

**Supplemental Notes:**

*The Book  
of  
Deuteronomy*

*compiled  
by  
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## Audio Listing

### Acknowledgments

These notes have been assembled from speaking notes and related materials which had been compiled from a number of classic and contemporary commentaries and other sources detailed in the bibliography, as well as other articles and publications of Koinonia House. While we have attempted to include relevant endnotes and other references, we apologize for any errors or oversights.

The complete recordings of the sessions, as well as supporting diagrams, maps, etc., are also available in various audiovisual formats from the publisher.

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## The Book of Deuteronomy

### Session 1

### Chapters 1 - 2

#### The Torah

Genesis	The Book of Beginnings
Exodus	The Birth of the Nation
Leviticus	The Law of the Nation
Numbers	The Wilderness Wanderings
<b>Deuteronomy</b>	<b>The Laws Reviewed</b>

The Book of Deuteronomy is the bridge between the first four books (outside the Land) and the next seven books (inside the Land). It contains the *Sh'ma*: the Great Commandment. There are more quotes by Jesus from Deuteronomy than from any other book. It also includes the Song of Moses.

### Deuteronomy 1

- 1] These *be* the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red *sea*, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

The Hebrew title of the book is אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים *'elleh haddebarim* ("these are the words") in keeping with the Hebrew custom of often titling a work by its first word(s). The English title Deuteronomy stems from the Septuagint's mistranslation of Deuteronomy 17:18, "this repetition of the Law." The Septuagint translated those words *deuteronomion* (*deutero* means "two" or "second," and *nomion* is "law"; lit., "second Law"), which were rendered *Deuteronomium* in the Vulgate, Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible.

The place names in verse 1 are not known with any certainty. Israel was not yet in the Promised Land, but was perched at its entrance (cf. v. 5) as they received Moses' final instructions.

"Words of Moses": Moses was eminently qualified to speak for God. He was more than Israel's human Lawgiver, he was the founder of Israel's religion and mediator of the covenant at Sinai (we'll review this in Chapter 5). He was Israel's first prophet (34:10). (Though God called Abraham a prophet (Gen 20:7), Israel did not then exist as a nation.)

Through Moses, God set such a high standard for the people that all subsequent prophets lived under his shadow, never attaining to it, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, the New Testament authors mentioned Moses more frequently than any other Old Testament person. So Deuteronomy is essentially a series of sermons by the greatest Old Testament prophet.

Moses' words were addressed to all Israel, an expression used at least 12 times in the book. Its frequent occurrence emphasizes the unity of Israel which was brought about by God's mighty deliverance of the nation from Egypt, and by her acceptance of His covenant at Sinai. They were uniquely God's people, the only nation on earth that had as its "constitution" the Word of God.

Moses' death was probably added by Joshua, whose book was added to the "Hexateuch." [Michael fights with Satan over the body? Transfiguration appearance? One of the two witnesses in Revelation 11?]

- 2] (There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh Barnea.)



From Horeb to Kadesh Barnea was only about 200 miles. The Israelites turned an eleven-day journey—from Horeb (another word for Mount Sinai; cf. Ex 34:2, 27 with Deut 5:2) to Kadesh Barnea, the first site for entering into the Promised Land from the south—into a 40-year wandering in the wilderness before they came to a second potential site for entering the land. It took only three days to get Israel out of Egypt; but it took 40 years to get "Egypt" out of Israel! As Stephen pointed out centuries later (Acts 7:39, 51), the Israelites had always been slow to believe God.

- 3] And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them;

יהוה YHWH, *Yahveh, Jehovah, or YeHoVaH*: In the OT, God was addressed as Yahveh when the writers wanted to stress the personal nature of the One who entered into a covenant with people (cf. Ex 3:13-14). Sometime after the close of the OT canon (the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) the Jews developed a superstition about pronouncing the name "Yahveh" (or YeHoVah). This was an unfortunate loss for the saints.

Christians today no longer address God as Yahveh in their prayers because God's personal revelation of Himself is fully realized in Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-2). Now Christians know God even more personally as their Father (Jn 14:6; 20:17; Rom 1:17; 8:15; 1 Cor 1:3), a designation only infrequently used of God in the Old Testament. The authority behind Moses' first speech (Deut 1:5-4:43) was Yahveh, Israel's personal God.

- 4] After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei:

The historical background to Moses' first speech is made complete with the note about the defeat of two kings, Sihon and Og (cf. Num 21:21-35; Deut 2:26-3:11).

