But the potential of Moses’ witness to influence and direct, to encourage and provoke, to warn and condemn, is scarcely realized within the storyworld. Mostly, the “book of the law” stands disengaged, with Joshua and Josiah the notable exceptions among a seemingly disinterested readership.<sup>77</sup> Between these two readers lies a vast stretch of hermeneutical inactivity, save the oblique reference in King David’s fatherly admonition to “keep the charge of the Lord your God ... as it is written in the law of Moses ...” (1 Kgs 2:3). For the attentive reader, however, the “book of the law” is a cipher whose content is readily accessible through the narrator’s mediation of Moses’ valediction; he need not wait for intratextual readings to occur to read for himself the document that seems largely ignored in the storyworld.<sup>78</sup> The narrative architectonics of the Primary Narrative allow the

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credible that a book gave rise to a religious reformation in the seventh century than that a deity identified as Yahweh created worlds with a word? Only with the imposition of extra-textual criteria (i.e., positivist sense of historicity) can one suspend belief in one part of the story (Genesis 1) and re-suspend it in another (2 Kgs 22-3). Given the narratological uniformity of the Primary Narrative, narratological theory demands that the external reader accord the same degree of authenticity to the narrator’s claim that Moses wrote the book of the law as to the narrator’s report in 2 Kings 22-3 that Josiah “discovered” the book of the law. Stott concurs, stating: “There are no literary criteria for determining that the story about the discovery of the book and its role in the time of Josiah is any more (or less) reliable historically than the story about its provenance and Mosaic authorship” (2008:110).

<sup>77</sup> In Josh 8:30-4, Joshua copies the book of the law to commemorate the Mount Ebal sacrifice, while in 23:6 he exhorts the Israelites to follow his example in observing the directives of Moses’ book.

<sup>78</sup> Noth viewed the Deuteronomic law as “a cipher” which the Deuteronomist used to critique the institution of kingship and individuals holding the office: “*Dadurch hat Dtr diesem Gesetz eine entscheidende Rolle zugewiesen und es zur Norm für das*



reader free access to the same text as the characters in the storyworld, heightening the drama of reading as a second order harmonic engages the external reader interested in deciphering the poetic fundamentals of the Bible's Primary Narrative.<sup>79</sup> In so doing, the narrator places all characters

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*Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Volk und zum Maßstab für das Urteil über das menschliche Handeln erklärt*" (1957:92).

<sup>79</sup> Initial impressions of the embedding structure of Deuteronomy might lead one to assume the presence of a *mise en abyme* within it and in the Primary Narrative in general. This concept, borrowed from heraldry by André Gide, has been applied to artistic and narrative works which display deliberate reflexivity, usually through some kind of interior duplication of the greater whole. Deuteronomy's embedded book of the law transposes within its pages the same key characters (i.e., Israel and Yahweh) present in Moses' frame of reality, albeit refracted through the anamorphic vision of the conditioned prophet. The interplay between these two ontologically disparate levels might be read as a synecdochal mirroring of the primary narrative, beckoning the reader to compare the image (book of the law) for the imaged (the storyworld of Moses).

A few biblical scholars have employed theoretical aspects of *mise en abyme* in their work (e.g., Polzin [1993b:37-8, 45-7] and Sonnet [1997:78-84]). Mieke Bal has been most involved in the theoretical development of the concept. Bal points out that the potential for *mise en abyme* exists whenever a character takes on at a secondary level the activity for which the narrator is normally responsible. Bal writes: "[A] *mise en abyme* will always be *interruption*, of the narration relayed to the character, often also relaying focalization, and/or interruption of the diegesis. The *mise en abyme* is reflexive and diegetic, object of the narration at the second degree" (1994:49). All *mises en abyme* are, by Bal's definition, embedded narrations. However, not every diegetic downshift constitutes a *mise en abyme*, for the essential property of a *mise en abyme* is its ability to reflect and/or duplicate some salient feature, prominent theme, main character, or important event from the primary narrative (Dällenbach 1977:46-7). Applying Bal's theory to the Deuteronomistic narrative, one might argue that Moses' valediction interrupts and duplicates important aspects of the primary narrative by reflecting a condensed "Deuteronomic" image of the "Deuteronomistic" whole that informs the primary narrative with encoded signification. This reflecting image, frozen into still-form by the scribal performance of Moses, is deposited in the storied world of the Deuteronomistic narrative as a "character witness" against Israel.

Robert Alter writes: "The phenomenon of an artwork mirroring itself as it mirrors reality ... could be traced back as far as the bard within the epic in the *Odyssey* and Euripides' parody of the conventions of Greek tragedy" (1975:xi). Yet the lure of a biblical *Spiegel im Spiegel* reflection can only be pursued after fundamental narratological research has been performed on Moses' book of the law. Caution is paramount, since recent theoretical discussions of Lucien Dällenbach's *mise en abyme*

(even Yahweh) in a position of dramatic irony, for they go about their world unaware that a witness eye looms above, overshadowing their every move and word.

Ironically, Sonnet fails to address the challenge of Deuteronomy's poetics within the broader biblical context: "In its canonical and narrative claim, Deuteronomy is not tied to a specific, 'Deuteronomistic' voice (pertaining to the Deuteronomistic corpus), but to the voice that so far conducted the Pentateuchal narrative" (1997:24). The present study rejects such curtailments to the narrator's voice and story and instead situates Deuteronomy's embedded communication within the larger Primary Narrative, liberating Deuteronomy from the confessional confines to which Sonnet appears to fall prey.<sup>80</sup> Sonnet asks: "Will Israel be appropriately equipped with the 'words' of the covenant when Moses completes his direct act of communication?" (1997:6). I propose that the resolution to Sonnet's question can only be found on the other side of Moses' death in Deut 34, in the narration that begins in Josh 1.<sup>81</sup>

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typology have identified issues that might easily introduce a methodological Trojan horse into a poorly constructed biblical project. Bal, for example, notes that of the many concepts employed by classical narratology, *mise en abyme* is frequently invoked but rarely articulated with clarity, perhaps (suggests Bal) because *mise en abyme* is "profoundly anti-narrative" in its distortion of linear chronological development (1994:45). Bal also questions whether Dällenbach's association of *mise en abyme* with a Jakobsonian (sender-receiver) model of communication does injustice to the semiotic aspects of the *mise en abyme* concept (1994:48). Furthermore, Moshe Ron raises some important theoretical issues, and in particular questions how a diminutive *mise en abyme* is able to reflect in any meaningful way the totality of the whole. Without a better articulation of the concept and its reflexive operations, "one man's *mise en abyme* [can easily turn into] another man's mush" (Ron 1987:437). Strong exegetical spadework must therefore precede any application of the concept of *mise en abyme*, particularly one so theoretically adolescent. The present study should serve as the initial stage for possible *mise en abyme* investigations in the future.

<sup>80</sup> Even though Sonnet argues against reading Deuteronomy as part of the Deuteronomistic History, he at times is caught thinking "Deuteronomistically" in references to Moses' Torah in the book of Joshua (1997:173, 181).

<sup>81</sup> Venema attempts the same task: to develop the implications of Deuteronomy's "book-within-a-book" for the remainder of the biblical canon, referring to Moses' book of the law as a "signpost for Judges and Kings" (50). My outcome differs from his simply because my reading is constrained in its scope (confined as it is to the narrative unit of the Primary Narrative as opposed to Venema's canonical purview) and mode (my reading reads the Primary Narrative as literature, not as scripture or theology).

## E. MAPPING THE TERRAIN

Given the task at hand, it is important that the (external) reader of Deuteronomy and the greater Primary Narrative understands precisely the contents of the book of the law that internal readers read in the storyworld. Using the narratological principles of voicing pioneered by Polzin and advanced by Sonnet, an investigation of the delineational clues contained within Deuteronomy is undertaken in the next chapter to disambiguate the contents of the book of the law. Sonnet in particular, notes the two sets of references to “the law” mentioned in Deuteronomy, each set spoken from two contrasting ontological levels. Within the narrator’s frame, the term “law” is mentioned four times,<sup>82</sup> while the same term is noted fifteen times in Moses’ reported address.<sup>83</sup> To determine the margins of Moses’ book, Sonnet focuses on the narrator’s reference set. In 31:9, the narratorial phrase “and Moses wrote this law” points back to the preceding verbal discourse; in 4:44, the narrator’s phrase “this is the law” points ahead to the address that Moses is about to deliver. These two narratorial statements, each consisting of noun-plus-demonstrative, effectively bracket the contents of the book written by Moses before his death (1997:248), accounting for Sonnet’s framing of the book of the law between 4:44 and 31:9. But is the narrator’s bracketing of Moses’ speech inclusive of all the material contained between 4:44 and 31:9? Does it include, for example, the curses of ch. 28 or the covenant-making ceremony of ch. 29? To answer such questions, I will examine the Deuteronomic text at two levels, beginning first at the level of the narrator and then proceeding “down” to the level of the story.<sup>84</sup> Throughout, the satellite view afforded to the reader offers a vantage from which to survey the large-scale chiasmic design of Moses’ speech, thereby assisting in the demarcation of the verbal communication that is published in Moses’ book. Overriding Moses’ chiasmically structured speech

<sup>82</sup> Deut 1:5; 4:44; 31:9, 24.

<sup>83</sup> Deut 4:8; 17:18, 19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58, 61; 29:20, 28; 30:10; 31:11, 12, 26; 32:46.

<sup>84</sup> Moses connects the plural noun דְּבָרִים (“words”) to seven of his fifteen references to the book of the law. In a moment of dramatic irony, Moses makes a statement in 32:46-7 that the external reader links to Deut 1:1: “For [all the words of this law (כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) are] no trifle for you, but [they are] your life, and thereby you shall live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess.” The intonation in Moses’ statement is laden with warning, in contrast with the narrator’s neutral introduction. Between these two radically different intonations lies the primary subject of the first section of my investigation.

is the narrator's own, effectively creating a two-tiered chiasmic framing strategy, the level of the narrator (or the level of the discourse) *and* the level of Moses' speech (or the level of the storyworld). Each chiasmic set structures the much-advertised "statutes and ordinances" as centerpiece to Moses' address and his book of the law. Infused throughout these two carefully structured speech events is a persistent dialogic between prophet and deity over the future presence of the deity.

Unveiling Deuteronomy's dialogic will be the task of the third chapter. To come to terms with the narrator and his tale, I pay careful attention to telling details that employ temporal deformation (retrospections, advance notices, elongations, summarizations, among others). A narratologically-informed method is up to the task, for such a method is equipped to deal with the sequential art that is narrative (Sternberg 1978:163-4). Attention to details of temporal sequence are performed at the two levels of story and discourse that I established in the second chapter. For most of the Deuteronomic narrative, the narrator leaves Moses to present his final address without interruption. As the aged leader speaks, he reinterprets Yahweh's covenant (Exod 19-24) in ways not originally intended (cf. Weinfeld 1991:19). Only near the end of Moses' valediction does the narrator volunteer a delayed exposition that enlightens the external reader as to the reasons for these differences in Moses' address. The narrator's delayed exposition coincides with the notoriously convoluted thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy. I will review four recent readings of this chapter before accepting Lohfink's invitation to domesticate the chapter's anomalies with a new thoroughgoing rechronologization of the narrative of Deuteronomy. In positing my rechronologization, I will work through the implications of Moses' writing action and the poetics of the narrator's dischronologization. What will emerge by the chapter's end is a radical reassessment of the Moab discourse.

Having rechronologized the narrative of Deuteronomy, the fourth chapter will reread the tale of Moses' last speech, detailing numerous angles of dialogic that exist between Moses and Yahweh. These angles are of acute interest to the external reader for only he is privy to the behind-the-scenes theophany presented to Moses and Joshua in the tent of meeting (31:16-23). Less fortunate are the internal recipients of Moses' address, whether the original Moab audience or subsequent generations of intratextual readers of the speech's fictional hardcopy (i.e., "book of the law"). They never had (nor will they ever have) access to this vital information from heaven, and so they must take Moses' speech as the whole (and nothing but) truth. The external reader is not so constrained. My rechronologized reading of Deu-

teronomy's dramatic irony will first focus on the frames surrounding the central "statutes and ordinances" (as detailed in chapter two) where Moses, using tactics of conditionalization, amelioration, and ambiguation, publicly undermines Yahweh's damnatory prediction without exposing the secret meeting held behind tent walls. Then follows a close analysis of Moses' pragmatic strategy in ch. 12 (involving Canaanite annihilation, cultic centralization, and "Name" abstraction), a strategy that Moses hopes-against-hope will sustain Israel in the land of promise.

In its final-form canonical context, the book of the law is an important presence throughout the literary complex of Deuteronomy-2 Kings. My last chapter will briefly explore the narrative of 2 Kgs 22, applying the book-within-a-book logic of Deuteronomy to the greater Primary Narrative. Following this application, I will conclude with comments on the implications of the narratological understanding of the Deuteronomio-Josianic link presented in this study, one that I contend is important for any who are interested in the Bible as scripture.

But first-things-first: the disambiguation of the book of the law that arises out of (the narrator's report of) the final speech.



## 2 DISAMBIGUATING MOSES' BOOK OF LAW

Efforts to delineate the contents of Moses' book of the law face the challenge of a variety of ambiguous terms and references. The phrase "this law" (הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) occurs nineteen times in Deuteronomy, five times in connection with the word "book" (סֵפֶר)<sup>85</sup> and once in connection with "stones" (אֲבָנִים).<sup>86</sup> The terms "law" and "book" are themselves ambiguous, since תּוֹרָה can mean "instruction" or "teaching" in addition to the law and סֵפֶר can denote any written surface, from an ancient scroll to engraved stone (Barton 1998:2, 13). In 31:9, the narrator reports that Moses wrote "this law" and handed the document over to the Levites and elders with instructions for periodic reading. A little later, the narrator reports that Moses wrote "the words of this law" in "a book" which he consequently handed over to the Levites for deposition beside the ark of the covenant (31:24). Added to the polyvalent terminology and multiple reports of writing are the ancillary terms "testimonies," "commandments," "statutes," and "ordinances" (e.g., 4:44-5).

Scholars have resorted to various means to delineate a document burdened so with diverse signification. In the process, some scholars have fallen into debate over the swept volume of a plastered stele so that they might better determine whether the entire Deuteronomistic (*sic*) text (chs. 1-34) could have been etched on its surface (cf. 27:3). While Eugene H. Merrill argues that a plastered stele could not have contained the entire Deuteronomistic text, (1994:342), Jeffrey H. Tigay asserts the opposite: "The text says that *all* the words of the Teaching—whatever that refers to—are to be inscribed, and places no limit on the size or number of steles to be used. In fact, two steles the size of that on which the laws of Hammurabi

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<sup>85</sup> Deut 17:18; 28:58, 61; 29:19; and 31:24.

<sup>86</sup> Deut 27:8.

were written could easily contain more than Deuteronomy” (1997:248).<sup>87</sup> From a narratological perspective, such debates over historical verisimilitude are secondary. In a storyworld where the sun stands stationary or where a stuttering supercentenarian can deliver without falter an extended valediction, the notion of an entire lawcode inscribed on a plastered edifice is quotidian part-and-parcel.

Of greater narratological import are those delineational clues, voiced by the narrator at the level of discourse and by Moses at the level of the story, which bind Moses’ discourse in Moab to its written precipitate (the book of the law).

<b>A Narrator's Outer Frame</b>	
A	<i>Succession Speech</i> (1:6-3:29)
B	<i>Witness Frame</i> (4:1-31)
C	<i>Covenant Frame, Part One</i> (4:32-40) ...
<b>B Narrator's Inner Framebreak (4:41-5:1a)</b>	
	<i>Covenant Frame, Part Two</i> (5:1b-33)
D	<i>Excursus Frame</i> (6:1-11:25)
E	<i>Ebal/ Gerizim Frame</i> (11:26-32)
X	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
E'	<i>Ebal/ Gerizim Frame</i> (26:16-27:14)
D'	<i>Excursus Frame</i> (27:15-28:68)
<b>B' Narrator's Inner Framebreak (28:69-29:1a)</b>	
C'	<i>Covenant Frame, Part One</i> (29:1b-8) ...
	<i>Covenant Frame, Part Two</i> (29:9-27)
B'	<i>Witness Frame</i> (29:28-30:20)
A'	<i>Succession Speech</i> (31:1-8)
<b>A' Narrator's Outer Frame (31:9-34:12)</b>	

Figure 2.1 – Deuteronomy’s Integrated Chiasmic Structures

For the most, the narrator’s delineation agrees with that provided by his primary hero, though the differences between them point to the contrasting agendas between reporting and reported speakers. In searching for the con-

<sup>87</sup> Tigay’s position is adumbrated by Hugh Pope (1910:153-54), who pointed out that the diorite cone on which the Hammurabi Code is inscribed contains some 7,928 lines of legal code, compared with the rough equivalent of 1,200 lines of text of Deuteronomy 12-34.



tents of Moses' book, the reader uncovers not only two framing structures integrated within the narrative, but also an underlying dialogic between Moses and Yahweh. Deuteronomy's dual levels of framing will be analyzed separately, first the upper-level framing strategies of the narrator (highlighted in bold borders in Figure 2.1), then the lower-level frames that Moses uses to structure his final address to the congregation in the story. What will emerge from these analyses are two compatible delineations of the central contents of the book of the law.<sup>88</sup>

## A. LEVEL OF THE DEUTERONOMIC NARRATOR

### Narrator's Outer Frame (1:1-5 and 31:9-34:12)

The narrator's leading *Outer Frame* introduces the main communicational events of Moab with three verbs, each corresponding to a major section of the narrator's presentation.<sup>89</sup> Two verbs (vv. 1 and 3) employ the common root דָּבַר ("spoke"), while the third (v. 5) uses the unusual verbal phrase הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בְּאָר ("Moses undertook to explain").<sup>90</sup> Concurrent with these

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<sup>88</sup> This chiasmic analysis of the Deuteronomic narrative is markedly different from typical divisions of Moses' speech that follow sequential series of speech units punctuated by "editorial superscriptions" in 1:1-5, 4:44-49, 28:69 and 33:1 (cf. Paul Kleinert 1872:166-67, McBride 1993:64, Georg Braulik 1986:5-6, and Polzin 1980:29-36).

<sup>89</sup> For decipherings of these seemingly superfluous markers, see Baruch A. Levine (1993:53-7, 91), Tigay (1996:3-5, 417-22), Patrick D. Miller (1990:22-3), von Rad (1966:36-7), and Weinfeld (1991:129-30). Craigie (1976:91) and Tigay (1996:4) argue that the narrator's discussion of an eleven day journey (1:2) gives advance information on the wilderness wandering recalled in 1:19-20.

<sup>90</sup> Tigay (1996:5) also points out that the communication notice of 1:1 was delivered previously to Israel and is now repeated for a final time forty years after the exodus (1:3). On the other hand, Ibn Ezra viewed the Moab address mentioned in vv. 3 and 5 as a repetition of an earlier speech given during the wandering in the wilderness alluded to in v. 1 (Weinfeld 1991:129; Ehrlich 1909:244-75). Miller reads the three discursive references in the narrator's introduction theologically: v. 1 establishes the book as human speech, v. 3 stresses that it is Yahweh who is the original source for Moses' speech, and v. 5 identifies Moses' role as explicator of the law contained in the book (1990:24). Mayes (1991:114-16) and Lundbom (1996:300-1) interpret the referential information in vv. 1 and 5 as a signature to the speech delivered by Moses in the land of Moab in ch. 5, while Lundbom equates "this law" in v. 5 with "these words" in v. 1.

three verbs is the threefold identification of the speaking subject, Moses (vv. 1, 3, and 5). With each notice, the narrator progresses from the general to the specific, from “these are the words that Moses *spoke*,” to “Moses *spoke* ... all that Yahweh had given in commandment to him,” and finally to “Moses *undertook to explain* this law.” The narrator’s first expositional notice describes generically “these words” (אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים) that Moses spoke to “all of Israel” (אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל). The second notice differs slightly, with Moses speaking to “the people of Israel” (אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) all that Yahweh commanded him to speak. Finally, the narrator describes Moses as “explaining this law.”

A cursory read of the narrator’s three-part introduction gives the impression that either one speech is presented three times or that three different speeches are presented sequentially. Closer inspection reveals that the three notices are matched with parallel narratorial statements at the close of Moses’ discourse (Table 2.1). The narrator’s general reference to the words which Moses spoke to “all Israel” in 1:1 prefigures the parallel narratorial notice in 32:45. The first and last occurrences of the phrase “to all Israel” in Deuteronomy encompass the discourse that Moses delivered prior to his final summation to Nebo’s peak (32:48).<sup>91</sup> In 1:3, the narrator announces proleptically the communication that Yahweh had commanded Moses concerning the “people of Israel.” Most interpreters assume that the phrase “according to all that Yahweh commanded him” announces the central lawcode of Deuteronomy. To ease the interpretation, scholars often add an

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Christensen (1991:6, 2001:9), Tigay (1996:3), Lundbom (1996:300-2), and Lohfink (1962a:32 fn2) note a ringstructure in the narrator’s introduction, with v. 3 centering the outer notices of communication in vv. 1 and 5. Mayes criticizes Lohfink’s analysis, stating that his structure fails to demonstrate convincingly the parallelism between the different chiasmic sections and does not account for the parenthetical comment in v. 2 (Lohfink concedes the latter deficiency). However, Mayes himself admits that “it may be that the attempt to produce a chiasmic form influenced the way in which additions were made to the original message” (1991:113).

For further discussions on the narrator’s introduction, see Driver (1986:1-10), Martin Noth (1957:28), Tigay (1996:1-5), and Zecharai Kallai (1995:192-97).

<sup>91</sup> Only the blessing of Moses (ch. 33:2-29) is excluded from the chiasmic envelope of the narrator’s outer frame.

extra verbal component: “according to all the commandment that Yahweh *had given* to him.”<sup>92</sup>

Table 2.1 - The Structure of the Narrator's Outer Frame	
A	these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel (אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל) beyond the Jordan in the wilderness. It is eleven days journey from Horeb ... to Kadeshbarnea (1:1)
B	and in the fortieth year ... Moses spoke to the people of Israel (אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) according to all that Yahweh had commanded him concerning them (1:3)
C	beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to explain this law (אֶת-הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) (1:5)
X	Moab Address (1:6-31:8)
C'	Moses' writing of this law (הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת) (31:9, 24)
B'	so Moses [wrote and taught] this song that same day to the people of Israel (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (31:22; cf. 31:19)
A'	and when Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel (אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל) (32:45)

Indeed, from the perspective of the broader Primary Narrative, Deuteronomy's primary discursive performance might at first be understood as the dissemination בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה (“by the hand of Moses”) of Yahweh's earlier commandments to Israel (e.g., Exod 35:29, Lev 26:46, Num 36:13).<sup>93</sup> But v. 3 does not mention “commandment” and instead employs the word צִוָּה (“command”) in a verbal rather than nominal sense. Significantly, the only instance in the book of Deuteronomy where Yahweh similarly “commands” Moses to address Israel is when he reveals the momentous contents of his song (31:19).<sup>94</sup> The narrator's second notice of communication (1:3) belongs to the promulgation of “all that Yahweh commanded him”

<sup>92</sup> Those who interpret “commandment” in 1:3 as a noun include von Rad (1966:31), and Thompson (1974:82).

<sup>93</sup> Von Rad details the parallels between Moses' retelling of past events in chs. 1-3 and the same events in the book of Numbers. In von Rad's view, the retelling of the past in Deut 1-3 “produces an effect of much greater homogeneity than the earlier sources of the Pentateuch, and in consequence reads much more easily” (1966:38). Von Rad's comparison between Deuteronomy and Numbers invites a narratological assessment that takes in stride the entire “Primary Narrative” (Genesis to 2 Kings).

<sup>94</sup> For scholars who interpret the verse literally, see Christensen (2001:9), Craigie (1973:91), Eugene H. Merrill (1994:61), Weinfeld (1991:125), and Tigay (1996:5).

(i.e., the song) in the tent of meeting (31:19), not to Moses' self-motivated address (1:6-30:20). Reinforcing the link between 1:3 and Yahweh's command to teach his song is the precise temporal demarcation of the phrase "in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month" in 1:3, the only such detail in Deuteronomy.<sup>95</sup> Coincidentally, in 31:22 the narrator states that Moses wrote and taught the *song* of Yahweh "that same day."<sup>96</sup> For these reasons, the communicational notice in 1:3 ought to be connected with Moses' promulgation of Yahweh's song (31:19 and 32:1-43) rather than with the central lawcode (chs. 12-26).

Having presented inclusive notices for Moses' valediction (1:1 and 32:45) and specific notices to Yahweh's command in the tent of meeting (1:3 and 31:19-22), the narrator issues a third framing notice in v. 5. Here, the narrator employs an enigmatic verb (בָּאֵר) in his phrase הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בָּאֵר אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת ("Moses undertook to explain"). The verb בָּאֵר (found elsewhere only in Deut 27:8 and Hab. 2:2) connotes writing or engraving, in addition to the usual denotations of "explanation" or "interpretation."<sup>97</sup> A. Mayes comments: "[From] its use in 27:8 and Hab 2:2 [בָּאֵר] clearly cannot be separated from the notion of 'writing' or 'engraving,' so that Moses is then presented here as the one who made a first written record of his teaching" (1991:116).<sup>98</sup> With this statement the narrator hints early-on in his presentation of an important compositional event whose report is delayed until after the disclosure of Moses' final speech. Between the connotation of writing (1:5) and the report of the same (31:19, 24), the narrator relinquishes his duty as storyteller in favor of reporting directly Moses' lengthy address.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Tigay 1996:4 and Craigie 1973:91.

<sup>96</sup> Standard to scholarly discussions is the phrase "song of *Moses*" in reference to the discourse of ch. 32, a misnomer due perhaps to a misreading of the first-person references in 32:1 (cf. Steven Weitzman 1997:40-1). While tradition attributes this discourse unit to the prophet Moses, a narratological reading would recognize that in ch. 32, Moses is teaching a song whose true author is Yahweh (31:19).

<sup>97</sup> Those who follow the more common interpretation for this problematic verb (i.e., "Moses explicated the law") include Craigie (1976:92), Miller (1990:24-5), Thompson (1974:82-3), and Tigay (1996:5).

<sup>98</sup> Supporting Mayes' interpretation are Weinfeld (1991:126, 129), Christensen (2001:15), and Sonnet (1997:29-32).

<sup>99</sup> Von Rad assumes that the reference to "this law" in v. 5 is evidence of a later redaction, written from the standpoint of "the law" and bearing little relation

The narrator's preliminary exposition (1:1-5) highlights three important communicational units given by Moses (Table 2.2).

(Table 2.2) Notices of Three Communicational Units in the Narrator's Introductory Frame (1:1-5)	
these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel (1:1)	Moses' oral valediction (1:6-31:8; 32:45)
Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that Yahweh had commanded him (1:3)	Yahweh's song (31:19; 32:1-43)
Moses undertook to "explain" the law (1:5)	Moses' book (31:9, 24)

Moses' oral valediction and the written law do not receive the divine endorsement awarded the promulgation of Yahweh's song, simply because these communicational units are the invention of Moses himself. Gaps in the narrator's preliminary exposition (1:5) raise important questions, especially of sequence: Did Moses "explicate" the law prior to its writing? Or does the verb **בִּאֵר** connote a writing activity that took place prior to its promulgation in 12:1? How much of Moses' last speech was recorded in the document reported to have been written in the storyworld? These details are omitted from narrator's introduction, since the narrator need not tell up-front all the details leading to the fictive present that finds Moses speaking for the last time. It is conceivable that the book of the law might have been written prior to Moses' address and that the prophet might even have read his speech directly from its pages. The resolution of such matters, however, must await a delineation of the contents of the book of the law.

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to the material in 1:6-4.43 (1966:37). McBride concurs: "In its received form, the whole Book of Deuteronomy is both 'this Torah' and literally constructed around it. Thus while the initial editorial superscription in 1:1-5 introduces the Mosaic memoirs that immediately follow in 1:6-4:40 ... it does so already with a clear view toward the promulgation of 'this Torah'" (1993:66). Both von Rad and McBride fail to note that the words of v. 6 belong to a different ontological plane compared with the first five verses of Deuteronomy. True, the narrator's words in v. 5 do not relate directly to the speech beginning in v. 6. But v. 6 belongs to a character in the story; Moses presents whatever introduction best fits his own rhetorical purpose. The external reader must wait for the internal speaker to work his way round to what the narrator presents as the main event (i.e., "this law" in v. 5).

### Narrator's Inner Framebreaks

The narrator's exordium and its parallel in chs. 31-2 form an outer frame around the valediction of Moses. The narrator supplements this *Outer Frame* with a pair of inner framebreaks (see Figure 2.1) that challenge the reader.<sup>100</sup> In the leading inner framebreak (4:41-5:1), the nouns **עֲדוֹת** ("testimonies"), **חֻקִּים** ("statutes"),<sup>101</sup> and **מִשְׁפָּטִים** ("ordinances") appear to delineate the sections of "the law" about to be reported (vv. 44-5).<sup>102</sup> Three separate terms, though most scholars treat the terms as one semantic field, each a synonymous reference to the law in its entirety.<sup>103</sup> The narrator's trailing *Inner Framebreak* (28:69-29:1) is likewise problematic. Sufficient grammatical ambiguity exists in 28:69 to permit either a subscript (summary to what pre-

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<sup>100</sup> Polzin distinguishes between narratorial "frames" and "frame-breaks," the latter seemingly pedantic interruptions of the hero's address by a reticent narrator (e.g., Deut 2:10-13) (1980:30).

<sup>101</sup> Despite the ambiguity of the word **חֻקִּים** ("statutes"), its nuances underscore the written dimension of Moses' message. Since **חֻקִּים** connotes something engraved or written down, the reader hears a semantic resonance with the unique term **בְּאֵר** used by the narrator in the introductory 1:5 and in the reports of writing in 31:9 and 24.

<sup>102</sup> Lundbom argues that 4:44-9 is a summary subscription of the material of chs. 1-3 rather than an introduction to the law beginning in ch. 5 (1996:303-4). While Lundbom is correct in seeing a connection between the innerbreak (4:44-5:1) and the introductory frame (1:1-5), the inner frame is more than a simple summation of Moses' speech in chs. 1-3. Rather, 4:44-5 is a significant demarcational cue that details the contents of the Moab covenant about to be promulgated.

Within the central section of Moses' address (chs. 12-26), the word **מִצְוֹת** ("commandments") appears almost entirely on its own (cf. 13:5, 19, 15:5, 17:20, and 19:9 with 26:17) and never in conjunction with the words "statutes and ordinances." In the frames surrounding the central section of the Moab address, "commandments" is frequently paired with other terms (cf. 6:1 and 27:17). Conversely, in the central section **חֻקִּים** ("statutes") occurs both on its own (16:12) and in conjunction with "this law" (17:19).

<sup>103</sup> Barnabas Lindars writes: "It is impossible to assign any distinction of meaning to [these various terms] ... One can only conclude that they are selected out of a desire for elegant variation and a liking for the fullness of synonymous phrases" (1968:128-29). Helmer Ringgren concurs: "The various terms [in Deuteronomy have] lost their special meanings, and the combinations all refer to the law as a whole, which is also called ['torah'] in Deuteronomy" (1986:145; cf. also Tigay 1996:43, McBride 1993:66-7, and Merrill 1994:138). For further discussions on these terms, see Lohfink (1963:56-8), Weinfeld (1991:235), Driver (1986:79-81), Merrill (1994:138, 398), and Braulik (1970:63-4).

cedes) or superscript (introduction to what follows) interpretation.<sup>104</sup> Alexander Rofé (1993:269f), Patrick D. Miller (1990:201-16), Lohfink (1992:52f), and S. Dean McBride Jr. (1993:67-8) argue that 28:69 is the start of a new literary unit. For example, Rofé uses the parallels between the covenant of Moab in chs. 29-30 and the ANE treaty structure to argue for the independent status chs. 29-30 from the remainder of Deuteronomy.<sup>105</sup> H. F. van Rooy (1988:221) and Mayes (1991:358-9) disagree, pointing out that the central stipulations of the ANE treaty are absent in chs. 29-30.<sup>106</sup> Alternatively, van Rooy (1988:222) argues for a subscriptional understanding of 28:69, seeing in the duplicated phrase “these are the words” an inclusio structure between 1:1 and 28:69. Straddling the debate is Lundbom, who concedes a dual super/subscriptionary role for the verse (1996:312-13). Finally, Mayes reads 28:69 as a redactional *deus ex machina* that attempts to harmonize the authority of the Moab lawcode with the pre-existing Horeb decalogue, and in the process lends equal validity to both Moab and Horeb (1991:360-1).<sup>107</sup>

I follow Lundbom in reading the narrator’s *Inner Framebreak* as both superscription and subscription. In 28:69, the narrator delineates chs. 5-28 as the “covenant Moab.” The repeated references to “this covenant” (e.g., 29:11, 13, 18) refer back to the preceding statutes and ordinances that constitute the covenant undertaken by the Israelites in ch. 29:9-14. But the narrator’s *Inner Framebreak* of 28:69-29:1 also shares with 4:44-5:1 a superscriptional function that directs the reader’s attention forward to subsequent sections in Moses’ address (Table 2.3).<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> The ambiguity of the narrator’s ambiguous inner frame has led to different versifications of the passage. Most English translations (e.g., AV, RSV, NRSV, NEB, NIV) read 28:69 as an introduction to the third part of Moses’ address (29:1), whereas the Masoretic division (also JB, NAB, NJV) makes v. 69 a subscriptionary conclusion to the second discourse.

<sup>105</sup> While Alexander Rofé (1993:269) argues for a unit extending from 28:69-30:20, Lohfink (1962a:35) advocates a broader unit stretching from 28:69 to 33:1.

<sup>106</sup> This omission problematizes chs. 29-30 as a *bona fide* ANE treaty text.

<sup>107</sup> Such jockeying for textual authorization (Horeb versus Moab) in the storyworld is more the property of the characters within the story than the concern of the narrator who simply hints in 28:69 of the dialogic playing itself out in the storyworld.

<sup>108</sup> The narrator also includes in his inner frame a double statement of the phrase: “And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them.” Lohfink interprets these parallels as a “resumptive repetition” (*Wiederaufnahme*) and argues that the vast speech reported between 5:1 and 29:1 is the narrator’s asynchronous narration of a

(Table 2.3) Narrator's Inner Framebreaks		
4:44-5:1		28:69-29:1
<i>Definition of central message:</i> this is the law ... these are the testimonies, statutes and ordinances (4:44-5)	A	<i>Definition of central message:</i> these are the words of the covenant (28:69)
<i>Location:</i> beyond the Jordan ... (4:46-9)	B	<i>Location:</i> which Yahweh commanded Moses to make in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them at Horeb
<i>Superscription:</i> and Moses summoned all Israel and said to them (5:1)	C	<i>Superscription:</i> and Moses summoned all Israel and said to them (29:1)

In A, the narrator presents two different descriptions of the central section of Moses' address, first labeling it "the law" in 4:44 and later in 28:69 identifying the same entity as "the words of the covenant." The combination of "the law" with the "testimonies, statutes, and ordinances" in 4:44-5 narrows the range of text wherein these entities are located (chs. 5-28).<sup>109</sup> But caution is best exercised before assuming that the narrator's "law" refers to Moses' discourse immediately following in 5:1, since the narrator's announcement in 1:5 ("Moses undertook to explain this law, saying") had little to do with the historical overview that Moses provides in 1:6-3:29, an indication that the terms used in the narrator's frames might be best understood loosely.

In section B of the *Inner Framebreaks*, the narrator situates Moses' address beyond the Jordan (4:46) and contrasts the location (Moab) with the former Horeb scene (28:69-29:1). In doing so, he distinguishes between two covenants, one made by Yahweh with the previous generation, and the supplementary covenant before the present company (cf. 29:11, 13). Finally, the last section of each *Inner Framebreak* (C) provides superscriptional notices to the units of address that follow the narrator's interruption.

What purpose do the narrator's *Outer Frames* (1:1-5 and 31:9, 19, 24, 32:45) and *Inner Framebreaks* (4:43-5:1 and 28:69-29:1) serve for the reader

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speech that actually occurred *during* the Moab covenant, between 29:14 and 15 (1993:65-78). Sonnet on the other hand, prefers to interpret the narrator's presentation more literally, stating that "the sequence of Deuteronomy's speech units is thus, *pace* Lohfink, not contradicted by their sequence in Deuteronomy's '*fabula*'" (1997:116).

<sup>109</sup> The word עֲדוּת ("testimonies") occurs three times in Deuteronomy, once in the narrator's inner frame (4:45) and twice in Moses' speech (6:17, 20).



interested in Moses' embedded book of the law? The narrator's framing strategy allows the reader to posit a general demarcation for Moses' book of the law. At its widest possible definition, the "book of the law" could include all discourse material residing between the intimation of a written text (1:5) and the direct reference to the book (31:9) in the narrator's *Outer Frame*. The narrator's *Inner Framebreaks* focus on the "testimonies, statutes, and ordinances" (4:45) that comprise the "covenant of Moab" (28:9) presented near the time of Moses' death. Although the narrator's leading *Inner Framebreak* is unclear as to the relationship between "law" and "testimonies, statutes, and ordinances," it is obvious that between 4:45 and 28:69 resides a covenant that differs somehow from the covenant of Horeb. The reader must now turn to Moses' discourse to determine whether the "testimonies, statutes, and ordinances" comprising the "covenant of Moab" (essentially 5:1-28:68) are to be found within the pages of Moses' book of the law. If so, Moses' book of the law, as a written precipitate of the Moab covenant, constitutes at minimum a dialogic counter-balance to the covenant of Horeb written by Yahweh on the tablets of stone (cf. 28:69 and 10:1-4).

## **B. LEVEL OF THE DEUTERONOMIC STORYWORLD**

The Moab audience in the storyworld is bound to the linear progression of Moses' presentation. In analyzing the structure of Moses' speech for delineational clues to the book of the law, the external reader need not wait for the end of Moses' speech. By flipping back-and-forth the pages of Deuteronomy, the reader can approach the speech concentrically, starting at the outer most frames and then proceeding through each of the fore-aft rings until the center of the speech has been reached.

### **Moses' Succession Speech**

Israel stands in Moab, flushed with military triumphs against Sihon and Og and poised to take its promise. Before euphoria can be converted into a bold Jordan crossing, Moses addresses an administrative detail of some urgency. Yahweh has precluded Moses' participation in the crossing, meeting each petition for clemency with a rebuttal and a command to prepare his successor Joshua (1:37-8; 3:23-8).

(Table 2.4) Moses' Succession Speech

<b>A</b>	<i>Succession Speech</i> — Moses' disbarment (לֹא־תִבָּא שָׁם); victory over Sihon and Og; encouragement of Joshua (אֵתוּ חִזְקוּ) (1:6-3:29)
<b>X</b>	<i>digression</i> (4:1-26:15)
<b>A'</b>	<i>Succession Speech</i> — Moses' disbarment (לֹא תֵעָבֵר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה); victory over Sihon and Og; encouragement of Joshua (חִזְקוּ וְאַמְצוּ) (31:2-8)

As Moses prepares his audience for the transition of leadership, he recapitulates key events of the past (Table 2.4).<sup>110</sup> At the outset, Moses' address (A) appears to be nothing more than the public encouragement of his successor (1:38; 3:28; 31:2-3,7-8). Moses supplements his succession speech with a reminder that past victories are repeatable when Yahweh is present (2:26-3:22), but defeat is certain when he is not (1:41-6). The vanquished kings of Sihon and Og reappear in the *Succession Speech* (A') when Moses reiterates that success in the conquest of Canaan is guaranteed, since Yahweh's presence goes before Israel (31:3-6). The storyworld audience cannot foresee that Moses' address will morphologize into an extended digression (X). But the reader has some intimation of what lies ahead in Moses' speech, given the information volunteered in the narrator's leading outer (1:1-5) and inner (4:44-5:1) frames.

### MOSES' WITNESS FRAME

Chapter 4 begins with the temporal adverb וְעַתָּה ("and now"), alerting Moses' audience of a rhetorical shift<sup>111</sup> away from matters concerning successorship to a series of frames that eventually lead to the central segment of Moses' address.

<sup>110</sup> Since Noth, many have noted the parallel between chs. 1-3 and 31-4 and assumed the intervening chapters to be a redactional interpolation disrupting the flow of the Deuteronomist's original history (Noth 1957:13-15, 40; cf. Römer 1994:179-83; Cairns 1992:52). Without doubt, there is a shift in subject between 3:29 and 4:1, though that shift is read narratologically as a rhetorical modulation within Moses' discourse rather than a redactional stitch.

<sup>111</sup> "The logical force of עַתָּה is usually confined to the combination וְעַתָּה, introducing a shift in argumentative tack with a continuity of subject and reference" (Waltke and O'Conner 1990:667; cf. also Braulik 2002:249).

(Table 2.5) Moses' Witness Frame

<b>A</b>	<i>Succession Speech</i> (1:6-3:29)
<b>B</b>	<i>Witness Frame</i> (4:1-31) – I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (v. 26) (הַעֲדוּתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ)
<b>X</b>	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
<b>B'</b>	<i>Witness Frame</i> (29:28-30:20) – I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (v. 19) (הַעֲדוּתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ)
<b>A'</b>	<i>Succession Speech</i> (31:2-8)

Shifting to his *Witness Frame*, Moses draws a number of parallels in chs. 4 and 30 to envelope his main speech (Weinfeld 1991:215-17).<sup>112</sup> Particularly important are the summons of heavenly and terrestrial realms to witness against Israel (Table 2.5).

In addition to informing the Moab audience of the gravity of the embedded “statutes and ordinances” (4:5, 8; 30:16), Moses reveals information on the contents of “this law”<sup>113</sup> that for the external reader is important for delineation of the prophet’s book. For one, the combination of the demonstrative pronoun הַזֶּה (“this”) with the substantive סֵפֶר (“book”) (e.g., 30:10) confirms the existence of a book at the level of the story as reported by the narrator in 31:9. Moses’ reference to the terms *statutes* (חֻקִּים) and *ordinances* (מִשְׁפָּטִים) is also familiar to the reader, having encountered similar comments at the narrator’s level of discourse (4:45). In 4:8, Moses connects the hendiadys “statutes and ordinances” (חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים) to “*this law* ... which I set before you this day,” while in 30:10 Moses defines the contents written in “this book of the law” in similar terms.<sup>114</sup> Moses’ tabling of

<sup>112</sup> Idol worship (4:15-19, 23 and 30:17), exile (4:27 and 30:1, 18), and redemption (4:30 and 30:1-5) are key parallels drawn by Moses in his *Witness Frame*. Weinfeld notes that chapters 4 and 30 form a “kind of envelope for Deuteronomy” (1991:215-16). Weinfeld’s observation is not unique. Estlin J. Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby adumbrated his interpretation over one hundred years ago (1900:293), while recently, Hans Walter Wolff (1961:182-83), McCarthy (1981:199-205), and Levenson (1975:203, 212) reiterate the same idea.

