

Deuteronomy 29:1

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-29/deuteronomy-291/>

Moses concludes the covenant renewal text of Deuteronomy by reminding his audience of the covenant relationship the Suzerain (Ruler) God has established with His vassals, Israel. He begins a new covenant which adds to the covenant made at Horeb (Sinai).

In the Hebrew text, Deuteronomy 29:1 is verse 69 of chapter 28, implying that it is the conclusion to Moses' address in chapters 27-28. But it might introduce Moses' fourth address. It seems best to view the first part of this verse as a concluding statement for the entire covenant document which began at 1:1-5, and the last part of the verse as the beginning statement of a new covenant made with this second generation (from leaving Egypt).

This verse states that *these are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb* (v. 1).

Note the similarities with Deuteronomy 1:1-5:

- *These are the words* (1:1)
- *Horeb* (1:2)
- *The LORD commanded him [Moses]* (1:3)
- *In the land of Moab* (1:5)

The similarity of language between Deuteronomy 1:1-5 and the first part of Deuteronomy 29:1 forms a literary framework (called an inclusio) for the entire section. The point is that everything in between Deuteronomy 5:1-5 and Deuteronomy 29:1 constitutes an exposition on the covenant (*words*) between God (the *LORD*, superior ruler, or suzerain) and Israel (His vassal) through *Moses*. It was a repetition of the covenant given at *Horeb*, also known as Mount Sinai. This second generation (from leaving Egypt) agreed to be bound by this covenant, even as the first generation had been bound (Deuteronomy 26:17).

The narrator first pointed out the fact that the Suzerain (Ruler) God (*the LORD*) had established a covenant relationship with the Israelites. The covenant

terms or conditions are contained in *the words of the covenant*. the covenant mediator was identified as *Moses*, and the two parties to the covenant were *the LORD* (the Suzerain) and *the sons of Israel* (His vassals).

This covenant renewal occurred *in the land of Moab*, on the east side of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 1:5). This covenant renewal was given in preparation for the people to enter and possess the land. So, *Moab* was where the Suzerain God renewed His covenant relationship *which He had made with Israel at Horeb*, also called Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:23). By this time (40 years later), the generation of fighting men (age 20 and older) that left Egypt had died (Deuteronomy 2:16). This covenant renewal served to instruct the new generation of Israelites about what the Suzerain God required since most of them were not present when the covenant was first established on Mount Sinai.

The last part of Deuteronomy 29:1 states that what is to come is *besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb*. The Hebrew word translated *besides* indicates the idea of being separate from, or in addition to. So it seems that Deuteronomy 29:1 marks the ending of the ratification of the covenant of Moses given at *Horeb*, agreed to by the people in Deuteronomy 26:17, while also marking the beginning of a separate covenant between this second generation who will enter the land and all generations who will follow.

The Apostle Paul treats this second, added covenant as an example of “righteousness based on faith” in Romans 10:6-10. In that passage, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14 to illustrate that the righteousness based on faith starts in the heart, by believing what is true. Paul contrasts this with “righteousness which is based on law” and uses Leviticus 18:5, which he illustrates using this verse rooted in the first covenant received at *Horeb*. It could be that in this second covenant God is adding an emphasis on faith as the foundation for obedience, that they might gain the benefits of living in God’s ways.

Biblical Text:

These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.