- 5] On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying,  
6] The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:

### First Attempt to Enter the Promised Land (1:5-46)

The word באר *ba'ar*, to make plain, distinct; to make clear; to declare. Declare, expound, is significant for it means that Moses did all he could to make God's Word clear to the Israelites. The word *ba'er* is used only here and in 27:8 (where it is rendered by the adverbs "very clearly") and

in Habakkuk 2:2 (“make it plain”). Basically, the verb means “to dig” (e.g., to dig a well; “well” is *be'er*; as in *BeerSheba*, etc).

The word translated Law, תורה *Torah*, actually means “instruction,” not merely a body of laws in the modern sense. It is instruction in how to walk with God. Paul referred to it as our “schoolmaster” (Gal 3:24, 25). The new generation, now grown to adulthood, needed to have the Law interpreted for them in the light of 38 years’ experience in the wilderness. When Moses expounded these words, Israel was east of the Jordan in Moab.

- 7] Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all *the places* high thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

The first words of the speech, **the Lord (Yehovah) our God**, set a particular emphasis in the Hebrew sentence and set the tone for the entire speech. (In fact in Deuteronomy the words “the Lord our God” occur almost 50 times.) Yehovah is the sovereign Leader of Israel’s history. When the covenant was ratified and the revelation at Sinai (Horeb; cf. v. 2) completed, He directed the nation to Canaan. The boundaries (v. 7; cf. 11:24; Ex 23:31) go beyond the territory that Israel ever actually possessed. [Though David’s and Solomon’s empires extended to the Euphrates River (cf. 2 Sam 8:3; 1 Kgs 4:21), many of the peoples in that territory were subjects only by paying tribute; they were not conquered by Israelites so the land was not fully possessed by them.]

- 8] Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

God’s command (Deut 1:8) to take possession (by conquest) of so vast an area should not have shocked His hearers. The promise of that same land had been given in a covenant hundreds of years earlier to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21; 17:7-8), and reiterated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:3-5; 28:13-15; 35:12). These three patriarchs are mentioned seven times in Deuteronomy (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4).

Moses left no doubt about the nature of this promise: It was gracious and it was *permanent*. When the Lord seals His promise with an oath (swore; cf. 1:35) He will never change that plan (cf. Ps 110:4). So from Abraham on to the nation at Moses’ time each Israelite was to realize that he stood in the line of God’s *inviolable promise*. The command to “take possession” (which occurs 18 times in Deut: 1:8, 21, 39; 2:24; etc.). This

emphasis on the “land” is unusually strong in Deuteronomy, for this word occurs almost 200 times.

- 9] And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:  
10] The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye *are* this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.  
11] (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye *are*, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)

If the nation had any doubt about God’s intention or ability to fulfill His ancient covenant with Abraham she had only to look at her present condition. Israel had become so numerous that they were like the stars in the sky (v. 10). This, of course, was one thing God had promised Abraham and Isaac (Gen 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Ex 32:13). The nation’s growth thus proved both God’s intention and ability to fulfill His original promises to Abraham. Moses was confident God would continue to increase and bless them, for they had the same Lord as their ancestors.

“The God of your fathers” is a common title of the Lord in Deuteronomy (cf. “the Lord your God” occurs over 250 times in Deuteronomy, no doubt to affirm to Israel that her God is not some abstract pagan concept but is Yahweh, the living Lord who made a covenant with her).

- 12] How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?  
13] Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.  
14] And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken *is good for us* to do.

The fulfillment of this particular promise, however, had caused a problem. The nation had become too large for Moses to govern effectively (vv. 9, 12; cf. Ex 18:13-27), so he had to appoint military leaders (commanders), officials (perhaps scribes or administrators), and judges (Deut 1:15-16).

- 15] So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.  
16] And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear *the causes* between your brethren, and judge righteously between *every* man and his brother, and the stranger *that is* with him.

The recording of these events is not incidental or parenthetical to Moses’ discourse. The concern shown in the choice of wise and respected men (v. 15; cf. v. 13) and the command for fairness (judge fairly, v. 16) and...



- 17] Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; *but* ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment *is* God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring *it* unto me, and I will hear it.
- 18] And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

... absolute impartiality in judgment (v. 17; cf. 16:19; Prov 18:5; 24:23). The point of the Conquest was for Israel to establish righteousness and holiness in the Promised Land and *ultimately in the entire world* (cf. Deut 28:1, 9-10, 13). It took faith for Israel to conquer the land, but it also took faith for them to administer justice in the land, for here too they would encounter opposition.