<sup>113</sup> Having digressed in 4:1-30:20 from his *Succession Speech*, Moses never mentions Yahweh’s command to encourage the new leader. The one time where Moses does refer to his disbarment (4:21-2), the name of Joshua does not appear. Polzin notes that the disbarment recollection of ch. 4 is in indirect quotation, in contrast to the direct quotations of Yahweh’s disqualification in 1:37 and 3:26-6 (1980:40).

<sup>114</sup> Moses uses the *Witness Frame* to inform his audience that the bulk of his speech is a retelling of both public and private revelations given him by Yahweh at Horeb (cf. v. 8 with the past tense of v. 5). Here the reader detects a hint of dia-

the contents of the “book of the law” with the phrase “statutes and ordinances” corresponds partially with the definition given by the narrator in 4:45. But what of the “testimonies” mentioned by the narrator in 4:45? Since the narrator consistently linked the “two tables of the testimony” (שְׁנֵי לַחַת הָעֵדוּת) to the decalogue in the book of Exodus (cf. Exod 31:18, 32:15, 34:29), it is likely that הָעֵדוּת (“the testimonies”) in 4:45 denotes the decalogue portion of the Moab speech, which Moses set forth in ch. 5 and then elaborates in chs. 6-11.<sup>115</sup> By default, the hendiadys הַקִּיּוֹם וּמִשְׁפָּטִים (“statutes and ordinances”) refers to the lawcode section of Moses’ address (12:2-26:15), as denoted by Moses in 12:1. Further clarification is found in 4:13-14, where Moses informs his audience that the “statutes and ordinances” are a supplement to the ten commandments revealed by Yahweh at Horeb and that the decalogue itself constitutes the “covenant” of the deity. For the external reader, Moses’ recollection of public and private revelations at Horeb reiterates at the level of the storyworld the contrast between the Moab and Horeb covenants drawn by the narrator (28:69).<sup>116</sup> In his address to Israel, Moses distinguishes between his “statutes and ordinances” and Yahweh’s Horeb decalogue (4:8, 13-14); in his report of Moses’ address, the narrator notes the same distinction, but describes it as the covenant of Horeb and the supplementary covenant of Moab (28:69).

But what of the narrator’s report that Yahweh had commanded the making of a covenant in Moab (28:69)? No request for full-blown promulgation of a Moab covenant is ever reported in the Numbers narrative, though Yahweh occasionally does issue *ad hoc* commandments to Israel through Moses (34:2, 35:1, 36:13). The matter is resolved with Moses’ recollection that Yahweh had commanded him to teach “at that time” the “statutes and ordinances” so that they might “do them in the land which [they were] going over to possess” (4:14). According to 4:4, Moses had already performed this task (cf. Exod 20:18-20), but the first audience had passed away, making it necessary for Moses to re-teach the commandments of

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logic, since the “statutes and ordinances” that form the bulk of the Moab address (chs. 12-26) are quantitatively and qualitatively different from the deity’s private revelation given to Moses at Horeb (Exod 20:22-23:33).

<sup>115</sup> Scholars who associate הָעֵדוּת (“testimonies”) with the restated decalogue in ch. 5 include McBride (1993:67-8), Mayes (1991:160), and Lindars (1968:127).

<sup>116</sup> In 5:31, Moses quotes Yahweh drawing the same distinction between a revelation given directly to the people (i.e., the decalogue) and a private revelation given to Moses for future dissemination (i.e., the commandments and ordinances).

Yahweh and to remake the covenant with the generation about to enter Canaan.

As Moses proceeds through the framing sequences of his address, the internal audience understands that the phrase “*this* book of the law” (סֵפֶר (הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה) denotes a document standing within spatial and temporal proximity to the speaker (30:10). The external reader can only discern the parameters of this document through careful attention to the delineational clues in the words of the narrator and Moses. Moses’ *Witness Frame* confirms for the reader that the “statutes and ordinances” defined as “this law” (4:8) are, at minimum, contained within a document standing in close proximity to Moses as he divulges its contents. Whether or not Moses’ book of the law also contains the original covenant of Horeb (ch. 5) remains to be seen.<sup>117</sup> What is obvious already at this point are the hints of dialogic tension between the Horeb covenant of Yahweh written on tablets of stone, and the “law” of Moses comprised of “statutes and ordinances” that are contained in a book (4:13-14, 31:24). These hints reinforce similar intimations of dialogic in the narratorial *Framebreak* of 28:69.

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<sup>117</sup> Who wrote the first book, Moses or God? Venema (2004:40) points to Exod 17:14, the first instance where a biblical character writes a book (in this case, Moses). However, in Exod 32:32-33 Moses and God discuss a book in the heavenly library, presumably containing the names of God’s chosen subjects. It is likely then that in the biblical storyworld God has been logging long hours at his writing desk well before Moses is called upon to write a book that will remind God (why does he need reminding?) to blot out the memory of the Amalekites (an odd counter-productive, self-defeating command).

In discussing of Moses’ writing endeavor, Venema recognizes (implicitly, at least) the dialogic that I am pointing to:

By placing the ‘book of the *torah*’ beside the ark, Moses indicates that his own authority and that of the book he has written go back to the stone tablets, and thus is derivative. On the one hand, this means that Moses’ action indicates the relative nature of his ‘book’, for it turns out not to be the Word of God; on the other hand, it represents an amazing arrogance by implying that if you want the Word of God, you should go to Moses, or rather read the words in Moses ‘book’ (2004:xv).

In my narratorial configuration of Deuteronomy, the “amazing arrogance” that Venema speaks of is recognized by the external reader alone, since readers inside the storyworld lack vital information with which to question the authority of Moses’ work.

## MOSES' COVENANT FRAME

As the reader proceeds concentrically towards the center of Moses' valediction, the *Witness Frame* gives way to a *Covenant Frame* (Table 2.6) that first focuses on past experiences of divine presence (Part One) before presenting two covenant ceremonies, one made forty years earlier with the previous generation at Horeb and the other about to be made with the present generation at Moab (Part Two).

(Table 2.6) Moses' Covenant Frame	
<b>A</b>	<i>Succession Speech</i> (1:6-3:29)
<b>B</b>	<i>Witness Frame</i> (4:1-31)
<b>C</b>	<i>Covenant Frame</i>
	Part One, past divine presence (4:32-40)
	Part Two, past covenant at Horeb (5:2-33)
<b>X</b>	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
<b>C'</b>	<i>Covenant Frame</i>
	Part One, past divine presence (29:1-8)
	Part Two, present covenant at Moab (29:9-27)
<b>B'</b>	<i>Witness Frame</i> (29:28-30:20)
<b>A'</b>	<i>Succession Speech</i> (31:2-8)

The first part of the *Covenant Frame* presents a set of parallel panels that link Yahweh's interventions (past and recent) with the "statutes and ordinances" about to be promulgated. Each panel (Table 2.7) begins with a recollection of the events witnessed by Israel in its deliverance from Egypt (A). The glory of past victory has recently been rekindled with the resounding defeat of Sihon and Og (C). Military victory generates territorial spoils as the slaves of Egypt (A) become the tenants of Canaan (D). Military victory and conquest shift to a sobering admonition that obedience to "statutes and ordinances" is necessary to ensure similar success in the upcoming conquest (E). In 29:9, Moses substitutes the phrase "this covenant" for the "statutes and commandments" of 4:40, repeating at the level of the story a similar semantic exchange in the narrator's *Inner Framebreaks* (4:45 and 28:69).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> In his framing strategy it is obvious that the narrator borrows the delineational logic from his primary hero, since Moses is unaware of the narrator's framing presence and cannot employ the rhetoric of the narrator.

(Table 2.7) Moses' <i>Covenant Frame</i> , Part One: Parallels on Divine Presence (4:32-40 / 29:1-8)		
<p><i>Yahweh's presence seen in the past</i> (vv. 32-34):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation ... by trials (בְּמִסָּה), by signs (בְּאֵתוֹת), by wonders (וּבְמוֹפְתִים), and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors (4:34)</li> <li>• according to all that Yahweh your God did to you in Egypt before your eyes (לְעֵינֶיךָ)</li> </ul>	<b>A</b>	<p><i>Yahweh's presence seen in the past</i> (vv. 1-2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes (לְעֵינֶיכֶם) in the land of Egypt (29:2)</li> <li>• the great trials (הַמִּסּוֹת הַגְּדוֹלוֹת) which your eyes (עֵינֶיךָ) saw, the signs (הָאֵתוֹת) and those great wonders (וְהַמּוֹפְתִים הַגְּדוֹלִים) (29:2)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Purpose of divine intervention</i> (vv. 35-37):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that you might know that Yahweh is God (4:35) לְדַעַת כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים</li> </ul>	<b>B</b>	<p><i>Purpose of divine intervention</i> (5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that you might know that I am Yahweh your God (29:6) לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם</li> </ul>
<p><i>Driving out of nations</i> (4:38)</p>	<b>C</b>	<p><i>Defeat of Siban and Og</i> (29:6)</p>
<p><i>Land given for inheritance</i> וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ לְתַת־לָךְ (4:38)</p>	<b>D</b>	<p><i>Land given for inheritance</i> וְנָתַנָּה לְנַחֲלָה (29:7)</p>
<p><i>Therefore ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you shall keep (וְשָׁמַרְתָּ) his statutes and his commandments</li> <li>• that it may go well with you (4:40)</li> </ul>	<b>E</b>	<p><i>Therefore ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be careful to do (וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם) the words of this covenant</li> <li>• that you may prosper (29:8)</li> </ul>

The recollections of past glories in Moses' *Covenant Frame* present a number of issues vital to understanding the emerging dialogic in the Deuteronomic narrative. Yahweh's interventions on behalf of each generation (A and C) remind Israel of the source for their past successes. Future success in the land of promise is now conditionalized (E) with a summons to obey the central portion of Moses' address. Moses' conditionalization of the Abrahamic promise comes at a propitious time, since never before has Israel's promise beckoned so strongly as at this moment. As the prize tantalizes beyond the Jordan, Moses uses to advantage his audience's situation to impress the conditions by which it will retain the prize it desires. But Moses' nomistic conditionalization is little more than the contrivance of the

prophet, since nowhere from Horeb to Moab does Yahweh institute the covenant as the condition for long-term success in Canaan. Having emphasized past victories over Pharaoh, Sihon and Og (sections A-C, Part One), Moses moves to future concerns lying across the Jordan. Between Israel's past at Horeb and its future in Canaan stands the present of Moab and Moses' "statutes and ordinances" (section E, Part One).

To emphasize the importance of his law, Moses pairs (Table 2.8) the covenant Israel is about to make in Moab (ch. 29:9-27) with a recollection of the covenant the previous generation made at Horeb (ch. 5).<sup>119</sup>

Moses also stresses the contemporaneity of each covenant, reaching beyond the original audience to generations not with-standing (F).<sup>120</sup> Both covenant-making scenes rehearse Yahweh's intervention in Egypt (G), followed by a prohibition against idolatry (H) and threats of punishment for any deviations from the law (I). The fearful fire that accompanied the Horeb covenant might ignite the nation on account of an idolatrous individual, consuming sinner and land alike (K). Once again, Moses' covenant-making scene in ch. 29 provides the reader with evidence that a "book of the law" (vv. 19 and 20) exists within the storyworld.<sup>121</sup> More important, this scene also provides evidence that the "curses" portion (chs. 27-8) of Moses' address is included in the book of the law (29:19). Taking inventory on the information gathered to this point, the external reader tallies the contents of the book of the law: the "statutes and ordinances" noted at 4:8 *and* the curses of chs. 27-28, thereby expanding the range of discourse contained in Moses' document to chs. 12-28 inclusive. The parallels drawn be-

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<sup>119</sup> Many scholars argue that the core Deuteronomic code (chs. 12-26) is structured by the sequence of "ten words" of the decalogue in ch. 5 (cf. Stephen Kaufman 1979:105-98; Braulik 1985:252-72; Dennis T. Olson 1994:62f).

<sup>120</sup> In detailing the parallels between chs. 29-30 and the preceding Moab discourse, Lenchak assumes that the author of 29-30 was either familiar with the text of chs. 1-28 or with their underlying traditions (1993:114-18; cf. also Braulik 1997:11, 24f). In narratological terms, it is not surprising that Moses borrows from his preceding discourse since a speaker's closing remarks usually reflect and summarize the body of the discourse delivered.

<sup>121</sup> "Moses' pointing to a specific ספר within Deuteronomy's represented world is meant for an audience in a position to grasp the act of reference. This is not true for the [external] reader, who does not see what the audience supposedly sees, and whose way of making sense of Moses' reference is necessarily a process of trial and error" (Sonnet 1997:103).



tween the two *Covenant Frames* of Moses' speech also reinforce early intimations of a dialogic between Horeb and Moab.

(Table 2.8) Moses' <i>Covenant Frame</i> , Part One: Parallels on Divine Presence (4:32-40 / 29:1-8)		
<i>Discussion on divine Presence (4:32-40)</i>	<b>Part One A-E</b>	<i>Discussion on divine presence (29:2-8)</i>
----- Moses' <i>Covenant Frame</i> , Part Two: Parallels on Covenant-Making (5:2-33 / 29:9-27)		
<i>Horeb covenant (5:2-6)</i> Yahweh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did Yahweh make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day (v. 2-3)	<b>Part Two F</b>	<i>Moab covenant (29:9-14)</i> You stand this day ... that you may enter into the sworn covenant of Yahweh your God, which Yahweh makes with you this day ... Nor is it with you only that I make this sworn covenant, but with him who is not here with us this day as well as him who stand here with us this day ...
<i>Past intervention recalled (5:6)</i> I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt ...	<b>G</b>	<i>Past intervention recalled (29:15)</i> You know how we dwelt in the land of Egypt and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed ...
<i>Prohibition against idolatry (5:7-8)</i> you shall have no other gods before me	<b>H</b>	<i>Warning against idolatry (29:16-18)</i> beware lest there be among you [someone] whose heart turns away ... to go and serve the gods of those nations
<i>Punishment for idolatry (5:8)</i> I, Yahweh your God am a jealous god, visiting the iniquity of the fathers ... to the third and fourth generation	<b>I</b>	<i>Punishment for idolatry (29:19)</i> Yahweh would not pardon that man, but rather the anger of Yahweh and his jealousy would smoke against that man
<i>Remaining Decalogue (5:11-21)</i>	<b>J</b>	<i>Book of the law (29:20)</i>
<i>Fearful presence (5:22-7)</i>	<b>K</b>	<i>Consuming anger (29:21-7)</i>

Yet, as tantalizing as the emerging hints of dialogic between Horeb and Moab are for the reader, the reader ought first to complete the task of delineating the book of the law before investigating their implications (my Chapter Three).

## MOSES' EXCURSUS FRAME

In the next series of parallels rings (Table 2.9), Moses demonstrates considerable rhetorical license with extended discourses on the importance of obedience (chs. 6-11) and blessings and curses (chs. 27-28). In 6:1, Moses opens with the phrase "now this is the commandment, the statutes and the

ordinances.” Since the central “statutes and ordinances” will receive their definitive introduction in 12:1, the reader must deduce that the singular noun “commandment” (מִצְוָה)<sup>122</sup> used in 6:1 refers to the intervening material of chs. 6-11, material which constitutes an excursive homily on the first commandment of Yahweh’s decalogue (“you shall have no other gods before me”).<sup>123</sup>

(Table 2.9) Moses’ Excursus Frame

A	<i>Succession Speech</i> (1:6-3:29)
B	<i>Witness Frame</i> (4:1-31)
C	<i>Covenant Frame</i> (4:32-5:33)
D	<i>Excursus Frame</i> – extended discourse on Yahweh’s first commandment (6:1-11:25)
X	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
D’	<i>Excursus Frame</i> – extended discourse on curses and blessings (27:15-28:68)
C’	<i>Covenant Frame</i> (29:1-29:27)
B’	<i>Witness Frame</i> (29:28-30:20)
A’	<i>Succession Speech</i> (31:2-8)

Moses’ excursus on the importance of obedience to the Horeb injunction (D) is matched with an equally weighty excursus that explicates the consequences of obedience through a series of blessings and curses set before Israel on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim in 27:11-14 (D’).

In his leading *Excursus Frame*, Moses repeats (Table 2.10) an apostasy narrative three times, each warning Israel of the potential for delinquency once it has reached satiety in the land flowing with milk and honey. Each repetition of Moses’ apostasy narrative follows the same pattern. The fecundity of the promised land will satisfy the new inhabitants to the full (A).

<sup>122</sup> Toward the end of his address, Moses interchanges the singular and plural forms of “commandment.” In 30:8 and 16, he uses the plural form (e.g., “And you shall again obey the voice of Yahweh, and keep all his commandments which I command you this day”), while in v. 11, he uses the singular (“for this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you ...”).

<sup>123</sup> Many commentators recognize ch. 6 as a homily on the *Hauptgebot* of the decalogue (Weinfeld 1991:328-30; Christensen 2001:136f; Lundbom 1996:304). Some also extend this focus on Yahweh-allegiance to the entire section of chs. 6-11 and its numerous exhortations to “love Yahweh” (6:5, 10:12, 11:1, 13) (Merrill 1994:30-1; Driver 1986:81-2; Tigay 1996:74; Olson 1994:49-50; Thompson 1974:78; Weinfeld 1991:326).

With physical needs satisfied, an undesirable psychological state might arise wherein Israel deceives itself with personal pride (B).<sup>124</sup>

(Table 2.10) MOSES' APOSTASY NARRATIVE			
	6:10-15	8:7-19	11:8 -17
A physical condition (in a good land)	when you eat and are full (וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ) (10-11)	you shall eat and be full (וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ) (7-10)	you shall eat and be full (וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ) (8)
B human psycho- logical state	take heed lest you forget (הִשָּׁמֵר לְךָ פְּנֵי יְהוָה) Yahweh (12)	take heed lest you forget (הִשָּׁמֵר לְךָ פְּנֵי יְהוָה) Yahweh (11)	take heed lest your heart be deceived (הִשָּׁמְרוּ לְכֶם לִפְתָּה) (16)
X deviant behaviour	you shall not go after other gods (לֹא תִלְכּוּן אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים) (14)	and if ... you go after other gods (וְהִלַּכְתָּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים) (19)	and you turn aside and serve other gods (אֲלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים)
B' divine psycho- logical state	lest the anger of Yahweh your God will be kindled against you (פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֲפִי יִהְיֶה אֵלֶיךָ בָּךְ) (15)	then I solemnly warn you this day (implied divine displeasure)	and the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you (וְחָרָה אֲפִי יְהוָה בְּכֶם) (17)
A' physical condition	and he destroy you from off the face of the earth	you shall surely per- ish	you perish quickly off the good land (17b)

Forgetting the hand that gifted the prodigality, Israel is in danger of forsaking its god. Their forgetfulness is the psychological condition that leads to deviance (X), which in turn kindles a dangerous psychological state in Yahweh (B') as the deity's anger threatens to destroy the good land that fed the contented state of Israel (A'). To illustrate the devastating consequences of apostasy, Moses looks to the previous generation's experience at Horeb

<sup>124</sup> The connection between religious laxity and physical satiety is drawn in Yahweh's song: "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked, you waxed fat you grew thick, you became sleek; then he forsook God who made him" (Deut 32:15f). Later in the Primary Narrative, the narrator makes the same association: "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand of the sea; they ate and drank and were happy" (1 Kgs 4:20).

where Israel “provoked Yahweh ... to wrath in the wilderness” (9:7). Moses punctuates his homily with a detailed review of the Horeb incident, focusing on the incident of the golden calf (9:6-29) and the rewritten decalogue (10:1-5).

The trailing *Excursus Frame* (27:15-28:68) begins (Table 2.11) with the pronouncement of Moses’ dodecalogue on Mts. Gerizim and Ebal (ch. 27).

(Table 2.11) Moses’ Excursus Frames	
<i>Leading Excursus Frame</i> Decalogue (5:7-21; 10:1-5)	<i>Trailing Excursus Frame</i> Dodecalogue (27:15-26)
no other gods before me / you shall not make a graven image (לִפְסֵל) ... I am Yahweh your God (7-8)	cursed be the man who makes a graven (לִפְסֵל) or molten image, an abomination to Yahweh (15)
Yahweh’s name in vain (11)	parents (16)
Sabbath (12)	neighbor’s landmark (17)
honor parents (16)	misleading blind man (18)
murder (17)	perversion of justice (19)
adultery (18)	sexual deviation (mother-20)
theft (19)	sexual deviation (bestiality-21)
false witness (20)	sexual deviation (sister-22)
covet (21)	sexual deviation (mother in-law-23)
	murder (24)
	assassination (25)
	cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them (26)

Scholars have noted the parallel catalogings of Horeb (ch. 5) and Ebal and Gerizim (ch. 27), the latter a deliberate reinforcement of the former (Cairns 1992:237).<sup>125</sup> The Horeb decalogue is matched with a list of solemn curses to be pronounced by the Levites on Mt. Gerizim. Moses’ list begins with a warning against the clandestine construction of graven images (v. 15), then focuses on ten misdemeanors, concluding with a curse against those who do not uphold “this law.”<sup>126</sup> These curses are then made the sub-

<sup>125</sup> Von Rad (1966:167), Merrill (1994:347), and Tigay (1996:253-54) draw parallels between Moses’ dodecalogue and Yahweh’s ten commandments.

<sup>126</sup> Tigay notes that the curse against graven images and the warning against disobedience are unique in length and style. These two curses, employing relative rather than participial clauses, deal with the most important sins of the twelve listed

ject of an extended excursus (ch. 28) that must be proclaimed by the Levites (27:14) at the ceremony on Mts. Gerizim and Ebal.

Moses' *Excursus Frame* brings together two temporal horizons (past and future) and two topographical sites (Horeb and Ebal/Gerizim) for dialogic comparison (Table 2.12). A written version of decalogue is made after the public event on Horeb (5:22; cf. 9:9 and 10:1-5); at Ebal/Gerizim, a plastered stele is present with "the words of this law" inscribed on it (27:3).

(Table 2.12) Comparison between Horeb and Ebal/Gerizim		
	Horeb (past)	Ebal/Gerizim (future)
"this law"	no	yes
writing in stone	yes (tablets)	yes (stele)
Moses	yes	no
Israel's loyalty	no	?
Yahweh	yes	?

Thus two written inscriptions frame either side of Moses' statutes and ordinances, one the covenant of Horeb, the other the covenant of Moab.<sup>127</sup> Whereas Israel was once fortunate to have Moses present as petitioner on its behalf (Horeb), at Ebal/Gerizim no such services will be available. There is no mention of "this law" in the Horeb event, while the Gerizim ceremony is entirely focused on Moses' code and the curses against anyone who refuses to adopt its precepts (v. 26). Whether Israel will still be loyal to Yahweh at Ebal/Gerizim or whether Yahweh will be present in Israel's future remains unresolved, though such contingencies are covered if only Israel will commit fully to the law that Moses places before them. That is, of course, Moses' dying concern, and so chs. 27-8 underscore that compliance to the law will lead to benediction, deviance to malediction.

Dialogic intensifies with Moses' pairing of Horeb's decalogue against Ebal/Gerizim's dodecalogue. But again, the external reader must focus on the task of delineation: what new information do these excursive *Frames* contain? In 28:58, Moses reiterates that "this book" contains the "words of this law." Moses also implies that "this book" contains sicknesses and af-

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(1996:253-54). Tigay interprets "this law" in 27:3 as a reference to chs. 12-26, though he concedes that the reference might also include the introductory speeches of chs. 1-11 and the blessings and curses of ch. 28 (1996:248).

<sup>127</sup> The two sites of Horeb and Gerizim/Ebal function as portals through which Israel transitions from one region to another. Exit out of bondage in Egypt was through the covenant event of Mt. Horeb; entrance into the promise of Canaan must pass through the covenant renewal scene at Mts. Gerizim and Ebal.

fictions (i.e., “curses”) which Israel can expect if it should disobey Moses’ directive for obedience (28:61). This information confirms what the reader learned from the *Covenant Frames*: that the material included in Moses’ *magnum opus* is more extensive than typical boundaries drawn at chs. 12 and 26.<sup>128</sup>

### MOSES’ EBAL/GERIZIM FRAME

With the extended discourse on the foremost commandment of the decalogue completed (chs. 6-11), Moses turns to the core of his address. That core—the “statutes and ordinances” portion of his address (chs. 12-26)—is bound by a very tight series of rings (Table 2.13) that highlight the ceremonial ritual of Mts. Ebal and Gerizim. The leading border of the *Ebal/Gerizim Frame* (a-g) quickens the reader’s pace towards the centerpiece of Moses’ address (12:1-26:15).<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Sonnet (1997:104) holds that the references to “this law” in ch. 28 signify the stele raised in 27:2-3, since (in his reading) the book of the law is not present during Moses’ last speech. Although it is true that the writing surface plastered over the stone erected in 27:3 is a סֵפֶר, it should be noted that nowhere does Moses explicitly label the stele of Ebal/Gerizim a סֵפֶר. Of course, only the audience within the storyworld has first-hand immediate knowledge whether Moses refers to the book given to the Levites for deposition in ch. 28, or whether he refers to the plastered stele of ch. 27 that Israel is to erect in the near-future. Either way, the poetics of the Deuteronomic narrative ensures that the external reader has a *mediated* knowledge of the contents of either the deposited book or plastered stele, since both record an identical core (“this law”). Sonnet notes this congruence: “[The] two records—the future inscription beyond the Jordan, and the document on hand in Moab—thus overlap in content while they differ in material form” (Sonnet 1997:104). (The next chapter will demonstrate that the document referred to in 28:58 and 61 is the text written by Moses, not the stone text built by Israel in Ebal/Gerizim.)

<sup>129</sup> Nadav Na’aman notes that scholars typically assume the two references to the Ebal/Gerizim ceremony in 11:26-30 and 27:1-11 to be out of context with the “statutes and ordinances,” arguing that they reflect an earlier stratum of literature where worship was permitted outside the precinct of Jerusalem (2000:144). Narratologically, the *Ebal/Gerizim Frame* presents no conflict with the framed call for centralization, since centralization is projected down the road after all enemies are conquered and all territories secured (12:10). Characters living during Moses’ day would have no foreknowledge that Jerusalem would eventually be “chosen” as the centralized site. With Israel yet to engage militarily a single enemy on the west side of the Jordan, the prospect of centralized worship indeed lies off in the distant future.

(Table 2.13) Moses' Ebal/Gerizim Frame	
a	I set before you ... a blessing and a curse (11:26-8)
b	Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (11:29-31)
c	you are passing over Jordan (אָתֶּם עֹבְרִים אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן)
d	be careful to do (וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹת) (11:32)
e	all the statutes and ordinances (כָּל־הַחֻקִּים וְאֵת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים)
f	which I set before you (אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נָתַן לִפְנֵיכֶם)
g	today (הַיּוֹם)
x	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
g'	this day (הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) (26:16)
f'	Yahweh your God commands you to do (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מְצַוְךָ)
e'	these statutes and ordinances (אֵת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה וְאֵת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים)
d'	be careful to do them (וּשְׁמַרְתָּ וְעָשִׂיתָ)
c'	on the day you pass over the Jordan (תַּעֲבֹרוּ אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן) (27:2-9)
b'	Gerizim and Ebal (27:10-11)
a'	<i>setting forward of blessing and curse</i> (27:11-14)

Once again, Moses calls for full adherence to the statutes and ordinances (d-e). On the other side of the central lawcode Moses claims that the central portion of his address (12-26) bears the full endorsement of the highest authority in the storyworld (f'-e'), though the subtle shift between "all the statutes and ordinances which I set before you" (e-f) and "Yahweh commands you to do these statutes and ordinances" (f'-e') is likely lost on the audience, given the tediously long discourse they have just endured. The reader on the other hand senses in the shift a subtle dialogic that appropriates divine authority for Moses' own law; however, no new information on the contents of the book of the law is relayed in this thin *Ebal/Gerizim Frame*.

### C. DEUTERONOMY'S RING STRUCTURE AND MOSES' BOOK OF THE LAW

Moses' framing strategy highlights the central portion of his final address by surrounding it with a series of enveloping frames. Each frame calls Israel to obedience to the lawcode, at times emphasizing the positive aspects of obedience (i.e., blessing). Frequently, Moses' valediction employs the rhetoric of curses and punishments to warn Israel of the dangers of offending Yahweh. When the narrator's frame/framebreaks are superimposed over the prophet's complex ring structure (Figure 2.2 below), subtle differences emerge in the framing poetics of the narrator and Moses, differences that hint once again of a dialogic between Moses and Yahweh. Structural sym-

metry dictates that the narrator ought to have synchronized his *Inner Framebreaks* with the framing structure of Moses' speech either by inserting his second framebreak between 29:8 and 9 to match the insertion of his first framebreak between the two parts of Moses' *Covenant Frame* (4:41-5:1a) or by placing the first framebreak between 4:31 and 32, paralleling the break-point between the *Excursus Frame* and the *Covenant Frame* of Moses' second framebreak. Why the curious dissymmetry between the narrator's *Inner Framebreaks* and Moses' framing structure? In delineating the "testimonies, statutes, and ordinances" of Moses' address (chs. 5-28), the narrator includes only that material which Moses likely derived from the revelation at Horeb. A close examination of the two framing strategies of Deuteronomy reveals that the narrator's second *Inner Framebreak* excludes from Moses' law the covenant-making ceremony in Moab (29:9-27). Why? Horeb and Moab are the polar opposites from which emanate a distinct dialogic conflict between Yahweh and Moses. In his final address at Moab, Moses appropriates the covenant of Horeb in ways significantly different from those intended by Yahweh. Not only does Moses alter the Horeb code (a quick comparison of the length of the Covenant Code in Exod 20-24 with Moses' "statutes and ordinances" confirms the disparity), he also makes Yahweh subservient to his revised code of law. In 29:20, Moses goes a step further, not only predicting that Yahweh will bring curses upon those guilty of apostasy, but that the deity will punish *in accordance with* the curses of his book. That Yahweh might limit his retributive options to a human blueprint is anathema to the principle of divine autonomy. Yahweh will not be coerced against his will, and the narrator, understanding full-well the psychological predisposition of his divine character, draws the deity's signature short of Moses' ambitious innovation, alerting the external reader to the divine-human struggle that lies beneath the surface of Moses' speech.



A Narrator's Outer Frame: 1:1-5	
<i>Succession Speech</i>	Joshua ... shall enter; encourage him (1:6-3:29)
<i>Witness Frame</i>	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (4:26)
<i>Covenant Frame</i>	<i>Part One</i> - past divine presence (4:32-40) ...
B Narrator's <i>Inner Framebreak</i> : this is the law; these are the testimonies, statutes, and ordinances ... and Moses summoned all Israel and said to them (4:41-5:1a)	
<i>Excursus Frame</i>	<i>Part Two</i> - past covenant at Horeb (5:1b-33) extended discourse on Yahweh's first commandment (6:1-11:25) I set before you ... a blessing and a curse (11:26-8) Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (11:29-31)
<i>Ebal/Gerizim Frame</i>	you are to pass over Jordan (11:31) be careful to do (11:32) all the statutes and ordinances which I set before you this day <i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15) this day (26:16)
<i>Ebal/Gerizim Frame</i>	Yahweh your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances be careful to do them on the day you pass over the Jordan (27:2) Gerizim and Ebal ritual (27:2-10)
<i>Excursus Frame</i>	setting forward of blessing and curse (27:11-14) extended discourse on curses and blessings (27:15-28:68)
B' Narrator's <i>Inner Framebreak</i> : these are the words of the covenant of Moab ... and Moses summoned all Israel and said to them (28:69-29:1a)	
<i>Covenant Frame</i>	<i>Part One</i> - past divine presence (29:1b-8) ...
<i>Witness Frame</i>	<i>Part Two</i> - present covenant at Moab (29:9-27)
<i>Succession Speech</i>	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (30:19) Moses summoned Joshua ... and said "Be strong and of good courage (31:1-8)
A' Narrator's Outer Frame: 31:9-34:12	

Figure 2.2 - Deuteronomy's Integrated Chiasmic Structure (Complete)

## D. CONCLUSIONS FOR THE DELINEATION OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW

The narrator's *Outer Frame* provides the external reader with the widest possible definition of Moses' *book* of the law (between 1:5 and 31:9). On the other hand, the narrator's *Inner Framebreaks* at 4:45 and 28:69 define the maximum limit of Horeb-derived material (i.e., the testimonies, statutes, and ordinances) contained within Moses' book. Shifting down to the level of the story, Moses' own framing strategy duplicates the narrator's delineation of the law promulgated at Moab, framing its critical mass with the *Witness Frames* (B, B'), the *Covenant Frames* (C, C'), the *Excursus Frames* (D, D'), and the *Ebal/Gerizim Frames* (E, E'). From these dual framing strategies the reader concludes that the book of the law must include not only the "statutes and ordinances" of chs. 12-26, but also Moses' *Ebal/Gerizim* and *Excursus* frames (chs. 6-28).

What of the remaining valedictory material in Moses' *Succession Speech* and *Witness Frame*? Does Deuteronomy's embedded book include material outside the narratorial boundary of chs. 5-28? Could Moses' document include, as Sonnet argues, the song of Yahweh from ch. 32? And what of the parallel calls to heaven and earth to witness in chs. 4 and 30? The book of Deuteronomy offers few (if any) clues to resolve these questions. To resolve them, the external reader must step outside the contrived boundaries of Deuteronomy into the broader Primary Narrative and there utilize the epistemological vantage afforded him by the narrator. At critical points in the Joshua to 2 Kings narrative, prominent characters engage the Mosaic document. For example, in Josh 8:31 the narrator reports that Joshua built "an altar of unhewn stones, upon which no man has lifted an iron tool," a quotation lifted directly from the *Ebal/Gerizim Frame* of the book of the law (27:6). Thus, there arises within the Primary Narrative confirmation that the *Ebal/Gerizim Frame* is included in the contents of the book of the law. At other times, character speeches belie their familiarity with the contents of Moses' book and in the process expose something of their own motivations. For example, during his temple dedication, Solomon quotes from the book of the law: "They are your people ... which you did bring from out of the midst of the iron furnace (מִתּוֹךְ כּוּר הַבְּרִזָּל)" (1 Kgs. 8:51). The only other occurrence of the phrase מִכּוּר הַבְּרִזָּל in the Primary Narrative is in Deut 4:20. Solomon's prayer reveals that the *Witness Frame* of ch. 4 is also included in the table of contents of Moses' book. Given the strong parallels between ch. 4 and ch. 30, the reader can assume that both chapters are included within the pages of Moses' final will and testament.

By combining the informational clues culled from both the intricate ring-network of Moses' speech and the narrator's reports of character receptions of Moses' book, the reader arrives at clear disambiguation of the contents of Moses' book of the law: all material between 4:1 and 30:20 (or from section B to section B') of Moses' speech are distilled onto the pages of his book. This stretch of written text represents an extraction of a larger *Succession Speech* delivered to Israel, an extraction that elongates the hortatory installation of Joshua as successor into a very lengthy digression on the conditions for Israel's success in the new land. This book, available to internal storyworld readers and external readers alike, comprises a larger volume of Deuteronomic text than is traditionally accorded the Mosaic law-code.<sup>130</sup>

With this delineational information in hand, the external reader is now able to compare hermeneutical notes with his internal counterparts, reading their book, comparing their appropriations, discerning their motives. Such a comparison will be offered in the fifth chapter of this study. Meanwhile, the reader must ascertain why Moses has embedded so large a digression within his succession speech. Is Moses intent perhaps on instituting a mechanism to deter or even reversing the ill-effects of a provoked deity alluded to in chs. 4 and 30? Is this mechanism required because of Moses' pending absence, given that no longer will the prophet petition on Israel's behalf? The answer to such intimations awaits a close narratological investigation of ch. 31, a chapter that has challenged all who have attempted to decipher it.

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<sup>130</sup> Sonnet is both more conservative and more liberal than I in his delineation of Moses' book of the law, drawing his margins between 4:44 and 33:1 (1997:184-5). While I include 4:1-40 in the book of the law, Sonnet does not. Conversely, Sonnet includes the song of Yahweh (ch. 32) in Moses' book, which I omit. In determining the possible inclusion of Yahweh's song, much depends on one's interpretation of the enigmatic colophon "when Moses had finished writing ... to their end (עַד תִּמָּוֶה)" in 31:24 (Sonnet 1997:156-67; cf. Lohfink 1993:270-1).



### 3 DEUTERONOMY'S RECHRONOLOGIZED *FABULA*

In Deuteronomy 31 Moses leaves off his digression on the topic of law and its utility for Israel's future and returns to the subject he began in Deut 1-3, the *Succession Speech* and its public encouragement of Joshua. As Polzin notes, Deut 31 also sees the return to narratorial reporting as the narrator begins to speak directly to his addressee (1980:71; cf. Sonnet 1997:120-1). The shift from showing to telling also coincides with the appearance of Yahweh who till now has been silent in Deuteronomy's storyworld. Narratologically, these shifts are important in interpreting the pivotal chapter in Deuteronomy's dialogic.

Gerhard von Rad described ch. 31 as a "thoroughly complicated state of affairs" whose "debris of traditions do little to develop the Deuteronomic narrative" (1966:187, 190).<sup>131</sup> In the space of thirty verses, a number of troubling temporal deformations appear in connection with multiple reports of writing. In v. 9, the narrator reports that Moses wrote the law and handed it over to the priests and elders for the purpose of instructing future generations of Israel. Then in v. 24, the narrator reports that Moses finished writing the words of the law in a book "to the end" which he handed over to the Levites with instructions for deposition beside the ark. Does this second report imply that Moses wrote the same book twice? Or is v. 24 a *Wiederaufnahme* that resumes the narration of the writing begun in v. 9? Did Moses instruct the Levites twice with two distinct command sets? Any resolution to the relationship of vv. 9 and 24 must also deal with the song of Yahweh that Moses is reported to have written the very day he received the theophany (v. 22). Clearing up the clutter of ch. 31 must also account for

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<sup>131</sup> Tigay echoes von Rad's assessment: "More than any other chapter in Deuteronomy, [ch. 31] is characterized by doublets, inconsistencies, interruptions, and variations in vocabulary and concepts that scholars take as evidence of literary sources" (1996:502; cf. also G. Earnest Wright 1953:513).

the reported presence of a “book of the law” during the covenant-making scene at Moab (29:20).

To domesticate the thirty-first chapter, some have (following later medieval manuscripts) resorted to substituting the word “song” for the word “law” in 31:24 and 26, reasoning correctly that **הַתּוֹרָה** is not restricted to nomistic denotations.<sup>132</sup> Though effective, this solution is too ham-fisted in its handling of the Masoretic text’s difficulties. Also common are source critical divisions of the chapter’s difficulties. In fact, Tigay views Deut 31 an ideal test-case on which source critics might demonstrate their craft (1996:502). Those sections that correspond with previous sections of Deuteronomy (e.g., the notices of Moses’ disbarment and the encouragement of Joshua in 3:28 and 31:1-8) are deemed D source material, while the descent of the “pillar of cloud” in 31:15 is assessed as typically JE (Tigay 1996:503).<sup>133</sup>

### A. RECENT ASSESSMENTS OF DEUT 31

Source-focused methods excavate the literary accretions of a text in search of the original strata buried beneath.<sup>134</sup> Although such methods demonstrate the tangled complexity of the final chapters of Deuteronomy, they do not articulate the rhetorical shape and redacted purpose of the final composition, nor do they explicate its narrative role in the larger context. Recent discourse-focused interpretations discern narrative cohesion where source-

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<sup>132</sup> Michael Fishbane (1972:350-1) and Craigie (1976:373) join scholars such as Staerk (1894:75), Steuernagel (1923:163), and A. Bertholet (1899:93) who associate the writing reported in 31:24 with the song. Von Rad dismisses this resolution to the exegetical difficulties of ch. 31, stating that the phraseology of “write,” “teach,” “put in their mouths,” and “may be a witness” all refer to legal documents (i.e., “law”) and subsequently were adapted to the song in vv. 16-22 (1966:190). Rofé argues that the confusion between “law” and “song” in the present text was the result of a copyist’s error (1978:59-76). For further discussions on the “law” and “song” in Deut 31, see Mayes (1991:375-6), Thompson (1974:294), Philips (1973:208), Weitzman (1997:44), Sonnet (1997:156-7), and Tigay (1996:296).

<sup>133</sup> The D source would include vv. 1-8, 14-22, while the JE source would encompass vv. 9-13, 24-7 and possibly 28-30 (Tigay 1996:502-5). For discussions on these source critical divisions, see Driver (1986:333-44), Friedman (1987:255), Brian Britt (2000:359-60, fn 6 and 7), Paul Sanders (1996:338-48), and Weitzman (1997:160, n. 13).

<sup>134</sup> Eep Talstra provides a succinct overview of how traditional methodologies relegate the closing chapters of Deuteronomy to the status of secondary appendices or *ad hoc* expansions of an original primary core (Talstra 1997:87-94).

critical interpretations find haphazard detritus.<sup>135</sup> Frequently, such interpretations involve narratologically legitimate temporal restructurings of the text, though the impact on the text is almost as disruptive to the narrator's presentation as source-critical fragmentations. In what follows, four literary-critical readings by Lohfink, Talstra, Sonnet, and Brian Britt will be presented, each exhibiting varying sensitivity to the literary function of ch. 31 within the book of Deuteronomy.

### 1. Norbert Lohfink (1995)

In his re-examination of ch. 31, Lohfink argues for the centrality of the chapter in understanding the Deuteronomic narrative: "*Ich schränke die Frage auf Dtn 31-32 ein. Denn hier fallen im Deuteronomium die wichtigsten Entscheidungen*" (1993:256).<sup>136</sup> According to Lohfink, ancient readers were aware of the convoluted nature of this chapter, as evidenced in the textual differences between the LXX and MT versions (1993:256-61).

An attempt to clarify the *fabula* (actual sequence of events) of ch. 31 is evident in the LXX version where the promulgation of the law is placed after the mediation of the song (32:44). By comparison (Table 3.1), the MT merely states that Moses "finished speaking all these words to all Israel" after he recited the words of "this song," with no mention of when the promulgation of the law took place.

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<sup>135</sup> Sanders argues that recent assessments of Deut 31 make it impossible to accept without equivocation the results of source criticism (1996:343).

<sup>136</sup> In his earlier redaction critical work (1962), Lohfink discerned a pattern of alternating long and short speeches in ch. 31, with three shorter speeches focusing on Joshua (vv. 7-8, 14, and 23), and four longer speeches focusing on written texts and witnesses (vv. 2-6, 10-13, 16-21, 26-9). Each series of speeches presents a successor to Moses where primary attention is given to the competing textual witnesses of law and song (1962a:49f; rephrased in 1993:261-63).

