

disobedience: rain, fruitfulness, and length of days (life) for obedience; drought, barrenness, and ultimately death for disobedience.

### **Deut 13: Warning against Hearing the False Prophet**

Deut 13 further extends the themes of Deut 6:4-9 in its characterization of the false prophet, who would lead Israel astray to worship other gods:

If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a portent, and the sign or the wonder that he spoke to you comes to pass, and he says, "Let us go after other gods, whom you have not known, and let us serve them": You must not *hear* (לא תשמע) the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for YHWH your God is testing you, to know whether you *love YHWH your God with all your hearts and with all your souls*. You shall go after YHWH your God, and *him* you shall fear, and his commandments you shall keep, and his voice you shall *hear* (תשמעו), and him you shall serve, and to him you shall cleave (Deut 13:1-4; translation mine).

This section is, in a sense, an anti-שמע, warning the people *not* to hear the word of one who would direct them away from YHWH and into idolatry. Only single-minded devotion to YHWH and keeping his commandments will lead to life; turning to other gods will lead to death and destruction (13:6-18).

Deuteronomy 13 is analogous to a section found in suzerain-vassal treaties, which typically include instructions on seizing and punishing those who would instigate rebellion against the king.<sup>76</sup> The language of “following after” other gods (הלך אחרֵי) is legal terminology which concerns a vassal’s disobedience to his master (cf. Deut 6:14).<sup>77</sup> To “follow after” another lord was treasonous; therefore, treaty clauses demand immediate pursuit of rebels, who are to be seized and killed. Deut 13 shows an analogous concern for maintaining loyalty to YHWH and calls for the harshest possible punishment for anyone who would foment rebellion against him.

Deuteronomy 13 demonstrates how the religious and political spheres were interconnected in the ancient world. Weinfeld comments:

Political and religious aspects, particularly in the Israelite covenant, were fused to such an extent, however, that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between them. Therefore, it must be said that, although the passage in Deut. 13 seems to be concerned only with religious loyalty to the God of Israel, the laws actually served to guarantee the political-national allegiance of the people no less than their religious allegiance.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Weinfeld, “Loyalty Oath,” 387-391; *Deuteronomie School*, 92.

<sup>77</sup> Moran, 82-83, n. 35.

<sup>78</sup> *Deuteronomie School*, 100.

This is particularly true if, as R. Frankena suggests, Josiah's reforms were designed to replace the former treaty with Assyria.<sup>79</sup> The complex interplay between political and religious ideas gives Deuteronomy much of its unique flavor; the notion of YHWH as Israel's King makes a lasting mark upon the Hebrew Scriptures and will continue to have an important influence on rabbinic discourse and Jewish liturgical traditions.

### **Deut 26-28: Blessings and Curses**

At the conclusion of Moses' second speech, the key themes of the *Shema* coalesce with an added emphasis on life and death, the consequences of obedience and disobedience. Deut 12-26 has spelled out the specific statutes and ordinances of the (singular) commandment, the loyalty oath between YHWH and Israel. At the end of the recitation of all the specific laws, the covenant is ratified. Moses now charges the people to hear and observe the commandments "with all their heart and soul" and to make YHWH their God (Deut 26:16-17; cf.

---

<sup>79</sup> R. Frankena, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy," in *Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland* (ed. P. A. H. de Boer; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 122-54, esp. 150-53. Frankena argues that the Josianic reforms of 622 BCE were able to take place because of the death of the Assyrian potentate Ashurbanipal, with whom Manasseh had a loyalty oath. After 622, Assyria was weakened and Judah was able to regain its independence, replacing the treaty with Assyria with a covenant with YHWH.