- 19] And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh Barnea.

### The Failure at Kadesh Barnea (1:19-46)

As the first step toward conquering the land the Israelites had to travel through the vast and dreadful desert (cf. 8:15; 32:10), a journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea of more than 100 miles over an essentially waterless wilderness. This first step would create a hunger in their hearts for the fruitfulness and beauty of the Promised Land and it also gave God the opportunity to demonstrate His fatherly love for them and His ability to protect them in a hostile environment (cf. 1:31). Both—the hunger for the land and confidence in God's love and power—were necessary if they were to accomplish the goal ahead of them. Moses' command to the people not to be afraid (another emphasis in Deut: vv. 21, 29; 3:2, 22; 7:18; 20:1, 3; 31:6, 8; cf. Josh 1:9; 8:1) shows that he realized the enormity of the task to take possession (cf. Deut 1:8) of the land of the Amorites, but he was also aware of the sufficiency of their God for that task.

- 20] And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us.
- 21] Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.
- 22] And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.
- 23] And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe:
- 24] And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.

The second step involved sending out 12 men, one from each tribe, as spies into the land. Though the people initiated this plan (vv. 22-23), the

Lord agreed to it (Num 13:1-2). It was therefore not an act of unbelief initially but rather a wise step in the necessary preparations for battle. When the spies returned, part of their report was encouraging. The land was unusually fruitful (Deut 1:25; Num 13:23-27). The Valley of Eschol (lit., “cluster of grapes”) was located near Hebron (cf. Num 13:22-23) and even today that area is famous for its grapes.

For this reason it was called a good land, a phrase used 10 times in Deuteronomy (1:25, 35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 6:18; 8:7, 10; 9:6; 11:17) to encourage Israel to undertake the Conquest. Moses did not explicitly mention the second half of the spies' report here, but their description of the land's inhabitants was so terrifying that almost all the people were discouraged (Num 13:28-33—the very word “*Nephilim*” is used there).

- 25] And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought *it* down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, *It is* a good land which the LORD our God doth give us.
- 26] Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God:
- 27] And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.
- 28] Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people *is* greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

In their fear the Israelites exaggerated about the size of the cities in Canaan, saying they were walled up to the sky. The most terrifying feature of the spies' report was the mention of the presence of the Anakim (v. 28) in Canaan (Num 13:32-33).

Out of cowardice the people rebelled and grumbled against the Lord (cf. Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3). The people claimed that the Lord hates them, and said He delivered them from Egypt only to destroy them by the hands of the Amorites. Israel had reasoned in a similar way in the wilderness (Ex 16:3; 17:3). Their description of the people revealed that they thought their task was impossible for both themselves *and God*.

### Post-Flood Nephilim

“...also after that...” (Gen 6:4); *Rephaim, Emim, Horim, Zamsummim* (Gen 14, 15); Arba, Anak and his seven sons (*Anakim*), encountered in Canaan (Num 13:33); Og, King of Bashan (Deut 3:11, Josh 12); Goliath and his four brothers (2 Sam 21:16-22, 1 Chr 20:4-8). The Bulls of Bashan? Psalm 22:12?

## The Stratagems of Satan

### Corruption of Adam's line (Gen 6)

- Abraham's seed Gen 12, 20
- Famine Gen 50
- Destruction of male line Ex 1
- Pharaoh's pursuit Ex 14
- The populating of Canaan Gen 12:6
- Against David's line 2 Sam 7

### Attacks on David's Line

- Jehoram kills his brothers 2 Chr 21
- Arabians slew all (but Ahazariah)
- Athaliah kills all (but Joash) 2 Chr 22
- Hezekiah assaulted, etc. Isa 36, 38
- Haman's attempts Est 3

### New Testament Stratagems

- Joseph's fears: Mt 1
  - Herod's attempts: Mt 2
  - At Nazareth: Lk 4
  - 2 storms on the Sea: Mk 4; Lk 8
  - The Cross
  - Summary: Rev 12
- ...and he's not through...

## An Enigma

What do the Golan Heights, Hebron, and the Gaza Strip have in common? They were the areas that Joshua *failed* to exterminate the Rephaim. Joshua 15:14, et al.

- 29] Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them.  
30] The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes;  
31] And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.