(Table 3.1) Deut 32:44-5 in Septuagint and Masoretic Versions	
LXX Version	MT Version
and Moses wrote this song in that day, and taught it to the children of Israel; and Moses went in and spoke all the words of this law . . . and Moses finished speaking to all Israel	Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun and when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel

Lohfink addresses directly the challenge inherent in the deictic references to “this book” in ch. 29. In unraveling the sequence of events (*fabula*) from the narrator’s presentation (*sjuzet*), Lohfink posits (Table 3.2) a writing of the book of the law prior to Moses’ final address (1993:267).<sup>137</sup>

(Table 3.2) Lohfink’s Rechronologization of Deut 31	
A	writing of the <i>Bundesdokument</i> and the song prior to the Moab assembly (Deut 31:9, 24)
B	Moab covenant-making ceremony to the first general assembly of Israel (ch. 29) / promulgation of the law (chs. 5-28)
C	general assembly of Israel, with instructions for the conquest of Canaan (31:1-6)
D	installation of Joshua by Moses (31:7)
E	theophany and installation of Joshua by Yahweh (31:14-23)
F	delivery of the book of the law (without Yahweh’s Song) and directions to Levites (31:10-13; 31:25-7)
G	writing and promulgation of the song to the elders assembled by the Levites (31:28-32:43) <sup>138</sup>
H	instructions for a periodic reading of the law to elders and Levites (31:10-13)
I	promulgation of Yahweh’s song to a second general assembly of Israel (32:44)

Lohfink positions the writing (A) of both the *Bundesdokument* (comprised of chs. 5-28) and Yahweh’s song prior to the Moab proceedings (B).<sup>139</sup> The

<sup>137</sup> Temporal reorderings of ch. 31 are not new. Ibn Ezra was first to note that the events of Deut 31 could not have occurred as presented. Ibn Ezra argued that Moses completed the writing and delivery of his book before Yahweh installed Joshua and revealed his theophany. Ibn Ezra’s approach has been adopted by Keil and Delitzch (1951:457) and Tigay (1996:505).

<sup>138</sup> While conceding the possibility that the Song was appended to a previously written book, Lohfink assumes a separate document and interpretive tradition for Yahweh’s witness (1993:270).



*reading* of the same document is positioned during the covenant ceremony, between 29:14 and 15 (1995:72-3; 1995a:233). To bolster his rechronologization, Lohfink notes the similarity in phraseology (“and Moses summoned all Israel and said to them”) of the two superscriptions in 5:1 and 29:1. These statements constitute for Lohfink a “resumptive repetition,”<sup>140</sup> allowing him to fold the law (reported in chs. 5-28) forward into the narrated covenant-making scene of ch. 29. The resumptive repetitions in 5:1 and 29:1 present two different perspectives of a single assembly: the first elaborates the contents of the covenant, while the second narrates the covenant-making ceremony itself (1995:71f). Following some general instructions concerning the conquest (C), Moses installs his successor (D). Both Moses and Joshua are then summoned to the tent of meeting for a behind-the-scenes theophany and installation of Joshua (E). Next, the written document is delivered to the Levites (F), conflating the two reports of document delivery in 31:10-13 and 31:25-27 into a single event (F) (1993:264).<sup>141</sup> Moses then convenes the Levites and elders (31:28-30) and teaches them the song of Yahweh (G), along with directions for public reading every seven years (H). Finally, both Moses and Joshua promulgate Yahweh’s song to the general assembly of Israel (I) (32:44).<sup>142</sup>

Lohfink’s displacement of all Mosaic writing prior to the Moab address is radical, though he finds textual precedence for his reconstruction in the disjointed historical reviews delivered by Moses in chs. 1-3, 5, and 9. To understand Moses’ presentation, Lohfink argues, the reader must rechronologize the prophet’s  *sujet* to harmonize with the narrator’s presentation (i.e., the *fabula*) of the same events in the books of Exodus and Numbers.

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<sup>139</sup> Lohfink’s chronological prioritization of the written law is established by the *wayyiqtol* verb (וַיִּקְהַל) in 31:9: “*Da wayyiqtol Zeitabstände zulässt, können 31,9 und 24f auch so verstanden werden, als habe Mose den Leviten (und Ältesten) eine schon zu einem früheren Zeitpunkt angefertigte Niederschrift der Tora übergeben*” (1993:268).

<sup>140</sup> H. W. Wiener (1929) was the first to use the term “resumptive repetition” to describe the editorial technique of incorporating multiple sources into a single narrative (Talmon 1993:117).

<sup>141</sup> While 31:9 and 24 are understood as two reports of a single pre-Moab event (ch. 29), Lohfink interprets Moses’ address to the Levites in 31:10-13 as the narrator’s proleptic notice of an event that occurs after the theophany (1993:267, 270); cf. von Rad 1966:190 for similar conclusion on the dual addresses to the Levites).

<sup>142</sup> Braulik (1992:222) concurs with Lohfink’s rechronologized interpretation of ch. 31.

Although Sonnet concurs that the phrase **וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה** in 31:9 can be interpreted in the pluperfect sense (“Moses had written”), he notes that there is no similar pluperfect *wayyiqtol* in 31:24 to mandate the rechronologization of both writing reports prior to the theophany. Instead, Sonnet argues that the *naw-consecutive* **וַיְהִי** at the beginning of 31:24 “signals the event of the transmission of the Torah ‘book’ to the Levites ... and not the writing or the completion of the writing of the Torah ‘book’” (1997:123, fn 20). Indeed, it is curious that Lohfink separates the dual report of the writing of the book of the law (a single pre-Moab event) from the dual report of the delivery of the same text (a one-time post-Moab, post-theophany event) when the narrator consistently combines each writing report with an account of its delivery. Lohfink argues that the same law could not have been delivered twice to the Levites. Sonnet counters that the object handed over to the Levites in vv. 25-6 differs from the first delivery, the second delivery a supplemented edition containing the newly-added song of Yahweh. Lohfink also fails to explain why Moses would promulgate the law to two assemblies (first to Israel’s notables and then to the people) when Yahweh had only commanded that he “teach it to the sons of Israel” (31:19). Nevertheless, Lohfink readily admits that his reconstruction of the Deuteronomic *fabula* does not address all the interpretive difficulties of ch. 31 and that he is willing to entertain alternatives (Lohfink 1993:271).<sup>143</sup>

## 2. Eep Talstra (1997)

Talstra eschews appendicular treatment of ch. 31 and instead, attempts to advance research with a literary critical, final-form reading of Deuteronomy in its entirety (1997:88-94, 102-3). Talstra marks off seven narrative scenes in ch. 31 that present three successors to the outgoing Moses: Joshua (vv. 7-8, 14, 23), the Levites (vv. 10-13, 25-7), and the Song of Yahweh (vv. 14-22, 28-30). These three successors function as interpretive guideposts for deciphering the chapter.

The frequent change of actors in the narrative frame can be taken as a signal that the most effective way of entering the text is to analyze it in terms of the various roles and actors presented, rather than in terms of its chronological order or its theological concepts. With the approaching death of Moses, all actors appear on the scene. In separate narrative sec-

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<sup>143</sup> “Aber die Informationen, die es der Lesfantazie ermöglichen, sie zu rekonstruieren, weisen einige Lücken und Unbestimmtheiten auf. Daher erreicht man an mehreren Stellen keine Sicherheit. Vielleicht soll der Leser sogar kreativ werden” (Lohfink 1995:66).

tions it is told how they are charged with their respective roles for the future (1997:96).

The song, whose revelation interferes with Moses' writing of the book of the law, dominates all other successors. For Talstra, this revelation makes Joshua subservient to the song. It also transforms Moses' document into a "witness" by dint of its inclusion within the book of the law. That transformation in turn demotes the Levites (and the elders) from active readers of the law (31:9) to passive receivers of the damning Song (31:24).

Due to the Song all roles are changing, including that of the Torah. The Torah as a whole takes the status YHWH gave to the Song: that of being a witness against Israel. The Song becomes its dominating voice ... The presentation of the Song changes the role of the Torah (the instruction becomes a witness), Joshua (the finish becomes a start), the Levites (the teachers need to add the document of the witness to the text of their Torah) and the elders (readers of the instructions and leaders of the people are now in the same role as the people: listening to the witness) (1997:100, 101).

For Talstra, the dramatic usurpation of both Joshua and the Levites by Yahweh's song argues for the importance of ch. 31 in the Deuteronomic narrative (1997:99-102).

Although Talstra promises a narratological reading, he fails to understand the voice hierarchies that situate the document within the storyworld of the Deuteronomic narrative. Thus, Talstra assumes erroneously that the book of Deuteronomy constitutes the document of the Moab covenant (a storyworld entity) (1997:102). Furthermore, Talstra's commitment to the supremacy of Yahweh's song trumps entirely Moses' book of the law. Finally, Talstra fails to explicate how a single chapter of divine song (ch. 32) can possibly overwhelm the immense volume of reported lawcode (chs. 5-26), or how Joshua's simple act of recording Yahweh's song (implied in 31:19) lessens his stature as the successor of Moses. Theological privilegings of the deity's revelation do not resolve the textual distortions of ch. 31.

### 3. Jean-Pierre Sonnet (1997)

Against Lohfink, Sonnet argues that the historical convolutions in Moses' historical overview (chs. 1-3, 5 and 9) do not establish a precedence for rechronologization of Deut 31, since the events recollected are preceded by a coherent narrative that sets straight their actual sequence. For Sonnet, this

“reality check” is consonant with the narrator’s continual goal of “fool-proof” presentation.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, since the narrator provides only a single report of the writing of the book of the law (ch. 31), Sonnet assumes that the sequence of events presented in this chapter represents accurately the last day of Moses (1997:124-5). Although Sonnet maintains maximum congruity between the *fabula* and *sujet* of ch. 31, he cannot escape the fact that the writing of Moses’ document is reported subsequent to its presence during Moses’ rhetorical engagement in Moab, necessitating a degree of chronological reconstruction (1997:137). Though sympathetic with Lohfink’s hermeneutical motivation, Sonnet judges Lohfink’s rechronologization of Deuteronomy overly sophisticated and beyond the competence of the ancient reader (1997:19-20, 114, 124).<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Sonnet states: “As elsewhere in biblical narrative, [the narrator’s] telling may include a certain amount of chronological deformation, but never at the expense of the intelligibility of the story-line” (1997:124). Sonnet adopts a Sternbergian narrator (1987:48-56, 230-35) whose proclivity towards minimal ambiguity whenever maximum clarity is required has raised the ire of postmodernist readers (e.g., Fewell and Gunn 1991:193-211). Sonnet also claims that the narrator’s orchestration of the Moab speech event emulates the sequence of events narrated in Exod 24, where oral speech leads to a written document (1997:116, fn 72). Based on Sonnet’s logic, one must conclude that despite the one-to-one correlation between narratorial *fabula* and *sujet*, the *fabula* itself is “fabricated” to mimic the sequence of events reported in Exod 19-24. And so, Sonnet states: “In a certain sense the text of Deut 31:9 is less *fabula*-oriented (it does not trigger or confirm a reconstruction of the order of events) than *sujet*-oriented” (1997:138). In arguing that the narrator’s *fabula* follows Moses’ narration of the reception of the Covenant Code, Sonnet must assume (as already noted) a near-Polzinian relationship between Moses and the narrator: “The irony is that Moses himself, in his retelling of the Horeb event, provided the narrator with the pattern of his own course of action” (1997:138). I assume that by “irony” Sonnet means “dramatic irony,” since the specter of a character of the narrator’s artistic creation dictating protocols of story-telling to the narrator is narratologically unorthodox.

<sup>145</sup> Speculations concerning the competence of the Deuteronomic audience are difficult to make, since modern exegetes have no direct means to gauge the hermeneutical abilities of ancient readers. Furthermore, criticisms of “oversophistication” can be leveled against any modern interpretation of the Bible that attempts to understand something of the original communicational process behind the biblical text. By this criterion, any biblical methodology falls defeated and even the most elementary of narratological interpretations are rendered suspect, given the lack of verifiable evidence for ancient comprehensions of narrative voice hier-

Sonnet interprets ch. 31 as follows. Emulating Yahweh at Sinai (Deut 4:13, 5:22, 10:4), Moses scribes a legal document and delivers it to (the representatives of) the people (31:9).<sup>146</sup> Sonnet concurs with Lohfink (Table 3.3) that the book of the law was written prior to the Moab address (in A below); the narrator's first report of writing in 31:9 clarifies the presence of a book during Moses' final address. Following his address, Yahweh charges Moses with the new task of writing and promulgating a divine "witness" against the wayward nation.<sup>147</sup>

So radical is this message that Moses is forced to revise his previously written law with an addendum that transforms (by "spatial contagion") the previously written law into yet another "witness" 1997:134-7, 151, 156-67).<sup>148</sup> Whereas Lohfink discerns an atemporal warp that reports the promulgation of the law prior to its occurrence in the ceremony of ch. 29 (C), Sonnet interprets the narrator's presentation of the Moab address (B-C) as sequentially ordered. Both scholars agree that Moses publicly installed his

archies. Sternberg speaks to this issue when he addresses accusations of "modern ethnocentrism" leveled by historical scholars:

We are wholly ignorant, in fact, of the 'theory of literature' prevalent in [for example] Homer's days or of the actual reactions of his contemporary audience ... There is [every reason] to believe, and a great deal of evidence to support this, that Homer, like other storytellers ancient and modern, exploited and manipulated these narrative interests [in temporal deformation]. The onus of proof to the contrary, therefore, obviously rests with the so-called historicists (1978:85).

Ultimately, the goal of any narratological investigation is first to interpret straightforward the text's conundra, and then, based on narrative and rhetorical theory, to reconstruct the degree of reader sophistication implied by the ancient document. A sophisticated text implies an audience sophisticated enough to understand it.

<sup>146</sup> Despite the many parallels drawn between Yahweh's writing in Exodus and Moses' writing in Deuteronomy, Sonnet argues that Moses' reported speech in Deuteronomy could *not* have been read from a previously written document, even though the sequence of reading following writing is found in Exod 24:4-7 (Sonnet 1997:114-16, 173-4).

<sup>147</sup> Lohfink neglects to explain the double promulgation of the song when Yahweh commanded only a single transmission. Sonnet, on the other hand, fails to explain why Moses would interpret the deity's command to "write" the song as a signal to *supplement* his previously written law.

<sup>148</sup> "In Deut 31:9-13 the written document received the positive *telos* of catalyzing the people's faithfulness to the covenant in their future in the land. In 31:26 the same document now supplemented with the Song, is turned into a "witness against" ... the same people ..." (Sonnet 1997:166).

successor after the Moab address (D). Lohfink argues that the public installation of Joshua was followed by the theophany and the divine installation of Joshua rather than a delivery of the law. Sonnet, on the other hand, adheres to two separate document deliveries, one before the theophany (E-F), the other after the divine revelation (F and H). Between the theophany and the second delivery, Sonnet asserts that Moses supplemented the law with the song (G).<sup>149</sup> Lohfink leaves the song to its own orbit. Predictably, Sonnet's one-time promulgation of the song before a single audience (H) is simpler than Lohfink's dual performance to two separate audiences (H-I-J).

Admittedly, this overview of Sonnet's Deuteronomic *fabula* is more precise than perhaps Sonnet's own description allows. Although Sonnet agrees with Lohfink that "Deuteronomy 31-32 never particularizes the relation of the Song in its written form to the written Torah," he nevertheless sees significance in the narrator's report of the completion of the book of the law "to the end." Sonnet writes: "Only in 31:24—after the Song is written—does the narrator present Moses' recording of the Torah as formally carried through" (1997:159). Sonnet assumes that the colophonic phrase "to the end" functions as the narrator's "marker of completion," indicating that the song was added to the book of the law. *Contra* Sonnet, mere contiguity between the report of the writing of the song (v. 22) and the writing of the book of the law (v. 24) does not link the two in causal step.<sup>150</sup> Sonnet

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<sup>149</sup> Sonnet's argument for a supplemented law-plus-song document is not unique, having been previously articulated in rabbinic tradition (Ibn Ezra) and adumbrated in scholarship by E. König (cf. Sanders 1996:342, Thompson 1974:304, Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger 1995:182, Talstra 1997:99-101, and Sonnet 1997:158).

The narrative of Joshua-2 Kings hints that a written copy of the song of Yahweh is perhaps accessible to the storyworld characters. In 2 Sam 22:2-3, 31-2, David employs the metaphor of a "rock" to describe his deity (Sanders 1997:359), the same metaphor used in Yahweh's Song (32:4, 15). The duplication of metaphors between David and the song of Yahweh implies that a written copy of the latter might indeed exist in the storyworld, though it does little to verify that the Song is listed on the contents page of the book of the law.

<sup>150</sup> Sonnet concedes to Lohfink the fact that "Deuteronomy 31-32 never particularizes the relation of the Song in its written form to the written Torah" (1997:158; Lohfink 1993:270-1). I agree with Sonnet (1997:163f) that there are significant differences between the two panels that prevent an easy conflation of the two reports of writing and two reports of the delivery of the law into a single event. However, I maintain that the narrator's colophonic phrase ("to the end") in v. 24 marks the *completion* of the law rather than the supplementation of the law with the

is also unclear on the relationship between the completed book of the law and the earlier report of a written law in v. 9. On one hand, he writes: “If the data provided in Deuteronomy 29-30 are to be believed,<sup>151</sup> Moses committed to writing the words of the Torah prior to the ritual recorded in Deuteronomy 29-30” (1997:135). On the other hand, Sonnet argues that v. 24 (“when Moses had finished writing the words of this law to the end”) constitutes the completion of the *process* of writing both the lawcode and the supplemental song “to the(ir) end” (עַד תְּמֹתָם), a process begun earlier but only completed after the theophany (1997:157f). Sonnet vacillates,<sup>152</sup> leaving the reader unclear whether Moses’ “process” of writing was a seamless affair that, midstream, took a different direction with the dramatic interpolation of the divine theophany,<sup>153</sup> or whether the writing process was a two-staged event that was catalyzed by the theophany, resulting in the addition of the Song of Yahweh to the original law.<sup>154</sup>

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song. That the phrase “to the end” (v. 24) is proximate to the narrator’s report of writing (v. 22) does not include the song in the book of the law. The text is clear: “When Moses had finished writing *the words of the Law* in a book to the end ...”

<sup>151</sup> Narratologically, there is no reason for the reader to “doubt” the veracity of the references to a book of the law in ch. 29.

<sup>152</sup> On one hand Sonnet states “... nothing less than a divine disclosure was required to authorize a supplementation of the (*already*) written Torah,” and on the other, he writes: “[Deut 31:24] describes Moses’ further writing as the prolongation of a *single process*, now brought to completion ... Beyond the temporal interruption (Moses wrote in *two sessions*), Deuteronomy considers the *process*: the *continued* writing of the Mosaic Torah, dramatically *relaunched* by the extemporaneous theophany” (1997:161-3; emphasis added).

<sup>153</sup> According to Sonnet, two interpolations occur, each at different levels in the Deuteronomy narrative. At the level of the storyworld, the song of Yahweh is interpolated into Moses’ book of the law, while at the level of the storyteller, the narrator interpolates the account of Yahweh’s theophany into his telling of Moses’ oral and written efforts (1997:161-2).

<sup>154</sup> Sonnet’s commitment to the priority of oral speech over written text forces him to argue illogically that the “witness” elements within Moses’ address (e.g., Deut 4:26, 8:19, 30:19) “somehow” foreshadow the function of the book of the law as a “witness against” Israel (1997:166, fn. 155, also 261). Where Sonnet aims to preserve the connection between Moses’ writing of the law and the catalyzing theophany of Yahweh, my interpretation will interpret the relationship between writing and revelation as part of an ongoing dialogical struggle between the narrative’s two main protagonists.

(Table 3.3) *Fabula* Comparison

Lohfink's <i>Fabula</i>		Sonnet's <i>Fabula</i>
writing of the book of the law (31:9, 24)	A	written law (31:9)
	B	Moab promulgation of the law (5-28)
Moab covenant-making ceremony (29-30) (with the promulgation of the law (5-28) inserted into the proceedings)	C	Moab covenant (29-30)
installation of Joshua by Moses (31:7)	D	installation of Joshua by Moses (31:7)
	E	delivery of the law to Levitical priests and elders for future reading (31:10-13)
theophany and installation of Joshua by Yahweh (31:14-23) <sup>155</sup>	F	theophany and installation of Joshua by Yahweh (31:14-23)
Moses writes song	G	Moses supplements law with song (31:24, a resumptive repetition of v. 9)
delivery of the book of the law and directions to Levites (31:10-13, 25-7)	H	delivery of the supplemented law to the Levites as a witness (31:25-29)
promulgation of the song to the assembly of elders and Levites (31:28-32:43)	I	
promulgation of Song to Israel (32:44)	J	promulgation of song (32:1-44)

Sonnet's ambivalence between a writing "process" and a writing "revision" is complicated by his interpretation of the second report of writing in v. 24. Where Lohfink understands the verse as a resumptive repetition involving simultaneity (the reports of writing and document delivery each separate events told twice), Sonnet argues for a nuanced understanding of the *Wiederaufnahme* that relates the event of the theophany to the process of writing. Sonnet explains:

In biblical literature the phenomenon of resumptive repetition functions not only as an editorial or redactional "marker" but also as a narrative technique ... In some cases resumptive repetitions can presumably do double duty, as a Janus-like device: they can mark an editorial or redac-

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<sup>155</sup> Lohfink suggests that the theophany occurred prior to the writing of the law, which would then rechronologize Moses' address after the theophany. My analysis of ch. 31 will explore shortly the dialogic possibilities of Lohfink's suggestion.



tional interpolation on the one hand, while providing a guideline in a complex narration on the other. This is apparently the case in Deut 31:9, 24. The specific bearing of the narrative technique in this case is not the presentation of non-sequential motifs, but the relationship of an *event* (the theophany) to a *process* (the writing of the Torah). The unexpected revelation brings about the resumption and completion of an action already initiated (31:9) ... Beyond the temporal interruption (Moses wrote in two sessions), Deuteronomy 31 considers the process: the continued writing of the Mosaic Torah, dramatically relaunched by the extemporaneous theophany (1997:162-3).

Here, Sonnet's position seems transparent: the writing of the book of the law was a process begun in v. 9, interrupted or catalyzed by the theophany of vv. 14-23, and finally completed in v. 24. Clarity turns opaque with Sonnet's refutation of Lohfink's pluperfect interpretation of v. 24: "The **וְיָיִן** form [v.24] signals the event of the transmission of the Torah 'book' to the Levites ... and *not the writing or the completion of the writing of the Torah 'book'*" (1997:123, fn 20; emphasis added). If the subject of v. 24 merely signals the delivery of a written document, then it seems contradictory to argue that this same verse signals the completion of a process of writing or that it relates Yahweh's theophany to Moses' law.

Whether Moses' document was the result of a single process of writing or a revision to a completed edition, Sonnet is emphatic that the theophany played a significant role in the final form of the book of the law. A catalyst for a new edition or a transformative force in an ongoing process, either way the proposed interrelation between Yahweh's theophany and Moses' writing must be rechronologized prior to the Moab address, given the presence of a material "book" in ch. 29. Notwithstanding Sonnet's self-defeating statement on the **וְיָיִן** phrase of v. 24, this rechronologization of theophany and writing would seem obvious in light of Sonnet's arguments. Yet for some reason, Sonnet appears to resist this implicit chrono-logic (1997:165).

#### 4. Brian Britt (2000)

In his reading of chs. 31-2, Britt is concerned to avoid artificial leveling of what all agree is a rather bumpy peroration (2000:360, n. 7). Britt eschews any commitment to "modern standards of coherence and single authorship" (2000:358), even though he presents his analysis of chs. 31-2 as "literary." Instead, he views the texts as an "artful" alternation of two originally

separate narrative strands,<sup>156</sup> one concerned with the story of Moses' death and the succession of Joshua, the other the recording and promulgation of texts (2000:366). These dual strands, reminiscent of Lohfink's cycles of long and short text units, present two (rather than Talstra's three) competing successors to Moses (2000:358-59, 367). The two successors, Joshua and law, alternate before the reader as the narrative shifts between Moses' death and his successorship on one hand, and the book and writing on the other.<sup>157</sup> What is more, the two narrative strands of chs. 31-2 compete as successors to the outgoing leader, their tension resolved only when the pre-eminence of the law is announced in 32:47 in preparation for life on the far side of the Jordan (2000:364-5).<sup>158</sup>

Like Talstra, Britt argues incorrectly that the book of Deuteronomy is a self-referential witness (2000:358-59, 364) and that the narrative of chs. 31-2 is itself the "textual memorial" referred to by Moses (2000:371-2). This argument is peculiar, given Britt's familiarity with Sonnet's caution against such transgressions of narrative voicing. More problematic is Britt's assumption that the law and the song are synonymous (2000:367), despite his intention to avoid over-ironing the wrinkled text. It is also unclear how the public promulgation of the "song" in 32:44-6 results in the combination of two competing "successor" strands and the conflation of their related tensions. Surely, the tensions discernible within these chapters are better analyzed as the product of competing characters who institute rival "texts-as-witnesses" within the storyworld.

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All scholars, whether source or discourse focused, agree that ch. 31 requires reconstruction to render its contents intelligible. Of the four readings re-

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<sup>156</sup> Olson (1994:134) and Cairns (1992:269) too discern different textual strands in ch. 31. Cairns divides the chapter into three parts: the writing of the Torah by Moses, the commissioning of Joshua, and the introduction of Yahweh's song. Olson (adapting Lohfink's exegesis) sees the chapter structured by a series of three short themes (the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua, the transfer of Moses' oral law into written form, and the introduction of the song).

<sup>157</sup> Wherever a shift in subject arises, Britt traces the seam of narrative strand: vv. 8-9, 13-14, 21-22, 22-23, and 23-24.

<sup>158</sup> In combining law and song, Britt follows von Rad (1966:190) who felt that ch. 31 exhibits an effort to legitimate the song by associating it with the law. For Britt, any residual ambiguities over whether "this law" refers to Moses' document or Yahweh's witness are resolved in 32:46, where תּוֹרָה refers to both law and song (2000:367).

viewed, only Lohfink (and to a lesser extent, Sonnet<sup>159</sup>) appears aware of the temporal deformation involving a writing report (31:9) after the appearance of a book in 29:20. All understand that the predominant subject of ch. 31 is the transition of authority from Moses to Joshua. Britt argues for a narrow definition of successorship involving only Joshua, though Joshua eventually exhibits submission to Moses' law. Talstra recognizes the role that the written documents play as successor to Moses, but he downplays the importance of Moses' book of the law by making it subservient to the song of Yahweh. Both Britt and Talstra perceive a tension between competing successors, one that is resolved only when a display of subservience is awarded to either the book of the law (Britt) or Yahweh's revelation (Talstra). Sonnet duplicates Talstra in relaxing too quickly the tensions between Yahweh and Moses in favor of a song-and-law collective wherein the (theological) superiority of Yahweh's song converts the law into a "witness" against Israel.

Britt is correct when he asserts that the complexity of the text must be honored, although his "dual-strand" redactional solution fails to take into account the competition between Yahweh and Moses and their respective documents. The nuanced complexities of ch. 31 should not be over-resolved to the point that the structuring and energizing tensions of the broader narrative are erased. A method of reading is required that can deal with the complexities identified by Lohfink, Talstra, Britt, and Sonnet. That method, I propose, is available in Bakhtin's dialogic theory. The twin story lines noted by Britt (the Moses-to-Joshua succession and the writing of texts) are intertwined in the dialogic concerns of Deuteronomy's two primary characters, Yahweh and Moses. By voicing the multiple themes of ch. 31 to distinct voices, one begins to see the dialogic cut-and-thrust that plays before the reader. That dramatized dialogic, however, remains secreted from Israel and is revealed to the reader quite late in the narrator's presentation.

## **B. IMPERATIVES FOR A RECHRONOLOGIZED DEUTERONOMY**

Read superficially, the Deuteronomic account of Moses' final day as leader presents a lengthy speech, followed by the writing of that speech in a book, and then concluded with a rendition of Yahweh's song (ch. 32) and a blessing of the people (ch. 33). But a number of key elements (specific deictic

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<sup>159</sup> See Sonnet (1997:110-12, 135f).

references to the “book of the law,” grammatical clues, a delayed exposition, and a shift in rhetorical situation) leaves little doubt that the narration of Moses’ final days has altered the sequence of events as they actually occurred, obliging the narratologically-informed reader to reconstruct the Deuteronomic *fabula*.

### Deictic References

In the preceding discussion, I have noted the presence of a physical entity called “this law” (הַתּוֹרָה־הַזֹּאת), “this book” (סֵפֶר הַזֶּה), or “this book of the law” (סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה) in the world where Moses addresses his audience. These deictic signs arising within the storyworld (chs. 29:20 and 30:10) compel the reader to resolve the relationship between a book on hand during Moses’ speech and the delayed report of its inscription. Real-world causal logic demands a mimetic rechronologization of the narrator’s *sujet* so that the writing of the book of the law (31:24) precedes its promulgation (chs. 4-30).

### Unmarked Temporal Overlay

The deictic signature of a book onstage at Moab (29:20, 30:10) constitutes the most important imperative for rechronologization. Additional imperatives contribute to the momentum for *fabula* restructuring. As noted, both Lohfink (1993:268) and Sonnet (1997:135-37) reinforce the intrinsic anachrony of a written document in ch. 31 with a pluperfect interpretation of the *wayyiqtol* verb in v. 9 (“when Moses *had* written this law and *had* given it to the priests ...”). The usual biblical convention for signaling a temporal regression within a narrative is to employ a *waw*-conjunction and *qatal* verb with an intervening subject (*waw*-X-*qatal*). Randall Buth notes, however, that on occasion the *wayyiqtol* can function as an “unmarked” signal for a non-sequential temporal shift.<sup>160</sup> “[The] standard narrative *wayyiqtol* will be used,” writes Buth, “as though the story is marching forward on its timeline but the story actually does an about-face and picks up the time line at an earlier point, one already passed” (1994:139). For a *wayyiqtol* to indicate temporal

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<sup>160</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor detail the issues and debate surrounding the pluperfect interpretation first argued by David Qimhi (1990:552-53, 547). Although Driver expressed reservations (1998:84-5), Randall Buth notes that Driver allowed for a pluperfect *wayyiqtol* under certain conditions (for example, at the beginning of a narrative). Buth himself recognizes instances where the *wayyiqtol* cannot be interpreted as pluperfect (1994:144-45).

retreat, some non-grammatical element in the text must signal the shift. Both argues that a lexical reference and/or a lexical repetition can transform a *wayyiqtol* into a pluperfect. An example where lexical repetition indicates an “unmarked temporal overlay” (as Both terms it) is seen in Judges 20, where a key lexical word (“and the men of Benjamin saw [וַיִּרְאוּ] that they were *beaten* [וַיִּגְּפוּ]”) in v. 36 refers back to v. 32 (“and the men of Benjamin said, ‘they are *beaten*’ [וַיִּגְּפוּ]”). This lexical repetition demands that the verb וַיִּרְאוּ (“they saw”) be interpreted as a pluperfect. A *wayyiqtol* also takes on pluperfect meaning when, as outlined above, the event about to be narrated has been anticipated in the preceding narrative. To illustrate a “culturally natural semantic relationship,” Both notes that the narrator’s report of Jephthah’s birth (וַיֹּלֶדְ גִּלְעָד אֶת־יִפְתָּח) in Judg 11:1-2 follows after the description of Jephthah as a “mighty soldier” (1994:142, 147).<sup>161</sup>

For a *wayyiqtol* to signal a narrative temporal overlay not marked in the usual manner (i.e., *waw-X-qatal*), certain textual features (lexical reference or causal logic) must also be present. Deut 31:9 represents such an example where cause (the writing of a document) precedes effect (a written document), thus requiring that the reader interpret the *wayyiqtol* וַיִּכְתֹּב as a pluperfect (“when Moses *had written*”).

### Resumptive Repetition

Douglas M. Gropp asserts that no matter how convoluted the temporal deviations, narrative progress must always provide sufficient cohesion for the reader to track the underlying *fabula* (1995:184). When a narrative loops back to a previously narrated event, some kind of backreferencing technique is necessary to enable the reader to follow the temporal thread of the plot. In classical biblical Hebrew, the particles  $\text{כִּי}$  and  $\text{כֵּן}$  in combination with an infinitive provide the requisite cohesiveness. Of the 93 occurrences of  $\text{כִּי}$  plus infinitive in the Hebrew Bible, seventy percent use one of three verbs:  $\text{שָׁמַע}$  (“hear or obey,” 34 times),  $\text{רָאָה}$  (“see,” 17 times), or  $\text{כָּלָה}$  (“accomplish, complete, cease,” 14 times) (1995:187). The latter verb is of particular importance, since it implies the completion or resolution of a task previously initiated. In Deut 31:24, the *Piel* infinitive  $\text{כָּלוּת}$  is combined with the particle  $\text{כִּי}$  to indicate the “finishing action” of a project previously undertaken:  $\text{וַיְהִי כִּכְלוּת מֹשֶׁה}$  (“when Moses had completed ...”).

<sup>161</sup> Both describes “culturally natural semantic relationships” (1994:143f) as a universally shared cause-effect experience that mandates a specific sequentiality to events within a narrative.

What action might  $\text{כִּי}$  plus  $\text{כָּלּוֹת}$  infinitive phrase refer to? Gropp provides a grammatical answer: “Because the verb  $[\text{כָּלָה}]$  always takes a complementary infinitive, lexical repetition may reinforce the finishing-action backreferencing technique if the infinitive reinforces an earlier verb” (1995:194). In 31:24, the phrase  $\text{וַיְהִי כְּכָלּוֹת מֹשֶׁה לְכָתֵב}$  (“when Moses had completed *writing*”) matches the complementary infinitive  $\text{לְכָתֵב}$  to  $\text{כָּלּוֹת}$ , creating a backreference to an identical lexeme in v. 9:  $\text{וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת}$  (“when Moses had *written* this law”). The repetition of the demonstrative noun  $\text{הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת}$  (“this law”) between vv. 9 and 24 reinforces the backreferencing function of v. 24, appearing to confirm its resumption of the first report of writing in v. 9, as argued by Lohfink.<sup>162</sup>

But Gropp’s study (1995:203) also concurs with Sonnet’s interpretation of  $\text{וַיְהִי}$  in v. 24. With the use of  $\text{וַיְהִי}$ , classical Hebrew syntax subordinates the phrase  $\text{וַיְהִי כְּכָלּוֹת מֹשֶׁה}$  (“when Moses had completed”) to the main verbal phrase  $\text{וַיִּצַו מֹשֶׁה}$  (“Moses commanded”) that follows in v. 25. According to Gropp, a “contingent temporal succession” arises between the completion of writing in v. 24 and the commands given to Levites in v. 25f. Gropp states:

In a somewhat simplistic generative formulation we could say that the infinitival phrase headed by  $[\text{כִּי}]$  is a transformation of a narrative clause. It is as if the narrator takes the chain of narrative verb forms which carries forward the progress of the narrative on the main-event line and twists or turns the chain back on itself in order to insure greater cohesion and periodicity in the narrative. The narrator achieves this cohesion through backreference which he builds into his narrative by “infinitivalizing” a narrative clause. The event narrated by  $[\text{כִּי}]$  + infinitive construct is still on the main-line event, but it is subordinated to the following event encoded in the next main verb (1995:210).

Gropp’s understanding of the relationship between the infinitival clause and the main verb that follows in narrated discourse confirms Sonnet’s contention that the report of the completion of writing in v. 24 sets the stage for the next main event involving Moses’ command to deposit the book of the law (v. 25).

How should one resolve the conflicting signals of v. 24? The infinitival use of the verb  $\text{כָּלָה}$  in conjunction with the particle  $\text{כִּי}$ , together with the

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<sup>162</sup> Gropp writes: “In Classical Hebrew narrative such backreferencing techniques appear not to link ‘sentences’ within a ‘paragraph,’ but successive ‘paragraphs’ within a larger narrative” (1995:185).

complementary infinitive לְכַתֵּב creates a solid link to v. 9, which in turn is reinforced with significant repetitions of key words (“writing” and “this law”). These lexical repetitions and grammatical features of vv. 9 and 24 seem to strengthen the argument for a resumptive understanding of v. 24. A problem arises, however, with Moses’ delivery of the “law” to the Levites in 31:10-13. If the law was not completed until v. 24, what then did Moses’ hand over for sabbatical promulgation?

Too much emphasis is placed on the first clause in v. 24 (“when Moses had completed writing the words of this law”), leading interpreters to underplay the importance of the qualifying clause “in a book to the end.” The latter clause signals that a document, similar and dissimilar to the one written and delivered in v. 9, was completed in v. 24 and deposited in v. 25 (Table 3.4).

(Table 3.4) Comparisons of Text Deliveries	
Moses’ First Delivery	Moses’ Second Delivery
Moses wrote this law (v. 9)	when Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end (v. 24)
and gave it to the priests the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh and to all the leaders of Israel and Moses commanded them (v. 9b-10)	Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh
injunction to read the law every seven years (vv. 10b-13)	injunction to store the book beside the ark as a witness (v. 26)

Following August Dillmann’s assessment (1886:387), it is clear that in vv. 9-13 Moses is drawing attention to the law *per se*. In his first address to the Levites and elders, Moses charges them with the future responsibility of reading the law every seven years. In contrast, the injunction delivered in vv. 24-26 involves an entirely different regulation. In v. 25, Moses charges the Levites (and not the elders) with the immediate task of depositing the *book* of the law next to the ark. Thus, two different injunctions are made, each involving different editions of the law. The second delivery concerns not only the law, but the law “written in a book to the end.” What Moses hands over for deposition is a second edition of the law (v. 24), one weight-

ier in linguistic content (compared with the edition in v. 9) than simple “materiality” (as described by Sonnet<sup>163</sup>).

A close reading of the reports of writing in ch. 31 reveals that the contents of the law written in 31:9 differ quantitatively from the contents of the book of the law written in 31:24. What Moses wrote in v. 9 were the “statutes and ordinances.” The book of the law written in v. 24 is a second edition that supplements the basic lawcode with a series of chiasmic frames.<sup>164</sup> Evidence for two editions of the law with differing contents (one framed and the other non-framed) is seen in 27:1. Here, the narrator breaks frame for the first time since Moses’ began his “statutes and ordinances,” signaling a shift in Moses’ valediction. Immediately after 27:1, Moses commands Israel to mark their crossing of the river with a copy of the words of “this law.” Since the remainder of ch. 27 contains a list of curses, the reference to “this law” in 27:1 can only refer analeptically to the preceding chapters spoken by Moses (chs. 12-26). It is *this* law, minus the surrounding frames, that Israel writes on the plastered stones in Josh. 8. Significantly, all references to “this book” or “this book of the law” only occur in the outer frames of his address, never in the core “statutes and ordinances.” Conversely, references to the “book of the law” in the frames of Moses’ address frequently allude to the curses.<sup>165</sup> The reader concludes that the “law” written in 31:9 did not include the frames added to the book of the law in 31:24. Confirmation for the distinction between “law” (i.e., “statutes and ordinances”) and “book of the law” is found in the Mount Ebal ceremony reported in Josh 8. What is *written* on the stele, in accordance with the command of Deut 27:2-3, is the “law of Moses” (8:31); what is *read* to the gathered congregation following the erection of the stele are “all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the *book* of the law” (chs. 4-30) (8:34).<sup>166</sup> The “book of the law” contains the additional blessings and curses which are vocalized during the Ebal ritual but not written on the plastered stele. The narratological delineations of “this law” discerned in the

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<sup>163</sup> “The emphasis on the materiality of the record [in 31:24-5], and on its preservation is in sharp contrast to the description of Moses’ writing in 31:9-13 (Sonnet 1997:163).

<sup>164</sup> In 28:58 and 30:10, Moses clarifies that the contents of the book of the law contains “this law,” while in 28:61 and 29:19, 26 Moses states that the book of the law contains “curses.”

<sup>165</sup> Deut 28:58, 61; 29:19, 20, 26.

<sup>166</sup> Contrary to Sonnet (1997:104, cf. 110), the contents of the two inscriptions (Ebal stele and Mosaic book) overlap only insofar as the law portion is concerned.



framing strategies of Moses reveal that “this law” constituted the “statutes and ordinances” of chs. 12-26, while the “book of the law” included a much wider range of discourse, spanning multiple frames between chs. 4 and 30.<sup>167</sup> What the Levites and elders were commanded to read publicly in v. 9 is the central portion of the completed book of the law of v. 25.

In effect, v. 24 performs multiple grammatical functions that link the completion of writing to the command to deposit the finished document (Table 3.5).

(Table 3.5) Grammatical Functions of 31:24	
when וְיְהִי	<i>protasis element, subordinating v. 24 to the apodosis command in v. 25</i>
Moses had completed writing the words of this law מֹשֶׁה לָכַתֵּב אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה־הַזֹּאת	<i>resumptive repetition, linking the law in v. 24 to the previous edition in v. 9</i>
in a book עַל־סֵפֶר	<i>qualifying clause, indicating a revised edition of the first law</i>
to their end עַד תִּמְּם	<i>additional qualifier, noting either that the two editions (law and law in a book) were fully completed, or that the frames surrounding the law in the second edition were attached</i>

As the protasis to Moses’ command in v. 25, the phrase “when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book to the end” announces that a second edition of the law was signed off for deposition beside the ark. The clause “in a book to the(ir) end” qualifies the finishing action of the clause “Moses completed writing the law.” By positing two editions of the law (a shorter one intended for ritual public reading and a longer edition for storage), Sonnet’s contradiction between a “writing process” and a “re-launched writing project” is resolved. The writing of the book of the law was a two-staged event, the first stage producing “this law” for public proclamation, the second stage yielding a framed version of the law for deposition.

<sup>167</sup> Sonnet takes a similar approach to these two panels, stating that the object handed over to the Levites in vv. 25-6 is not the same object as in vv. 10-13, but rather, a second supplemented edition of the law. However, what marks Sonnet’s second edition is the inclusion of the song of Yahweh (1997:158), rather than the multiple frames in the second edition proposed in my reading.

When a consequence (a written book) precedes its antecedent (the writing of the same), a rechronologization of the narrator's *sujet* is in order. The deictic references to the book of the law in chs. 29-30 necessitate that the writing of that same book be placed prior to the Moab address (1:6-31:8). Most important, the subordination of the phrase **וַיְהִי כְכָלוֹת מִשֶּׁה** (indicating the completion of the *book* of the law) to the delivery of the same document in v. 25 logically implicates the depositional speech in vv. 26-29 in the rechronologization of Deuteronomy, since both the completed document and its deposition are inseparably linked by the verbal element (**וַיְהִי**) that opens v. 24. The command to deposit the book of the law and to assemble all of Israel are directed to the same audience (i.e., Levites) and as such precede the Moab speech (1:6-31:8).

If the report of two editions of writing and two document deliveries in ch. 31 are rechronologized prior to the beginning of Moses' Moab address (1:6-31:8), where does the reshuffled narrative leave the theophany of Yahweh in 31:14-23? If the theophany is enmeshed in Moses' writing project, then it too must be rechronologized prior to Moses' last speech. Thus rechronologized, the narrative of 31:9-29 bears immense impact on the meaning of the remainder of Deuteronomy, for then Moses' lengthy discourse would constitute the prophet's response to Yahweh's revelation of a breakdown in future divine-human relations. The fundamental question underlying the relationship between the theophany and the writing of the book of the law is whether Yahweh's theophany constitutes a reaction to the Moab speech (1:6-31:8) or whether it functions as its provocation.<sup>168</sup> The resolution of this question is found in a rhetorical analysis of the ch. 31.

