

Session 5: Deuteronomy

A. A New Law

Activity 5.1

Read 2 Kings 22:1 – 23:25

The passage records the discovery of a hitherto unknown law-code in the Temple in the year 621 B.C.

- What were the effects of the discovery on King Josiah's state of mind?
- What were its effects on his policy?

Now read the following passages from Deuteronomy:

- 29:1-15
- 12:1-14
- 16:1-7
- 28:15 to about 28 or further if you wish

You can read more about the reign of Josiah in the time chart.

621 B.C. was almost exactly 100 years after the fall of Samaria in the time of Hosea. During that time the power of Assyria gradually waned. Josiah's predecessors, Mannaseh and Amon, had been vassals of Assyria. They had paid tribute and had been forced to worship Assyrian gods. Then followed attacks on Assyria by the Scythians, Babylonians and Medes in the east. In the west, Egypt regained her independence. With the pressure removed, Josiah too was able to assert his independence. The renovation of the Temple was the first step in this direction and it was in the course of this renovation that the 'Book of the Law' was 'found'.

What was the book? The story gives us a number of clues:

- it was short enough to be read three times in one day
- it emphasized the covenant between Yahweh and Israel (23:3)
- when Josiah heard it he was terrified
- it gave the reforms a new and much more focused direction
 - all worship except that of Yahweh was suppressed
 - all worship was centralized at Jerusalem and the priests were brought to Jerusalem
 - Bethel and other high places were defiled and their priests killed
 - mediums, wizards, and divining idols were suppressed (23:24)
 - the Passover was kept in a different way (23:21)

One book fits the bill: Deuteronomy – either the whole or the main part of the book we have now.