Moses, on the other hand, who was not in rebellion against the Lord, had the same set of facts as the people but interpreted those facts differently. God did not hate His people; He loved them with the tender love a father has for his helpless little son (Deut 1:31). All the people needed to do was to look back into their recent past when God miraculously delivered and sustained them in their desert journey. Furthermore, the people need not

be afraid (v. 29; cf. v. 21) because the Lord did not intend to destroy them but to fight for them (v. 30; cf. 3:22; 20:4). Ironically, Moses reminded the people that God, by means of the pillar of fire by night and . . . cloud by day (cf. Ex 13:21) had even acted as a spy for them. The Hebrew word חָרַץ ("search out," Deut 1:33), is the same word used in Numbers 13:2-25 of the spies' activity! Moses, in contrast with the people, relied on the Word of God and his experience of God in history, allowing these two realities to interpret his circumstances and control his response to the news of the *Nephilim* (*Rephaim*).

The people's obstinate refusal to be encouraged by God's working for them in the past makes this passage an eloquent testimony to the fickleness of human hearts. A few "experts" (10 of the 12 spies) were able to overturn the facts of God's unmistakable providential care. [This perverse vacillation displayed here is not uniquely Israelite. James needed to warn his Christian readers—who after the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus never had cause to doubt God's love or power—not to approach their God with a vacillating spirit (James 1:5-8).]

- 32] Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God,  
33] Who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents *in*, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.  
34] And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying,  
35] Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers,

The introduction of God's judgment by the phrase "when the Lord heard what you said" suggests God's omniscience (for the people actually grumbled secretly in their tents, v. 27). Also the declaration of His devastating judgment on that generation (v. 35) clearly presupposes His omnipotence. He had sworn (affirmed by oath; cf. 4:31) to Israel's forefathers to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant (1:8). The word "forefathers" occurs 21 times in Deuteronomy to stress Israel's relationship to the covenant promises through the three major patriarchs.

- 36] Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.  
37] Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither.  
38] *But* Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

God also swore to exclude every warrior (cf. 2:14) of the rebellious generation from the Promised Land, with only Caleb (1:36) and Joshua

(v. 38) excepted (Num 14:36-38). The covenantal promises to Abraham were not invalidated by this act of judgment. The descendants of Abraham would still be given the good land, but it would be given to a *more obedient* generation. The covenant belongs to Israel, but only an obedient Israel will enjoy the covenant. The exemption of Joshua and Caleb from judgment clearly illustrated this point. Caleb, for example, followed the Lord wholeheartedly (cf. Josh 14:8-9, 14).

God's judgment even extended to Moses: God was indignant with and disappointed in Moses (as revealed in the words "with me also," emphatic in Heb; cf. 3:26; 4:21). (When Moses said that he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land because of you he was not laying the ultimate blame for his judgment on the people. Rather the people's grumbling led him to sin, too.) So his assistant Joshua (cf. Ex 24:13; 33:11) would lead the people into the land.]

- 39] Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.
- 40] But *as for* you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

The children were not held responsible for their parents' cowardice but were assured possession of the land, whereas the parents were sent back to the desert (cf. 2:1) to die. The author of Hebrews later pointed to the wilderness strewn with the corpses of this generation as a grim reminder of the consequences of a believer's lack of confidence in God's power (Heb 3:16-19).

The age of responsibility is older than we may think it is. Some of these folk who entered the land were teenagers at Kadesh-Barnea. We know from Numbers 14:29 that God set the age at 20, and all from twenty years old and upward died in the wilderness. Something else to note here is that children who die in infancy *are saved*. How do we know? God did not hold responsible those young folk who had not reached the age of accountability when their elders refused to enter the land. He permitted them to enter the land. "...Had *no knowledge between good and evil*?" Does that describe "value relativism" that is with us today?!

- 41] Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD, we will go up and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill.
- 42] And the LORD said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I *am* not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies.

When the devastating judgment was announced to the people they realized the enormity of their sin and responded with an immediate confession and a readiness to go to battle immediately. But then it was too late, for God had already sworn to judge them. The insincerity of their confession was made evident in a second act of rebellion. The fickleness of the people is again underscored.

They rebelled at first out of cowardice and unbelief in the Lord's ability to fight for them. They rebelled a second time in arrogance (v. 43) thinking they could win the battle without His help. Their defeat by the Amorites who chased them like a swarm of bees in the hill country (cf. v. 41b), made it plain that they were under the resolute and inescapable judgment of their God (cf. Num 14:40-45).