### Rhetorical Situation

Every communication act occurs within a "rhetorical situation," according to rhetorical theory (Lenchak 1993:109). L. Bitzer defines the context of communication as "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations

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<sup>168</sup> Lohfink's rechronologization of ch. 31 assumes that the theophany is Yahweh's response to Moses' Moab address (1993:264), though he does concede the possibility that the theophany might have preceded the events of Moab. Sonnet implies that the theophany precedes Moses' Moab speech, since the process of writing a document (which must have taken place prior to the Moab scene) was a process influenced by the deity's revelation. Sonnet, however, does not follow through on this implication. Neither scholar, of course, detects the dialogic between deity and prophet on the subject of Joshua's role in the conquest, the apostasy of Israel, and the competing written witness documents.

which presents an exigence that can be completely or partially removed if discourse—introduced into the situation—can influence audience thought or action so to bring about positive modification of the exigence” (1980:24). The vector of Deuteronomy’s primary discourse transpires along a consistent rhetorical axis, with Moses the primary speaker and “all Israel” or “the people of Israel” the prophet’s target audience. A slight shift in rhetorical situation arises in 31:7 when Moses turns to encourage his successor publicly, a shift anticipated from comments made in his *Succession Speech* (e.g., 1:37). The speech of encouragement occurs within “the sight of all Israel” as Moses continues to address the congregation indirectly over the head of his successor (31:7).

The continuous rhetorical situation of the narrator’s presentation begins to disintegrate in 31:9 where Moses addresses the Levites and elders in vv. 9-13. A speaking agent new to Deuteronomy commands an appearance with Moses and Joshua in the tent of meeting (vv. 14-23). Following Yahweh’s theophany, Moses resumes the role of primary speaker and gives instructions to the Levites for deposition of the book and the assembly of the congregation (vv. 24-29). These three discursive events (31:9-29), all out of earshot of the congregation, are anomalous within a narrative that consistently foregrounds the voice of Moses addressing the congregation. Extricating 31:9-29 from the Moab address leaves a single rhetorical situation stretching from 1:6 to 32:44. At the level of the narrator’s communication, the rhetorical shift in ch. 31 and the introduction of new participants (Yahweh, Joshua, and the Levites) serve to heighten the contrast between the public address of chs. 1-30 and the private events associated with writing in ch. 31.

From the perspective of Moses’ storyworld, a continuous rhetorical situation plays before the congregation. Who stands in this grand assembly, witnessing the last words of Moses? In his rhetorical-critical study of Deut 28:69-30:20, Timothy A. Lenchak notes that “in no part of [this unit] are levitical priests considered part of the audience towards which this discourse is directed” (1993:96).<sup>169</sup> In a rechronologized narrative, the absence of the Levites from the “participant list” presented in 29:9 holds true also for the entire Moab discourse, since in 31:28 Moses’ command for a plenary assembly casts the Levitical priests as assemblers of the congregation rather than recipients of Moses’ final rhetorical act. When Moses begins to address

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<sup>169</sup> Lenchak notes four “audience participant lists”: Deut 5:23, 29:9-10, 31:9-12, and 31:28-30 (1993:97-8).

the congregation, the Levites stand with Moses and at one point join the leader in exhorting the congregation to obedience to the book of the law (27:9). Only once in that speech event does a select group step out from the full assembly and join Moses and the Levites in addressing the people of Israel. In 27:1, the elders of Israel participate in the communication to Israel. A little later (27:8), presumably when the elders of Israel have resumed their former positions in the audience, the Levitical priests join Moses in promoting the blessings and curses of Ebal/Gerizim (cf. 29:9-10).

But how should one resolve the mismatch between “all the elders of your tribes and your officers” summoned in 31:28 and the audience of “all Israel” or “the people of Israel” noted in the narrator’s introduction (1:1, 3)?<sup>170</sup> The question of audience complexion is an important rhetorical issue, though Sonnet thinks the conundrum more apparent than real, pointing out that the “elders of Israel” in 31:28 can refer metonymically to the entire congregation of Israel as in 31:30 (1997:171). Examples of this phenomenon can be found in Exod 19:7-8, Josh 24:1-2, and 2 Kgs 23:1-2, where elders are assembled for a communication from Moses; immediately following, the narrator refers to the same group as “all the people” (1997:171-3). On the other hand, the LXX text of Deut 31:28 provides a comprehensive audience description (“the heads of your tribes, your elders, your judges, and your officers”) which harmonizes with the roster noted by Moses in 29:9-10: “You stand this day all you ... the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, both he who hews wood and he who draws water” (cf. Sonnet 1997:171, fn 169; Fortunatus Nwachukwu 1995:88; and Lohfink 1993:259). Whether through the metonymic association of MT or the comprehensive articulation of LXX, it is evident that the audience that Moses calls for in 31:28 is largely congruent with the audience in attendance in 29:9-10. It is the same group, cryptically identified, that the narrator has in view in 1:1 and 3.

In his definition of “rhetorical situation,” Bitzer notes that an “exigence” motivates and focuses the communicatory act between speaker and audience. Bitzer offers this explanation: “[Rhetorical exigence] is an imperfection marked by some degree of urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something to be corrected. It is necessarily related to interests and valuations”

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<sup>170</sup> Lohfink argues that the call to assemble (תְּקַהֲלֵם) the elders and officers of Israel in 31:28 is the same select group (“assembly [תְּקַהֲלֵם] of Israel”) to whom Moses taught the song in 31:30ff (1993:268).

(1980:26). Given the prolixity of the address that assaults both the story-world audience and the reader of Deuteronomy, the exigence behind the address must be of exceptional significance to motivate so prominent a speech. What might this motive be? In the long-run, issues such as Moses' disbarment or the challenge of the pending conquest pale in comparison to the threat that lurks within the psyche of the congregation and its impact on relations with heaven. Moses' premature death short of the Canaanite goal does not motivate the long digression on the law; rather, it merely constitutes the exigence addressed in the *Succession Speech* of the prophet's final speech (chs. 1-3, 31:1-8). In a rechronologized Deuteronomic narrative, the only exigence momentous enough to motivate Moses' valediction and the rewriting of a second edition of the law is the announcement of divine occultation in the tent of meeting (31:14-21). Yahweh's prediction of a breakdown in divine-human relations mobilizes the lengthiest address in the Primary Narrative. This discourse, carefully framed, addresses the congregation's well-documented proclivity to idolatrous offence (*Excursus Frame*) and highlights the socio-religious plan that will hopefully obviate the predicted occultation of divine presence (Lenchak 1993:110).

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The imperatives that reconstitute Deuteronomy in conformity with a natural sequence of events within the storyworld are summarized as follows. The causal logic inherent in the references to "this book of the law" in chs. 29 and 30 dictate that the writing of the law in ch. 31 antedates the Moab speech (1:6-31:8). A number of key textual features in Deuteronomy reinforce this common-sense logic, directing the reader to conceptualize the sequence of events in a manner significantly different from the sequence presented by the narrator. A series of important grammatical clues surrounding the narrator's second writing report link the law portion of Moses' book in v. 24 to a previous edition in v. 9, which in turn stages the command for the deposition of the book and the assembling of the congregation. Finally, the rhetorical situation (audience complexion and location) in 31:9-29 sets the entire unit apart from the rhetorical situation in 1:6-31:7 and 32:1-47. Between the two editions of Moses' law stands the divine theophany (31:16-22) that catalyzes both a second, expanded edition of the original law and the lengthy nomistic digression (chs. 4-30) in Moses' *Succession Speech*.

Viewed synoptically, my rechronologization strikes a midway solution between Lohfink and Sonnet (Table 3.6). My *fabula* places both reports of Moses' injunctions to the Levites (reading the law and deposition of the book) prior to the Moab address rather than after the theophany as restruc-

tured by Lohfink. I interpret 31:28-29 as Moses' command for a plenary assembly to promulgate the book of the law, whereas Lohfink interprets the call for an assembly in v. 28 as the occasion for the first of two promulgations of the song.<sup>171</sup> My rechronologization agrees with Sonnet that Yahweh's theophany influences Moses' written law, though that influence is not a "transformation" of the law through inclusion of the song within the book of the law. With Sonnet (and against Lohfink), I argue that the covenant ceremony (ch. 29) follows the promulgation of the law (chs. 5-28), though admittedly, it is possible to argue (*contra* Sonnet, 1997:174) that the law promulgated in Moab is read off the pages of the previously written book of the law (cf. 30:10).

Finally, I argue that Yahweh's theophany is itself a response to Moses' early innovation of centralized worship that was written in 31:9 and revised in 31:24.

### C. DIALOGIC AND DEUTERONOMY'S RECHRONOLOGIZED NARRATIVE

Contrary to von Rad's negative assessment, Deut 31 plays a vital role in the Deuteronomic narrative once its expositional value is recognized and the narrative's *fabula* reconstructed. Tangled in the chapter's dischronology is an important dialogic that, at the end of Moses' career, crescendos into a writing competition between Yahweh and Moses. Each witness, song and book, functions as proxy for the absence of its author. Each witness also addresses the absence of the other; Yahweh's song is a witness against the people who will forsake their god once Moses is no longer on scene, while Moses' book is a witness that will (hopefully) prevent the apostasy of the nation that would lead to Yahweh's withdrawal.

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<sup>171</sup> Driver (1986:343) and Sonnet (1997:171) also argue that "these words" of 31:28 refer to the quoted song in ch. 32, while Mayes (1991:380) takes the position advocated in this study.

(Table 3.6) Three <i>Fabula</i> Synopses			
	Lohfink	Bergen	Sonnet
A <i>Events prior to Moab address</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>writing of the book of the law (31:9, 24)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>writing of the book of the law (31:9, 24)</li> <li>Yahweh's private installation of Joshua and theophany (31:14-23)</li> <li>Moses writes the song (31:23)</li> <li>first reported delivery of the law (31:10-13)</li> <li>second reported delivery of the law (31:25-7)</li> <li>call for a plenary assembly (31:28-9)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>written law (31:9)</li> </ul>
B <i>Moab address</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moab covenant-making ceremony (29-30) with embedded promulgation of the law (5-28)</li> <li>public installation of Joshua by Moses (31:7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moses public installation of Joshua, with embedded promulgation of the book of the law (chs. 1-30)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moab promulgation of the law (5-28)</li> <li>Moab covenant (29-30)</li> <li>public installation of Joshua by Moses (31:7)</li> </ul>
C <i>Events after Moab address</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yahweh's private installation of Joshua and theophany (31:14-23)</li> <li>writing of the song?</li> <li>combined first and second deliveries of the law (31:10-13, 25-7)</li> <li>first promulgation of the song (31:28-32:43)</li> <li>second promulgation of Song to Israel (32:44)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promulgation of Song to Israel (32:44)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>first delivery of the law (31:10-13)</li> <li>Yahweh's private installation of Joshua and theophany (31:14-23)</li> <li>supplemented law (31:24)</li> <li>second reported delivery of the (supplemented) law (31:25-7)</li> <li>promulgation of Song to Israel (32:44)</li> </ul>

Comparing the rechronologized order of Moses' final act as leader (*fabula*) with the narrated presentation of those same acts (*syjet*) reveals some important differences (Table 3.7). The narrator's presentation of the Moab discourse (his *syjet* in the left column above) occurs in the extended section (A) that embeds an extended digression on the subject of the law. Rechron-

nologized, that same lengthy discourse is shifted from its foremost position in the narrator's report to a position subsequent to the events reported in 31:9-29 (sections B through G).<sup>172</sup> In C, Yahweh predicts that Moses' death will mark the beginning of Israel's apostasy and that their "falling away" will precipitate the occultation of the divine presence (31:17). In anticipation of this development and in lieu of his absence, Yahweh dictates a "song" to Moses which the prophet is commanded to write down and teach to the people (vv. 19-21). The narratorial comment in 31:22 (E) is a proleptic notice that clarifies a detail that the complicated *sujet* might have obscured: Moses immediately completed the task given him by Yahweh, though not without a good deal of interim writing and teaching.

(Table 3.7) Deuteronomy's <i>Sujet</i> and <i>Fabula</i>	
Deuteronomy's Narrated Sequence ( <i>Sujet</i> )	Deuteronomy's Rechronologized Narrative ( <i>Fabula</i> )
A Moses' <i>Succession Speech</i> (with embedded promulgation of law) 1:6-31:8	
B writing of law and delivery for public reading and deposition (31:9-13)	B writing of law and delivery for public reading (31:9-13)
C Yahweh announces Moses' imminent death (31:14)	C Yahweh announces Moses' imminent death (31:14)
D Yahweh's private commissioning of Joshua (revelation of witness/song; 31:14-23)	D Yahweh's private commissioning of Joshua (revelation of witness/song; 31:14-23)
E writing of Yahweh's song (31:22)	E writing of Yahweh's song (31:22)
F writing of lawbook as Moses' witness and delivery to Levites (31:24)	F writing of lawbook as Moses' witness and delivery to Levites (31:24-29)
G assembling of elders (31:25-29)	G assembling of elders (31:25-29)
	A Moses' <i>Succession Speech</i> (with embedded promulgation of law) 1:6-31:8
H promulgation of song (32:1-47)	H promulgation of song (32:1-47)
I Yahweh calls Moses' to Nebo (32:48-52)	I Yahweh calls Moses' to Nebo (32:48-52)
J Moses' blessing (33)	J Moses' blessing (33)
K Moses' death (34)	K Moses' death (34)

<sup>172</sup> Contrary to Sonnet's position, Moses' final deed is not one of writing, but rather solely one of speaking, perhaps even reading.



It remains unclear, however, whether the temporal component in the phrase וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא (“then Moses wrote this song that very day”) refers only to the writing of the song, or whether it also incorporates the following וַיְלַמְּדָהּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (“and taught it to the people of Israel”). In favor of the latter interpretation, the reader observes that in 31:14 Yahweh announces that the “days” (plural) are approaching when Moses must die. Since the call for Moses’ ascent follows immediately after the public promulgation of the song (32:48), it is conceivable that a number of days passed between the revelation of the song and Moses’ teaching of the same to the congregation.<sup>173</sup>

The announcement that “the days are approaching when you must die,” coupled with the detrimental potential for a withdrawn deity, motivate Moses to get in order his affairs and those of the congregation. As if to delay the inevitable, Moses’ encouragement of Joshua holds as much surprise as Yahweh’s private installation of the new leader in the tent of meeting. Embedded within the *Succession Speech* is a pragmatic program that stands as counter-witness to Yahweh’s theophany. The dialogic between Moses and Yahweh and their textualized witnesses is marked by identical structures in each of the protagonists’ speeches (Table 3.8).

(Table 3.8) Structure Parallels in Protagonists’ Speeches		
Yahweh’s Theophany Deut 31:14-23		Moses’ Moab Address Deut 1:6-31:8
announcement of Moses’ death and Joshua’s successorship (v. 14)	A	announcement of Moses’ death and Joshua’s successorship (1:37; 3:23-8)
Yahweh’s theophany (Israel’s apostasy and the deity’s withdrawal) (vv.16-21)	B	Moses’ law (preventing Israel’s apostasy and the deity’s withdrawal) (chs 4-30)
private installation of Joshua (v. 23)	A’	public encouragement of Joshua (31:1-8)

Each of the narrative’s key rhetorical events begins with Moses’ death and the need to transfer leadership to Joshua (A). Joshua’s installation, however, is deferred in each case by a digression (B) that focuses on the problematic

<sup>173</sup> The proposed rechronologization assumes that Moses completed the writing of the song in the same day it was revealed to him, while the teaching of the song was delayed by the numerous extra-curricular activities that the prophet compressed into his final few days.

relationship between Israel and Yahweh,<sup>174</sup> after which each speaker returns to the initial purpose of his discourse, the succession of Moses (A').

Moses compresses considerable activity into his last days: a revision of his written law, an assembly at Moab for a *Succession Speech*, and a promulgation of the book of the law (Diagram 3.1). From Yahweh's point of view, Moses' final days were scarcely intended to be so hectic, since the deity's agenda only involved the public teaching of the song. On the surface, each discourse unit (A and B) is concerned with Moses' death and the succession of Joshua (cf. 31:14 and 1:37-38). Embedded within each address is a digression both verbally promulgated to Israel and written in a "witness." Only after an extensive digression does Moses complete his *Succession Speech* and deliver Yahweh's goods. As soon the song has been promulgated, Yahweh steps in with a command to "ascend . . . and die" (32:48). Without the teaching of the song, that final death-knell could not have been rung.

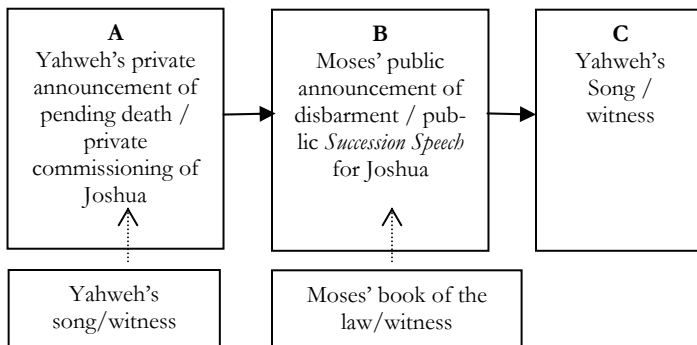


Diagram 3.1

Moses' delay presents the reader with two competitive writing programs that dynamize what on first reading appears to be a rather static speech occupying the foreground of the book of Deuteronomy (Table 3.9). The key dialogic contest in Deuteronomy revolves around the writing and promulgation of documents.<sup>175</sup> Yahweh responds (B) to Moses' initiative

<sup>174</sup> Tigay notes the digression that Yahweh embarks on in vv. 16-21 (1996:503).

<sup>175</sup> Having rechronologized the tangled narratorial presentation of ch. 31, the mysterious phrase "undertook to explain" (הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בְּאֵר) from the narrator's

(A) with his own document which Moses is to place in the mouths of the people of Israel. Moses' responds (A') by revising his original law into a "witness" that collides directly with the witness instituted by Yahweh. The competition for authority in Deut 31 is not between the two successors of Moses (Britt), but rather between Yahweh's song (vv. 16-21) and Moses' book (chs. 4-30).

(Table 3.9) Scribal Dialogic in Deuteronomy

A <i>Moses' Initiative</i> (31:9-13)	B <i>Divine Response</i> (31:14-22)	A' <i>Moses' Counter-Response</i> (31:24-29)
writing of the law and delivery to the Levites (v. 9)	command to Moses to write song (v. 19a)	writing of the book of the law to the end (v. 24)
injunction to Levites for a periodic reading of the law (v. 9)	command to place (שִׁמְרָה) the song in mouths of the people of Israel (v. 19 b)	command to Levites to place (וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֹתוֹ) the book of the law next to the ark and to call an assembly to "speak these words" (vv. 25-28)

These two witnesses are locked in a polemic stand-off, the one attempting to retain Yahweh's presence for the good of the nation, the other attempting to escape obligations to a people desirous of heavenly benefit without demonstrating the requisite loyalty. What transforms Moses' legal code from a public instruction manual to a damning witness, according to Sonnet and Talstra, is the addition of Yahweh's "song" to the original lawcode. The transformation of Moses' book owes less (even nothing) to the sanctifying power of the deity's song than to the prophet's efforts to revise his first program to prevent and ameliorate the ill-effects of a provoked god.<sup>176</sup>

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*Outer Frame* (1:5) gains greater clarity. According to Weinfeld, the auxiliary verb הוֹאִיל expresses "a decision often connected with a new move, sometimes connecting initiative and boldness" (1991:128; cf. also Tigay 1996:5). Moses' restructuring of the religious and political landscape of Israel's future life in Canaan manifests the audacity of the phrase of 1:5. In light of all the dialogic energy discerned in the book of Deuteronomy, the narrator's praise of Israel's greatest prophet in 34:10-12 is understandable, though easily misunderstood.

<sup>176</sup> Though a common feature in ANE treaties, scholars puzzle over the function of the multiple "witnesses" (i.e., law, song, heaven and earth) in Deuteronomy. Tigay points out that traditionally, the witnesses were viewed either as an attempt

Moses must record his pragmatic legislation so that future generations might know how they should live, since Moses has been disbarred entry into the promised land.

In ch. 32, Moses reaches the denouement of his discursive engagement before Israel. With his song now promulgated, Yahweh commands Moses to ascend Mt. Nebo (32:48f). Still, Moses resists, taking the time to pronounce a blessing over the people (ch. 33). Finally he relents, ascends Mt. Nebo, and dies (ch. 34).

#### D. MOSES' MOTIVATIONS

Moses' law promises to sustain Israel in its occupation (4:1) and long-term tenure (4:40) of the land. Moses' view of the purpose of the "statutes and ordinances" is markedly different from the purpose that Yahweh awards the decalogue. In 4:10, Yahweh commands Moses to gather the people so that they might hear his words and "learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children to do so." Yahweh expects reverence, with no direct mention of Israel's possession of the land. Between these cross purposes lies much of the dialogic entanglement in the Deuteronomistic narrative. For Moses, "fear of Yahweh" is but a means to an end, the attainment of life and retention of the land of promise. Israel's need for a secure land and Yahweh's need for loyal subjects becomes inseparably fused in Moses' nomistic proposition.

In Sonnet's reading, Moses' writing of the law *in a book* is an emulation of Yahweh's previous actions at Horeb (1997:165). The parallels between the two writing events are impressive (Table 3.10).<sup>177</sup> But the motive behind

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to pre-empt later accusations of inadequate notification or to function performatively as an instrument of divine retribution (1996:52). Weitzman (1994:377-78) documents two interpretations of the "witness" in biblical scholarship: a formal indictment against Israel, or a manual used for didaction. Weitzman analyzes the narrative of *Abiqar* and concludes that Deut 32 conforms to "conventional literary logic" in which both Deuteronomy and *Abiqar* culminate in a final teaching that is both "instructional and incriminatory" (1994:392-93).

<sup>177</sup> To bolster his contention that Moses' written record is derivative of events arising in the tent of meeting, Sonnet argues that the second writing of the law parallels Yahweh's second writing of the ten commandments/tablets (1997:165). That is, just as Yahweh wrote two versions of the ten commandments, so too does Moses write two versions of the law (vv. 9 and 24). If, as Sonnet argues, Yahweh's dually scribed covenant bears the weight of precedence, where then is the parallel

Moses' parallel writing and deposition has less to do with emulation than with dialogic appropriation. When Moses broke the tablets written by Yahweh, another set was written.<sup>178</sup> Moses appropriates this strategy when, in an attempt to break the predicted cycle of apostasy in Yahweh's theophany, he rewrites his law.

(Table 3.10) Writing Initiatives	
Yahweh's Writing at Horeb (Exod 32:15-34:35; Deut 9-10)	Moses' Writing at Moab (31:-25)
Yahweh writes the decalogue (Deut 9:9)	Moses writes the law (31:9)
Israel apostatizes / Moses breaks the tablets (9:12-21)	Yahweh predicts Israel's apostasy / Yahweh "breaks" the centralization law (31:14-22)
Yahweh rewrites decalogue (10:1-2)	Moses "rewrites" the law (= book of the law) (31:24)
Moses places tablets into the ark (10:3-5)	Moses places the book of the law next to the ark of the covenant (31:25)

Twice, Moses recalls the events of Horeb (chs. 5 and 9), revealing that Israel's brush with extinction is uppermost in the mind of the aged prophet. But Moses carefully avoids mentioning Yahweh's catastrophic theophany and instead, puts to didactic use Israel's devastating Horeb experience (see the extended homily on loyalty in the *Excursus Frame*). "For I know well," demurs Moses in 9:27, "how rebellious and stubborn you are," thinking no doubt of the golden calf incident at Mount Horeb where Yahweh first threatened to withdraw his presence. That event resulted in a rewriting of the original tablets, which were then placed in the ark of the covenant. Predictions of future apostasy in ch. 31 likewise trigger a rewriting of Moses' original law and a deposition of the book of the law beside Yahweh's ark.<sup>179</sup>

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destruction of the first edition of the ten commandments that would lead to a re-written lawcode in Deuteronomy?

<sup>178</sup> This is not the first occasion where prophet and deity have squared off in a writing duel. In Exod 24:4, Moses wrote the book of the covenant and read it to the people (v. 7). Almost immediately, Yahweh responds with a document of his own (the "ten commandments") in v. 12. The narrator's resumptive repetition in Exod 31:18 emphasizes the fact that the tablets were written by "the finger of God." When Moses breaks the divinely-authored tablets in Exod 32:19, Yahweh is forced to write (or dictate) a second copy of the decalogue in Exod 34:27f.

<sup>179</sup> It is surely intentional, even impudent perhaps that Moses should install the second edition of his law next to the second edition of Yahweh's decalogue. Each document represents the written response of one participant in Deuteronomy's

The question still remains: Why does Moses mount a counter-offensive in the form of a revised book of the law (31:24) when Yahweh's theophany has so thoroughly trounced his original plan for centralization (31:9) with a fatalistic prediction, a prediction which Moses himself deems entirely plausible given his own experience (31:27)? Sonnet intimates that Moses might have held a grudge against Yahweh: "Is Moses' way of involving God (and Joshua) in Israel's future—a future without Moses—completely free of resentment" (1997:128)? Sonnet notes a "protracted inner conflict" within Moses which might have resulted from Yahweh barring Moses from entering into the land on one hand and on the other ensuring Israel's crossing of the Jordan River and the conquest of the land (1997:129; cf. pp. 128-34). In the end, however, Sonnet resumes a traditional theological position that interprets Moses' speech as the word of Yahweh rather than the prophet's dialogic counter-measure.

No doubt, partial motivation for Moses' original law (v. 9) might well have derived from the personal shame felt by one prevented from reaching his career goal (1:37; 3:26; cf. Sonnet 1997:128, 130, 147). Even so, more is at stake in the dialogic currents of ch. 31 than simple grudge-matching. Moses' actions as outgoing leader are driven by four motivations. For one, the sheer amount of energy invested in liberating Israel from slavery and leading them to the congregation through the wilderness precludes Moses from simply walking away from his life's work. Throughout Moses' life, the reader has observed a man intent on assisting his fellow Hebrews. It matters little whether the threat is that of an Egyptian slave-driver (Exod 2:11-15) or the powerful hand of the deity (Exod 31:7-14; Deut 9:13-14, 25-29), Moses' inclination has been consistently to lend a hand to the people with whom he is genetically linked. When Yahweh steps in with a prediction of doom for the Israelites, Moses acts true-to-character.<sup>180</sup>

If Moses bears a grudge, it is with the Egyptians. Here lies the second motive behind Moses' actions. In his recollection of the Horeb incident, Moses quotes the most powerful argument available to dissuade the deity

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dialogic to the other. Yahweh's rewritten stone tablets represent his response to Moses' breaking of the original set, while Moses' rewritten book of the law is his response to Yahweh's "breaking" of his centralization plan (31:10).

<sup>180</sup> Moses' adult life is framed by ironic parallels. At the beginning, Moses is exiled from his people for assisting a fellow Hebrew; at the end of his career he is again separated from the Israelites as they cross the Jordan. In Egypt, Pharaoh sought Moses' life, while in Moab, Yahweh summons him to die.

from destroying the congregation: “Lest the land from which you did bring us say ‘Because Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land ...’” (Deut 9:28). At Horeb, the specter of public shame seemed to quell the deity’s anger. But Yahweh is not the only character to feel shame with the dissolution of the Exodus project. Given Moses’ childhood experiences at the hand of Pharaoh and his murderous actions as a young man (Exod 1-2), it is likely that Moses has as much (if not more) at stake in Israel’s success on the far side of the Jordan as does Yahweh.<sup>181</sup>

A third motive is in response to Yahweh’s failure to exercise his full powers on Israel’s behalf. For Israel, the primary purpose behind Yahweh’s intervention in Egypt was freedom from slavery and acquisition of territory. Yahweh, however, had another purpose in publicly flexing his muscle.<sup>182</sup> In 4:35 and 29:6, Moses recalls Yahweh’s desire to make himself known (לְמַעַן יִתְדַעַי) (cf. Exod 6:7, 7:5). But Yahweh’s dual revelations of power and knowledge seem to have been lost on Israel, given the speed with which they invented alternative agents of liberation at Horeb (Exod 32:1-6). Surprisingly, Moses places culpability for Israel’s cognitive shortcoming squarely on the shoulders of Yahweh: “To this day Yahweh has not given you a mind to understand, or eye to see, or ears to hear” (29:3). Yahweh’s failure to enlighten Israel leaves Moses little option if Israel is to avoid becoming the laughingstock of its former captors. A pragmatic program must be instituted that will ensure loyalty to Yahweh and (by extension) longevity in the land. That program, heavy on memory as a substitute for full (divinely bestowed) comprehension, must be obeyed: “Keep [it] and do [it], for [it] will be your wisdom and your understanding ...” (4:6). If the manipulator of human psyche refuses to grant Israel the disposition required for loyal obedience to himself (cf. Exod 4:21),<sup>183</sup> then Moses must ante-up his best card and institute the rituals (ch. 12) and education (ch. 6) necessary to ensure focus on Yahweh.

According to Weinfeld, it was common practice in the ancient near east to accompany changes of leadership with pledges of loyalty on behalf of the people (Weinfeld 1991:6). Essentially, the law embedded within

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<sup>181</sup> That Moses would rally for his people, despite the personal and corporate odds, is what the ancient reader expects of a first-class prophetic leader (34:10-12).

<sup>182</sup> See Eslinger (1991:43-60) for the dual purposes of emancipation and revelation in the exodus narrative.

<sup>183</sup> A similar situation arises in 1 Kgs 3 where God deftly sidesteps Solomon’s wish for an obedient disposition (see Bergen 2006:213-30).

Moses' *Succession Speech* models a typical ANE treaty structure. The renewed pledge of allegiance to Moses' code (ch. 29) is designed to offset the central damnation in Yahweh's preceding theophany. Israel can live neither with nor without Yahweh.<sup>184</sup> While Moses was alive, the congregation could rely on him to petition Yahweh on its behalf and to advocate its cause when the congregation erred. Faced with his own disbarment, Moses must innovate a substitute that will prevent Yahweh's furious consumption of Israel. Moses has not far to look for inspiration, adopting the strategy of Yahweh's written witness against Israel for his own law. With a command to read its central contents every seventh year, Moses attempts to ward off Yahweh's prediction with an impassioned plea to singular loyalty and a strong pragmatic call to obedience. Moses' innovative strategy, recorded in the *Witness, Covenant* and *Excursus* frames of the book of the law, are available to any dramatized reader.

But the strongest motivation behind Moses' writing and promulgation of the book of the law lies in humanity's innate will-to-believe, even in the face of overwhelming odds (James 1956:8-11). Yahweh's prediction of apostasy is unequivocal. Indeed, even Moses' instruction to the Levites concerning the "witness" function of the book of the law (31:25-6) bristles with similar damnation. Yet, despite the pessimistic rhetoric of Moses' summons for a final audience, a perceptible change takes place as the prophet speaks. By the time Moses has finished, a measure of optimism is evident, despite Yahweh's fatalism: "Lay to heart all the words which I enjoin upon you this day, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law" (32:46). Hope dies hard when life's primary concerns are at stake, even in the face of overwhelming odds. Despite the theophany, the human will-to-live finds Moses promoting the only tool available for securing what is of ultimate concern to Israel's well-being. "For [this law] is no trifle to you, *it is your life.*"

### **E. Theoretical Implications of Narrative Anachrony and Delayed Exposition**

Although disruptive to the narrative's surface presentation, rechronologization is imperative for any narrative interpretation. In telling his story, the narrator is free to arrange the sequence of events (*fabula*) in ways other than their actual occurrence. The narrator is also at liberty to begin his story with

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<sup>184</sup> See Exod 33:5 and 15.



an exposition that tells all, or to delay important introductory information to a point later in the story (Sternberg 1978:236):

[The] literary artist holds all the cards in his hands from beginning to end and can trump his aces in any way he chooses. He can break up his *fabula* into as many parts as he pleases, shuffle and reshuffle them as much as he likes, and arrange their actual emergence in the order that will suit his purposes best (1978:96).

It is erroneous to assume that the opening scene of any narrative is synonymous with the narrator's exposition. To do so would be to confuse "the beginning of the *sujet* and that of the *fabula*" (1978:13). In any narrative, the exposition always antedates the first scene of the *fabula*, while the conclusion of the exposition marks the beginning point of the narrator's tale (Sternberg 1978:21).<sup>185</sup>

Faced with a matrix of imperatives for rechronologization, the Deuteronomic reader engages in a dynamic process of discernment, utilizing whatever means are at his disposal to decipher the narrative's *fabula* meaning. Through temporal reconstruction, gap-filling, and hierarchical voicing the reader strives to make sense of the narrator's story (Sternberg 1978:16-17, 54). Where *fabula* and *sujet* are discordant, the reader is compelled to supply hypothetical solutions to fill the lacunae that arise during the reading process.

The literary text may be conceived of as a dynamic system of gaps. A reader who wishes to actualize the field of reality that is represented in a work, to construct (or rather reconstruct) the fictive world and action it projects, is necessarily compelled to pose and answer, throughout the reading process, such questions as, What is happening or has happened, and why? What is the motivation of this or that character? To what extent does the logic of cause and effect correspond to that of everyday life? and so on (Sternberg 1978:50).

Whether the exposition is delayed in whole or part, late-breaking information illuminates what has already been narrated. Such delaying tactics can, according to Sternberg, "enrich, modify or even drastically change the reader's understanding of [the narrative]" (1978:21). A delayed exposition requires that the reader determine where the exposition lies in the *sujet*, where it ends, and thus where the *fabula* actually begins (1978:28). In the

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<sup>185</sup> That is, the "location and form of exposition are fixed in the reconstitutive *fabula* but highly variable in the finished *sujet*" (Sternberg 1978:34).

case of the retrospective (as opposed to preliminary) exposition, this task is relatively easy for the reader. The emergence of the exposition interrupts the natural sequence of events, and “activates and throws into relief the bidirectionality inherent in the reading process, forcing the reader to ... link and re-link the past, present and future, and constantly to interpret what has gone before” (Sternberg 1978:31).

The narrator provides but five verses of introduction at the beginning of Deuteronomy’s narrative before engaging the “fictive present” of the Moab address. The preliminary exposition gives no hint that a substantial piece of pre-Moab information is being withheld. Only in retrospect does it become clear to the reader that most of the narrative’s exposition has been withheld (cf. Sternberg 1978:57).<sup>186</sup>

Whenever dischronologization is evident, it is vital that the reader investigate reasons for the *sujet* selected by the narrator (Sternberg 1978:33). Distortions of the *fabula*, argues Sternberg, are intended to create and manipulate narrative interest (1978:45). W. J. Martin concurs with Sternberg:

In some cases nothing more seems to be involved than the reversal of the chronological order as a concession to memory. Or the purpose might be to arrange incidents according to their geographical distribution. A writer, on the other hand, might wish to subordinate and arrange incidents according to their relative importance. The major consideration of any writer of literary talent would be to present his material so organized as to stimulate attention and to communicate it effectively (1969:186).

After a brief introduction (1:1-5), the Deuteronomic narrator steps aside, leaving his addressee to hear, directly it seems, the voice of the outgoing Moses. The first-time reader of Deuteronomy is situated *in medias res* without the behind-the-scenes advantage of Deut 31. As he reads, the reader encounters a number of curiosities that constrain multiple gap-filling strategies and appeal to his “ratiocinative faculties” (Sternberg 1978:193). Why are Moses’ recollections of his disbarment so discordant with those an-

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<sup>186</sup> Poetics of exposition are not the only means for understanding the temporal art of narration. The “quantitative factor” in narration is an important clue in determining the intention of the narrator (Sternberg 1978:17; cf. also pp. 19-20). The longer the speech, the more the reader ought to pay attention to the narrator’s purpose in quoting the discourse. The amount of time devoted to the mediation of Moses’ speech speaks volumes for its centrality in the narrator’s communicational purpose.

nounced by Yahweh (Num 20:12)? Why does Moses' altar law in ch. 12 seem to contradict the simpler altar law of Exod 20? Why was there no command from Yahweh to write the "book of the law" that appears in ch. 29? So long as the narrator withholds expositional information, occasions will arise when the reader is at a loss to explain events or motives.<sup>187</sup> The scarcity of narratorial information deepens each gap while the reader searches for information that will grant him sufficient depth-of-field to disambiguate the perplexities within the narrator's presentation (Sternberg 1978:54).<sup>188</sup>

In Sternberg's view, the exposition is usually the most tedious portion of a narrative, one rarely relished by the reader and therefore best dispensed piecemeal (1978:163).<sup>189</sup> The laconic narrator of Deuteronomy is judicious

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<sup>187</sup> Sternberg: "[The] reader becomes aware—and this awareness can easily be heightened by a suitable manipulation of gaps—that he will not understand them fully or at all as long as he lacks certain information about the period preceding the beginning of the *sujet*" (1978:53-4).

<sup>188</sup> Sternberg argues that narratorial manipulations of reader interest take one of two forms: curiosity or suspense. Through a dearth of information, readers either experience "expectant restlessness" concerning the resolution of conflict in the future (suspense) or they formulate "tentative hypotheses" of past conflicts that await verification (curiosity). "Suspense thus essentially relates to the dynamics of the ongoing action," claims Sternberg, "curiosity [relates] to the dynamics of temporal deformation" (1978:65). A dischronologized narrative plot generates curiosity as the reader attempts to come to terms with its "poetics of ambiguity" (Sternberg 1978:194), postulating hypothetical pasts to account for warped recollections, revised laws, and unauthorized documents in the present. Reader participation is much greater in a "curiosity" narrative than in a "suspense" story, since in the latter, the reader is informed of the past but must passively await the inevitable outcome of the future. In the former, the reader becomes a detective who sleuths out "who-dunnit" clues to resolve the opacity of the past (Sternberg 1978:177-82).

What remains constant in all the hypothesizing is "the consciousness of referential ambiguity and the active play of expectations, lasting till the gap is definitively closed at any point or (if permanent) definitively left open at the end" (Sternberg 1978:245). When in 31:9-29 the narrator vouchsafes his delayed exposition, gaps are filled and the reader's theorizations are either confirmed or defeated (1978:181).

<sup>189</sup> From the external reader's perspective, a narrative that delays or disperses its exposition downplays the psychological or emotional dimensions of the story in favor of the more erudite interests of detective sleuthing and theory generation. Sternberg notes: "As any emotional coloring of the represented facts may divert the reader's mind from the intellectual challenge of piecing together the jigsaw puzzle of clues, this genre ... resorts to a number of drastic preventive measures to pre-

in his disclosure of the dialogic undercurrents of Moab so that the reader might hear forthright Moses' final address.<sup>190</sup> By displacing the theophany off-line in ch. 31, the narrator achieves a remarkable symmetry between the internal audience and the narrator's addressee as first-time recipients of Moses' message. As "representational time approximates represented time" (Sternberg 1978:17), both internal and external recipients encounter the leader's speech at the same rate and in the same sequence. In contrast, the writing of the book of the law (a more time-intensive event than its promulgation) is narrated in the space of a single verse or two (31:9, 24).

In presenting the core of Moses' final speech (i.e., the contents of Deuteronomy's embedded book of the law) in the foreground of his narrative, the narrator places front-and-centre that which is most important to the narrator at that point in his presentation. That Moses' speech is longer than that of any other deuteronomistic character points to the importance of that speech not only for the occupants of the storyworld but also for the rhetorical purpose of the narrator. By foregrounding Moses' speech and backgrounding Yahweh's momentous theophany, the narrator succeeds in highlighting the importance of Moses' contentious speech (and the book of the law that contains it) for the narrative of Deuteronomy and beyond.

The first-time reader of Deuteronomy and the Moab listener share a common ignorance of the exigence behind the lengthy Moab speech. The disclosure of the dialogic behind the book of the law in ch. 31 tosses the

clude any possible distraction or distribution of interest" (1978:193). Sternberg describes this reader as "an alert reader, and one who can content himself with a long protracted and most unemotional excitement ... and a frank enjoyment of craftsmanship in the form of virtuoso literary engineering ..." (1978:194). Sternberg's "detective" reader finds in the central lawcode and intricate chiastic structuration of Moses' speech a narrative long on puzzlement and short on excitement.

<sup>190</sup> The tendency to privilege earlier information despite evidence to the contrary is well known to psychologists. The impact of the expository information disseminated in ch. 31 forces the reader to readjust the primacy effect of the narrator's introduction that gives the impression that Moses was the faithful mediator of all that Yahweh had given him in commandment concerning Israel (1:3). The power of Deuteronomy's primacy information on the confessional reader is evident when he insists, regardless of evidence to the contrary, that Moses was the faithful mouthpiece for Yahweh. Only perspicacious readers will perceive the "deidealization" effect of ch. 31 on Deuteronomy's hero (cf. Sternberg 1978:94-5, 112, 148). For discussions on primacy and recency effects in narrative, see Sternberg (1978:93ff), Schlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983:119-22), and Carl I. Hovland (1957:*passim*).

reader back to the opening page of Deuteronomy, albeit with attentions raised concerning the dialogic resonances first hinted at but now evident at every turn in the prophet's communication.<sup>191</sup> Thus, the expository poetics of the Deuteronomic narrator imply a reader who will engage the narrative numerous times and at multiple levels. In rereading the book of the law, Deuteronomy's reader reenacts a hermeneutical performance similar to Ehud Ben Zvi's post-exilic "rereader" who constitute the community to which the "ancient Jerusalem literati" addressed their writings. Ben Zvi's description of the prophetic books is applicable to the Deuteronomy narrative:

If the starting point of the scholar is that the prophetic books were texts written to be read again and again, then textual ambiguities and multi-layered readings cannot be considered an 'unexpected' presence in the text, but almost a foreseeable necessity, for their openness and incertitude significantly contribute to the feasibility of continuous rereading (1996:133).

The delayed exposition of Deuteronomy, coupled with the disparate epistemologies between external readers and their internal counterparts, constrains a rereading of the Deuteronomic narrative. The (re)reader understands what internal readers do not: that the book of the law arises out of a serious dialogic between Moses and Yahweh concerning Israel's ability to maintain ownership of the land and relationship with its deity. But the Moab audience has no inkling of the tumultuous conversation held in the tent of meeting. No matter how often they read Moses' book, whether in Cisjordan or in Transjordan, internal readers will forever remain in the dark concerning the dialogic between Yahweh's song and Moses' do-or-die program.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> The external reader gains where his internal counterparts lose: the "things revealed" in the book of the law belong to the congregation of Moab, but the "secret things" of the tent of meeting are made available to the external reader (29:30). The epistemological advantage accorded the reader of ch. 31's exposition is no less revolutionary than the preliminary behind-the-scenes affairs expositions to the book of Job or the gospel of John. All three expositions, whether delayed or preliminary, concentrated or distributed, afford the reader a significant advantage over the characters within the storyworld. That advantage, frequently overlooked by those unskilled in narrative poetics, dynamizes the entire narrative and shapes the reader's understanding of the narrator's purpose.

