

**Text:** Dt 16.1-22

## THEOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF DEUTERONOMY<sup>1</sup>

1. **Consider:** a review of God's faithfulness (1.6–4.40)
2. **Covenant:** an exposition of the law (5–26)

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
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3. **Commence:** preparations for renewing the covenant (27.1–28.68)
4. **Commit:** an exhortation to obedience (29.2–30.20)

Let's identify the themes of the paragraphs:

- (1-8) **Passover**
- (9-12) **Feast of Weeks (Firstfruits, Pentecost)**
- (13-15) **Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)**
- (16-17) **The three-feast rule**
- (18-20) **You shall appoint local judges**
- (21-22) **You shall not plant Asherah (idols)**

The last chapter ended with the laws concerning the first-born animals. The Israelites were to reserve them (and not profit from them) so that they could offer them "every year before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses." (Dt 15.20)

Which verses in 16.1-17 repeat portions of this formula "the place your Lord chooses"? **6, 7, 11, 15, 16**

What events to the three feasts commemorate?

1. Passover: **Exodus**
2. Firstfruits: **Early harvest**
3. Booths: **Late harvest, wilderness wanderings**

What additional feast accompanied the Passover feast? (3) **the seven-day feast of unleavened bread**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from an outline in Lawrence O Richards, *The Bible Readers Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 117.

Since firstfruits is a harvest feast, what standard should apply to Israelites as they contributed to the provisions for the feast? (10) **as the Lord blesses you (compare 1 Cor 16.2, church to offer as the Lord “may prosper”)**

What does the mention of so many participants in v. 11 signify concerning the feast of firstfruits? **the spirit of generosity pervaded the celebration**

What is the difference between firstfruits and booths? (Compare v. 9 and v. 13) **One celebrates the early harvest, the other the final harvest**

Which verses in Dt 16 have the word “stranger” in them? **11 and 14**

What is the significance of mentioning or not mentioning “stranger” in connection with these feasts? **Passover involved Israel and the Exodus, but firstfruits and booths celebrated blessing in the land, where the nation had a mission to the strangers (and the strangers will be part of the rapture and second coming of Christ)**

The section on judges and officials (18-20) speaks of men who would be appointed locally, replacing Moses and the seventy elders who judged such matters in the wilderness. What was the heavily emphasized characteristic that must mark the work of these judges? **Justice, no bribes, no partiality**

What does “righteous judgement” (18) mean? **Judgement according to a standard, which would be God’s Law**

One of God’s standards is an implacable opposition to idolatry. We see this in vv. 21-22 (a paragraph which seems to continue to 17.1).

Tom Constable explains the use of these objects of pagan worship:

“An Asherah (v. 21) was perhaps a sacred tree or group of trees, or a wooden pole, that the Canaanites used in the worship of their female fertility goddess: Asherah. Asherah was evidently both the name of a Canaanite goddess and a cult object used in her worship. The Canaanites usually made this ‘image’ (v. 22, AV) or ‘sacred pillar’ (NKJV, NET2, NEB, HCSB, cf. ESV) or ‘sacred stone’ (NIV, TNIV, CEV) or ‘stone pillar’ (NRSV) out of stone, and used it in the worship of Baal, the male Canaanite god of fertility, and Asherah. But evidently the Canaanites also worshipped wooden Asherahs (v. 21)...

“The judges were not to tolerate the planting (v. 21) of these Asherah trees or poles, that were so common in Canaan that the people regarded them as a prominent part of the native culture.

“Judges customarily dispensed justice in the open space near the main gate of each town. This area was the main congregating place of the community (cf. Ruth 4:1–12).”<sup>2</sup>

You can see why this section follows the appointment of judges: if they were to judge righteous judgements, they could not do so in connection with Asherah poles. How does the instruction about sacrifices connect with the responsibility of judges? **The priests were to examine sacrifices, but apparently judges were to hold priest and people accountable to God’s standard**

“When judge and people alike followed this standard of justice, they could expect long and prosperous life in the land (v. 20). This was precisely the promise for those who keep the fifth commandment (Deut 5:16).”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Dt 16.21.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, v. 4 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 258.