- 43] So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill.
- 44] And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, *even* unto Hormah.

The exact location of the city of Hormah is not known, but it was in the Negev, the southern portion of Canaan, later assigned to Judah (Josh 15:30) and then to Simeon (Josh 19:4; cf. Judg 1:17). Seir was an early name for Edom (Gen 32:3; Deut 2:4-5, 8, 12, 22, 29).

- 45] And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.
- 46] So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode *there*.

## Deuteronomy 2

- 1] Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days.
- 2] And the LORD spake unto me, saying,
- 3] Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

In spite of this 40-year judgment of that ungrateful and rebellious generation God had not given up His people, for Moses could still say the Lord had directed me. God was still guiding the nation through His Prophet Moses and had not abandoned His plan to give them the land of Canaan for their home.

- 4] And command thou the people, saying, Ye *are* to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore:



- 5] Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau *for* a possession.

God then told Moses to leave the hill country (west of Seir or Edom) and go through Seir, the home of Esau's descendants (cf. Gen 36:8-9). God warned Israel to avoid fighting with them. [This likelihood of war may have been because of the scarcity of rainfall in that area (only about five inches annually). A large contingent of people moving through Seir could easily deplete the Edomites' store of water. Therefore God told Israel to pay for whatever they ate and drank in order to avoid hostilities.] (The Edomites, in fact, refused to grant the Israelites right of passage, Num20:14-21.)

These instructions show that the Lord is sovereign over all lands and all peoples. This sovereignty should have encouraged the Israelites to enter Canaan and fight with courage. For since God honored the right of Edom—and also Moab (vv. 8-9) and Ammon (vv. 19)—to possess their land, how much more would He honor Israel's right to possess Canaan, which was guaranteed to them by His covenantal oath to the patriarchs!

- 6] Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.  
7] For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God *hath been* with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.

These careful instructions show that the Israelites were not free to try to conquer any territory they wanted. Rather, God had promised them a definite land, and the war they would wage in order to conquer Canaan had a moral character to it (thus OT scholars have referred to it as a "holy war"; Cf. Deut 7). The Lord's protective care of Israel in the vast desert for 40 years (v. 7) also motivated them to obey His immediate instructions.

- 8] And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and from Eziongaber, we turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab.  
9] And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land *for* a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot *for* a possession.

Instead of going through Seir (Edom) up the Arabah Road to the southern part of Canaan, the Israelites traveled north along the east side of Edom up through Moab (cf. v. 18). Elath is a later name for Ezion Geber, a seaport at the Gulf of Aqabah. After God's command to treat the Moabites (the city of Ar was in Moab), Lot's descendants (Gen 19:36-

37), as carefully as the Edomites (Deut 2:4-6), a post-Mosaic editor inserted an explanatory note (vv. 10-12).

- 10] The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims;  
11] Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims.  
12] The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them.

[Though it is impossible to determine precisely when verses 10-12 were inserted, verse 12 indicates that it was after the initial conquest of the land.]

## Inspiration

The original texts of Scripture are "God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16), and therefore contain no errors, for God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). The Holy Spirit superintended the work of editors just as He did the historical research of Luke (Lk 1:1-4) so that the final words of the text, though obtained by different methods, are the words intended by God. It was this final text that Jesus Christ pronounced perfect (e.g., Mt 5:18; Jn 10:35) (including editorial insertions).

The Rephaim were an ancient tribe known for their tall stature (also mentioned in Gen 14:5; 15:20; Deut 2:20; 3:11, 13; Josh 12:4; 13:12; 17:15; 1 Chr 20:4). The Moabites called the Rephaites *Emim*, which means "terrors" or "dreaded ones." The Horim may have been the non-Semitic Hurrian people who lived in scattered groups in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. They occupied Seir before Esau moved there (Gen 14:6; 36:8-9, 20) and drove them out. The fact that the Moabites could dispossess these strong, numerous, and tall people underscored Israel's cowardice and faithlessness, who even with God's help shrank back from these same people (cf. Deut 1:28; Num 13:28, 33).

These explanatory notes leave the impression that no enemy is invincible. If the Moabites could drive out the Anakim (Emim) and if Esau's descendants could expel the Horim, then surely God could give Canaan to Israel. This puts God's command to cross the Zered Valley in Moab (Deut 2:13) in a fresh light.

- 13] Now rise up, *said I*, and get you over the brook Zered. And we went over the brook Zered.  
14] And the space in which we came from Kadesh Barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, *was* thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men

- of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them.
- 15] For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.