<sup>192</sup> Why has the Deuteronomic narrator chosen to interpolate his late-breaking exposition precisely at 31:9? At this point, the *Succession Speech* of Moses is drawing

Once the exposition has been revealed, the reader faces new questions that demand a response. Will Israel apostatize? Will Yahweh hide his face? Or will the book of the law suffice to turn the tide of divine prediction and consolidate Israel's claim to the promise? At the end of Deuteronomy, the reader is caught between two impulses: to turn back and explore further its unique book-within-a-book dynamic, or to forge ahead to determine the outcome of the ever-suspenseful dialogic of the divine-human experiment. The conscientious reader must hold in-check the pursuit of suspense in favor of the resolution of outstanding dialogic curiosities in the Deuteronomic narrative.

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to a close as Moses publicly encourages Joshua. From the congregation's point of view, the song of Yahweh follows directly on the heels of the public exhortation, without any clue of its origin in the tent of meeting. By breaking in at 31:9, the narrator separates Moses' book of the law from Yahweh's song, while at the same time explaining the origins of both units of discourse (one from Moses' pen, the other from the mouth of Yahweh).

## 4 REREADING DEUTERONOMY

The narrator's poetics of dischronologization in ch. 31 reveals the contentious dialogic that forms the backdrop to two promulgations in Deuteronomy, the book of the law (chs. 4-30) and the song (ch. 32). Those readers who fail to decipher the expositional clues latent in the narrative of ch. 31 remain (ironically) in as thick a cognitive fog as that enveloping the congregation of Moab. Neither Moses nor Joshua thinks it necessary to enlighten the congregation of the speech event in the tent of meeting; they remain in the dark concerning the dialogic currents behind Moses' discourse.

(Table 4.1) Deuteronomy's Rechronologized Narrative ( <i>Fabula</i> )	
Pre-Moab Events	A Moses' Initiative: writing of the law and delivery for periodic reading (31:9-13)
	B Yahweh's Response: installation of Joshua with embedded theophany / song (31:14-23)
	C Moses' Counter-Response: completion of writing of the words of the law in a book and delivery for deposition; call for plenary assembly (31:24-9)
Moab Valediction	D Moses' <i>Succession Speech</i> (with embedded promulgation of law) 1:6-31:8
	E promulgation of song (32:1-47)
	F Yahweh calls Moses' to Nebo (32:48-52)
	G Moses' blessing (33)
	H Moses' death (34)

Only Yahweh, Moses, and Joshua have direct knowledge of the exigence that leads to the momentous events of Moses' last days.<sup>193</sup> The reader joins this elite group, courtesy of the narrator who slips important information to his addressee through a delayed exposition. Informed of the scenario in Deut 31, the rereader of Deuteronomy approaches its reconstructed *fabula* with a better understanding of the context out of which the publication of

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<sup>193</sup> For an alternative (i.e., historical) exigency behind the textual alterations of Deuteronomy, see Van der Toorn 2007:146f.

the book arose (Table 4.1 above). A rereading of Moses' valediction slows considerably as the many dialogic angles between Moses' initiative in vv. 9-13 (A), Yahweh's response in vv. 14-23 (B), and Moses' counter-response in 31:24-29 (C) are explored.

### A. Moses' Initiative

The purpose behind the original delivery of the written law in 31:9 was positive: to inculcate fear of Yahweh to future generations through the communication of the contents of the law (31:12-13). In v. 10, Moses legislates a periodic reading of the law at the site where the people will "appear before the presence" (לְרִאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה) of Yahweh (v. 11). A localized presence for the deity flies in the face of Yahweh's original altar law (Exod 20:22-6), which preserved a measure of independence for heavenly interactions with earth. Between Horeb and Moab, no heavenly authorization issued from above for a revision to the original altar law; that revision could only have come from Moses, the author of the revised nomistic code.<sup>194</sup>

Throughout the wilderness wandering, Israel's experience of Yahweh was fraught with difficulty and danger. From Yahweh's exhibition of power over Pharaoh (Exod 12:29-36), to the *mysterium tremendum* event of Horeb (Exod 19), to the twenty-four thousand dead in a recent plague (Num 25:1-9), it was evident that a less volatile means of interaction with Yahweh was required if Israel was to survive in Canaan. Moses' original code countered an unpredictable deity with a law of centralization that would entice Yahweh to select a place for divine-human interactions.

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<sup>194</sup> It is conceivable that in his counter-response, Moses even altered the central original "statutes and ordinances." Since the narrator has chosen not to mediate separately the original contents of "this law" written in v. 9 (i.e., minus the frames), the rereader ought to be careful not to read back into "this law" (A) the mediated contents of the book of the law (D). For this reason, the analysis undertaken here will explore the dialogic between Yahweh's theophany and Moses' subsequent speech, with only a brief sketch of the undisclosed dialogic between Moses' original law and Yahweh's theophanic response.



(Table 4.2) Parallel Panels in Yahweh's Embedded Theophany Deut 31:16-23		
PANEL ONE		PANEL TWO
16 Behold, you are about to sleep (שָׁכַב) with your fathers (עִם־אֲבוֹתֵיךָ)	occasion for apostasy	20 For when I have brought them into the land which I swore to their fathers (לְאֲבוֹתֵי) —flowing with milk and honey—and they have eaten and are full and grown fat
then this people will rise and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land ... and they will forsake me and break my covenant (וְהִפְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי) which I have made with them.	A	they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant (וְהִפְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי)
17 Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face (וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי) from them	B	( <i>presence hidden</i> )
and many evils and troubles will come upon them (וּמַצָּאוּהוּ רָעוֹת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת), so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?'	X	21 And when many evils and troubles have come upon them (כִּי־תִמָּצְאוּ אֹתוֹ רָעוֹת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת)
18 And I will surely hide my face (הִסְתַּר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי) in that day on account of all the evil (כָּל־הָרָעָה) which they have done	B'	( <i>presence hidden</i> )
19 Now therefore write this song (וְעָתָּה) (כְּתַבּוּ לְכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת) and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths (בְּפִיהֶם), that this song may be a witness (לְעֵד) for me against the people of Israel.	A'	this song (הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת) shall confront them (לְפָנֵינוּ) as a witness (לְעֵד)—for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their descendants (מִפִּי וְרֵעוּ)
	latent apostasy	for I know the purposes which they are already forming, before I have brought them into the land that I swore

But no deity interested in his right of independence would consent to such a restriction.<sup>195</sup> It is no surprise then that Yahweh steps in abruptly at the point where Moses institutes the periodic dissemination of his centralization plan (31:11, 14).

### B. Yahweh's Response

Yahweh interrupts Moses' speech (31:14) with a terse announcement: Moses' time is short. In lieu of the imminent vacancy in leadership, Yahweh requests an audience with Moses and Joshua to commission the new leader. The private commissioning of Joshua takes a surprise turn with the revelation of a watershed in divine-human relations, contradicting Moses' vision in 31:9-13 (Table 4.2 above). Yahweh's responds to Moses' sabbatical congress with a devastating portrayal of Israel's apostasy (v. 14f). In fact, according to Yahweh, Israel's desertion is scheduled to begin immediately with plans already in full-swing for a mass defection (v. 21). The congregation will break Yahweh's covenant and prostitute itself to strange gods, their rising (וַיָּקָם) a contrast to Moses' lying down (שָׁכַב) (v. 16).

(Table 4.3) Structure of Panel One in Yahweh's Theophany 31:17-18	
a	then my anger will be kindled against them in that day (17) (וַחֲרָה אַפִּי בּוּ בַיּוֹם־הַהוּא)
b	and I will forsake them and hide my face from them (וְעֹזְבֹתֵימִי וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי מֵהֶם)
c	and they will be devoured; and many evils and troubles will come upon them (וְהָיָה לְאָכַל וּמִצָּאָהוּ רָעוֹת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת)
x	so that they will say in that day is it not because our God is not among us (וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עַל כִּי־אִין אֱלֹהֵי בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ)
c'	these evils come upon us (מִצָּאוּנֵי הַרָעוֹת הָאֵלֶּה)
b'	and I will surely hide my face in that day (18) (וְאֶנְכִי הִסְתַּר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא)
a'	on account of all the evil which they have done, because they have turned to other gods (כִּי־פָנָה אֶל־אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים)

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Schäfer-Lichtenberger (1995:50) and Sonnet (1997:151).

Yahweh will counter Israel's deviance with anger and withdrawal (B).<sup>196</sup> In his absence, evil will befall the nation (X) as recompense for the evils they have committed (B'). The structure surrounding the center of the first panel (Table 4.3 above) highlights the absent deity (vv. 17-18). In their suffering (c, c'), the congregation intuits that Yahweh has abdicated from the midst of his people (x). Nuanced word-plays emphasize the deity's point—Yahweh's *anger* (אַפִּי) burns in response to their *turning* (פָּנָה) to other gods (a-a'); in place of Yahweh's hidden *face* (פָּנִי) will be the song that Moses will place in the *mouths* (בְּפִיהֶם) of the people (vv. 18-19).<sup>197</sup> Yahweh concludes the first panel of his theophany with a command to teach his witness to Israel (Table. 4.4).

(Table 4.4) Conclusion to Panel One of Yahweh's Theophany 31:19	
a	write for you this song כְּתֹבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת
b	and teach it to the people of Israel וְלִמְדָה אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
b'	place it in their mouths שִׂמָּה בְּפִיהֶם
a'	so that this song will be for me as a witness with the people of Israel לְמַעַן תְּהִי־לִי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Where Moses instituted a program to “teach” (יְלַמְדוּ) the nation to fear Yahweh (31:12), Yahweh introduces a new curriculum (i.e., Yahweh's Song) that Moses must “teach” (וְלִמְדָה) to the people (31:19). In contrast to Moses' earlier command (31:11) to place the law “in their ears” (בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם), Yahweh commands Moses and Joshua to place his “witness” in the “mouths” (בְּפִיהֶם) of the people of Israel (cf. 31:11 and 19).

The beginning of Yahweh's second panel finds milk and honey (rather than divine words) in the mouth of Israel (31:20-1). Yahweh warns that the

<sup>196</sup> The only time in the Primary Narrative where Yahweh predicts that he will “hide his face” is in Deut 31 (Driver 1986:341), a prediction that comes to fruition in 2 Kgs 23:27 and 24:3.

<sup>197</sup> Lyn M. Bechtel (1994:79-82, 89-92) points out that in group-oriented cultures such as Israel, shaming was a common method for social control of an errant individual. In ancient perceptions, even the deity was vulnerable to “shaming.” In pursuing other options for worship, Israel shames its own deity. To “save face,” Yahweh hides his presence while placing the guilt for the collapsed relationship squarely on the shoulders of the people.

people will turn (פָּנָה) in their sated condition and serve other gods, thereby breaking his covenant (B). Here, the apostasy narrative of the first panel takes on a minimalist tone: complacency leads to apostasy (A), apostasy is followed with evil (X), apostasy is confronted by the divine witness (A'). Yahweh's song confirms what Israel feared (v. 21), answering to "their face" (לְפָנֶיךָ) in Yahweh's absence. Yahweh's presence is conspicuously absent in the second panel (cf. sections B and B')—not even the hiddenness of Yahweh makes an appearance.

Having announced the fateful future of Israel, Yahweh commissions Joshua with the task of bringing Israel into the land of promise (31:23).<sup>198</sup> Joshua's task is hardly enviable, given Yahweh's dire prediction and the existential predicament of his predecessor.<sup>199</sup>

### C. Moses' Counter-Response

According to the narrator, Moses complies almost immediately with Yahweh's orders to write and teach the song (31:22). But the impression of a dutiful servant disguises Moses' innovative counter-thrust.<sup>200</sup> The reader of

<sup>198</sup> Commentators note that the subject speaking in 31:23 is ambiguous, but argue that the verse is best viewed as a continuation of v. 14 with Yahweh the speaker of the encouragement speech to Joshua (Driver 1986:342; Mayes 1991:378).

<sup>199</sup> Yahweh's dispensations of presence are fragile at best. In Exod 33:3-16, Yahweh pulls his presence from Israel and only when Moses pleads does he reinstate his presence with the leader. Now, in the tent of meeting, Yahweh retracts his presence from Moses and transfers it to his successor, Joshua. The same premature withdrawal of presence seems to take place in the midst of the conquest when Yahweh approaches Joshua with the message that he is "old and advanced in years" (13:1).

The reader of the Primary Narrative will remember that the impetus behind the selection of a successor belongs to the ever-pragmatic Moses. In Num 27, Moses requests that Yahweh appoint a man over the congregation who will "go out before them and come in before them." Yahweh responds with his nomination, which Moses is commanded to commission. According to the narrator, Moses did so immediately (27:22-3). Unfortunately, at the end of his career Joshua lacks the foresight of his predecessor and fails to request a successor. Joshua's neglect leaves Yahweh free to drift from his people even before the conquest is completed (cf. Judg 1-2).

<sup>200</sup> In v. 19, Yahweh commands his two addressees to "write to yourselves this song" (כְּתֹבוּ לְכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת), with Moses and Joshua the subject of the suffixed preposition and the indirect objects of the plural verb. Curiously, while the

a rechronologized Deuteronomy rereads Moses' speech, attentive to the dialogic energies within the supplemental frames (i.e., the *Witness*, *Covenant*, and *Excursus* frames), the deposition of the expanded book, the call for a plenary assembly of Israel, and the promulgation of the central lawcode.

### 1. Lawcode Supplementations

Moses uses the might of his pen to respond to Yahweh's inimical theophany, focusing Israel's attention on a code of conduct that will fix their loyalties while securing Yahweh's presence.

#### *a. Excursus Frame*

The apostasy predicted by Yahweh will be precipitated by two events: the death of Moses, and Israel's indulgence on Canaan's abundance. In his leading *Excursus Frame* (chs. 6-11), Moses appropriates Yahweh's apostasy narrative for didactic intent, emphasizing the importance of the central lawcode ("statutes and ordinances") as a guidebook for action and behavior in the land of promise. An examination of Moses' threefold appropriation reveals how the prophet uses his *Excursus Frame* to counter Yahweh's prediction of Israel's gluttonous enervation (Table 4.5).

In general terms, Moses' three-fold appropriation reveals the liberties that Moses takes with Yahweh's original prediction (Table 4.6). A closer inspection of each appropriation reveals nuances that inject a hidden polemic to Moses' dialogic counter-thrust to Yahweh's theophany (Table 4.7).

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verb כָּתַבוּ ("write") is in plural, the verb וְלִמְדָהּ ("teach") is singular. In 31:22, Moses alone is the subject of the verbs "write" and "teach," while in 32:44, both Moses and Joshua are reported as having taught the song.

(Table 4.5) Moses' Dialogic Appropriation in Excursus Frame			
	First Appropriation (6:10-15)	Second Appropriation (8:7-19)	Third Appropriation (11:8 -17)
A physical condition (in a good land)	and when Yahweh ... brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers ... and when you eat and are full ( וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ ) (10-11)	for Yahweh is bring- ing you into a good land ...and you shall eat and be full ( וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ ) (7-10)	that you may live long in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers ... and you shall eat and be full ( וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ ) (8-15)
B human psycho- logical condition	take heed ( הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ ) lest you forget ( פְּנִיתְשָׁכַח ) Yahweh	take heed ( הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ ) lest you forget ( פְּנִיתְשָׁכַח ) Yahweh, by not keeping his commandments ... lest when you have eaten ... (12) you forget Yahweh ... (14) lest you say in your heart, "[I] have gotten me this wealth" (17)	take heed ( הִשָּׁמֶר ) lest your heart be deceived ( פֶּן יִפְתָּהּ ) ( לִבְבְּכֶם )
X deviant behavior	you shall not go after other gods ( לֹא תִלְכֹּן אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים ) (14)	and if you forget Yahweh ... and go after other gods ( וְהִלַּכְתָּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים ) (19)	and you turn aside and serve other gods (16)
B' divine psycho- logical condition	lest the anger of Yahweh ... will be kindled against you ( פְּנִי יַחַרְהַ אֶף־יְהוָה ) ( אֶלְיָיךְ בָּדָד ) (15)	then I solemnly warn you this day (implied divine displeasure)	and the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you ( וְחָרָה אֶף־יְהוָה בְּכֶם ) (17)
A' divine response	and he destroy you from off the face of the earth	you shall surely per- ish (19)	and he shut up the heavens ... and you perish quickly off the good land (17b)

(Table 4.6) Moses' Appropriation of Yahweh's Theophany		
Moses (chs. 6-11)		Yahweh Theophany (31:16-21)
when you eat and are full ... (6:11; 8:10; 11:15)	A	when they have eaten and are full ... (20) (Panel Two)
take heed ... lest you forget / lest your heart be deceived (6:12; 8:11; 11:16)	B	–
go after /serve other gods ... (6:14; 8:17; 11:16)	X	they will turn to other gods and serve them ... (20) (Panel Two)
anger of Yahweh be kindled ... (6:15; 8:19; 11:17)	B'	then my anger will be kindled against them ... (17) (Panel One)
he destroy you / you perish / he shut up the heavens (6:15; 8:19; 11:17)	A'	when many evils and troubles will come upon them ... (Panel One and Two)

Where Yahweh simply referred to the promised land as “flowing with milk and honey,” Moses elaborates on the abundance of Israel’s pending lottery (A). The wealthy infrastructure of Israel’s *quid pro quo* gift demands reciprocity on behalf of the nation (B), since where much has been given (land), much is expected (loyalty). Moses takes up Yahweh’s negative prediction and adeptly analyzes deeper psychological factors for Israel’s ruinous turn. If not careful, Israel will forget the price of the gift (Egyptian liberation) and its indebtedness to the giver (v. 12). Moses then counterbalances Yahweh’s prediction with a command to fear and serve Yahweh (X) (cf. 6:13 and 31:20). In v. 15, Moses turns his analytical gaze to the deity, noting the fuel (i.e., jealousy) that feeds Yahweh’s anger (B’). Moses concludes his first appropriation of Yahweh’s apostasy narrative with an exaggeration of the calamity promised in the theophany (A’).

(Table 4.7) Moses' First Appropriation		
Moses' Appropriation (6:10-15)		Yahweh's Theophany (31:16-21)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and when Yahweh your God brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers ... to give you</li> <li>• with great and goodly cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you did not hew, and olive trees which you did not plant</li> <li>• and when you eat and are full</li> </ul>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for when I have brought them into the land (20)</li> <li>• flowing with milk and honey which I swore to their fathers</li> <li>• and they have eaten and are full and grown fat</li> </ul>
then take heed lest you forget Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt ...	B	
you shall fear Yahweh your God, you shall serve him and swear by his name, you shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples who are round about you (13-14)	X	they will turn to other gods and serve them
for Yahweh your God is a jealous God; lest the anger of Yahweh your God be kindled against you (יַחַרְאֵלֶיךָ) (15)	B'	then my anger will be kindled (יַחַרְאֵפִי) against them in that day (17)
and he destroy you from off the face of the earth (פָּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה)	A'	and I will forsake them and hide my face (וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי) from them and many evils and troubles will come upon them

In his second appropriation, Moses again parallels the opening of Panel B in the theophany (Table 4.8). Moses repeats his elaboration on the abundance that will greet Israel upon arrival in Canaan (A), this time moving beyond the Canaanite infrastructure of cities, houses, and cisterns (6:11) to focus on the agricultural and mining resources that enrich the promised land (8:7-10). The catalyst that precipitates the apostasy in Yahweh's theophany ("when they have eaten and are full") is transformed into a positive command: "and you shall eat and be full and you shall bless Yahweh your God for the good land he has given you" (8:10).



(Table 4.8) Moses' Second Appropriation		
Moses' Appropriation (8:7-19)		Yahweh's Theophany (31:16-21)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and Yahweh your God is bringing you into a good land (7)</li> <li>• a land of brooks of ... olive trees and honey, and land in which you will eat bread without scarcity ... (7-9)</li> <li>• and you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless Yahweh your God for the good land which he has given you (10)</li> </ul>	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for when I have brought them into the land (20)</li> <li>• flowing with milk and honey which I swore to their fathers</li> <li>• and they have eaten and are full and grown fat</li> </ul>
take heed (הִשָּׁמֶר לָךְ): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lest you forget (פָּנִיתֶשְׁכַּח) Yahweh your God, by not keeping his commandments ... (11)</li> <li>• lest when you have eaten and are full ... (12) then your heart be lifted up and you forget Yahweh your God ... (14)</li> <li>• lest you say in your heart, “my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth” (17)</li> </ul>	B	
and if you forget Yahweh your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them (19)	X	they will turn to other gods and serve them
then I solemnly warn you this day (implied divine displeasure)	B'	then my anger will be kindled (וַחֲרָה אַפַּי) against them in that day (17)
you shall surely perish	A'	and I will forsake them and hide my face (וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי) from them and many evils and troubles will come upon them

For the first time, Moses advocates the importance of the “commandments, ordinances and statutes which I command you this day” (B). One of the deleterious consequences of Israel’s complacency was, in Yahweh’s view, the breaking (הִפָּר) of the divine covenant (31:16, 20). Moses draws a different consequence. Spiritual complacency will result in the forgetting (פָּנִיתֶשְׁכַּח) of the commandments of Yahweh which Moses is teaching “this day” to Israel. Yahweh views Israel’s apostasy as an irreparable severing of his covenant; Moses’ responds with his promulgation of Yahweh’s commandments that must be imprinted on the mind of his audience

(8:11c). Where Yahweh's apostasy narrative was linked to the deity's song, Moses links his appropriation of the theophany to the law presented at Moab.

In vv. 14-16 Moses reiterates the risk of forgetting the exodus intervention (cf. also 4:9 and 6:12). Most important, Moses zeroes in on the pride that credits itself undeservedly. Such pride, Moses asserts, would lead to forgetting the source of Israel's contentedness.

(Table 4.9) Moses' Third Appropriation		
Moses' Appropriation (11:8-17)	Yahweh's Theophany (31:16-21)	
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that you may live long in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give them and their descendants (9)</li> <li>• a land flowing with milk and honey (זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבָשׁ) For the land which you are entering ... drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land which Yahweh your God cares for ... (9-15)</li> <li>• and you shall eat and be full</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for when I have brought them into the land (20)</li> <li>• flowing with milk and honey (זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבָשׁ) which I swore to their fathers</li> <li>• and they have eaten and are full and grown fat</li> </ul>
B	take heed, lest your heart be deceived	
X	and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them	they will turn to other gods and serve them
B'	and the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you (וַחֲרָה אֲפִי) (אֲפִי־הוֹהֵב בְּכֶם) (17)	then my anger will be kindled (וַחֲרָה אֲפִי) against them in that day (17)
A'	and he shut up the heavens so that there be no rain ... and you perish quickly off the good land (17b)	and I will forsake them and hide my face (וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי) from them and many evils and troubles will come upon them

Following an implicit reference to the anger of Yahweh (B'), Moses rounds out his second appropriation with a warning that Canaan's expected calamity might one day be Israel's own (v. 20).

In his final appropriation of the apostasy narrative, Moses pulls all stops with an elaborate description of the abundant land of Canaan (Table 4.9 above). The self-reliant technologies of the Egyptians will be of no use in sustaining the idyllic quality of Israel's promised land (Mayes 1991:214).

Rather, Israel is completely dependent on the goodwill of Yahweh for the continuation of Canaan's fertility (A). To forget this gratuity while gorging on the land's produce will amount to corporate suicide, a point made clear at the conclusion of Moses' final appropriation (A'). The goodness of Canaan would cease abruptly were Yahweh to shut the taps of heaven and impoverish the land. In B', Moses summarizes the psychological condition that threatens Israel's future with the warning: "take heed lest your heart be deceived" (B).

On the surface, there is plenty of agreement between Yahweh's theophany and Moses' stylizations of the same. Beneath the surface, dialogic tensions brew. These tensions are evident in the subtle differences that Moses introduces to the apostasy narrative, chiefly, the "commandments, ordinances, and statutes" that Moses publicizes while appropriating the deity's prediction (8:11). Conspicuously absent throughout Moses' reiteration of Yahweh's theophany is any hint of the deity's withdrawal. But why three separate rehearsals of the theophany?

Scholars have struggled to find some pattern or structure in the seemingly inchoate *Excursus Frame* (chs. 6-11). Lundbom discerns (Table 4.10) a framing device in 6:6-9 and 11:18-20, where parallel calls for covenant obedience and the promotion of the law arise (1996:305).

(Table 4.10) Lundbom's Framing Device (6:3-9 and 11:18-20)	
A	you shall love Yahweh your God with all your soul and all your might (6:3)
B	teach [these words] to your children; frontlets and doorposts (6:6-9)
B'	teach your children; frontlets and doorposts (11:18f)
A'	if you are careful to do all this commandment ... loving Yahweh your God, walking in all his ways and cleaving to him ... then Yahweh will drive out all these nations (11:22)

Lundbom's frames can be reinforced with Moses' first and third appropriations of the apostasy narrative (Table 4.11).

(Table 4.11) Enhanced Framing Device in <i>Excursus Frame</i>	
A	you shall love Yahweh your God with all your soul and all your might (6:3)
B	teach [these words] to your children; frontlets and doorposts (6:6-9)
C	<i>First Appropriation of the Apostasy Cycle</i> (6:10-15)
C'	<i>Third Appropriation of the Apostasy Cycle</i> (11:8-17)
B'	teach your children; frontlets and doorposts (11:18-21)
A'	if you are careful to do all this commandment ... loving Yahweh your God, walking in all his ways and cleaving to him ... then Yahweh will drive out all these nations (11:22)

The first and third of apostasy cycles lend weight to Lundbom's framing device. But what of the second of Moses' three appropriations? Both Lohfink (1963:195-96) and W. L. Moran (1969:266) have identified a concentric structure in ch. 8, at the center of which lies Moses' second appropriation (Table 4.12).<sup>201</sup>

(Table 4.12) Moses' Second Appropriation and the Concentric Structure of Lohfink and Moran (Deut 8)	
A	all the commandment which I command you <i>this day</i> you shall be careful to do (8:1)
B	which Yahweh swore to give to your fathers
C	you shall remember (2)
D	[Yahweh] led you in the wilderness ... and you ate the manna ... which your fathers did not know (2-3)
E	and you shall eat and be full (10)
X	take heed lest you forget Yahweh your God by not keeping his commandments, his ordinances and statutes which I command you (11)
E'	lest, when you have eaten and are full (12)
D'	who led you in the wilderness ... who fed you manna ... which your fathers did not know (15-16)
C'	you shall remember (18)
B'	which he swore to your fathers (16)
A'	if you forget ... <i>this day</i> (8:18-20)

The center of the structure (E-X-E') discerned by Lohfink and Moran holds the second of Moses' three renditions of the apostasy cycle (8:7-19).

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<sup>201</sup> Christensen reproduces Lohfink's structure and describes the chapter as a "tightly constructed literary work of art" (2001:172).

(Table 4.13) Full Structure of Moses' Excursus Frame (chs. 6-11)	
A	you shall love Yahweh your God with all your soul and all your might (6:4-5)
B	teach [these words] to your children; frontlets and doorposts (6:6-9)
C	<i>First Appropriation of the Apostasy Cycle</i> (6:10-15)
D	"you shall diligently keep the commandments of Yahweh ..." (6:16-19)
E	recounting to "your son" Yahweh's intervention in Egypt (6:20-5)
F	destruction of Canaanite idols – "burn their graven images with fire" (7:1-5)
G	obligation of Israel to Yahweh – "know therefore" (יָדַעְתָּ) ... (7:6-16)
H	if you say in your heart (כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְבְּךָ) ... (7:17-26)
I	you shall remember all the way which Yahweh your God has led ... (8:1-2)
J	that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart (8:2)
K	and fed you with manna (8:3-6)
L	Yahweh your God is bringing you into a good land ... (8:7-9)
M	and you shall eat and be full (8:10)
X	take heed lest you forget Yahweh your God by not keeping his commandments, his ordinances and statutes which I command you (8:11)
M'	lest, when you have eaten and are full (8:12-13)
L'	Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt (8:14)
K'	and fed you with manna (8:16)
J'	that he might humble you and test you; beware lest you say in your heart (16)
P	you shall remember Yahweh your God ... (8:18-20)
H'	do not say in your heart (אַל־תֹּאמַר בְּלִבְבְּךָ) ... (9:1-5)
G'	obligation of Israel to Yahweh neglected – "know therefore" (יָדַעְתָּ) ... (9:6-8)
F'	destruction of Israelite idol at Horeb – "burn [the calf] with fire" (9:9-10:22)
E'	recounting ("not to your children") Yahweh's intervention in Egypt (11:1-7)
D'	"you shall therefore keep all the commandment which I command ..." (11:8)
C'	<i>Third Appropriation of the Apostasy Cycle</i> (11:8-17)
B'	teach your children; frontlets and doorposts (11:18f)
A'	if you are careful to do all this commandment ... loving Yahweh your God, walking in all his ways and cleaving to him ... then Yahweh will drive out all these nations (11:22-3)

Working concentrically from this center to the enhanced framing devices in chs. 6 and 11, it is possible to reconstruct the structure of the entire leading section of the *Excursus Frame* and the role that the three-fold repetition of the apostasy narrative plays within the frame (Table 4.13 above). At center (X) stands the injunction to obey the commandments that Moses introduced at the center of his second appropriation of the apostasy narrative. Similar emphases on nomistic obedience echo throughout the leading Excursus Frame (e.g., 6:2, 16-19, 7:11, 8:1, 11:8). In sections D and D', Moses employs yet another dialogic that subtly shifts attention from Yah-

weh's commandments to Moses' revised version. In 6:17, Moses calls Israel to obey the "commandments of Yahweh ... which he has commanded you." In 8:11, Moses warns Israel not to forget Yahweh by failing to keep "his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I command you this day." The law still belongs to Yahweh (as in 6:17), but now it is Moses' version of the divine law that Israel is to observe. Finally, in 11:8, Moses' takes full ownership of his proclamation: "you shall therefore keep all the commandment which I command you this day." The curriculum in Moses' *Excursus Frame* changes from Yahweh's commands given by the deity (B) to Moses' commands promulgated in Moab (B'). This curriculum is Moses' antidote to the forgetfulness that afflicts the national psyche and threatens future relations with Yahweh (sections "B" in each of the three appropriations). Even if Yahweh desists from future displays of tangible power, Israel can always hold on to memories of past interventions to sustain its loyalty (sections E/E' and I/I').<sup>202</sup>

In sections F and F', Moses appropriates for didactic measure the experience of the previous generation, presenting it as the antithesis of orthopraxic behavior. Little does the Moab audience realize that its flirtation with idolatry will not be its last. It is peculiar that the Israelites turned so quickly from Yahweh, despite recent victories over Egyptian forces and the miraculous provision of manna.<sup>203</sup> But Nahum M. Sarna argues that Israel's request for an idol was less a display of outright contrariness than a desire for a "material, visible entity" to fill the void created by Moses' absence on Mt. Sinai.<sup>204</sup> "They intended nothing more," states Sarna, "than an appropriate

<sup>202</sup> Following his reading of the "book of the law of Moses" in Neh 8, Ezra recounts to God in the presence of the people of Israel an overview of their history with God, using stock conventions lifted from the Moses book: "And they captured fortress cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses filled with all sorts of goods, hewn cisterns, and fruit trees in abundance; so they ate, and were filled and became fat, and delighted themselves in your great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient ..." (9:25-6).

<sup>203</sup> That the golden calf incident follows so closely on the heels of the manna miracle (Exod 16:18) explains Moses' reference to the "test" of manna in sections J and J'. The connection between the state of Israel's stomach and their relationship with Yahweh, the provider of their primary concerns, needs to be explored more fully.

<sup>204</sup> If the building of idols or graven images is humanity's attempt to gain a palpable divine presence, then the golden calf incident indicates the kind of deity that Israel is forced to come to terms with. Yahweh relishes complete autonomy, and thus resists any attempt to try to make him more present(able) to the people.

object emblematic of the Divine Presence” (1986:217).<sup>205</sup> Sarna’s interpretation of the golden calf underscores the importance of a safe, visible divine presence for Israel.<sup>206</sup> When, in the aftermath of the Sinai debacle, Yahweh announced that he would not accompany Israel into Canaan, Israel falls into mourning, highlighting the importance of divine presence to the nation (33:3-4).<sup>207</sup>

As important as Yahweh’s presence is for Israel, it is equally vital for the leader of the people: “If your presence will not go with me,” implored Moses at Horeb, “do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not your going with us, so that we are distinct ... from all other people that are upon the face of the earth? (33:15-16).<sup>208</sup> In the end, Yahweh relented to the persuasions of his prophet and granted both Moses and Israel the presence they desired (Exod 33:14, 17). But that presence came with a condition, as is evident when comparing two discourses before and after the divine presence given to Moses in 33:14 (Table 4.14).

In his lawcode, Moses struggles to gain maximum control of the presence of a deity whose primary aim is to maintain maximum freedom.

<sup>205</sup> Sarna’s interpretation explains why Aaron announces a festival to “Yahweh” in 32:5 with the calf serving perhaps as “the pedestal of the invisible God of Israel” (1986:218).

<sup>206</sup> Haran argues that the golden calf affair bears the marks of the pilgrimage temple festival, since both feature sacrifices accompanied by eating, drinking, public gaiety, public noise and dancing (1978:303). According to Yahweh, these activities will preface Israel’s apostasy and the deity’s withdrawal from Israel.

<sup>207</sup> Ironically, the deity’s presence is no less threatening than his absence: “If for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you” (33:5).

<sup>208</sup> The dialogic over the deity’s presence is longstanding, occurring as early as Jacob’s struggle with a nocturnal adversary (Gen 32:24-32). The importance of divine presence for the conquest generation is highlighted in the opening section of the *Succession Speech*, where, in describing the travesty of Kadesh-barnea, Moses quotes a statement from Yahweh that guaranteed their success in conquest (1:30). The people, however, refused the challenge, and the deity vowed destruction of the entire group through natural attrition (Num 14). In a sudden fit of obedience, Israel mustered the courage to attack, too-little, too-late, for by now Yahweh was in a huff and had lost his appetite for conquest (1:43). The result was the thorough trouncing of the congregation at the hands of the Amorites (1:44).

(Table 4.14) Discourses on Divine Presence	
Exod 33:2-3	Exod 34:11-17
I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites ...	behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites ...
go up to a land flowing with milk and honey	
but I will not go up among you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take heed to yourself lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants (... you shall tear down their altars ...), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants, and ... you eat of his sacrifice ...you shall make for yourself no molten metal</li> </ul>

The notice of withdrawn presence in 33:3 is replaced with a list of prohibitions designed to prevent idolatry (34:13-17). The conditionalization of divine presence in Exodus some forty years earlier gives Moses precedence to apply his nomistic code of law to hopefully entice Yahweh to renounce his plan for withdrawal as he had done before in the Exodus narrative.

### ***b. Witness Frame***

The structure of the *Excursus Frame* reveals Moses' primary bulwark against the fatalism of Yahweh's prediction (8:11). Stepping back, the *Witness Frame* reiterates the conditionalizing of Israel's good fortune in Canaan with the demands of Moses' lawcode. Furthermore, when divine-human relations break down, Moses institutes his lawcode as the condition for the normalization of the relationship.

Although Sonnet argues for the transformation of the law through the supplementation of Yahweh's song, he is puzzled by the witness function of the law that "is somehow prepared by Moses' speeches" (1997:166, fn 155). Talstra too is perplexed: "One may wonder what testimony is left for heaven and earth to give, after the Song and the Torah have been made to function as witness" (Talstra 1997:100). My rechronologized reading of the Deuteronomic narrative resolves this perplexity by placing Moses' call for cosmic witness prior to his final address. In 31:28, Moses' call uses the *hiphil* form הִפְּטֶנָּה to announce "I will cause heaven and earth to witness against you," the same verbal conjugation found in 4:26 and 31:19. Rechronologized, this announcement explains the presence of the "witness" element in chs. 4 and 30 (Table 4.15). It is scarcely coincidental that the only time Moses actually calls on the heavenly and terrestrial realms as witness



(הַעִידֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ) is in the *Witness Frame* of Moses' speech (4:26 and 30:19). Contrary to common opinion, Moses' call to "heaven" and "earth" is not found in 32:1. The phrase "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth!" belong to Yahweh, not to the address which Moses sets before Israel.<sup>209</sup>

(Table 4.15) Moses' Call for Cosmic Witnesses

(4:2-30; 30:18-19)

A	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (4:26) הַעִידֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ
B	that you will soon utterly perish (כִּי־אָבֵד תֵּאבְדוּן) from the land which you are going ... to possess; you will not live long upon it ( לֹא־יִשְׁתָּהָרַץ לְרִשְׁתָּהָּ ) (לֹא־תֵאָרִיכוּן יָמִים עָלֶיהָ), but will be utterly destroyed
C	repentance (4:29-30)
X	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
C'	repentance (30:1-10)
B'	you shall surely perish (כִּי אָבֵד תֵּאבְדוּן). You shall not prolong <i>your</i> days (לֹא־תֵאָרִיכוּן יָמִים עַל־הָאָדָמָה) in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it (30:18)
A'	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (30:19) הַעִידֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ

<sup>209</sup> Like Sonnet (1997:175), Sanders is convinced that Moses' intention to call heaven and earth to witness is a reference to 32:1, 16, 29. In fact, Sanders states that 31:27-30 are written "in view of the song of Deut 32" (1996:334-35). C. J. Labuschagne uses his logotechnique to discern in 31:24-30 "a real jewel of compositional art, a *rhetorisches Prachtstück*" composed in "one single operation as the inner framework to the Song" (1997:123-4). While Labuschagne's analysis of this unit might shed light on its authorial operations, it ignores the voicing boundaries of the narrative in the interest of numerical structures. (For further discussions on the link between Moses' call for cosmic witness and Yahweh's song, see Craigie 1976:373, Driver 1986:343-4, and Tigay 1996:298.)

Levenson argues that historically the Song of Yahweh preceded and influenced the exilic bracket of chs. 4 and 30. He writes: "The Song of Moses [*sic*] exerted not only an influence of a literary nature on the exilic hand, evident in his recomposition of the covenant at Moab, but also a profound theological influence over the entirety of his bracket. The exilic frame to Dtn is the sermon for which the Song of Moses is the text" (1975:217). For additional connections between Yahweh's song and chs. 4 and 30, see Sanders (1997:349). Also, compare Mendenhall (1993:171-5) for the unusual position that Deut 32 is an ancient poem written by Samuel.

What is more, in 32:1 heaven and earth are passive listeners to Moses' promulgation of Yahweh's song; no *hiphil* verb form of עוּד is present. Moses' promulgation of the hardcopy of his law (inclusive of the *Witness Frame* of chs. 4 and 30) constitutes the call for cosmic witness promised in 31:28, a call that is repeated each time the book of the law is read within the storyworld.<sup>210</sup>

As Moses works through his valediction, his rhetoric becomes less damnatory (cf. Moses' pre-Moab command in 31:46 with his post-Moab comments in 32:46).<sup>211</sup> A comparison of the two borders of the *Witness Frame* shows an undermining of the fatalism of 31:29 ("you will surely act corruptly") with milder inflections that entertain possibilities and options not predicted in Yahweh's theophany (Table 4.16).

(Table 4.16) Comparisons of Fatalism

Moses' Call for Assembly (31:28-9) A	Leading <i>Witness Frame</i> (4:25-6) B	Trailing <i>Witness Frame</i> (30:17-19) C
[that I may] ... call heaven and earth to witness against you וְאָעִידָה בָּם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ	when you have borne sons ... and are old in the land and have acted corruptly ... כִּי־תוֹלִיד בָּנִים... וְנֹשְׁנָתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ הַשְּׁחָתָם	and if your heart turns away וְאִם־יִפְנֶה לְבָבְךָ
... you will surely act corruptly and turn from the way כִּי־הַשְּׁחָת תִּשְׁחָתוּן וְסָרְתֶם מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day הָעִידְתִּי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ	... I call heaven and earth to witness against you הָעִידְתִּי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ

<sup>210</sup> Why should Yahweh be beholden to the dictates of a dying leader's message? While Moses' speech is directed to the congregation, he also delivers a hidden polemic against Yahweh's theophany. By promulgating publicly his final word, Moses brings a measure of accountability to a deity who seems accountable to no one for his actions. Moses' call to heaven and earth as witnesses, while directed to the Israelites, is an attempt to introduce into the divine-human economy a pair of cosmic witnesses who will bear witness to all participants involved, Yahweh included.

<sup>211</sup> My reading contradicts Campbell and O'Brien, who write: "As it stands, the book of Deuteronomy bears ominous overtones. Deuteronomy 4 warns and threatens; the warnings and threats grow worse in Deuteronomy 29-31. Promises of restoration after exile are cold comfort; the exile comes first" (2000:17).

In consonance with the theophany, Moses' announces (A) a grim future for Israel after he has moved on: "you will surely act corruptly (כִּי־הִשָּׁחַתְתָּ) and turn aside" (וְסָרְתָּ). But does Israel have to play the cards it has been dealt? In 4:25 (B), Moses calls heaven and earth to witness the recriminating wrath of Yahweh *when* Israel "acts corruptly" (כִּי...וְהִשָּׁחַתְתָּ). The כִּי clause of 4:25 is circumstantial, setting the stage for the second clause that speaks of the nation's apostasy (Aejmelaeus 1986:196-98). This clause can have either a conditional ("if") or a temporal ("when") meaning. Though ambiguous, Anneli Aejmelaeus notes that the temporal sense is used when the context assumes a high probability of occurrence (1986:197). The tenor of Yahweh's theophany marks the apostasy near inevitable. But a subtlety in 4:25 reveals the ameliorating intentions of the prophet. Where Yahweh had predicted imminent apostasy, Moses projects such a scenario far into the future. Then in his trailing *Witness Frame* (30:17), Moses turns Yahweh's fatalistic table with the introduction of a condition that virtually eliminates the deity's inflexible predestination (C).<sup>212</sup>

A closer examination shows that even in the leading *Witness Frame*, Moses begins to weaken the fatalism of Yahweh's theophany (Table 4.17). Moses parallels Yahweh's revelation by announcing his own death (A) and warning the people to heed the covenant of Yahweh (B). Where Yahweh predicted a certain apostasy, Moses simply warns against actions that might lead to divine provocation. To electrify his point, Moses lists various evils that will befall the people if his warning is not considered (vv. 26-7), evils which Yahweh's theophany only alluded to (C).

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<sup>212</sup> Since the theme of exilic punishment permeates the "apostasy narrative," historically-focused scholars are inclined to date these textual pericopes to the exilic or post-exilic period. Hans Walter Wolff, for example, thinks that 4:25-31 and 30:1-20 are derived from an exilic editor who frames the original lawcode with a theme of hope (1961:180f; cf. also Sanders 1996:348-49 and Levenson 1975:203).

(Table 4.17) Moses' Amelioration of Fatalism		
Moses' Equivocation (ch. 4:22-9)		Yahweh Theophany (ch. 31:14-21)
I must die (אֲנֹכִי מוֹת) (22)	A	you must die (לָמוּת) (14, 16)
take heed ... lest you forget the covenant (פְּנִיתֶשְׁכְּחוּ אֶת־בְּרִית) of Yahweh ... that he made with you (אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת עִמָּכֶם) (23)	B	then this people will ... break my covenant that I made with them (וְהִפְרֹ) (אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אִתּוֹ) (16)
so as to provoke him to anger (לְהַכְעִיסוֹ) (25)	C	then my anger will be kindled (וְחָרָה) (אֲפִי) (17)
<i>evils: Yahweh will scatter you</i> (vv. 26-8)	D	so that they will say in that day: "have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?" (17)
but from there you will seek Yahweh your god and you will find him (29)	E	and I will surely hide my face (18)

In Yahweh's version, religious complacency led to prohibited worship (v. 16), which then ignited the wrath of the deity and provoked a disastrous punishment (v. 17), ultimately resulting in the occultation of Yahweh (v. 18). In 4:29-31, Moses' reiteration of the apostasy narrative takes a radically different turn as Moses counters Yahweh's predicted concealment with a scenario that sees Israel seeking and *finding* Yahweh even in the midst of tribulation.

In his leading *Witness Frame*, Moses also uses a strategy of ambiguation to defeat the unconditional fatalism of Yahweh's theophany. This strategy is evident in Moses' contrasting characterizations of Yahweh in 4:23-31 (Table 4.18).

(Table 4.18) Moses' Characterizations of Yahweh (4:23-31)	
A	take heed, lest you forget the covenant (פְּנִיתֶשְׁכְּחוּ אֶת־בְּרִית) of Yahweh your God which he made with you (כָּרַת עִמָּכֶם) (4:23)
B	for Yahweh your God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ) is a devouring fire (אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה), a jealous God (24) ... you will be utterly destroyed (הִשְׁמַד תִּשְׁמְדוּן) (4:24-26)
B'	for Yahweh your God is a merciful God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ רַחוּם) ... he will not destroy you (וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ) (4:31)
A'	[Yahweh] will not forget the covenant (וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת־בְּרִית) with your fathers which he swore to them (וַיִּשָּׁבַע לָהֶם) (31)

In 4:24-6, Moses describes a wrathful god capable of annihilating a nation forgetful of the covenant (A, B). A little later, Moses' characterization of

Yahweh appears to change midcourse, from a devouring fire (B) who will destroy the nation, to a merciful being who will not destroy (B').<sup>213</sup> As Moses repeats his injunction to remember the covenant, he characterizes Yahweh as one who never forgets the covenant made with their fathers (A'). Of course, no hint of a merciful persona is evident in Yahweh's original proclamation. In revising the lawcode with a supplemental *Witness Frame*, Moses introduces a new dimension to the apostasy narrative that will see a relenting of divine wrath and unprecedented accessibility to Yahweh.

Moses' *Witness Frame* undermines the fatalism of the theophany by creating opportunities for self-determination through nomistic adherence (Table 4.19). Moses then weakens his original fiery characterization with a portrayal of a merciful god.

Moses' dialogic against the intrinsic determinism of Yahweh's theophany becomes even more pronounced as he develops the exile theme across the two sections of the *Witness Frame*. Between the cosmic witnesses (4:25 and 30:19) stand a pair of parallels that dare to think the impossible. In sections C and C', Moses not only develops the notion of a merciful god, he also presents the possibility of a return to the former divine-human relations. Former fortunes will be restored as Israel is gathered from the lands to which it has been scattered (C', subsection b'). Also notable is the implicit presence of Yahweh, to whom Israel can return (subsections *a* and *a'* in sections C and C'). Ironically, Moses' prediction of restored prosperity recycles the apostasy narrative back to its beginning, situating Israel squarely in the middle of wealth, security, and complacency (cf. 31:20).

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<sup>213</sup> These contrasting characterizations are due less to the inconsistent logic of Moses' presentation than to the split in Yahweh's personality, whose attitude and behavior towards his people changes drastically, depending on which side of the Canaanite border Israel stands. On their promised soil, Israel faces the threat of complete extinction (without any possibility for reprieve) should it arouse Yahweh's ire. However, if Israel is exiled outside the land, Yahweh seems willing to demonstrate mercy and grace if proper contrition is paid.

(Table 4.19) Law as Return Mechanism in Moses' <i>Witness Frame</i> (4:26-31; 30:1-19)	
A	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (4:26)
B	that you will soon utterly perish (אָבַד תֵּאבְדוּן) from the land ... you will not live long upon it (לֹא־תֵאָרִיכֵן יָמִים עִלֶּיהָ)
C	a but from there you will seek Yahweh your God ... you will return to Yahweh (וְשִׁבַתְּ עַד־יְהוָה) ... and obey his voice (וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי) (4:29-30)
	b for Yahweh your God is a merciful God (אֵל רַחוּם); he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant (4:31)
X	<i>statutes and ordinances</i> (12:1-26:15)
C'	a' when all these things come upon you ... and you call them to mind among all the nations and [you] return to Yahweh (וְשִׁבַתְּ עַד־יְהוָה) your God ... and obey his voice (וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי) in all that I command you (30:1-2)
	b' then Yahweh your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion upon you (וְרַחֲמֶךָ) and he will gather you again from all the peoples (30:3)
B'	you will perish (אָבַד תֵּאבְדוּן); you will not live long in the land (לֹא־תֵאָרִיכֵן יָמִים עַל־הָאָדְמָה) (30:18)
A'	I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day (30:19)

The *Witness Frame* also sees Moses elevating the importance of his book of the law (Table 4.20). Obedience to the law will not only reverse Israel's forfeiture, it will also reactivate the flow of "blessings and curses." In his trailing *Witness Frame* (ch. 30), Moses clarifies for his audience the vague reference to "these things" (כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה) in 4:30: "the blessing and the curse which I have set before you" (30:1).

The tribulations which befall Israel in ch. 4 are equated with the blessings and curses of chs. 27 and 28 included in the book of the law (A). The rereader of Moses' speech, of course, understands fully the meaning of "all these things" which might afflict Israel. In 30:2, Moses also clarifies the phrase "listen to Yahweh's voice" made earlier (4:30); the divine voice is equated with the commands that Moses issues at Moab (B). The lawcode within the book of the law (chs. 12-26) is the pivotal mechanism by which Israel is either displaced out of or replaced into the promised land. Israel's future is now determined by a book and Yahweh must honor the code of his servant. Where the deity's prediction is fatalistic, Moses' response springs a return clause (B) that permits a return to Yahweh and the land from which they were scattered. Renewed nomistic adherence becomes the lever with which to extricate compassion from Yahweh, launching the po-

ple out of the land of tribulation back into the land of promise. The book of the law serves a dual function vis-à-vis the land: adherence to its precepts will ensure a long life in the land (30:15); renewed adherence to the book of the law will instigate a return to the land should exile occur (30:2-3).

(Table 4.20) The Law as the Reversal of Misfortune (chs. 4 and 30)	
4:30-1	30:1-3
when you are in distress and all <i>these things</i> (כל הדברים האלה) have come upon you in the latter days,	A And it shall come to pass, when all <i>these things</i> (כל הדברים האלה) are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you will return to Yahweh your God (ושבת עדיהוה אלהיך)</li> <li>• and listen to His voice (ושמעו בקלו)</li> </ul>	B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and return to Yahweh your God (ושבת עדיהוה אלהיך), you and your children (2)</li> <li>• and obey his voice (ושמעו בקלו) in all that I command you this day</li> </ul>
for Yahweh your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them.	C then Yahweh your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion upon you (3)
	D and he will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you (3)

Without a rechronologized narrative, the dialogic between Moses and Yahweh collapses into theological equipoise as Moses' statements of mercy and accessibility (ch. 4 and 30) are monologized by a devastatingly harsh pronouncement of final judgment and occultation in ch. 31. Reversing the narrator's cart-before-horse presentation, the external reader discerns in Moses' supplemental frames the dialogic ebb-and-flow between Moses and Yahweh.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>214</sup> The reader of my rechronologization project might find it interesting to compare my narratologically defined supplements to the law with Van der Toorn's historical description. According to Van der Toorn, Deuteronomy underwent a series of successive editions "at the borders of the book." In chronological order, these editions were: the Covenant Edition, the Torah Edition, the History Edition, and the Wisdom Edition (2007:151-66).

## 2. Witness Relocation and Call for Plenary Assembly

Having supplemented his original law (v. 9) with a series of chiasmic frames (v. 24), Moses deposits his book of the law next to Israel's ark of the covenant, situating the covenants of Horeb and Moab in symbolic proximity (Table 4.21). One covenant is accessible, the other inaccessible, the hidden decalogue dependent on the accessible book of the law for perpetual dissemination to future generations of Israel. Moses' deposition is an astute ploy, given that the ark functions as a talisman of divine presence for Israel. Moses' foresight is also evident in his entrusting of the book to the Levites who are not only skilled in handling Israel's volatile ark,<sup>215</sup> but also conversant with cultic protocol (לְעִמּוֹד לְפָנַי יְהוָה) (10:8).

(Table 4.21) Deposition and Call	
Book Deposition (31:25-7)	Call for Assembly (31:28-9)
<i>Command:</i> take this book of the law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God	A <i>Command:</i> Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers that I might speak these words in their ears
<i>Witness:</i> that it may be there for a witness against you (בְּךָ לְעֵד)	B <i>Witness:</i> and [that I might] cause heaven and earth to witness against them (וְאֵעִידָה בָּם)
<i>Anterior Knowledge:</i> for I know (כִּי יָדַעְתִּי) how rebellious and stubborn you are ... how much more after my death (כִּי אַחֲרַי מוֹתִי)	C <i>Prescient Knowledge:</i> for I know (כִּי יָדַעְתִּי) that after my death (אַחֲרַי מוֹתִי) you will surely act corruptly ...

<sup>215</sup> Wenham comments: "Deut 10:8 suggests that the Ark was considered by the redactor to be the place where Yahweh made His presence known, for it puts 'carrying' the ark in parallel with 'standing before the Lord'" (1993:100). Roland de Vaux notes that the ark represented two things: the receptacle for the tablets of Yahweh, and the pedestal of the deity (1965:301-2; cf. Miller 2000:21) However, Weinfeld (1992b:208) and Lenchak (1993:9) argue that in Deuteronomy the ark of the covenant is merely a receptacle for the tablets and as such, serves a didactic function in the community. Given the active role of the ark in the crossing of the Jordan (Josh 4) and in the upcoming battles against the Philistines (1 Sam 6), it is premature from a narratological perspective to assume that, prior to the conquest, the ark is a neutered object holding only educational value.



Moses revises the Levites' original job description (drafted by Yahweh, Num 3:5-13) by adding two important tasks: the proclamation of the contents of the law and the archiving of the larger document (31:9, 25).<sup>216</sup> In doing so, Moses makes a distinction between Levites in general (v. 25) and those Levites who are also priests (v. 9), paralleling the distinction between the law and the supplemented frames which envelop the code.<sup>217</sup> To the *priests* Moses gave the responsibility of teaching the contents of the law to the congregation (cf. von Rad 1956:67; Wright 1954:329f). Following Yahweh's theophany, Moses dictates that all Levites (not just the priests) are responsible for the proper handling of the prophet's witness.<sup>218</sup> This dis-

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<sup>216</sup> Sonnet holds that the entrusting of the book of the law to the Levites is "a continuation of the divine commissioning reported in 10:8-9" (1997:138). The mere fact that Moses' publication was his own and not that of Yahweh argues against such a position.

<sup>217</sup> Schäfer-Lichtenberger (1995:51, fn 160) draws a distinction between the roles given to priests and Levites (cf. also Sonnet's discussion 1997:164-5, fn 153). Much debate surrounds the identity of "the Levites" and "the priests" in Deuteronomy. Some assume (a degree of) synonymy (e.g., Cody 1969:127-31; Emerton 1962:129; and Driver 1986:219-20, 123). Others argue for distinctions within the Levitical group. Wright proposed a distinction between altar clergy who served in the centralized temple arena and teaching clergy who taught the people of Israel (1954:328-30). Raymond Abba proposes that a functional difference existed between the Levites in general and the priests in particular. The former were involved in mundane transportations of the ark (e.g., 2 Sam 15:25) while the priests bore the ark for high ceremony occasions (Josh 8:33) (1977:261). Alternatively, Merlin D. Rehm suggests a historical distinction between the Levites and priests, with the Levitical priests coming into the forefront after the tribal confederation shifted to a centralized religio-political system in Jerusalem (1992:305; cf. also Rodney K. Duke 1987:198).

Based on Josh 8:33, McConville argues for synonymy between priests and Levites in Deut 27:9-14, despite (as he himself admits) contrasting duties for the priests in v. 9 and the Levites in v. 14 (1984:137). McConville's interpretation is specious for two reasons. First, there is a temporal disjunction between vv. 9 and 14, since the calling of Israel to silence in v. 9 occurs in the fictive present of the Moab gathering, while the declaration of the Levites in v. 14 is projected into the future. Secondly, the levitical priests do not read the law or the blessings and curses from the book of the law during the Mt. Ebal event. Rather, Joshua usurps this duty to himself (Josh 8:33-4), and initiates one of the first misappropriations of Moses' book of the law in the storyworld.

<sup>218</sup> As Moses supplements his original lawcode and upgrades the tasks and responsibilities of the Levites, a pattern emerges that draws a distinction between a

inction between priests and Levites is maintained in Moses' instructions (Deut 27) for the important public reading scheduled for Mt. Ebal.<sup>219</sup> Moses and the levitical *priests* call Israel to silence, stating: "You shall therefore obey the voice of Yahweh your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes [i.e., "this law"] ..." (v. 9-10). Having gained the audience's attention, Moses charges the people with instructions for the important occasion. With the tribes in their assigned positions, the Levites declare the *curses* (27:14) which constitute the supplemented contents of the book of the law. Had Moses wanted only the law to be read on this occasion, he would have asked the *priests* to perform the task, in keeping with the responsibility laid down for them in 31:9.<sup>220</sup>

Following the installation of his textual witness,<sup>221</sup> Moses requests the assembly of an audience ostensibly to proclaim "these words" as heaven and earth stand ready to lend witness (B).<sup>222</sup> In a rechronologized Deuter-

whole and a subsidiary part. For example, the document which the Levitical priests were to read every seven years (31:9-13) constitutes the central section (chs. 12-26) of the larger document that Moses gives to the Levites for deposition (31:25). This part/whole distinction is paralleled by the particularization of a specialist group (part) within the Levitical tribe (whole) who will perform the reading. Further part-whole particularization is evident in the principle of cultic "centralization" that focuses on the place which Yahweh will choose "out of all your tribes" (12:5).

<sup>219</sup> The association of "this law" with priests (in contrast to the Levites who are associated with the "book of the law") is also found in the "royal law" of ch. 17, where a king, obligated to make a copy of "the law," is instructed by Moses to obtain an original from "the Levitical priests" (17:18).

<sup>220</sup> Only in the Mosaic blessing of ch. 33 is the distinction blurred between law and priests on one hand and the *book* of the law (or witness) and Levites on the other. In 33:10 Moses states that "[Levi] shall teach Jacob thy ordinances and Israel thy law ...". Moses' last words do not, however, rule out the possibility that functional distinctions existed within the tribe of Levi, though his blessing of Israel's tribes (ch. 33) does not cut such fine distinctions.

<sup>221</sup> Moses' command to the Levites to install the book of the law as a witness (31:25-7) is absent from the *written* lawcode. That is, the storyworld book nowhere refers to itself as a witness against Israel. Subsequent generations of storyworld readers are unaware of the dialogized nature of Moses' book that stands counter to Yahweh's own witness. For them, the extratextual dialogic between their leader and their god lies beyond the storied horizon of the storyworld book.

<sup>222</sup> Driver argues that Moses directs the incriminatory message against the Levites, who are representatives of Israel (1986:343). Why would Moses turn the condemnation of the theophany against the leaders of the people, particularly those who in the past exhibited greater loyalty than the corporate group (cf. Exod 32:28)?

onomy, Moses' instructions in 31:25-9 represent the beginning of the "fictive present" of the entire narrative. The close parallels between the two panels to the Levites reveal that it is the words of the book of the law (not the words of Yahweh's Song as some argue) that Moses intends to deliver to the assembled congregation (A).

### **3. Promulgation of the Central Lawcode**

All dialogic angles within the frames of Moses' speech serve one ultimate purpose, to focus attention on the "statutes and ordinances" of chs. 12-26. Like the frames, the central lawcode is broadcast simultaneously at two levels, one at the level of the storyworld and the other at the level of the narrator. In his supplemented law, Moses attempts to indemnify Israel's future with a socio-religious blueprint that will revamp the political and religious landscape of Israel around a centralized focal point where human and divine interests converge.<sup>223</sup> Most obvious is Moses' call for the annihilation of the deities of Canaan. Moses then institutes a reconstruction of Israel's socio-political world that localizes worship in a single location, in contrast with indigenous convention. Finally, the emblematic "name" of Yahweh is employed to preserve for Israel a semblance of divine presence without affronting divine freedom. These three innovations function as the epicenter around which swirl the dialogic currents between Yahweh and Moses.

#### ***a. Annihilation of Canaanite Deities***

The core of Moses' "statutes and ordinances" opens with a call (Table 4.22) for the erasure of all empirical and symbolic evidence of the gods of the Canaanites (12:2-3). On one hand, Israel must annihilate the Canaanite deities and obliterate from memory their name, while on the other hand, the people must remember their own god (cf. 8:11).

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<sup>223</sup> Given the limitations of the present discussion, my investigation will focus on only three innovative adaptations, all located within ch. 12.

(Table 4.22) Canaanite Deities		
Moses' Adaptation (12:1-5)		Yahweh's Prediction (31:20)
these are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be careful to do in the land (לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ) which Yahweh the god of your fathers (אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיךָ) has given you to possess all the days that you live in the land (עַל-הָאָדָמָה) (12:1)	A	when I have brought them into the land (אֶל-הָאָדָמָה) ... which I swore to give to their fathers (לְאֲבוֹתֵיךָ)
you shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods (עַבְדוּ-שָׁם) ... (12:2)	B	they will turn to other gods and serve them (וַעֲבֹדוּם)
but you shall seek the place which Yahweh your god will choose ... (12:5)	C	and despise me and break my covenant

Earlier, Yahweh had commanded that Israel was to tear down the altars of the inhabitants of Canaan and to drive out the inhabitants of the land (Exod 34:11-13). In his final speech, Moses goes further in his call for the destruction of Canaanite religion. Every Canaanite place of worship, not just every altar (Exod 34:13), must be eradicated (B). What is more, Israel is to “destroy their name out of that place” where worship took place (12:3). The annihilation demanded by Moses not only includes the destruction of the idols and altars used in Canaanite worship, but also the complete destruction of the *memory* of the gods (cf. 7:24 and 25:19).<sup>224</sup> Israel's destruction of (the memory of) the forbidden places defeats much of the threat inherent in the deity's prediction (B). By destroying their places of habitation, the gods of Canaan are effectively cut off from their land (cf. 31:16).

### ***b. Restructuring of Israelite Society***

Moses' second response to Yahweh's fatalistic prediction is to reorganize the socio-religious structure of Israelite society around a central religious locus. Recently, Bernard M. Levinson's *Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* has presented a thorough reassessment of the centralization formula that pre-

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<sup>224</sup> Ironically, the mention of the Canaanites or the Amalekites (7:24, 12:3, 25:19) within the book of the law guarantees their memory in perpetuity, regardless of the efficiency of Israel's sword.

occupied a century of historical literary investigations.<sup>225</sup> In Levinson's view, Deuteronomy radically reinterprets the pre-existing Covenant Code to institute far-reaching and unprecedented transformations in religion, law, and social structure. Paradoxically, Deuteronomy presents its transformations as both divergent and continuous with the code it seeks to subvert (1997:3). Clearly not the work of amateurs, Levinson's literati are "sophisticated interpreters," "skilled scribes," and "radical innovators" who pseudepigraphically borrow and then radically transform the antecedent code of Exodus. Their final "literary reformulation" thoroughly reconfigures Israel's religious and social status quo around an exclusive cultic center in Jerusalem (1997:3-6, 16, 20, 28, 46, 150).

Levinson's hermeneutic follows a simple principle: any discrepancy between the rudimentary conventions of the Covenant Code and Deuteronomy's subsequent reformulation discloses the process of ancient scribal exegesis (1997:21-2). In what is arguably the oldest section of ch. 12 (vv. 13-19),<sup>226</sup> Levinson demonstrates two radical changes mandated by the book:

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<sup>225</sup> Bernard M. Levinson's understanding of the relationship between the Covenant and Deuteronomic Codes is not new, though he argues that his interpretation of Deuteronomy surpasses previous redaction critical, canon critical, even inner-biblical exegetical understandings of Deuteronomy's interpretive strategy (1997:6, 14-15, 20, 26, 51-2). During the heyday of Pentateuchal dating (1920's), George Dahl wrote: "In general... the relationship of Deuteronomy lies in the general direction of expansion and development of earlier laws. Its code reflects a distinctly more advanced and complicated community life than that underlying Ex. 21-23(34)" (1928:367). According to Levinson, the authors of Deuteronomy established a "revisionist transformation" that unintentionally provided future interpreters with a paradigm to revise existing authoritative texts (1997:22). Levinson's theory bears comparison with theories and discussions of actualization and intertextuality put forward by Joseph Groves (1987), Douglas Knight (1977), Fishbane (1985), Eslinger (1992), and Benjamin D. Sommer (1996).

<sup>226</sup> Chapter 12 employs two slightly different phrases in connection with the name and its association with the place chosen by the deity. The more common phrase states "at the place ... to make his name dwell there (לְשֵׁבוֹ שְׁמוֹ שָׁם) and is found in 12:11, 14:23, 16:2, 6, 11, and 26:2. Less common is the phrase "the place ... to set his name there" (לְשׂוֹם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם), found in 12:21 and 14:24. Most scholars assume these two phrases to be synonymous, in part because the verbs שָׁם ("put") and שָׁבוֹ ("cause to dwell") are combined in 12:5 and 14:23-4. Baruch Halpern, however, claims that the early form of the centralization formula employed the verb שָׁבוֹ and is capable of various interpretations (a place—the place—any place). This original centralization statement was not an instrument of the centralizing reform at Jerusalem; in fact, the verb שָׁבוֹ connotes mobility rather than fixedness.

restrictive centralization of religious sacrifice and liberal concession of secular slaughter. When compared with the introduction to the Covenant Code, Levinson notes that Deuteronomy proscribes the very thing that the older ruling allows. In Exod 20:24, multiple sites are affirmed as legitimate locations where Yahweh will come and give his blessing: “in every place (בְּכָל־הַמְּקוֹם) where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.”

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However, in ch. 12 the old centralizing law (12:13-19) is augmented with the verb שִׁים, which secures the name in a localized place. Deut 12:5 completes the transition from לְשַׁבֵּן to לְשׁוֹם by combining both verbs and giving priority to the latter. In ch. 12, the mobile sanctuary is abolished, and the requirement to slaughter sacrifically at the sanctuary is now understood in terms of Josiah’s pro-Jerusalem reform (Halpern 1981:30f; cf. McConville 1994:118-19).

McConville disagrees with Halpern’s theory of a compositional progression between the two verbs לְשַׁבֵּן and לְשׁוֹם, arguing that there is “no satisfactory demonstration of the alleged transition in verb forms, paralleling a change in the evolution of the centralization theme” (1994:119). McConville also argues that Halpern’s argument rests on outmoded literary critical habits (1994:119). However, McConville does concede to Halpern that the formula is not determinative of a particular place, though such indeterminacy should not be interpreted in favor of a distributive meaning, since 12:14 clearly intends *one* place (1994:120). McConville holds that the altar-law may have only gradually taken on an exclusive meaning.

More significant for the present discussion is an alternative phrase that speaks of a place which Yahweh will choose, but without any reference to his name either being “set there” or “caused to dwell there” (12:14, 18, 26, 14:25, 15:20, 16:7, 15, 16, 17:8, 10, and 31:11). In a rechronologized Deuteronomistic narrative, it is possible that (using Halpern’s logic in the service of a narratological reading) the law which Moses handed to the Levites prior to the theophany (31:11) contained the shorter, generic formula, since Moses’ first injunction to the Levites was that the document was to be read at the place “which Yahweh will choose.” Prior to the theophany, there is no mention of the possibility that the deity will “set” his name or “cause his name to dwell” in the chosen place. However, after the theophany revelation in 31:14-22, Moses writes the law in a book and in the process supplements the original formula with an entirely new innovation: the place which Yahweh will choose will be a place where his *name* will dwell. The central core of Moses’ speech might have been subject to the same revisionary sweep that added the post-theophany frames. This significant invention, placed at the head of the statutes and ordinances section (12:1-5), combines the infinitive constructs לְשַׁבֵּן and לְשׁוֹם, giving the audience a “primacy formula” with which to interpret the centralization plan unveiled in the following chapters (cf. Halpern 1981:23-4).

(Table 4.23) Appropriated Altar Law	
Yahweh's Altar Law (Exod 20:24b)	Deuteronomic [ <i>si</i> ] Appropriation (Deut 12:13-15)
בְּכָל־הַמָּקוֹם (in every place)	(A) בְּכָל־מָקוֹם – in every place (sacred sacrifice at multiple sites prohibited) (B) אֶם־בְּמָקוֹם – in the place (cultic sacrifice / single site proscribed) (C) בְּכָל־שַׁעְרֶיךָ – in all your gates (secular slaughter at multiple sites permitted)

The Deuteronomic authors appropriate the Exodus phrase “in every place” to serve their own purpose (Table 4.23), “deftly rework[ing] it to command the distinctive innovations of Deuteronomy—both cultic centralization and local, secular slaughter” (1997:32).

The theoretical paradigm of narratology<sup>227</sup> permits a near wholesale transfer of Levinson’s reading onto the shoulders of the primary speaker within the storyworld of Deuteronomy.<sup>228</sup> Only now, Levinson’s “Deuteronomic” project is the work of Moses who radically revises the previous altar law of the divine character Yahweh. Reading within a narrative framework erases from Moses’ horizon any foreknowledge of the narrated events of 2 Kgs. 22-3 and collates the writing of the Covenant and Deuteronomic lawcodes into a before-after narrated sequence.<sup>229</sup>

<sup>227</sup> Levinson rejects the efforts of synchronist scholars to harmonize the discrepancies in Deut 12, stating that they “fail to do justice to the degree of philological difficulty in the chapter” (1997:27). A dialogic reading within a narratological framework, however, is flexible enough to account for the *voiced* philological differences in Deut 12.

<sup>228</sup> One of the most critical issues in Levinson’s reading is the assumption that the Covenant Code precedes Deuteronomy as either an “authoritative” or a “prestigious” text. Unless this assumed historical literary dependency can refute the fundamental challenges of such historical critics as Van Seters (1996:319f) or the narratological assertions of Eslinger (1992:56-8), Levinson is open to charges of clever speculation. However, narrative interpreters need not concern themselves with the necessities of demonstrable priority, for the logic of temporal sequence dictates that Yahweh’s discourse in Exod 20 precedes Moses’ final address.

<sup>229</sup> Frank Crüsemann concurs with this temporal relationship between the Covenant and Deuteronomic lawcodes: “The book of the Covenant is older than Deuteronomy and so is the oldest law book in the Old Testament” (1996:109). Later he adds:

The relationship of deuteronomic law to the older Book of the Covenant,

As Moses unveils his plan, the rereader compares notes with Yahweh's theophany (Deut 31:14-22) and the Covenant Code (Exod 20-4) that supplemented the decalogue of Mt. Sinai. The altar law of the Covenant Code promises Yahweh's presence in every place where he will cause his "name" to be remembered. The unit details a mode of worship that leaves Israel's god free to shuttle between sky and earth (Table 4.24).<sup>230</sup>

(Table 4.24) Yahweh's Altar Law - Exod 20:22-6	
A	You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven (22c) אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם כִּי מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם דִּבַּרְתִּי עִמָּכֶם
B	You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold (23) לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן אֱלֹהִי כֶסֶף וְאֱלֹהִי זָהָב לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם
C	An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen (24a) ... מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדָמָה תַעֲשֶׂה־לִּי וְזָבַחְתָּ עָלָיו אֶת־עֹלֹתֶיךָ
X	in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you (24b) בְּכָל־הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּיר אֶת־שְׁמִי אֲבֹא אֵלֶיךָ וּבֵרַכְתִּיךָ
C'	And if you make me an altar of stone (25a) וְאִם־מִזְבֵּחַ אֲבָנִים תַעֲשֶׂה־לִּי
B'	you shall not build it of hewn stones; for if you wield your tool upon it you profane it (25b) לֹא־תִבְנֶנּוּ אֶתְהֶן גְּזִית בִּי חֶרֶבֶד הַנִּפְתָּ עָלֶיהָ וַתְּחַלְּלֶהָ
A'	and you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it (26) וְלֹא־תַעֲלֶה בַמַּעֲלֹת עַל־מִזְבְּחִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִגְלֶה עֶרְוַתְךָ עָלָיו

Yahweh establishes his sovereignty at the outset (A) by emphasizing his place of address. In Exod 19:18, the narrator described the descent of Israel's god to Mt. Sinai; here in 20:22c Yahweh accentuates the heaven-earth dichotomy by adopting the earth-bound perspective of his addressees standing outside the perimeter of Mt. Sinai (Exod 19:13, 23). "You have seen (רְאִיתֶם) that I spoke with you from heaven," says Yahweh. From Is-

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viewed as a whole, compels us to regard the more recent document as a replacement for the older one. The decisive features, which made the Book of the Covenant different from other ancient Near Eastern law codes, were adopted by Deuteronomy and expanded ... [Similarities between the two law codes] compel us to interpret the deuteronomic law not as an amplification of the Book of the Covenant, but rather as a replacement for it ... The most significant new content accents are the character of Deuteronomy as the speech of Moses rather than God ..." (1996:201-2)."

<sup>230</sup> Joe M. Sprinkle's chiastic analysis of this passage is similar to mine (1994:36, 39).



rael's point of view, the Sinai theophany indeed appeared to come from non-earthly realms (cf. U. Cassuto 1983:255). But the reader, equipped with the narrator's satellite view in 19:18, sees in the perspectival shift an emphasis on Yahweh's supremacy over his subjects. Exaggerated distance is paralleled with an inclusio (A') that effectively grounds Yahweh's chosen people at the base of the mountain (v. 26). The revelation from above must not compete with libidinous unveilings below. The next concentric level prohibits inappropriate worship. With Yahweh's voice the only memory, Israel has little chance of creating iconic imitations of Yahweh (v. 23).<sup>231</sup> Still, any thought of creating a tangible rival is banned (B)—Yahweh will be remembered, not represented. Even the rocky materials of their stone altars (v. 25b) must be left undressed and in their natural state (B'). Prohibition yields to permission in the two statements on either side of chiasmic center. Yahweh's preference (v. 24a) is for an earthen altar (C), though concession is granted (C') for stone structures as well. Yet even here, restrictions apply. Earthy materials (אֲדָמָה), humble, impermanent (Houtmann 1997:55), and worthless for high-rise projects (cf. Gen 11:1-9), underline the heaven and earth distinction (Sprinkle 1994:38).<sup>232</sup> In Yahweh's scheme, earthlings have no business projecting in heaven's direction, hence the prohibition against stairs (A') and the stipulation for virgin stone (לֹא-תִבְנֶה אֶתֶּהָן גְּזִית) that pre-empts temptation to engrave symbolic images, build pillars, or quarry Mt. Sinai (cf. 19:12).

At center stands the oft-discussed statement: "in every place where I cause my name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you."<sup>233</sup>

A – I (Yahweh) have talked with you from heaven (22c)

X – in every place ... I will come to you (24)

A' – you shall not go up by steps (26)

Yahweh's promise is a parenthetical remark (Sprinkle 1994:38) interrupting the discussion of altar materials while continuing to emphasize the appro-

<sup>231</sup> Sprinkle notes: "By speaking as an invisible voice from the sky, [God] was indicating that no earthly image is appropriate for him" (1994:37).

<sup>232</sup> There is some debate whether the "earthen altar" is to be of mere earth or of some kind of brick (Sprinkle 1994:41-2).

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Jonathon Z. Smith for discussion on the connection between memory and place (1987:26).

appropriate vector of divine-human interaction. While Yahweh speaks from the sky, the earthly locations where his presence will irrupt are multiple. No corresponding movement in the opposite direction is permitted (A'); all verbs of motion (אַבּוּא אֵלַיִךְ) along the vertical axis must remain unidirectional (cf. לֹא־תֵעָלֶה). And where would Yahweh visit his blessings? Yahweh is as geographically ambiguous as he is grammatically vague; literally, v. 24 reads “in every [the] place” (בְּכָל־הַמְּקוֹם). The Hebrew idiom for “every” is כָּל plus an indefinite substantive, while a definite substantive preceded with כָּל usually means “entirety” or “the whole.” Nevertheless, many scholars argue against this philological convention and maintain that the correct translation is plural and distributive—“in every place”—based in part on similar translations of כָּל plus an indefinite substantive in Gen 20:13, Exod 1:22, and Deut 11:24 (Levinson 1997:32, fn 18; Sprinkle 1994:47).<sup>234</sup>

The altar law of Exod 20 resonates with holy antithesis as Israel’s liberating deity introduces the terms of his agreement for his newly liberated subjects. Forty years later on the plains of Moab, Israel faces the loss of its intrepid leader and the recession of its patron deity. Moses rises to the formidable challenge with the promulgation of a revised altar law that will meet the pragmatic concerns of a new generation facing long-term residence in a foreign territory and a tenuous relationship with Yahweh. In his appropriation of Yahweh’s altar law (Deut 12:1-5), Moses orders the complete destruction of all paraphernalia associated with idolatry (vv. 3-4). Moses’ commands to “tear down” (וַתִּצְתְּתֵם) and “dash in pieces” (שִׁבַּרְתֶּם), to “burn” (תִּשְׂרֹפוּן) and “hew” (תִּגְדְּעוּן) are contrasted with the simple command in v. 6 to bring (הֵבֵאתֶם) all sacrifices “there” (שָׁמָּה) to the place of Yahweh’s choosing (B’).<sup>235</sup> In vv. 5-7, destruction of the heinous sites of

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<sup>234</sup> Gesenius’ *Grammar* maintains that the original text did not contain the definite article, a grammatical adjustment made in “dogmatic correction” (1910:412, §127e).

<sup>235</sup> From a narratological perspective, Moses is oblivious of David, Jerusalem and Josiah, his epistemological reach limited to that of any gifted prophet. Rather than a program for religious renewal in Jerusalem, “Deuteronomy’s” centralization formula represents a re-engineering of Israel’s socio-political world that concretizes at a spatial/physical level the decalogic principle of singular worship. Moses’ statutes and ordinances protect Yahweh’s central concern for independence, while giving Israel a focal point for their religious attentions.

The propensity of scholars to read Jerusalem back into Deuteronomy is widespread, and Levinson is no exception: “The intent of the Deuteronomic reform,

worship sublimates into seeking *the* place where Yahweh's "name" will be sacralized (לְשׁוֹם אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שָׁם) and where Israel will bring its sacrifices.<sup>236</sup> This single centralized place (v. 7) stands in contrast to the multifarious practices of the Canaanites (v. 1). A comparison between Moses' directive (Deut 12)<sup>237</sup> and Yahweh's previous discourse (Exod 20) is instructive.<sup>238</sup>

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and of Josiah's drive for cultic and political renewal, was to create a unified, centralized, essentially homogenous cult and to assert the authority of Jerusalem, simultaneously political and religious, over all of Judah and Israel" (1997:62). To equate Deuteronomy's centralization with Jerusalem is counter to narrative logic, for Jerusalem does not appear on Moses' epistemological horizon. While Levinson and company assume that the centralization formula of Deuteronomy has in view the city of Jerusalem, a narratological reading of the formula refuses to read later narrative developments into the intentions of an earlier character. The appropriation of the centralization formula for Jerusalem must await some two hundred years of narrative time, when the ambitious and cunning David picks up where Yahweh has been remiss and compels him to choose the site most advantageous to the young king's schemes (2 Sam 7). Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the narratological reader distance Moses' intentions as read in the book of the law from Josiah's interpretation of that same book. For theological reasons, Miller takes a rather similar position:

One may be led to accentuate that note when these chapters are read against the historical background of Josiah's reform (cf. 2 Kgs 22-3), But there is in fact no reference to Jerusalem here; one must listen to what the text says rather than merely labeling it the law of cult centralization. This makes it a matter largely of historical interest, and even then for a fairly brief period of Israel's history (1990:131; cf. also von Rad 1956:38).

Those who wish to downplay (usually for conservative reasons) the connection between Moses' call for centralization and Josiah's temple reforms often argue that "the place" is not the primary concern of Deut 12:5. McConville (1984:30f; 1994:137) and Miller (1990:131) for example, argue that the primary focus of the passage is on Yahweh's freedom of "choice" (cf. Driver 1986:140). Those interpreters who think that Moses grants Yahweh such freedom (a curious inversion of the ancient divine-human economy) fail to recognize that the deity's freedom in Moses' centralization program is limited to choosing the location for the dwelling of the name.

<sup>236</sup> After a lengthy summation of many possible reasons for cultic centralization, Tigay concludes: "Whatever the reason, the view that sacrificing at multiple sites was considered inherently pagan is the only one that can claim explicit textual support from the very passage that forbids the practice" (1996:464).

<sup>237</sup> Cairns notes that there are three distinct sections on the centralization of worship in ch. 12 (vv. 2-7, 8-12, 13-19), with the first section probably the latest addition (1992:126). In traditional sole sanctuary vs. central sanctuary debates, all

Conspicuously absent in ch. 12 is Yahweh's concern over the construction of a legitimate altar and the use of appropriate materials.<sup>239</sup> The deity's promise of visitation in Exod 20:24 is likewise concealed in Moses' cultic transformation; the dynamic verbs "I will cause to remember" (אֲזַכֵּיר), "I will come" (אָבוֹא), and "I will bless" (וַיְבַרְכֵנִי) have all been replaced (v. 5) with a single verb "choose" (יְבַחֵר). This verbal substitute is complemented with two infinitives, "to set" (לָשׂוּם) and "to dwell" (לְשַׁכֵּן), each anchoring Yahweh's restricted action to a single place.<sup>240</sup> Moses also eliminates all reference to Yahweh's heavenly dwelling and instead focuses three times (12:5, 6, 7) on the demonstrative adverb "there" (שָׁם) to refer metonymically and resumptively to the alliterated phrase לָשׂוּם אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שָׁם ("to put his name there").<sup>241</sup>

Further hermeneutic manipulations are also evident on the part of Moses (Table 4.25). He appears to mimic Yahweh in a mirror citation of the deity's earlier speech, but with subtle changes that reshape the original directive in the direction of an exclusive site.

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participants agree that 12:2-7 dictates a sole sanctuary. Levinson omits this passage from his discussion, perhaps because of its silence on secular slaughter in local areas. For demonstrations of other Mosaic reformulations in Deut 12, Levinson's work is recommended, with appropriate narratological dehistoricization.

<sup>238</sup> Noll assumes that the temple is of "great concern" to the narrator, given the degree of attention awarded this sanctum within his story (1997:34). The focus on the temple belongs primarily to the characters within the storyworld, though to be sure, Noll views the narrator as a citizen of that same world.

<sup>239</sup> Also absent in Deuteronomy's reformulated "altar law" is the verb "sacrifice" (זָבַח). As Levinson explains, the act of "sacrifice" has been "deliberately redefined" to refer to the secular slaughter of flesh in the gates of their future cities (cf. Deut 12:15, 21) (1997:38, 43, 49).

<sup>240</sup> On the complementary function of infinitive constructs, see Waltke/O'Connor 1990:606.

<sup>241</sup> Oddly enough, the use of the verbs "put/establish" (לָשׂוּם) and the more transitory verb "dwell" (לְשַׁכֵּן) infuses Moses' initiative with a certain ambivalence (e.g., 12:5). Ralph W. Klein writes: "The deity does not 'live' in the tabernacle in the same way as humans 'live' (*yasab*) in a house or town. From the point of view of the priestly writer, one senses in the word *sakan* the tenuous character of divine presence ... Both Yahweh's transcendence and his freedom are protected by describing his presence with the verb *sakan*" (1996:271).

(Table 4.25) Further Hermeneutic Manipulations	
Exod 20:24	Deut 12:5-6
you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings וְזָבַחְתָּ עָלָיו אֶת־עֹלֹתֶיךָ	to the place which Yahweh your God will choose כִּי אִם־אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוָה
in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you בְּכָל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּיר אֶת־שְׁמִי אָבֹא אֵלֶיךָ בְּרַבְתִּיךָ	there you shall bring your burnt offerings וְהִבַּאתֶם שָׁמָּה עֹלֹתֵיכֶם



Localized placement of Yahweh is affected with the deletion of a simple word (“every” — כָּל). Divine placement is accompanied with replacement as the chosen site (יִבְחַר, third-person) substitutes for Yahweh’s free-wheeling memorializations (אֶזְכֵּיר, first-person *hiphil*). Moses also uses the verb “bring” (בוא) in place of the verb “sacrifice” (זָבַח), reserving the latter verb for the secular slaughter now permitted in places that once had played host to sacred offerings (12:15, 21). Likewise, Yahweh’s blessings are divorced from his hierophanous activity (Exod 20:24) and instead, sublimated (Deut 12:7) among the households of Israel (אֵתֶם וּבְתֵיכֶם).<sup>242</sup>

What motivates Moses to “transform all spheres of Judean life?” What are the reasons behind his “radically new vision of the religious and public polity?” Why does Moses “locate his innovative vision in prior authority by tendentiously appropriating the Covenant Code?” These questions (cf. Levinson 1997:16) are summarily addressed in Deuteronomy’s rechronologized narrative. The centralized site envisioned in his original draft of the law (31:11) represented Moses’ attempt to secure for the fledgling nation an accessible location where Israel might appear in the presence of Yahweh without the need for a prophetic mediator. The face-to-face revelation at Horeb had unnerved Israel (5:4); before his death, Moses devises a plan to safeguard Israel’s security in the presence of Yahweh while maintaining a steady, diffused flow of vital blessing. To rephrase Sonnet, nothing less than the “divine disclosure” in the tent of meeting could have engendered the changes (complete revision as opposed to Sonnet’s less in-

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Levinson (1997:35), whose analysis of Deut 12:13-19 prefigures my interpretation of Deut 12:5-6.

vasive “supplementation”) evident both in the multiple frames and in the lawcode of Moses’ book (1997:161-2).