Moses again reminded his audience of the terrible judgment that his own rebellious generation had suffered (1:35, 39). He made it clear that the entire generation of fighting men (cf. 2:16) *did not die of natural deaths* during the previous 38 years in the wilderness. The fact that the Lord's hand was against a people often meant that He sent a destroying pestilence against them.

Also the first part of Deuteronomy 2:15 should be rendered, "The Lord's hand was against them to panic [or confuse] them." The verb for "panic or confuse" (*hamam*) is used for the divinely inspired panic that God sent on many of Israel's enemies so that they became too confused or terrified to fight competently. Thus because of their rebellion against the Lord this first generation of Israelite warriors actually found *themselves* objects of God's "holy war." They left the protective care of His hand in their arrogant rebellion only to find that hand turned against them as they endured painful deaths outside the Promised Land. By reminding the people of this, Moses said in effect that God is faithful to His promises and His threats, and has the power to execute both.

- 16] So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people,
- 17] That the LORD spake unto me, saying,
- 18] Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day:
- 19] And *when* thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon *any* possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot *for* a possession.
- 20] (That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims;

God had told Israel not to molest Esau's descendants (vv. 4-5) or the Moabites (v. 9); now He said the same about the Ammonites. Israel was not to attack the Ammonites for they, like the Moabites, were Lot's descendants (cf. Gen 19:36-38).

- 21] A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead:
- 22] As he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day:

Verses 20-23 are another editorial insertion (cf. vv. 10-12). The Ammonites' destruction of the Rephaites, called Zamzummites, and Esau's

descendants' destruction of the Horites, are attributed ultimately to God. For as Paul later wrote, it was He who set the times and boundaries for all the peoples of the earth (Acts 17:26).

- 23] And the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, *even* unto Azzah, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.)
- 24] Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess *it*, and contend with him in battle.

Even the Avvites living as far west as Gaza were destroyed by another people. Caphtorites is probably an early name for the Philistines, who came from Caphtor, another name for Crete.

- 25] This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations *that are* under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.
- 26] And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying,

God's command to dispossess Sihon the Amorite king of the city of Heshbon is another illustration of God's sovereignty over all nations. The terror and fear God would put in those nations constituted an essential "weapon" for Israel in this war and the Conquest (cf. Ex 15:15; 23:27; Num 22:3; Josh 2:9, 11, 24; 5:1; 9:24).

## The Defeat of Sihon (2:26-37)

This section (cf. Num 21:22-35) describes the beginning of Israel's conquest of the land, a war that had been delayed for 40 years.

- 27] Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left.
- 28] Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet;
- 29] (As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the LORD our God giveth us.

Moses recalled his peaceful offer to Sihon, an offer that had several things to commend it to the Amorite king. Moses promised they would not leave the main road, and therefore no plunder of the crops need be feared. The Israelites had already passed through the territories of Edom and Moab without war (v. 29). The Edomites had refused the right of passage to the Israelites (Num 20:18-21). Probably the Edomites allowed Israel to pass by on their eastern border though they refused to let them

pass through the middle of their territory. Moses also told Sihon that Israel's ultimate destiny was not the territory of Sihon but was on the other side of the Jordan in the land the Lord was giving them.

- 30] But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as *appeareth* this day.
- 31] And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.

Sihon rejected this peaceful offer. The Hebrew verbs used to express the “hardening” of Sihon’s mind and will (heart) can mean that the Lord “confirmed” what was already in Sihon’s heart, namely, his arrogance against the Lord and His people Israel (cf. Ex 4:21 on the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart). Sihon’s arrogant refusal was a sure sign that he had just thrown away his one chance of survival. Since God controls all of history, **Moses could say that the Lord our God delivered him over to us.**

- 32] Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz.
- 33] And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.
- 34] And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain:

Completely destroyed (v.34) translates *hòaram*, “to give over [to the Lord] often by total destruction.” In Deuteronomy *hòaram* also is used in 3:6; 7:2; 20:17. [In Chapter 7 we’ll discuss the question of the morality of killing the total population—men, women, and children.]

## Tribal Genocide?

The command to destroy them *totally*, that is, men, women, and children, has often been thought of as unethical for a loving God. However, several points must be kept in mind concerning these people.