### *c. Abstraction of Divine Presence (Name Theology)*

The secreted revelation in the tent of meeting sets the stage for a complete overhaul of the original law that mediates between a predicted divine occultation and Israel’s need for divine presence. As Moses revises his original altar law, he innovates a radical shift in Israel’s religious ethos towards an abstracted form of divine presence. Picking up on Yahweh’s earlier altar law, Moses announces that Yahweh will do more than simply “cause his name to be remembered.” Instead, Yahweh will establish (לָשׂוּם) his “name” in a place of his own selection (Table 4.26). According to Joe M. Sprinkle, the focus of Exod 20:24 is on the appearance of Yahweh and his blessing; the phrase “in every place where I cause to be remembered my name” (A) is of lesser importance than the main clause (E and G) promising a benevolent presence (1994:47). In Deut 12:5, “the place” is the subject of the entire sentence (A), reinforced by the repeated use of the adverb “there” (שָׁם) (D and E). No doubt, the *centrality* of “the place” in Deut 12:5, especially when compared with Exod 20:24, accounts for the overwhelming interest that scholarship has shown in the geographically-centralized site for ancient Israelite worship (i.e., Jerusalem). More important, in Moses’ transformation, Yahweh does not “come” to Israel with blessings (Exod 20:24) (G). In fact, the only verbs of motion are those engaged by the devotees who are commanded to “seek” and to “go” to the place where the “name” resides (E). Once there, they are to sacrifice and rejoice in the blessings they have received from Yahweh (12:7) (F). Where Yahweh promised (Exod 29:45-6) that he would dwell in Israel’s midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), the best that Moses can hope for is that Yahweh will cause his “name” to dwell in the place of his choice.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Based on Exod 33:7-11, Craigie identifies the nomadic tabernacle housing the ark as the place where Yahweh was expected to set his name (1976:217). Craigie fails to note, however, that Moses’ book of the law involves a number of key innovations that abrogate old rules and understandings while actualizing key elements in order to suit the new situation awaiting Israel in the land of Canaan. A key factor in that new exigency is the occultation of the deity.

(Table 4.26) Dwelling for Yahweh's Name	
Yahweh's Altar-Law (Exod 20:24)	Moses' Innovation (Deut 12:5-7)
in every place בְּכָל־הַמָּקוֹם	A but to the place כִּי אִם־אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם
where I cause to be remembered אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֹּר	B which Yahweh ... will choose ... to put אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם ... לָשׂוּם
my name אֶת־שְׁמִי	C his name אֶת־שְׁמוֹ
	D there for its <sup>244</sup> dwelling שָׁם לְשַׁכְּנוֹ
I will come to you אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ	E you shall seek and you shall go there ... תִּדְרְשׁוּ וּבֵאתָ שָׁמָּה
	F and there you shall bring your [offerings and sacrifices] ... and there you shall eat before Yahweh your God and you shall rejoice ...
and bless you וּבֵרַכְתִּיךָ	G in which Yahweh your God has blessed you אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

How does situating the “name” of the deity in a chosen location resolve the impasse between a nation desperate for the need of divine presence and Yahweh’s prediction of withdrawal?<sup>245</sup> Von Rad identified a “Name Theology” in Deuteronomy to explain an apparent trend in demythologization that shelved outdated conceptions of a deity residing in a

<sup>244</sup> My translation uses the neutral rather than gendered third person suffix, since the dwelling is for Yahweh’s name rather than for the deity himself.

The MT use of *לְשַׁכְּנוֹ* in 12:5 is a *hapax legomenon* that is resolved by revocalizing the problematic word as *לְשַׁכְּנוֹ*, intensifying it with a *piel* conjugation that lends causative force to the meaning: “to cause to dwell.” The advantage is that this form of the verb is found in 12:11 and 26:2, raising the possibility that the same form may have been original to 12:5 (Mayes 1991:225; Christensen 2001:242-3; Craigie 1976:217, fn 9; Thompson 1974:166; Tigay 1996:365, fn 19; and Driver 1986:140, fn 3).

<sup>245</sup> McConville asseverates: “The identity of the place is not intrinsically the issue. Rather it is the nature of the presence of God, and the rationale behind his remaining at any time with his people” (1994:123).

mythic earthly sanctuary and instead, balanced a transcendent existence in heaven with a mundane presence in the temple (1956:38-9). The presence of a “Name” theme in Deuteronomy has led many to argue that Deuteronomy’s view of Yahweh is theologically advanced,<sup>246</sup> with fewer anthropomorphic conceptions of the deity than in other biblical writings.<sup>247</sup> Tigay, for example, writes: “By speaking ... of God’s *name* as dwelling in the chosen place, Deuteronomy seeks to correct the impression that God Himself literally dwells there: only His name “dwells” there, whereas God Himself is in heaven” (1996:120; cf. also Weinfeld 1991:37f). Some are less inclined to relegate all divine presence to Deuteronomy’s heavenly sphere. Roland de Vaux for example, asserts that Deuteronomy frequently describes Yahweh as residing among people and even depicts the devotee performing his religious obligations “before Yahweh” (1967:219-28).<sup>248</sup> Recently, Ian Wilson has advanced de Vaux’s argument with a detailed investigation of Yahweh’s presence in the book of Deuteronomy. Ian Wilson argues against the mainstream view of a sophisticated demythologized theology in Deuteronomy (1995:3f). Drawing on a comment by J. G. McConville (1979:149, n. 41), Ian Wilson sees in the phrase לְפָנַי יְהוָה (“before Yahweh”) evidence that the author envisioned a real divine presence before whom the ancient devotee could perform his religious rituals (e.g., Deut 12:7).<sup>249</sup> Ian Wilson ada-

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<sup>246</sup> Weinfeld argues typically that 1 Kgs 8 is the view of the Deuteronomist (as opposed to the character Solomon) whose goal is to modify the ancient mythological view present at the beginning of Solomon’s prayer (8:12-13) with a more theologically enlightened understanding of the deity (1992b:195-6; cf. also Mayes 1991:224-5; Christensen 2001:243; de Vaux 1967:225f; Olson 1994:68; Cairns 1992:126-7; Tigay 1996:120.)

<sup>247</sup> Despite the “sophisticated” theology that many assume behind Deuteronomy’s “name” concept, Cairns notes that “there is also a certain institutionalizing evident in Deut 12: the name is ‘set’ at the shrine (v. 5), in comparison with the free ‘coming’ of God to the ‘memorial’ death altar of Exod 20:24” (1992:127).

<sup>248</sup> According to de Vaux, Yahweh is simultaneously present in both earth and heaven. As for the phrase “the place which Yahweh your God will choose to put his name there,” de Vaux argues that this phrase is legal rather than cultic, since in the Amarna letters a similar phrase denotes affirmation of ownership and possession (1967:219-29). For discussion on de Vaux’s understanding of divine “presence,” see Wenham (1971:112-13), Mayes (1991:224), Weinfeld (1992b:194f.), and Jeffrey Niehaus (1992:23-4).

<sup>249</sup> In his effort to debunk scholarship’s insistence that Deuteronomy downplays earthly manifestations of divine presence, Wilson does not distinguish between the numerous instances of divine presence in the past as recollected in the



mantly opposes T. N. D. Mettinger's view (1982:53) that לִפְנֵי יְהוָה is a dead metaphor.

[If,] as advocates of Name Theology affirm, the Deuteronomic writings are concerned to emphasize the transcendence of YHWH, it would have been unwise of them to use (or retain) as a circumlocution for "at the sanctuary/chosen place" an expression which is more neutrally understood as referring to the proximate Presence of God (and thus as implying the very opposite of what Name Theology represents) (1995:156).

Ian Wilson asserts that the majority of occurrences of the phrase לִפְנֵי יְהוָה in Deut 12-26 are to be understood literally and that any activities which occur "before Yahweh" are performed in the immediate presence of the deity. The "name" of Yahweh, according to Ian Wilson, signifies a localized presence at the place chosen by Yahweh (1995:158-59).<sup>250</sup>

Narratologically, the abstracted "name" in ch. 12 has less to do with the transcendent ideology of a Deuteronom(ist)ic writer or school than with Moses' pragmatic response to a god set to disappear. As McConville argues,<sup>251</sup> the "name" is not a prophylactic device to protect Yahweh's heavenly location or a gnosticization of the divine to preserve spiritual purity. However, while the "name" of Yahweh is in fact *present* in the chosen site, it is only the *name* of the deity. As is clear from Exod 20:24, the "name" is a memory associated with interventions of divine power rather than any enduring physical presence. In his reconceptualization of Yahweh's original altar law, Moses memorializes the "name" of the deity whose power was once palpably present for Israel (cf. Exod 3:15, 5:23, 6:3, and 9:16). Whether or not Yahweh will be present in Israel's future, the people always have present in their midst the "name" of the deity. And, regardless of whether Israel enjoys the same interventions on the other side of the Jordan, it can hold on to the memory of a time when Yahweh intervened decisively on its behalf. Ironically, that "name," that memory, marks Yahweh's

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first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy (in consonance with Exodus and Numbers), and the divine presence envisioned in Moses' future program in chs. 12-26 (1995:210f).

<sup>250</sup> McConville agrees with Wilson's assessment that the formula is indicative of an earthly presence in the place of choice (1994:114f).

<sup>251</sup> My interpretation bears resemblance to McConville's: "The name of Yahweh in Deuteronomy ... is not a device to preserve the transcendence of Yahweh; rather, it serves, more subtly, to affirm both his transcendence and his presence, as part of an explication of his character" (1994:121).

permanent hiatus by substituting a presence once tangible but now poised to retreat. For this reason it is imperative that Israel never forget past performances of the “name” on its behalf. For this reason too, the basic curriculum for all generations of children is the rehearsal of the Exodus event (Deut 6:20-5). Come what may, Yahweh cannot take from Israel that which it holds central in its memory.

The presence of the “name” in the chosen location becomes both a *substitution* for the absent deity and a *memorialization* of a time when Yahweh was vividly present in Israel’s past. True, when the congregation goes to the cultic center, it is to eat, sacrifice, and rejoice “before” Yahweh. But the “presence” before which all this religious activity is performed is the static presence of the “name” of the deity, not the dynamic presence of Yahweh himself (Table 4.27).<sup>252</sup> At center stands the warning “you must not do so to Yahweh” (X). This phrase has been variously interpreted, though most see here a prohibition against multiple sites.<sup>253</sup> The parallels surrounding this prohibition do more than contrast worship location (C’ versus C). They also contrast the names of the Canaanite gods (B) with the “name” of Yahweh (B’); the names of the Canaanite gods are to be eradicated (A), but the place of Yahweh’s “name” is to be sought (A’).

The opening chapters of the *statutes and ordinances* (chs. 12-16) detail Moses’ blueprint for perpetuating the memory of Yahweh’s presence with regular sacrificial pilgrimages to the localized presence of his “name.” Year after year, the *meme* of a once-present deity would be perpetuated in the same way that the memory of a person’s life is kept alive through the replication of his/her genetic code.<sup>254</sup> The levirate marriage law of Deut 25:6 is

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<sup>252</sup> P. P. Jensen takes issue with von Rad’s distinction between “presence theology” and “appearance theology,” arguing that these are not mutually exclusive alternatives, but rather different aspects (“static” and “dynamic”) of presence. In Jensen’s view, the phrase *יְהוָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה* is a static presence that would ensure continuous access for Israel (1992:112-14).

<sup>253</sup> For discussions on the phrase “you shall not do so to Yahweh your God”, see Thompson (1974:165-6), Ingrid Hjelm (1999:299), and Tigay (1996:120, 459-64).

<sup>254</sup> Moses announces in 29:19 that total destruction ( *וּמָחָה יְהוָה אֶת-שְׁמוֹ מִתַּחַת* ) awaits the person who would neglect to obey his book of the law, thus appropriating for his work the same condemnatory function associated with the deity’s “book of life” in Exod 32:33. Behind all these references to the total destruction of a person and his/her memory lies the common curse of the ancient

important for understanding the dynamics of presence that inheres in the perpetuation of the name of an individual or group. According to Tigay, death was not viewed by the ancient as the end of an individual's existence. Those still living on earth could assist the deceased individual by, for example, perpetuating the name of the deceased and thereby maintaining a connection between the departed and those still alive (1996:482). For Moses, the "name" of Yahweh functioned as a legitimate icon that adhered to the spirit of the aniconic second commandment (5:8) while perpetuating the presence of the deity who, like the departed individual of Deut 25, was no longer present. This minimal "presence" was forbidden the Canaanite deities, whose names were to be completely exterminated.

(Table 4.27) Yahweh's "Name" versus the Name of Canaanite Deities  
Deut 12:3-5

A	and destroy וְאַבְדֶתֶם
B	their name אֶת־שֵׁמֶם
C	out of that place וְאַבְדֶתֶם אֶת־שֵׁמֶם מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא
X	you shall not do so to Yahweh your God לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּן בְּן־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
C'	But to the place which Yahweh your God will choose כִּי יִאֶמְרֶה אֱלֹהֵימְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
B'	to put his name there for its to dwell לְשׂוֹם אֶת־שֵׁמוֹ שָׁם לְשִׁכְנוֹ
A'	you shall seek and go there תִּדְרְשׁוּ וּבִאתֶם שָׁמָּה

#### 4. Encouragement of Joshua

Yahweh's announcement of the final days of Moses and his private installation of the new leader (31:14-23) provokes not only the revision of the law but also a convoluted public speech of encouragement for Joshua from Moses. On a number of occasions in the *Succession Speech* Moses alludes to his impending death (chs. 1-3). With every passing word, the time draws closer for promise to yield to fulfillment, for the wilderness to be replaced

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Near East (Christensen 2001:165; Tigay 1996:91. For more discussion on annihilation of the name, see Tigay 1996:119.)

by Canaan, and for Moses to give way to Joshua. But as is evident from his voluminous discourse and convoluted digressions, Moses resists the relinquishment of his leadership and his life (Deut 1:37; 3:26).

Just when Moses returns to his *Succession Speech*, the narrator steps in with an *inclusio* to his introduction (31:1): “Moses went (וַיֵּלֶךְ) and spoke these words” (הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה).<sup>255</sup> The ambiguous verb of motion has been interpreted as either a continuation of the scene narrated in chs. 29-30 (as seems to be the case in the LXX) or the beginning of a new scene (Lohfink 1993:258-59). Some resolve the troublesome verb through metathesization so that the verse reads “when Moses had *completed* his address.” But others note that Moses continues to speak after 31:1 and consequently, interpret וַיֵּלֶךְ as “Moses *continued* to speak” (RSV). Rechronologized, the *fabula* of Deuteronomy provides another solution. Ian Cairns notes the biblical convention that whenever Moses retreated to receive a revelation, he always returned to the people with a message (1992:271).<sup>256</sup> For example, Moses was appointed mediator in Exod 19:19 and after he received the contents of the Book of the Covenant (Exod 20-3) from Yahweh, he returns to deliver its contents to the people (Exod 24:3). Moses’ entrance into the tent of meeting is noted 31:15: “and Moses ... went (וַיֵּלֶךְ) and presented [himself].” The reverse motion expected is omitted in the narrator’s introduction (1:1), but supplied in 31:1.

Exiting the tent, Moses approaches the congregation charged with the task of teaching the song to the people. The prophet’s movement from the private confines of the tent to the public stage of Moab is noted in 32:44: “Moses came (וַיָּבֹא) and recited all the words of this song in the ears of the people.” In storyworld reality, Moses actually intends to address the congregation with two speeches, one of his own invention (the *Succession Speech*), the other commissioned by Yahweh. Just as the narrator concludes the promulgation of the Song with a verb of motion (32:44), so too does the completion of the promulgation of Moses’ law receive a narratorial verb of motion in 31:1 (Table. 4.28). This notice occurs at the point in Moses’

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<sup>255</sup> Mayes (1991:372-3) argues that the phrase in 31:1 concludes the discourse unit begun in 29:1, while Merrill (1994:396) holds that 31:1 completes the introduction given by the narrator in 1:1. Alternatively, Cairns (1992:271) posits a link between 31:1 and the notice of 5:30-6:1 which sets the stage for the delivery of the supplemental Moab material.

<sup>256</sup> Levenson himself argues that in 31:1, the “*wayyelek* is not the traditional ‘and he continued’ but the more regular ‘and he went’” (1975:210).

speech where he shifts from broadcasting the contents of the book of the law to the *Succession Speech* (31:1).

(Table 4.28) Parallel Frames	
Narrator's Frame of Moses' Witness	Narrator's Frame of Yahweh's Witness
these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel (1:1)	Moses spoke the words of this song ... in the ears of all the assembly of Israel (31:30)
<i>Succession Speech with embedded book of the law</i> (1:6-30:20)	<i>Yahweh's Song as witness</i> (32:1-43)
Moses went (אָנָּן) and spoke these words to all Israel (31:1)	Moses came (אָנָּן) and recited all the words of this song in the ears of the people (32:44)

The dual references in 31:1 and 32:44 mark Moses' return from his encounter with Yahweh. They also mark the prophet's final mediation to the people of Israel. Moses is aware that this is his last performance as Israel's mediator, stating in the closing paragraphs of his *Succession Speech* that he is no longer able to "go out or come in" (31:2). The narrator's calculated use of the verb אָנָּן in the framebreak of 31:1 falls immediately before Moses' public confession, underlining the poignancy of the prophet's moment of truth before his people.

As he resumes his *Succession Speech* (31:1-8), Moses notes the exigency that prompts his encouragement of Joshua (cf. 31:14, 1:37-38, 3:23-28). Given the radical transformations evident in Moses' revised lawcode, the rereader has come to anticipate the unexpected from the primary speaker of Deuteronomy. In his encouragement speech (Table 4.29), Moses delivers on the reader's expectation, first addressing the congregation (31:2-6) and then the new leader (31:7-8). The outer sections of this unit contrast Yahweh's retracted support for Moses with the divine support claimed for Israel (A and A'). Moses' promise of divine presence to Joshua ("he will not fail you") is exceptionally ironic, given that the speaker's disbarment from Canaan marks the beginning of Yahweh's withdrawal (cf. Num 20:10-13; 27:12-23). In section B, Yahweh and Joshua will go over the Jordan, in direct contrast to Moses' inability to cross. Yahweh will precede the congregation, with Joshua heading the group (v. 3).

(Table 4.29) Moses' Encouragement of Israel - 31:2-6	
A	Yahweh has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan ( <b>לֹא תַעְבֵּר</b> לֹא אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה ) (v.2)
B	Yahweh your God, he will go over before you ( <b>יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא עֹבֵר</b> ) ... Joshua, he shall go over before you ( <b>יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הוּא עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ</b> ) (v. 3)
C	Yahweh will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og ( <b>וַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לָהֶם</b> ) ( <b>כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְסִיחוֹן וְלִעֹג</b> ) (v. 4)
X	will give them over to you ( <b>וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיכֶם</b> ) (v. 5)
C'	you shall do to them according to all the commandment which I have commanded you ( <b>וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָהֶם כְּכָל-הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם</b> )
B'	be strong and of a good courage ( <b>חֲזָקוּ וְאִמְצוּ</b> ), do not fear or be in dread of them ( <b>אֲלֹ-תִירָאוּ וְאֲלֹ-תַעֲרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם</b> ); for Yahweh your God, he <i>it is</i> that goes with you ( <b>כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּךְ</b> ) (v. 6)
A'	he will not fail you, nor forsake you ( <b>לֹא יִרְפֹּךְ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבֶךָ</b> )

The suffixed noun used to describe the Yahweh-Joshua leadership in v. 3 is **לְפָנֶיךָ**, a word nuanced by the theophanic threat of declining presence. Moses' portrayal of Yahweh and Joshua leading the people is paired with a command for Israel to put away all fear of the presence (**מִפְּנֵיהֶם**) of the enemy, since Yahweh is *with them* (B'). With the phrase "be strong and of good courage," Moses lifts a promise made to Joshua in Yahweh's private installation and appropriates it for the general congregation of Israel (Table 4.30). To drive home the counter-thrust, Moses reiterates a paradigmatic theme from the first chapters of his *Succession Speech* to describe the havoc that Yahweh will wreck on the Canaanites (3:1-17).<sup>257</sup>

(Table 4.30) Appropriated Promise	
Yahweh's Encouragement to Joshua (31:23)	Moses' Encouragement to Israel (31:6)
be strong and of good courage ( <b>חֲזָק וְאִמְצָן</b> ) ... I will surely be with you ( <b>וְאִנֹּכִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ</b> )	be strong and of good courage ( <b>חֲזָקוּ וְאִמְצוּ</b> ) ... for Yahweh your God, he it is that goes with you ( <b>כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּךְ</b> )

The conquest on the other hand, will be a collaborative effort. The Israelites are required to annihilate the enemy in accordance with the command-

<sup>257</sup> Concerning 1:4, Tigay writes: "[The] victories are not mentioned merely as a chronological marker but because they constitute the second pivotal theme in the coming address. They are the mirror image of the events at Kadesh ..." (1996:5).

ments laid down by Moses (7:1-5, 12:2-3, 20:16-17), while Yahweh is summoned indirectly to participate (וְנִתְּנָם יְהוָה לְפָנֵיכֶם וְעָשִׂיתֶם לָהֶם) in the destruction of the enemy (31:5). By publicly implicating Yahweh in the conquest, Moses establishes a reciprocal equation that throws onto the deity's shoulders responsibility for the people's apostasy. The degree to which the deity responds to Moses' challenge will be empirically demonstrated by the temptations that remain in Canaan to lure the people away from Yahweh (31:4). The theophanic ball is now in Yahweh's court. If he will work his wrathful vengeance on behalf of Israel against the Canaanite inhabitants as he did Sihon and Og, Israel will stand a fighting chance of retaining both land and divine presence. Placing Yahweh publicly on-the-spot is no less shrewd a rhetorical ploy as is the concealment of Yahweh's theophany from Israel.

At last, Moses summons Joshua forward for his much-heralded moment in the public spotlight. Again dialogic tensions are evident as Moses appropriates Yahweh's private installation with a transformed public encouragement of his successor. Yahweh's private commissioning in the tent of meeting was to the point. Joshua was commanded to be strong and courageous (A), for he would be the man to cause the people to enter (*hiphil* form of בּוֹא) Canaan (B). Having focused on Joshua's tasks (A and B), Yahweh then announces his intention to keep his promise (C) and to assist Joshua (E). In his public appropriation of Yahweh's private commissioning (Table 4.31), Moses encourages Joshua with a quotation from Yahweh's speech: "be strong and of good courage" (A).<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Tracing back to the opening chapters of Moses' *Succession Speech*, the reader observes that each plea for clemency (1:37-8; 3:23-8) was rebuffed, followed by a command given to "encourage" Joshua (וְהִזְקֵהוּ וְאַמְצֵהוּ). In Num 27:19, however, Yahweh had commanded Moses to "commission" Joshua (וְצִוִּיתָהוּ אֹתוֹ), a task reported as completed immediately (27:22-3). Nowhere does Yahweh instruct Moses to "encourage and strengthen" Joshua.

Lohfink argues that Moses' public statements in 31:7-8 constitute an official *installation* of the new leader to the task of land developer (1962b:38). However, Sonnet points out that the keyword צוה is absent in the public event of vv. 7-8 and that the official *public* installation of Joshua occurred much earlier in Num 27 (1997:130-31; for an extended discussion on the "installation" of Joshua, see Lori L. Rowlett 1996:121-44).

(Table 4.31) Appropriated Encouragement		
Yahweh's Private Commissioning (31:23)		Moses' Public <i>Succession Speech</i> (31:7-8)
be strong and of good courage (חֹזֶק וְאַמֶּץ)	A	be strong and of good courage (חֹזֶק וְאַמֶּץ)
for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land (כִּי אַתָּה תְּבִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָאָרֶץ)	B	for you shall go with this people into the land (כִּי אַתָּה תִּבּוֹא אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ)
which I swore to give them (אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָהֶם)	C	which Yahweh has sworn to their fathers to give them (אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאֲבוֹתָם לָתֵת לָהֶם)
	D	and you shall put them in possession of it (וְאַתָּה תִּנְחַלֶּנָּה אוֹתָם)
I will be with you (וְאֲנִכִּי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ)	E	it is Yahweh who goes before you (וַיִּהְיֶה הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ לְפָנֶיךָ); he will be with you (הוּא יְהִי עִמָּךְ); he will not fail you or forsake you (לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבֶךָ)
	F	do not fear or be dismayed (לֹא תִירָא וְלֹא תַחַת)

The outgoing leader then revamps Yahweh's understanding of the incoming leader's role in the Jordan crossing. Moses looks beyond the river crossing and announces that Joshua will enter (*gal* form of **בוא**) the land *with* the people.<sup>259</sup> Critically, Moses' extends Joshua's role beyond Yahweh's original commission to the conquest (*hiphil* form of **נחל**) of Canaan (D). Moses leaves little doubt as to the level of commitment expected from Yahweh (E): "It is Yahweh who goes before you ...he will not fail you or forsake you" (31:8).<sup>260</sup> Throughout his encouragement speech, Moses focuses on the promises that Yahweh gave to the fathers of Israel while remaining completely silent on the deleterious "promise" made to Moses and Joshua in the tent of meeting.

<sup>259</sup> Sonnet hints at the differences between these two independently voiced units, but fails to exegete their dialogic potential (997:155-56).

<sup>260</sup> Sonnet discerns a wordplay in Moses' public *Succession Speech* that highlights the dominant concerns for a continued divine presence in Israel's future. In 31:7 (and in fact, throughout the Moab discourse) Moses refers to his successor by his lengthier name **ה'יושע**, thus emphasizing the theophoric meaning ("Yahweh will be with you") latent in his former name **ה'יושע** (1997:133).



In the encouragement speeches directed to Israel (31:3-6) and Joshua (31:7-8), Moses publicly appropriates the promise of divine presence originally made in private to Joshua. Moses' rhetorical manipulations run entirely against the grain of Yahweh's original plan while holding Yahweh publicly responsible for the success of the venture. The reader must await the death of Moses before hearing Yahweh's response to the prophet's radical reformulations. He need not wait long, as Yahweh steps in immediately after the death of Moses with his own appropriation of the book of the law (Josh 1).

#### D. MOSES PROMULGATES YAHWEH'S SONG

Dialogic energies (reflections of hope-eternal) die hard in Deuteronomy's narrative. Having countered Yahweh's encouragement of Joshua with his publicized version of the same, Moses proceeds finally to teach the words of the song to the congregation. Is this teaching, as mediated by the narrator, identical with the contents revealed in the tent of meeting? Or are there two promulgations of the song, one the same day when it was revealed and written (31:22; i.e., prior to the Moab address), the other just after the promulgation of the book of the law? The rereader suspects a second teaching, given that the contents of the song present a future more positive than the one predicted in the tent of meeting. Paul Sanders notes the discrepancy between Yahweh's pessimistic tone in the theophany and the more optimistic tone in ch. 32, and concludes that Deut 32 is older than the sections of ch. 31 which serve as its introduction (1996:339-40). Sonnet concurs: "One of the surprising aspects of the Song is that the reversal in God's attitude towards his people takes place without any Mosaic intervention" (1997:177).<sup>261</sup> But contrary to Sonnet, the contrasting tone between the theophany and promulgated song is more likely the result of the meddling hand of Moses than any change of heart of Yahweh.<sup>262</sup>

Suspensions of an altered song are reinforced with a narratorial introduction (31:30) that describes the song in terms first associated with the supplemented book of the law in 31:24: "then Moses spoke the words of this song *until they were finished.*" But this time, the narrator has not seen fit to

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<sup>261</sup> Perhaps traditional readers have intuited changes in the song of ch. 32 and for this reason have labeled it the "song of Moses."

<sup>262</sup> Both Yahweh and Moses claim that their respective documents testify to the rebelliousness of the congregation, even though the actual contents of their writings are considerably less damning than their respective trailers would lead one to believe.

report elsewhere the contents of the song; thus, the external reader cannot perform the same binocular comparisons that are possible with the dual mediations of the Covenant Code and the Mosaic lawcode. Evidently, the contents of the song are unimportant for understanding the rhetorical purpose of the narrator.

The purpose of the narrator's narration of Moses' final hours is clarified in the structure that surrounds the song of ch. 32 (Table 4.32).

A	the words of this law	31:24	narrator
B	these words	31:28	Moses
C	the words of this song in the ears of the assembly of Israel	31:30	narrator
X	<i>the song of Yahweh</i>	32:1-43	Yahweh/Moses
C'	the words of this song in the hear- ing of the people	32:44	narrator
B'	these words	32:45	narrator
A'	the words of this law	32:46	Moses

As he reports Moses' public instruction of Yahweh's song, the narrator carefully intertwines his own reporting with statements made by Moses in the storyworld. In sections A and A', the narrator employs quotations from Moses' address to fill in his ring structure. Moses' ambiguous reference to "these words" in 31:28 is matched by the narrator in 32:45, creating a parallel ring at levels B and B'. The frames (C and C') belong to the narrator and reference directly the central song. Together, Moses' Moab benediction and the narrator's report envelop the song of Yahweh within frames that reference indirectly (B, B'), then directly (A, A'), the book of the law. Ultimately, all words spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy have but one purpose: "Lay to heart *all* the words I have spoken this day so that you may be careful to do all the words of *this law*" (32:45-6 and 31:24, 28). Against Britt (2000:368), the "inclusion" dimension of 32:44-6 situates the law above Yahweh's song rather than over the successor Joshua. As for Sonnet, "these words" in 31:28 and 32:45 force him to admit that Moses appropriates the song of Yahweh in such a way that it now functions as a catalyst to motivate Israel's obedience to the Mosaic code: "[The] function of the Song is now subordinated to a further purpose: '... *that you may be careful to do all the words of this Law*' (Deut 32:46) ... A positive link (of implementation) to the Torah is thus restored" (Sonnet 1997:179-80).

A final dialogic is seen in the narrator's differentiation of Yahweh's command to teach the song and Moses' fulfillment of the injunction.

Whereas Yahweh had intended that the song be placed in the “mouths” (בְּפִיָּהֶם) of the people (31:19, 21),<sup>263</sup> the narrator reports that Moses spoke “the words this song in the ears” (אָזְנוֹתָם) of the assembled (31:30; 32:44). Added to the infraction, Moses states in 30:14 that the commandment (i.e., book of the law) is near to Israel: “it is in your mouth (פִּיָּךְ) and in your heart, so that you can do it.”<sup>264</sup> For Israel, religion now takes on an internalized dimension, a necessary corollary to the abstracted presence of Yahweh’s “name.” No longer is it necessary to “ascend to heaven” to hear the will of the deity (29:28). No longer does Israel need Yahweh to reveal himself to the congregation. Yahweh’s intentions are now scripturalized within a tangible document as religion becomes a psychological phenomenon, exchanging palpable heavenly presence in Canaan for virtual encounters within Moses’ book.

For their obedience to his nomistic innovations, Moses promises a long life “in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess.” This promise (a restatement of a speech that began the entire dialogic event of Deuteronomy) is a red flag to which Yahweh responds smartly (Table 4.33).

(Table 4.33) Moses’ Dual Promotion of his Law		
Prior to Yahweh’s Theophany 31:13-14		Subsequent to Yahweh’s Theophany 32:46-50
that they may ... be careful to do all the words of this law	A	be careful to do all the words of this law
as long as you live	B	thereby you shall live long
... in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess	C	... in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess
and Yahweh said to Moses	D	and Yahweh said to Moses that very day
behold, the days approach when you must die	E	ascend this mountain ... and die on the mountain which you ascend

<sup>263</sup> According to Tigay, the phrase “in your mouth” denotes a storing of data into memory for long-term recall (1996:286-7).

<sup>264</sup> Sonnet points out that nowhere in the narrator’s telling of the Moab speeches is there any explicit indication that the people actually *heard* what was being promulgated. The narrator only states that Moses taught the song, or spoke the words of the law; he never states: “and the people listened” (1997:245). Perhaps the narrator’s lacuna implies a flawed reception of Moses’ book of the law, foreshadowing the lack of attention paid to the document in the Joshua to 2 Kings narrative.

Much has happened between the first death notice of 31:14 and the final summation in 32:49. This time, Moses is summoned to Mount Nebo rather than the tent of meeting. With this final subpoena, Yahweh silences Moses and his tireless promotion of the law.

### E. YAHWEH AND MOSES' BOOK OF THE LAW

In the face of Yahweh's retreat, Moses focuses Israel's attention on the memory of the exodus and the powerful operations of the "name." This memory is secured in a central site where it will be perpetuated through regular festivals and rituals. So radical a revision of a former edict can only follow on the heels of an equally radical development in the story, namely the devastating theophany of 31:14-21.<sup>265</sup>

Israel is prohibited from treating Yahweh with the same destruction and shame meted out to the Canaanite gods. Rather, the Israelites must seek the place where the "name" of Yahweh is located and there carry out their religious obligations. A sharp Moab listener might sense something amiss in the cosmos, since no such "seek-and-find" activity was required in the Exod 20 altar law. Paradoxically, Moses' appropriation of the "name" exchanges the real, though capricious presence of Yahweh with a symbolic memory of a past intervention. Though past appearances of Yahweh were frequent, they were hardly regular, always temporary, and often dangerous. In Moses' reconception, what is lost is compensated by what is gained: lost is the actual presence of the deity; gained is a permanent (and perhaps safer) presence in the hypostatic presence of the "name" (von Rad 1956:39-40).<sup>266</sup>

Moses wins the Deuteronomic rally, but at the end of the day, Yahweh wins the game. Upon the death of Moses, Yahweh takes the book of the law and makes it the *condition* for Joshua's success in the conquest of Canaan (Josh 1).<sup>267</sup> As the illustrious leader prepares to exit stage, Yahweh too pre-

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<sup>265</sup> Craigie notes that the third commandment prohibits "explicit [attempts] to harness God's power for personal ends ... all such improper uses of God's name have suspended over them a warning, *for Yahweh will not leave unpunished him who takes his name in vain*" (1976:156; cf. Christensen 2001:116). Moses' innovation flirts with the third commandment forbidding the misuse of the name of Yahweh.

<sup>266</sup> By promoting so strongly the "name" of Yahweh as a representation of the deity's presence, Moses implicitly argues that the "name" offers Israel a more favorable "presence" than the song that Yahweh instituted as the witness for his absence.

<sup>267</sup> Conditionalization of former promises is a favorite tactic of Yahweh. The revelation of Sinai conditionalizes the promise of land made to the fathers of Israel,

pares his own exit. Hereon, close encounters with heaven fade into Israel's memory (Friedman 1997:13-29).

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Yahweh's address to Joshua conditionalizes the conquest of Canaan (Josh 1), the unconditionality of the promises made to Israel's two greatest kings is undermined in 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kgs 2. Moses joins in the conditionalization process by forwarding his book of the law as the condition by which Israel will retain the land of promise and by which it will ensure the positive relations with Yahweh.



## 5 BEYOND DEUTERONOMY: APPLICATION AND IMPLICATIONS

Deuteronomy's perplexities resolved, the reader settles back for a long read, allowing the narrator's tale to resolve the suspense gap of-what-happens-next. Will Israel follow Moses' advice to engage in a hermeneutical dialogic with the book of the law? Will their interpretation of the book work to their favor and halt the withdrawal of Yahweh, their principal ally? Moses' final act in Moab has bequeathed Israel two promulgations, one human, the other, divine, each a dialogically-opposed speech center to the other, each too a written substitute for the pending absences of their respective authors. Higher up the voicing hierarchy of the Primary Narrative, the narrator's mediation of the Moab scene gives the external reader a report of the same, along with the added complexity of two distinct yet mutually dependent books, one (Moses' book of the law) embedded within the other (the canonical Deuteronomy). Added to the embedded-embedding drama that is Deuteronomy is the narrator's mediation of Yahweh's fine-print in ch. 31.

The dynamics of Deuteronomy's poetics implicitly invite external readers to converge hermeneutical attention towards the same text that ought to concern internal readers.<sup>268</sup> The reader who heeds the invitation ought never to lapse into passivity, but rather he must read forward and backward simultaneously, comparing interpretive notes with internal readers. Evidence for hermeneutical engagement with the book of the law by storyworld readers can be traced three ways. One method is to analyze the actions of characters for indirect evidence of lawcode applications within the storyworld (e.g., Hezekiah's reforms in 2 Kgs 18). A second method is

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<sup>268</sup> My approach (a variant on the traditional "inner-biblical exegesis" interpretive model) in reading 2 Kgs 22-3 addresses the interpretive challenge raised recently by Stott:

"[N]ew insight might be gained from an alternative approach that focuses not on the historicity of the story but on how it is represented in narrative form. The aim of such an approach is not to determine one way or the other whether the details of this story reflect historical reality, but to concentrate instead on how the historian has presented the narrative and why it is told in such a way" (2008:86).

to compare individual character speeches with the phraseology of the book of the law (e.g., Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 8).<sup>269</sup> Third, and most obvious, is to search for direct verbal references to the written code (e.g., "I have found the *book of the law*" in 2 Kgs 22:8). Using the latter method, only three such references to the "book of the law" occur between Moses' valediction and Hilkiah's discovery. Two mentions of the book of the law are located in the book of Joshua, once where Yahweh exhorts Joshua to meditate day and night on its contents (Josh 1:8), and a second in Joshua's final address to the people (23:6). The third occurrence is at David's deathbed (1 Kgs 2:3).<sup>270</sup> All told, references to the "book of the law" appear only in Deuteronomy, Joshua, and 2 Kings; next-to-no references are found between Judges and 2 Samuel.<sup>271</sup> These statistics reveal that Moses' writing is most frequently engaged by internal readers at the outer extremes of the Primary Narrative (i.e., thirty out of thirty-four direct or indirect references to the book of the law occur in Deuteronomy and 2 Kings), supporting Römer's

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<sup>269</sup> See Eslinger (1981: 144-76) and Bergen (2006:213-30) for analyses of Solomon's manipulations of Moses' book of the law.

<sup>270</sup> At the level of narratorial discourse, the book of the law and its variants are featured nine times, four times in connection with Moses (Deut 1:5, 4:44, 31:9, 31:24), twice in connection with Joshua (8:31, 34), once in a critical evaluation of Joash (2 Kgs 14:6), and three times in the course of the narration of Josiah's reign (2 Kgs 22:10, 11, 23:24).

While Moses' book of the law "seems" lost—it is a character within the story-world, not the narrator, who gives the book of the law a "lost-and-found" characterization—the external reader ought never to lose sight of its presence, despite the rarity of internal engagements. Contrary to Venema (2004:52), Moses' book is not missing from Solomon's world when he dedicates his temple (cf. 1 Kgs 2:3), though Venema indicates elsewhere his awareness of this fact (2004:93). For a close examination of the role of the book of the law in the opening chapters of the Kings narrative, see my article "The Heart of the (Deuteronomic) Matter: Solomon and the Book of the Law" (2006).

<sup>271</sup> While no overt reference is made to the book of the law in the book of Judges, there are indirect allusions to Moses' document. The narrator refers to the premonarchic period as a time when "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25). This phrase, a quotation from Deut 12:8-9, might (with careful scrutiny) yield interesting insight, qualifying Weinfield who says that the "Deuteronomists" only allude to the book of the law when royalty is on stage, while no mention is made of Moses' book in the decentralized period of the judges (1992b:171).



insight that the book of the law forms an *inclusio* for the entire Deuteronomistic historiography (1997:5-6).<sup>272</sup>

While revolutionary in conception, Moses' socio-religious innovation of cultic centralization is ambiguous in location. This topological gap entices internal readers of the book of the law to exploit it for their own situation and purpose. For common to all generations within the storyworld is the desire to obtain on earth (i.e., Jerusalem) the benevolence of heaven. Given Yahweh's increasing distance, storied human characters have little choice but to appropriate scripturally Moses' book of the law to fulfill their need for some measure of fixed divine presence. And so the kings David and Solomon team-up to fill the vacuum of power, selecting the place and building the house wherein Yahweh's Name will dwell (cf. 2 Sam 6-7, 1 Kgs 6-8). Their efforts demonstrate a reading of Moses' book that favors heavily those passages (i.e., Deut 12) which provide them the social, religious, and political leverage required to domesticate the ephemeral powers of the deity. While their reading and application of the book of the law is of importance and interest to the reader, my purpose in this chapter will be to demonstrate the outcome of Deuteronomy's dialogic between Yahweh and Moses, passing over instantiations of readerly interactions in Joshua and 1 Kings for an analysis of the final chapters of the Primary Narrative where the reader can drop in to learn of Josiah's reception of Moses' publication.

### **A. APPLICATION: MOSES' BOOK IN KING JOSIAH'S COURT (2 KGS 22-3)**

After centuries of collecting dust beside the ark of the covenant, the book of the law is suddenly thrust into the foreground of the narrative as Hilkiah, Shaphan, and the king discover what external readers have known to exist

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<sup>272</sup> Moses' book of the law takes on ultimate valuation whenever the issue of "land" is at stake. At the outset of the conquest, the presence of the book of the law stands palpably before the Israelites; on the eve of the exile, Moses' witness returns to the foreground of the narrated world. This should come as no surprise, given the concerns for security natural to humans. Instrumental to human security within the storyworld is the benevolent presence of Yahweh; concern for divine presence is evident wherever a character overtly engages the book of the law. These engagements occur at critical points in the narrative: Joshua's conquest of Canaan (Josh 1), the building of the temple at the peak of Israel's political power (1 Kgs 8), and at the final stage of Israel's political fortune, by Josiah, the most law-attentive leader in the narrative history of Israel/Judah (2 Kgs 22-3).

all along.<sup>273</sup> The narrative of the discovery begins mundanely with a court dialogue over the payment of wages.<sup>274</sup> Shaphan is then dispatched to the temple with a housekeeping message for the high priest, Hilkiah. Content with minimal intervention, the narrator allows the dialogue of his characters to forward the plot. Anticipating an accounting of the temple coffers, the reader instead, learns of an unexpected discovery. “I have found the סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה (book of the law) in the house of the Lord,” announces the high priest to the king’s secretary (v. 8).<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Again, contrary to Conrad (1992:51-2) and Venema (2004:52), Moses’ book is not “lost” to the reader. The absence of the book from large portions of narrative scene indicates that it is “ignored” or “forgotten,” but never “lost” in the storyworld. Conrad defeats his own position by arguing that the book was placed *in* the ark of the covenant (1992:51). By Conrad’s logic, if the ark is present in the storyworld, so too is the book of the law (cf. Deut 31:26).

At the level of discourse, the book is always present, since the external reader can at any point in the reading process flip back and reread the contents of Moses’ book of the law.

<sup>274</sup> However, close attention to the narrator’s introductory comment (22:2) reveals that Josiah is no ordinary king. G. E. Gerbrandt (1986:49-50) notes that of the twenty Judahite kings, eight received a positive evaluation by the narrator. Here, the narrator adds for the first time the phrase “*he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*” (22:2). The added accolade, a direct quote from the book of the law (Deut 17:20; cf. Provan 1995:270), raises expectations of an exemplary event and focuses the scene through the lens of Moses’ book of the law. From here on, every move made by Josiah is foreshadowed by the narrator’s evaluation.

<sup>275</sup> David Henige labels 2 Kgs 22-3 pejoratively a “narrative barnacle,” one which he finds highly problematic *as a narrative* (2007:8):

Was Hilkiah skulking around the construction site and spied the text lying unnoticed in some rubble? Where would it have been for this to happen, and why did the workers not see it themselves—and report it—first? Maybe the workers did make the first discovery, but we are not told this—the recorded “transmission” process begins only with Hilkiah, who then showed it to the (head?) scribe, and they went off to show it to Josiah—apparently all in short order, but long enough that each was able to read the document—or perhaps only parts of it (2007:8-9).