- First, **they deserved to die** for their sin. Studies of their religion, literature, and archeological remains reveal that they were the most morally depraved culture on the earth at that time.
- Second, **they persisted in their hatred of God.** Had they repented, God would have spared them as He spared the Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah. Yet repentance seemed to be out of the question for these people.
- Third, the Canaanites constituted **a moral cancer** and even one of them—even a child left alive—had the potential of introducing an idolatry and immorality which would spread rapidly among the Israelites and bring about the destruction of God’s own people.

[Two mitigating factors may be mentioned. In some ways the death of a Canaanite child could have been a blessing. For if the child died before reaching the age of accountability it is likely that his or her eternal destiny would have been made secure in heaven. Another factor to remember is that one day Jesus Christ will return to slaughter the unrepentant wicked on the earth (though nothing is said about His killing children), and that “holy war” will make Israel’s holy war look pale by comparison (2 Thess 2:5-10; Rev 19:11-21).]

So there is no dichotomy between the God of the OT and the God of the NT. In both testaments He is revealed as a loving and righteous God. The command to engage in holy war is, of course, not applicable today since at the present time God is not working through one nation to set up His kingdom on the earth. But Christians today should learn from this command that they should be as ruthless with sin in their own lives as Israel should have been against the Canaanites.

- 35] Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took.
- 36] From Aroer, which *is* by the brink of the river of Arnon, and *from* the city that *is* by the river, even unto Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us: the LORD our God delivered all unto us:

The statement that not one town was “too strong for us” was a sharp reminder to the Israelites. (The Hebrew sentence literally reads “not a town was *too high* for us.” The high walls of the Canaanite cities terrified the first generation of Israelite warriors (1:28) so that they disobeyed the Lord’s command to enter the land.)

- 37] Only unto the land of the children of Ammon thou camest not, *nor* unto any place of the river Jabbok, nor unto the cities in the mountains, nor unto whatsoever the LORD our God forbad us.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Where does “Deuteronomy” get its name?
- 2) What does Paul mean that the law is our “Schoolmaster” in Galatians 3:24,25?
- 3) Summarize the commitment by God of the land to Israel: (Gen 15:18-21; 17:7-8), and reconfirmed to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:3-5; 28:13-15; 35:12).

- 4) What were the boundaries of the land grant to Israel?
- 5) Why did Israel fail at Kadesh-Barnea? What were they afraid of? Was that reasonable?
- 6) What does the Golan Heights, the “West Bank”, and the Gaza Strip have in common (from the perspective of the Book of Judges)?
- 7) Who were the Rephaim? What were the principal tribes involved?
- 8) In what way did *Moses’ grumbling* get him into trouble? What were the consequences to him?

### Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Was the land grant by God to Israel conditional? On what grounds?
- 2) How is the land grant (above) being challenged today? What is going to happen regarding Israel, the Palestinians, the UN, et al?
- 3) Are there “demonic” implications of the current tensions in the Middle East? What kind?
- 4) Discuss the ostensible genocide in 2:32-34.
- 5) What is Israel’s destiny in the Millennium?
- 6) How does Sihon’s rejection of Israel’s offer, and his subsequent history reflect on Matthew 25:31-46?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Why has the site of St. Catherine’s in the Sinai become suspect among contemporary scholars? What are the arguments in favor of Jabal Al Lawz in Saudi Arabia as the actual Mt. Sinai?
- 2) Outline Stephen’s presentation to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7. Notice that he seems to emphasize that Israel always missed the opportunity on the first occasion, and succeeded on their subsequent opportunity. What would his point have been had they let him continue?

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 3 & 4. Also Numbers 21, 25, & 32.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 2 Chapters 3 - 4

### Deuteronomy 3

- 1] Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.
- 2] And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

Bashan was a little farther north than the Israelites needed to go to reach their point of entry into the Promised Land. However, in defeating Og on the north they were protecting their right flank when they turned to cross the Jordan. Edrei, where the battle began, was about 30 miles east of the southern tip of the Sea of Kinnereth (Sea of Galilee).

God’s command for Israel to battle Og rested on two assurances: God had handed him over to Israel, and Israel had recently gained victory over Sihon. Again God was credited with the outcome of the battle (3:3; cf. 2:30-31).