It would seem that, from a narratological perspective, only a “Mr. Gradgrind” would so relentlessly demand “fact, fact, fact!” from the Josiah narrative (Dickens 2003:14). *Mutatis mutandis*: How was the Little Red Riding Hood’s wolf able to disguise himself as an old woman? How did the wolf get into grandmother’s house? How could a *Canis lupis* swallow whole two humans, an adult and a child, and why would the animal need to be killed after disembowelment? My point should be obvious: A narrator, biblical or otherwise, ought to have freedom to tell the story as he sees fit, assuming always that the telling reflects the purposes of the narrator and

Hilkiah's announcement provides a positive identification of the scroll for those standing in the temple. Hilkiah hands the document to Shaphan, who in turn reads its contents. Not since Joshua has the external reader witnessed a character *directly* engaging the book of the law (cf. Josh 8:34, 35). Shaphan in turn, reads the discovery to the king without revealing its true identity. In v. 11, the narrator authenticates for the external reader the high priest's identification of the discovered document, effectively placing everyone except the king "in-the-know" as to the true identity of the document.<sup>276</sup> In Josiah's mind, there is no ambiguity. With clothes in tatters, Josiah strikes a task force (Table 5.1) to seek confirmation from Yahweh (v. 13). The driving concern behind Josiah's urgency centers squarely on the

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the peculiarity of the audience. The Bible's narrator cannot be criticized for gaps that fail to address twenty-first century sensibilities and concerns. Henige's use of such terms as "narrative," "*explicatory* narrative," "narrative line," "bedtime story," or "detective novel" (2007:3-4) give the appearance of narrative sensitivity, yet his understanding of these terms seem ingrained with matters of history and theology and thus do not hew to the formalist construction I employ in this study. Henige concedes, albeit with reluctance, that 2 Kgs 22-3 might be read simply as a story:

The third alternative is simply that this story is just that—a story—devised at some later point to explain why Deuteronomy was both Mosaic and canonical. This alternative does not require any on-the-spot duplicity or credulity, merely a later interpolation that made these seem as if they were in play. In many ways this is the most economical explanation, as well as the most plausible (2007:16).

A plausible alternative, yet in Henige's view an "unpleasant" one too. Why unpleasant? I suspect that the answer lies in Henige's polemic against groups who configure the Bible as historically and/or theologically truthful. Reading 2 Kgs 22-3 as mere story lacks the referential punch needed to refute those who hold the Bible as factually true. While I am sympathetic to Henige's (likewise A. J. Droge's—2003:118) agenda, I fear that such scholarship is myopic, importing into the Bible's tale an ethnocentrism wholly shaped by contemporary (largely western, perhaps even American) debate, thereby missing the skeptical high-point to which all the dialogic, curiosity, and suspense of the Primary Narrative has pointed. Ironically, the narrator of the Bible (at least as read here) supplies more than enough jaundice to support Henige's suspicions without having to devolve the Josiah narrative to a textual crustacean.

<sup>276</sup> Henige writes: "[The biblical text] leaves the impression that Hilkiah recognized the contents immediately—but how? Did he know that such a text had once existed—if so, again, how? Did the text come with a title? Or had at least some of the wording been orally preserved for whatever period of time was involved?" (2007:9). My second chapter answers this question handily, since Moses' book of the law is reflexively titled in 30:10.

king's decree: great is Yahweh's anger (חַמָּה) poised against the king and the people of Judah (X).

(Table 5.1) Josiah's Directive (2 Kgs 22:13)

A	go, inquire of Yahweh for me, and for the people and for all of Judah לְכוּ דַרְשׁוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בְּעַדִי וּבְעַד־הָעָם וּבְעַד כָּל־יְהוּדָה
B	concerning the words of this book that is found עַל־דְּבַר־יְהוָה הַסֵּפֶר הַנִּמְצָא הַזֶּה
X	for great is the wrath of Yahweh that is kindled against us because our fathers have not obeyed כִּי־גְדוֹלָה חַמַּת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־הִיא נִצְתָה בָּנוּ עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ
B'	the words of this book עַל־דְּבַר־יְהוָה הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה
A'	to do according to all that is written concerning us לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכָל־הַכְּתוּב עָלֵינוּ

Framing the king's concern are explicit references to the newly-found document (B-B') that has convinced the king that the shortcomings of past generations are about to be visited against the present generation (X and A').<sup>277</sup> A narratologically attuned reader will search the book-within-a-book structure for the passage in Moses' book that evinces so visceral a reaction from the king. Focusing on Yahweh's wrath (חַמָּה) at the center of Josiah's command, a word search reveals twelve occurrences in the Primary Narrative.<sup>278</sup> The only other instance where a character within the storyworld re-

<sup>277</sup> Based on the report from Shaphan that a book was "found" in the temple, the king must conclude that previous kings were unaware of its presence, thus unable "to hear" (cf. לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ) the dire contents of its message. Their ignorance led to their unwitting transgression of "all that is written" in the book, placing Josiah's generation in serious jeopardy with Yahweh. The king's concern is not only for himself but also for his countrymen, as is evident in the threefold repetition of "on behalf" (בְּעַד) and the string of first person plural pronouns ("against us," "our fathers," "concerning us").

<sup>278</sup> Three of these occurrences describe the anger of a human character (Esau in Gen 27:4, David in 2 Sam 11:20, and Naaman in 2 Kgs 5:12), while two are used poetically to refer to the poison of serpents (Deut 32:24, 33). The remaining seven occurrences are all used to depict the wrath of Yahweh. In Lev 26:28, Yahweh describes the fury that will meet Israel should it disobey his law. In Num 25:11, Yahweh's fury erupts over Israel's religious flirtation with the daughters of Moab and is only calmed by the spear-wielding Phineas. Three times, Moses uses the term חַמָּה to describe Yahweh's wrath over Israel's past (Deut 9:19) and future (29:22, 27)

fers to the anger (חַמָּה) of Yahweh is in Moses' book of the law. How could Josiah know the psychological state of Yahweh especially since he requires a prophetic to divine the authenticity of the discovered book? The king has but one source for his knowledge, and the external reader deduces the three passages of Moses' book that have enlightened Josiah's existential predicament, one in Moses' leading *Excursus* Frame (9:19) and two in his trailing *Covenant* Frame (29:23, 28).

### Josiah's Situation as Reader of the Book of the Law

Through the medium of writing, Moses implicates future generations in the consequences of his "sworn covenant." In reading the newly-discovered document, Josiah is as much party to Moses' covenant as those who were in Moab (29:13-14). Josiah's reception of the book of the law is opposite the anti-model of Deut 29:18, verifying the narrator's positive endorsement of the king in 2 Kgs 22:2.

The immediacy of the threat envisioned by the book of the law drives the king to search for extratextual confirmation. At this point in the narrative process, the interests of the external reader converge with the interests of Josiah, as both await the verdict that the delegation has been ordered to retrieve. As a mere mortal living in the storyworld, Josiah cannot be certain that his hermeneutical posture before the book of the law has contrasted sufficiently with the anti-model in Deut 29:19 to annul the curse heading his direction.<sup>279</sup>

### Huldah's Oracles

As the appointed delegation leaves the palace, the narrator allows dialogue among the characters to dramatize the interpretive dilemma inside the sto-

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behavior. The remaining two references to Yahweh's חַמָּה are found in the narrative of 2 Kgs 22 (vv. 13 and 17).

<sup>279</sup> Ironically, Josiah's trauma would never have arisen had the book of the law remained undiscovered. His restoration of the temple would have been guided by the inner instincts of a Yahweh-true heart, without the guilty angst raised by encountering Deut 29. It is also ironic that the conversation predicted in Deut 29:23-6 cannot become reality unless the law is first discovered. The foreigner's statement in 29:26 ("all the curses written in this book") demands that there be a book against which such a reference can make sense. Hence, Hilkiah's discovery plays a decisive, though unwitting role in realizing the internal predictions made within the discovered text itself.

ryworld.<sup>280</sup> Following discussions, Huldah utters a dual prophecy, one for Jerusalem and its inhabitants (2 Kgs 22:16-17), another for the king of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 22:18-19).<sup>281</sup> In her first oracle (Table 5.2), Huldah confirms that the burning of incense to other gods has incensed Israel's god and that his anger (חַמָּה) is kindled against "this place" (v. 17). The actions against the inhabitants of Judah (A-A') noted in her oracle match point-for-point Josiah's command to the delegation (v. 13).

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<sup>280</sup> Internal readers, no less than their external counterparts, desire extratextual verification for the claims made in the text. Does Josiah's royal commission constitute evidence of doubt within the mind of the king? Knoppers states that in seeking clarification, Josiah fails to "accord with the specific instructions of Deuteronomy" (1994:134). Perhaps, but Josiah does not have recourse to Yahweh to verify his interpretation as did many who preceded him (e.g., Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David). Not a word of dialogue is exchanged between the deity and any humans at the end of the Primary Narrative—Yahweh's absence has become an ever-present existential reality.

<sup>281</sup> Huldah's oracle is a crucial passage for redactional theorists (Nelson 1981:76). Historical criticism divides 2 Kgs 22 into pre-Deuteronomistic and Deuteronomistic sections, with the phrase "the book of the law" an obvious reference to the postexilic Deuteronomistic historian. Because Huldah's second oracle (vv. 18-20) does not presuppose the book of the law but only refers to an oracle from God ("how I spoke against this place" [v. 19]), critics have tended to view Huldah's second oracle as an *ipsissima verba* (i.e., pre-exilic and Josianic) quotation set within a later Deuteronomistic context. Another argument for the pre-exilic dating of the second oracle is drawn from the contradiction between the hopeful prediction ("gathered to your grave in peace") and the violent circumstances of Josiah's death at Megiddo (cf. Mayes 1978:35, 41, 43-4, G. H. Jones 1984:608-9, Dietrich 1977:25-29, and Knoppers 1994:130-1).

Some have sought to harmonize the discrepancy between Huldah's oracle and the narrated demise of the king that follows. Provan for example, argues that the phrase "you will be gathered to your grave in peace" predicts the circumstance of Josiah's burial rather than his death (1988:149). McKenzie contests such interpretations, arguing that they are foreign to the writer's intent (1991:111; cf. also Knoppers 1994:150-51). Knoppers asserts that the incongruities between Huldah's oracle and Josiah's death "beg for diachronic analysis and reconstruction" (1994:144-51).

(Table 5.2) Huldah's First Oracle		
Josiah's Inquiry (2 Kgs 22:13)	Huldah's Oracle (2 Kgs 22:16-17)	Moses' Prediction (Deut 29:20-7)
Inquire ... for me, the people, and all of Judah	I am bringing evil (רָעָה) upon this place and its inhabitants	and Yahweh would single him out from all the tribes of Israel for evil (לְרָעָה) ... (20)
concerning the words of the <i>book</i> (עַל־דְּבַרֵי הַסֵּפֶר) that has been found	... all the words of the <i>book</i> (כָּל־דְּבַרֵי הַסֵּפֶר)	... all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law (בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה)
for great is the <i>wrath</i> of the Lord that is kindled against us (בִּיגְדוּלָה חֲמַת יְהוָה) (אֲשֶׁר־הִיא נֹצֵתָה בְּנוּ)	... therefore my <i>wrath</i> will be kindled against this place (וְנֹצֵתָה חֲמַתִּי בְּמִקוֹם הַזֶּה)	therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land (26) ... and the LORD uprooted them from their land in <i>wrath</i> (וּבַחֲמָה) (27)

Josiah's directive follows closely the prediction of a large-scale disaster in the book of the law (29:20-7). Visitors to the environmental holocaust (v. 22) demonstrate their covenantal illiteracy, though they intuit divine retribution behind the disaster: Why did Yahweh destroy the land? Why was Yahweh angry?<sup>282</sup> An anonymous party, one obviously conversant with the contents of the book and its curses, will enlighten them with a report describing the violation of the covenant and the kindled anger of Yahweh (E). But why the ecological disaster? In keeping with the prescriptions of the book of the law, Yahweh will cause the curses of the book to fall upon the land, just as curses settled down upon the transgressing party.<sup>283</sup>

In turn, Huldah's first oracle duplicates Josiah's command to the king's emissaries. According to Huldah, Yahweh will indeed "throw the book" at

<sup>282</sup> See Eslinger (1981:168f) for Solomon's positive appropriation of this inquisitive foreigner.

<sup>283</sup> The word *הַקָּלָה* is used in Deut 29:26 to refer to the calamity that will come upon the land. According to Herbert Chanan Brichto, *קָלָה* is usually a general term for material misfortune, abusive treatment, or disaster without the locutionary aspect associated with other "curse" synonyms (1963:183, 197, 199). According to Lenchak, *קָלָה* is the antonym of *בְּרָכָה* in Deut 30:19 and bears greater impact than *אָלָה* ("curse"), since it is associated with Yahweh's anger (1993:194). Lenchak, however, fails to account for the association of divine anger and *אָלָה* in 29:19.

the land and its wayward inhabitants.<sup>284</sup> Huldah's first oracle drives a wedge (A) into the threefold focus of Josiah's royal inquiry (v. 13), focusing on "this place" and "its inhabitants" with no mention of the king. Why is Josiah exempt from the curses descending upon the inhabitants? The answer lies in Huldah's second oracle (vv. 18-20) where divine mercy stands in marked contrast to the fury and anger of the first oracle (Figure 5.3). The outer sections of the second oracle (A-A') establish the reciprocal communication of a king and a deity attuned to each other. Josiah's penitential demeanor, as described by Yahweh (B-B'), contrasts with the cursed inhabitants of "this place" (X). Most important is Huldah's positive evaluation of Josiah's reaction to *hearing* the words of the book of the law (A, X, A').<sup>285</sup> By adopting a hermeneutical stance opposite that of Moses' deviant reader (cf. Deut 29:18), Josiah appears to have averted the curse sweeping in his direction (2 Kgs 22:20).

(Table 5.3) Huldah's Second Oracle - 2 Kgs 22:18-19

A	the words which you have heard הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ
B	because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD יֵעַן רָדִדְ לִבְכָּד וַתִּכְנַע מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה
X	when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse בְּשָׁמְעֶדךָ אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי עַל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְעַל-יֹשְׁבָיו לְהִיּוֹת לְשִׁמָּה וְלִקְלָלָה
B'	and you have rent your clothes and wept before me, וַתִּקְרַע אֶת-בְּגָדֶיךָ וַתִּבְכֶּה לְפָנַי
A'	I also have heard you, says the LORD. וְגַם אֲנֹכִי שָׁמַעְתִּי נְאֻם-יְהוָה

According to Huldah—an important caveat that the reader should note—Josiah will live a life of peace and be spared from witnessing the evil that is set to befall Jerusalem.

<sup>284</sup> The references to the "book of the law" in ch. 29 are self-reflexive markers of the book in which they appear. Two additional reflexive notices are found in the instructions set for the king of Israel (17:18-19). However, the reflexivity of these notices extends only to the storyworld book written by Moses, *not* to the embedding book of Deuteronomy.

<sup>285</sup> Ideally, of course, Josiah should have been busy reading and writing a copy of the book of the law, rather than hearing it read to him (Deut 17:18).



External readers attuned to the centralization directive of Moses' book will hear the nuances in the phrase "this place." The phrase "this place" is a *leitmotif* resounding four times through Huldah's message (vv. 16 [twice], 19, 20), assaulting the remnant of Israel at its most vulnerable (Nelson 1981:79). With only Judah left on the Israelite landscape, Yahweh has little choice when it comes to selecting an object for his anger (Deut 29:21). Ironically, Moses' prediction of a "place" chosen out of all the tribes by Yahweh for his Name to dwell (e.g., Deut 12:5) has at the end of the Primary Narrative become the one "place" to which Yahweh might target his anger.

### Josiah's Response to the Royal Inquiry

The royal delegation returns to Josiah, bearing the message already mediated to the external reader (v. 20). The delegation's report instigates a turning point in the narrative. From Josiah's point of view, the only thing setting him apart from the greater population is that he had the opportunity to hear the book of the law and to demonstrate his own penitence in the face of its damning message. Perhaps the people of Judah could still escape their fate if, like him, they were given an opportunity to demonstrate nation-wide contrite reception of the book of the law.

And so is born the most extensive cultic reform ever witnessed in the narrative's history. First, a public reading takes place before an assembly rivaling the size of the Moab audience (23:2; Deut. 29:10).<sup>286</sup> Then follows

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<sup>286</sup> Why does the narrator state that Josiah read publicly "all the words of the book of the *covenant* (סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית)," a document that has been neither seen nor heard from since Exod 24:4-7? Is the king engaging in some kind of hermeneutical sleight-of-hand, and if so, why? Venema states: "The so-called reform of Josiah starts with the public reading of the book, which now is no longer called the 'book of the *torah*', but the 'book of the covenant'" (2004:83). Venema argues (somewhat vaguely) that the shift in title transforms Josiah into a representative of Moses, giving "the words of Moses, the *torah*, topical relevance in the narrative. Josiah does not claim to have a book clothed in Moses' authority actually at his disposal, but he reads out to the people the book that was found in the temple, and thus speaks with the authority of Moses" (2004:84).

A few clues in 2 Kgs 23 indicate that the book promulgated by Josiah is not the "book of the covenant" that Moses wrote in Exod 24, despite the misleading title "book of the covenant" in v. 2. First, the narrator clearly states that the book of the covenant read by Josiah was the one found in the temple (v. 2); in context, that book can only be the "book of the law" identified in ch. 22. Second, the phrase

extensive reforms corresponding closely to the Mosaic blueprint. Gary N. Knoppers notes that Josiah's reforms follow a certain logic, beginning locally and then proceeding further afield (1994:181).<sup>287</sup> First, Josiah cleanses

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“with all his heart and all his soul” is a stock phrase lifted from Moses' book. Third, the words “commands” and “statutes” of v. 3 were directly used by Moses to frame the law section of his book of the law. These indicators all point to the book of the law. But what about the enigmatic term “testimonies” (עֵדוּת) also used in v. 3, a frequent signifier for the stone tablets stored in the ark of the covenant (for e.g., Exod 25:16-22)? Might this be evidence that Josiah read from the book of the covenant after all? Perhaps so. For Josiah to read publicly from the book of the covenant while instituting radical reforms based on the book of the law is an intriguing option to consider. Doing so would have some advantage, from Josiah's point of view. For one, it would neatly avoid the problem of a king promulgating the law rather than the elders of Israel (cf. Deut 31:9-11). Similarly, by publicly reading the book of the covenant, Josiah would pre-empt a public panic that would be sure to arise were the people to hear the curses of Moses' book.

Without question, the narrator's reference to the book of the covenant represents a troubling ambiguity for the reader. The resolution of this conundrum demands more space than is available here. Preliminarily though, I maintain that the book that was actually read in the storyworld was Moses' book of the law, despite the ambiguities of reference that surround the narrated incident. The narrator is clear that the document presented to the people was the very same document that was found in the temple. Moreover, it is only at the level of the narrator's discourse that the ambiguity between two differently titled books emerges; what is on-stage in Josiah's world is without doubt. Furthermore, this is not the first time that the narrator has played this game of obfuscation. As I noted in my second chapter, the narrator's *Inner Framebreak* in Deuteronomy vacillated functionally between a superscription for the Moab covenant that Yahweh had commanded Moses to deliver and a subscription for Moses' lawcode that preceded the narrator's break. The ambiguity itself cloaked a dialogic between two revelational centers, Horeb and Moab, the latter a complicated exercise in appropriation that both represented and distorted to Israel the commands of Yahweh according to Moses' own ends. Might the ambiguous references made by the narrator in Deut 28:69 and 2 Kgs 23:2-3 lend weight to Noll's conditioned, hence unreliable, narrator, demonstrating an eagerness on the part of the Bible's premiere authority to award Moses' law a title better reserved for the deity's own law? If so, the narrator is soon to be broadsided by the implied author, who is rather less enthusiastic about Moses and his book of the law.

<sup>287</sup> Following Hans-Detlef Hoffmann (1980:169-270), Knoppers argues that the narrator's telling of Josiah's reforms follows a chronological pattern that methodically reverses the transgression of the previous southern and northern kings (1994:181-202).

the epicenter of sacredness by removing the temple's idolatrous appurtenances devoted to Baal, Asherah, and the host of heaven. His cleansing of cultic pollutions echoes Moses' description of the destruction of the golden calf in the book of the law, burning them and scattering their ashes in the brook Kidron (cf. 2 Kgs 23:4-7 with Deut 9:21). The high places receive the brunt of Josiah's reforms, as emphasized by the multiple repetitions of **בְּמֹת** in ch. 23 (Knoppers 1994:185-6). The purge of Jerusalem worship is a systematic, albeit selective application of Moses' law,<sup>288</sup> where centralization of worship at "the place" is prepared with the destruction of offensive Canaanite sites. Josiah's reform of southern Israel is then applied to the northern region. The reformation climaxes in a dramatic celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:23). Josiah's effort to stay national execution mirrors Israel's exodus event, with the writing of the book of the law and the discovery of the same document taking place away from public view (Table 5.4):

Israel's Exodus	A	passover (Exod 12)
	B	covenant (Exod 19)
	C	book of the law (Deut 31)
Josiah's Reforms	C'	discovery of book of the law (2 Kgs 22:8)
	B'	covenant (23:2-3)
	A'	passover (23:21-3)

Surely, this highly symbolic celebration of Yahweh's "mighty, outstretched arm" (Exod 6:6), a first for any monarchic leader, will win an eleventh hour reprieve from the horrors envisioned in Moses' witness (Deut 29:22).<sup>289</sup> Or will it?

In his zeal to save his people from the wrath to come, Josiah fixes attention on the phrase "this place" (**הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה**) in the oracle of the prophet. The king of the Judean people, like David and Solomon before,

<sup>288</sup> Gray notes: "[It] is significant that the account of Josiah's reformation makes no reference to social legislation in Deuteronomy, nor the constitutional limitation of royal authority, nor the provisions for holy war, etc. Only the principles of the purity of the cult are mentioned, with the fact of the covenant and passover ..." (1970:715, c; cf. also Knoppers 1994:166).

<sup>289</sup> Knoppers argues that in his eagerness to purify the region, Josiah went beyond the directives of the lawcode: "The very notion of a king applying massive force to impose a document which radically curtails royal powers, is, from a deuteronomic point of view, highly problematic" (1994:123).

would naturally associate Huldah's *leitmotif* with those nineteen occurrences in Moses' book that mention the **מְקוֹם** that "Yahweh has chosen for a dwelling for his Name." All ancients, ancient kings in particular, were intensely interested in those earthly places where deities were thought to reside. If this divine power could be persuaded to take up residence on valued real estate, then inhabitants of that region would be ensured a secure environment vis-à-vis other nations. Once the deity was terrestrially committed, elaborate buildings could be constructed and proper religious technologies devised to house and appease the powers of heaven for the purposes of earth. As any ancient king, Josiah is attracted to the centralization program in the book of the law, his reforms a last-ditch effort to rid the land of profane impurities in the hope that Yahweh's chosen place will regain its former heavenly attraction.

The external reader knows, however, that Josiah's efforts at reform are thwarted from the outset by an ironic bind that only a few (narrator, Yahweh, and the external reader) are aware of. Unknown to the king, the book of the law omits from its pages the theophany of Deut 31:16-22. The marginalization of this vital speech from Moses' book of the law places the king in a situation of dramatic irony, completely unaware that his cultic efforts are in the eyes of Yahweh too-little, too-late. Only the reader understands the dramatic irony surrounding Josiah's search for clarity. No matter how pure his motives or how strenuous his efforts, Yahweh will not be dissuaded. And only the external reader sees what the storyworld king cannot: that the author of the book of the law was at odds with Yahweh on the centrality of "the place." From start to finish, Yahweh has resisted a place for his Name and only with the cunning manipulations of King David (2 Sam 7:13) did he reluctantly commit to Jerusalem experiment, and then with conditional strings firmly attached (cf. Eslinger 1994:40f and Shamai Gellander 1991:25). Yahweh will not be unconditionally tied to human technologies, nor will he be forced to adjudicate according to the dictates of a humanly reconfigured code of retribution (cf. Noll 1997:34-5).

In 2 Kgs 23, doom falls on king and people alike as the narrator quotes Yahweh's final utterance: "I will remove Judah also out of my presence, as I have removed Israel and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I have said, My name shall be there" (v. 23). The narrative's most committed reader of Moses' document cannot defer the portent soon to befall the land and its inhabitants (2 Kgs 23:24-5). What is more, the Mosaic code (specifically, its centralization ideology) proves utterly ineffective in retaining the presence of Yahweh in the temple of Jerusalem. Josiah learns too late a lesson taught to the Israelites in the

wilderness (Deut 1:41f): belated obedience to divine directive is to no avail if Yahweh has a mind to withhold or withdraw his presence. For his herculean effort Josiah receives a superlative evaluation by the narrator in 2 Kgs 23:24-5: “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the book of the law; nor did any like him arise after him.” The narrator’s positive evaluation, however, rings flat in light of what befalls the Bible’s most committed scripturalist (vv. 28-30).<sup>290</sup>

## B. IMPLICATIONS OF SOMETHING TOLD TO SOMEONE BY SOMEONE

My narratological reassessment of Deuteronomy and its literary connection to Josiah’s discovery covers considerable critical ground, some of it as old as biblical studies itself. The salient points of contact are summarized below (Table 5.5). My narratological approach to the paramount (Deuteronomistic) view of biblical scholarship invests new understanding into traditional terms and concepts. Scholars of Deuteronomy have typically viewed chs. 12-26 as the oldest material within the book of Deuteronomy, with chs. 1-11 and 27-34 added to update the code for contemporary circumstances. The framing structure of Moses’ address, evident at the level of the story-world (Chapter Two), affirms the literary instincts of historical scholars without drawing on extratextual speculations as to the respective provenances of the lawcode versus the surrounding material. The large digression within Moses’ *Succession Speech* lends structural weight to Noth’s theory of a redacted insertion into the introduction of a large-scale historical narrative.<sup>291</sup> In my rechronologized Deuteronomy (Chapter Three), the notion of

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<sup>290</sup> Venema writes:

The contrast with what has been said about the king in the preceding text is remarkable, and to a modern reader the [king’s] end appears illogical. Two reactions are possible. Either we assume that these text fragments have different origins and are not connected in any way, or we try to assign meaning to what at first sight seems contradictory. The latter option presupposes that the Kings text ... is perceived as a story which in view of the future has something to say about the past ... (2004:93-4).

My preference is for the second option, but I would add that in my view, the Primary Narrative’s *denouement* was no less remarkable and illogical to the ancient skeptic than to the modern. Indeed, so was it intended.

<sup>291</sup> The second half of the Primary Narrative (Joshua to Kings) is loaded with the dialogic that gave rise to and saturates the book of the law, so much so that it is

a dual-edition lawcode offers a synchronic explanation for the supplementation of the lawcode (i.e., framing additions) *and* its incorporation within a seemingly foreign speech unit (i.e., *Succession Speech* and an embedded digression).

(Table 5.5) Summary of Salient Points

Mainstream Scholarship	Narratological Reassessments
<i>Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch</i> – a central debate in early biblical studies, now universally refuted by modern critical scholars.	<i>Mosaic Authorship of the Book of the Law</i> – to write the book of the law is not to author the canonical book of Deuteronomy, though the narrator’s mediation of the embedded book easily confuses narratologically naïve readers.
<i>Deuteronomy’s Central Lawcode</i> – traditional critical studies argues a long transmission history for Deuteronomy, with the lawcode the oldest text and chs 29-34 mere add-on material.	<i>Moses’ Central Lawcode</i> – at the center of Moses’ speech stands the first edition’s “statutes and ordinances,” later ringed with a series of frames that emphasize the importance of the code as deterrence to divine-human divorce.
<i>Noth’s Deuteronomistic Construct</i> – a large-scale nomistic insertion between chs. 3 and 30 created the fiction that the lawcode was the property of the ancient figure, Moses.	<i>Moses’ Succession Speech</i> – in response to Yahweh’s announcement of imminent death, Moses engages in a succession speech that embeds (chs. 4-30) a digressive promulgation of his revised law.
<i>Deuteronomistic-Josianic Link</i> – Deuteronomy had more in common, both ideologically and compositionally, with Josiah than with Moses.	<i>Moses’ Book and Josiah’s Discovery</i> – Josiah’s servants discover Moses’ book, not the canonical Deuteronomy.
<i>Deuteronomistic Ideology</i> – Deuteronomy is the charter document for a Israelite movement that created a large-scale historiography to propagate its pro-Yahwist, pro-Zion view.	<i>Moses’ Innovation and Character’s Concerns</i> – Moses’ centralization appeals to royal characters who appropriate its directive for their political and religious ends.
<i>“Name” Ideology</i> – the book of Deuteronomy represents a refined theology and is evidence of a later stage in Israelite religion.	<i>Moses’ “Name” Innovation</i> – in light of Yahweh’s prediction, Moses invents a pragmatic religion that gives Israel as much divine presence as the deity will permit.

The large digression within Moses’ *Succession Speech* lends structural weight to Noth’s theory of a redacted insertion into the introduction of a large-scale historical narrative. In my rechronologized Deuteronomy (Chapter Three), the notion of a dual-edition lawcode offers a synchronic explanation for the supplementation of the lawcode (i.e., framing additions) *and* its incorporation within a seemingly foreign speech unit (i.e., *Succession Speech* and an embedded digression). Moses’ enhanced document is a rhetorical

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difficult to conceive a phase of composition (pre-DtrN redaction) where the book of the law was not part of the story.

response to Yahweh's theophany, not the revisions of a purported Deuteronomic movement forced south of home territory or a people exiled from their soil.<sup>292</sup>

Scholarly devaluation of Deut 29-34 has long perpetuated the textual prejudices of western religious ideology which privilege "law" over narrative in the Bible's "torah" section. In my interpretation, the profile of ch. 31 is raised considerably within the dialogic drama of Deuteronomy's narrative. The narrator's late-breaking dissemination of information in Deuteronomy's closing chapters accentuates the epistemological advantage of the external recipient of Moses' valediction. Without a rechronologized narrative, the reader is left to wonder why Moses rambles on about a subject already covered (Exod 20-24) and why the narrator lumps so haphazardly the extraneous information at the end of Deuteronomy. From a broad narratological view, ch. 31 represents the pivotal moment in divine-human relations within the Primary Narrative. The theophany of ch. 31 also explains the disparity between the "Deuteronomic Code" and the "Covenant Code" of Exodus and the reasons behind the differences. Deuteronomy is no mere "second copy" (Latin: *Deuteronomium*) of an earlier formulation, but rather a completely revised understanding of Yahweh's declaration. To miss this is to miss out on the dialogic dynamic coursing between Horeb and Moab, Yahweh and Moses, Exodus and Deuteronomy.<sup>293</sup>

Recently, scholars have questioned the historical veracity of the 2 Kgs 22-3 narrative. Stott (for example) argues that the report of an important discovery in 2 Kgs 22-3 is wholly conventional, repeating thematic features common to the ancient formula: long ago, a book was authored by an important figure; the book was deposited in the temple and then forgotten for a period; the book is subsequently discovered by a priest and presented to a king; the meaning of the book is opaque to the discoverers, and so a skilled interpreter is employed, after which the book becomes the basis for reforms (2008:87-121). This typical subplot serves three rhetorical functions within the Bible, according to Stott: to validate the narrative that supplies the re-

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<sup>292</sup> While scholars rely on the calamity of the exile to explain variations and tensions in the text, my reading posits the catastrophic theophany for its rhetorical exigence.

<sup>293</sup> To reiterate, Levinson understands well the radical innovation of Deuteronomy, though he does not read the ancient innovations in their narrativized context. The narrator presents the genius of Moses' transformations not as the scribal usurpation of old authoritative texts, but rather as the product of an aged character keen to give his people a fighting chance in a game stacked against them.

port, to support the ideological agenda of Josiah and company, and to endorse the lawcode of Moses.

Rather than engage in critical refutation of the book discovery, my formalist interpretation of the Bible's Primary Narrative re-establishes the *literary* (not historical) association between Deuteronomy and 2 Kgs 22-3 while positing a depth dimension wherein dialogic energies resonate between the realms of heaven and earth, story and discourse.<sup>294</sup> At one level, the book of the law is a Nothian "cipher" for the reader to evaluate the characters of the storyworld. The narrator's rehearsal of Josiah's reforms in ch. 23 documents that no other king applied himself so diligently to the demands of the Mosaic law. But Josiah's premature death converts the narrator's evaluation (2 Kgs 23:24-5) into the narrative's most poignant irony. Josiah's nomistic reforms cannot reverse centuries of disloyalty, no matter how zealous the application of its principles. Once Yahweh has predicted his retreat (Deut 31:16-21, the ever-widening vector of divine-human relations is permanently charted, regardless of the hope Moses' scripture might hold for internal readers.

Like any narrative, the telling of the Bible's Primary Narrative negotiates between three worlds or dimensions as something quite remarkable is told to someone by someone.

### Something ...

While the notion of Mosaic authorship seems anachronistic, a narratological assessment of the Primary Narrative cannot escape the fiction that Moses authored the book of the law. That Moses was never forthcoming on the motivations behind his written book of the law certainly constitutes an oversight as scandalous, and to the traditional reader of scripture, as troubling, as any "pious fraud" purportedly committed by Josiah. That oversight, coupled with Yahweh's steadfast refusal to be tied to Solomon's vaunted cult or to conform to Moses' published terms-of-agreement, compels the biblical reader to construct a third motivation for the rhetorical event of the Bible's Primary Narrative, a motivation that goes beyond *and* deconstructs any assessment that sees in the Bible an agenda that unerringly

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<sup>294</sup> Divided thus, the story-discourse dichotomy of the Primary Narrative undermines Davies' "circular argument," since the report of the discovery of the book of the law in 2 Kgs 22 is not the self-promotion of the "Deuteronomistic History."



promotes as normative Moses' law.<sup>295</sup> In this alternative reading, the Primary Narrative encodes a subtly-voiced skepticism against Moses' religious appropriation of writing technology which he promulgates to affect positive outcomes from Yahweh. Put plainly, the Primary Narrative represents a skeptical attitude towards normative scripture and its implicit assumption that the agents of heaven are receptive to the repeated coercions contained within humanly-produced texts. As such, the book of the law is to the Primary Narrative what Jesus is to ancient conceptions of messiahship: the threshold of a scandal (Greek: *skandalon*), an offense, a stumbling block (McCracken 1993:29-42; 1994:*passim*). According to David McCracken, the threshold is a place where two worlds meet, a "boundary where issues of ultimate importance are encountered" (1993:33). In Bakhtinian terms, biblical characters are always "on the threshold of decision, at a moment of crisis" (1984:61; cf. McCracken 1993:33). Moses' prescription to obey the conditions of his book continually beckons Israel, collectively and individually, to such a cusp where matters of ultimate importance and critical decision are potentially addressed.<sup>296</sup> But the promise of a revelation of divine intent through the book of the law is misleading, for the external reader knows that by engaging the world of the text embedded within their world, storyworld readers unknowingly step into an abyss.<sup>297</sup> Despite Moses' best intentions, Yahweh's predicted occultation, his belatedness in selecting a place for his name to dwell, his indifference to Josiah's ideal reception, all these conspire to transform the book of the law into a stumbling block over which storyworld readers trip whenever they read its contents with a hermeneutic of suspended disbelief.

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<sup>295</sup> Such a proposal counters Venema who states: "[T]he use of the phrase 'book of the *torah*' demonstrates the importance of 'Scripture' as a literary motif in the ... Hebrew Bible" (2004:201).

<sup>296</sup> While speaking primarily about New Testament characters like Martha, McCracken could well be describing Israel's situation at the end of the Primary Narrative when he comments: "It is surprising how many unresolved stories ... there are in the gospels, where characters are narratively abandoned, so to speak, in the moment of crisis, and readers are left with the crisis dramatically defined but not resolved" (1993:33).

<sup>297</sup> McCracken notes that the Septuagint uses the Greek word *skandalon* to describe Yahweh and his actions as a "stumbling-block" to the Israelites (1993:34).

### ... Told to Someone ...

To whom is this remarkable message communicated? Formally, it is the implied reader of the Primary Narrative, the one who is given privileged audience to the scandalous threshold embedded in the world of Moses and his people. Real readers should beware, however, for the scandal is contagious and cannot be sequestered to storyworld confines. The book-within-a-book structure of the Primary Narrative ensures that the scandal spreads to the book that envelopes the book within.<sup>298</sup> All that is required to initiate a readerly somersault within the storyworld is the suspension of disbelief by an internal reader, a suspension that transforms the narrative from text to scripture and in the process shifts the book of the law from a firm stanchion of faith into a precipitous obstruction. Should the external reader opt for a similar hermeneutic when reading the Primary Narrative, he will operate blind to the skeptical import of the dramatized dialogic that surrounds the publication by Israel's most illustrious leader. Such a reader too will be deaf to the dramatic irony enshrouding Israel's most religious king, all the while listening but not comprehending, seeing but not understanding (cf. Isa 6:9) that above prophet and king there exists a deity in retreat, ever free of the pious mechanisms of restraint and manipulation contained within a text advertised as his will-and-testament.

Is it reasonable to assume an ancient writer or reader capable of the kind of hermeneutical and intellectual skills needed to decode the dialogic strains of the text and to detect therein the skeptical subversion of Moses' book of the law? These same questions could be asked of the works of Job and Qoheleth, both of which contain skeptical polemics against ancient religious economies and their foundational principles of retributive justice. Their skepticism lends support to the voice of skepticism detected in the Primary Narrative, a work that sounds forth a sustained counterpoint to the enthusiastic advocations of the book of the law voiced in Psa 119 or in the Ezra-Nehemiah literary unit. Additional evidence for a sophisticated ancient readership can also be seen in the Menippean genre of satire that was widespread in Hellenistic and Roman literature, a genre which Bakhtin argued exerted considerable influence on ancient Christian literature (1984:135-6; cf. also McCracken 1993:37-8).<sup>299</sup> Is it so great a step historically from the

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<sup>298</sup> As McCracken notes: "[It] is not just characters in the text who are brought to the threshold; the gospels themselves act as occasions for offense to their readers" (1993:34).

<sup>299</sup> McCracken writes:

cynicism of the third century BCE philosopher Menippus to the skepticism of Job, from the scandalized messiah of the gospels to the scandalized book of Moses in the Primary Narrative? For those gifted with a skeptical ear, ancient or modern, the subtle message of the Primary Narrative was (and is) latently audible, provided distinctions are drawn between narrator and character and between *sujet* and *fabula*.<sup>300</sup>

### ... By Someone

Finally, I return to the vexing question of who might be responsible for the telling of this remarkable tale. Is it the narrator (as Eslinger might argue), or might it be the implied author (as Noll would be sure to assert)? Only rarely does the narrator comment or evaluate on the proceedings in the story, preferring to stand aloof from his story, leaving the tale to deliver the message. However, the reader is jolted into a search for ultimate semantic authority when the narrator's evaluations prove out of step with his narrative. Either the tale-teller discrepancy of 2 Kgs 23:25-30 indicates that the narrator is using the subtleties of irony to deliver a nuanced message (cf. Eslinger 1989:*passim*), or they reveal a narrator committed to a Deuteronomic ideal-

A Menippean element that appears in the gospels is the scandalous, an artistic category between the tragic and the comic, wherein the eccentric, the one out-of-center ...destroys the ordinary wholeness of the world by making a breach in what is normal, central, and official. This breach may potentially free the person approaching the eccentric, who posits the scandalous. But this can only occur on the threshold, between the normal, official, stable world and another 'world,' which in the gospels is the kingdom or reign of God. This is the good news, which is at the same time scandalous news (1993:38).

Against Harold Bloom, McCracken asserts that the scandalous "can of course happen in the Hebrew narratives, but is not the norm" (1993:38). My narratological study of Deuteronomy and the Primary Narrative of course sides with Bloom on the matter.

<sup>300</sup> And what is one to make of centuries of non-skeptical receptions of the Primary Narrative by the "people of the book?" Does the inertia of their reading tradition override the problematic assessment of Moses' law subtly encoded in the Bible? Frederick E. Greenspahn has recently argued that the Jewish reading tradition has always displayed ambivalence to the Bible, as is evident in the degree to which the Talmud has predominated over the Tanakh (2007:7). Moreover, Noll asserts that "the Former Prophets give every appearance that their authors were not interested in creating the kind of literary authority that the Bible eventually became for several religious communities" (1997:37). Between ambivalent receptions (Greenspahn) and "secular" intentions (Noll) there appears ample room for the skeptical understanding of the Primary Narrative proposed here.

ogy whose conditioned and unreliable nature has been subtly exposed by the implied author (cf. Nelson 1988:47).<sup>301</sup> Unreliable narrator or ironic narration—either way, the level of discourse is cloven to make room for the Primary Narrative’s dialogic, whether through a separation of voices (the narrator versus the implied author) or a double-voicing intonation within the narrator.

Why does the biblical teller not state forthrightly that the book of the law was predictably ineffectual in leveraging blessings from heaven? For one, such a tale would sound flat to the intended reader who, as my third chapter demonstrated, is called on to puzzle out the textual anomalies of a dischronologized narrative and to uncover Deuteronomy’s *fabula* and its underlying dialogic. No less active a reader should therefore be expected for the remainder of the biblical narrative. More importantly, the cloaked nature of the Hebrew Bible’s message might hint at a sinister rhetorical situation, one where the biblical teller is overshadowed by a monologic force so powerful that only a hidden polemic of considerable nuance could subvert the pro-Mosaic hegemony that ruled his day. On the topic of hidden polemic, Bakhtin notes that such doubly-voiced communication “literally cringes in the presence of the anticipation of someone else’s word, reply, objection. The individual manner in which a person structures his own speech is determined to a significant degree by his peculiar awareness of another’s words, and by his means for reacting to them” (1984:196).<sup>302</sup> In

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<sup>301</sup> Both Richard D. Nelson and Noll (1997:28f) understand the narrator to be unreliable, given his out-of-step evaluation in 2 Kgs 23:25. Nelson writes:

The deuteronomistic party line is that, if the people through their king had repented and returned to full obedience to the law, they would have prospered. Yet the one king who truly does repent and truly keep the law ‘with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might’ ... is cut down in the prime of his life as if God changes the rules at the end of the book. Does this narrator really know what is going on, after all? The story that the narrator tells and the way it is told actually undercuts the ideology it is intended to support! From an ideological standpoint, Kings is a worm that turns and feeds on its own tail (1988:46-7).

<sup>302</sup> According to Bakhtin, every literary discourse contains a hidden polemic, every discourse “senses its own listener, reader, critic, and reflects in itself their anticipated objections, evaluations, points of view” (1984:196). Perhaps we may never fully understand just how deeply ingrained the principle of hidden polemic was in Bakhtin’s work. Many have pointed out the presence of Bakhtin’s hidden polemic against the political regimes of his day, and the role that Stalin himself must have played in Bakhtin’s formulizations of dialogic and monologic (especially the latter). “Stalin and Stalinist censors should be recognized as participants in these

whose presence does the narrator (or implied author) of the Primary Narrative cringe? An interesting question, one that demands yet another rereading of the Bible's Primary Narrative.

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dialogues as well, acting as Bakhtinian superaddressees that force Bakhtin to adopt oblique strategies of expression while providing him with a direct target of subversion" (Booker and Juraga 1995:24).



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