### Sihon & Og

The whole country E of Jordan, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, was possessed by the Amorites, whose king, Sihon, refused to permit the Israelites to pass through his territory, and put his army in array against them. The Israelites went forth against him to battle, and gained a complete victory. The Amorites were defeated; Sihon, his sons, and all his people were smitten with the sword, his walled towns were captured, and the entire country of the Amorites was taken possession of by the Israelites Num 21:21-30 Deut 2:24-37

The country from the Jabbok to Hermon was at this time ruled by Og, the last of the Rephaim. He also tried to prevent the progress of the Israelites, but was utterly routed, and all his cities and territory fell into the hands of the Israelites (Num 21:33-35 Deut 3:1-14 Ps 135:10-12 136:17-22). These two victories gave the Israelites possession of the country on the east



of Jordan, from the Arnon to the foot of Hermon. The kingdom of Sihon embraced about 1,500 square miles, while that of Og was more than 3,000 square miles.

- 3] So the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining.
- 4] And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

After traversing the smooth pasture land, Israel suddenly came on the marvelous rock barrier of Argob, an oval basalt island, 60 miles by 20 miles, “all the girdle (Hebrew) of Argob” (the stony country), rising abruptly 30 ft. from the surrounding Bashan plains. The rocky fastnesses, on which Og’s 60 cities were, almost impregnable, compensated by security for their inconveniences. Had Og remained in them, Israel could not have dislodged him. God therefore saw it needful to encourage Israel in facing such a foe, “fear him not”; and God sent hornets which, as well as infatuation, drove Og into the open field where he was overthrown (Josh 24:12). God’s special interposition for Israel against Og is the theme of praise (Ps 135:11; 136:20).

- 5] All these cities *were* fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many.
- 6] And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city.
- 7] But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves.

And as in the case of Sihon’s cities (2:32-36), Og’s 60 cities (with high walls, 3:5) could not restrain the Israelite warriors. The trust of Israel’s soldiers in the word of their God contrasts with the unbelieving warriors referred to in 1:28.

- 8] And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that *was* on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon; (Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)
- 9] All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

These verses 8-11 summarize the conquest of the territory controlled by the two Transjordanian Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. The Israelites needed the encouragement of repeated reminders of God’s past faithfulness to them. Two aspects of this summary particularly heartened the Israelites. First, these verses stress the extensive nature of the Israelite conquest: from the Arnon Gorge to Mount Hermon (called Sirion by the Phoenicians of Sidon and called Senir by the Amorites). Second, Og was one of the last of the Rephaites the Israelites would face in battle.

- 11] For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead *was* a bedstead of iron; *is* it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits *was* the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.

Og’s iron bed measured 6 feet wide by 13½ feet long! [Some scholars, uncomfortable with the view of the *Nephilim*, conjecture that this was probably his coffin (sarcophagus, NIV marg.).]

## Gilgal Rephaim: “The Circle of Rephaim”

This monument consists of 5 circles including 20-ton stones (diameter = 155 meters). Dated: 3000 B.C.; built on flat plateau; only visible from above. It is located 10 miles from Asteroth-Karnaim (Gen 14:5; Josh 12:4; 1 Chr 6:71).

- 12] And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which *is* by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites.
- 13] And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, *being* the kingdom of Og, gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.

The Transjordan was divided among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. (See the map “Land Allotted to Israel’s Tribes,”) **Reuben** received the Moabite territory from the Arnon Gorge to Heshbon. **Gad** was given the southern half of Gilead from Heshbon to the Jabbok River. To the **half tribe of Manasseh** went the northern part of Gilead and also Bashan, which was east of the Sea of Kinnereth (later named the Sea of Galilee). Og was over this northern part of Gilead and Bashan.

- 14] Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the coasts of Geshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own name, Bashanhavothjair, unto this day.
- 15] And I gave Gilead unto Machir.

**Jair**, a descendant of Manasseh, was singled out for special mention (Deut 3:14) because of his courage in capturing the whole region of Argob in Bashan (cf. v. 4; Num 32:41). As a result the area was named after him. Likewise, to **Makir** (Deut 3:15), a subtribe of the tribe of Manasseh, was given the rest of Gilead because they conquered that territory (Num 32:34-40).

- 16] And unto the Reubenites and unto the Gadites I gave from Gilead even unto the river Arnon half the valley, and the border even unto the river Jabbok, *which is* the border of the children of Ammon;
- 17] The plain also, and Jordan, and the coast *thereof*, from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, under Ashdoth Pisgah eastward.



- 18] And I commanded you at that time, saying, The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all *that are* meet for the war.
- 19] But your wives, and your little ones, and your cattle, (*for* I know that ye have much cattle,) shall abide in your cities which I have given you;

Numbers 32 records the request of 2 1/2 tribes for the Transjordan. They had acquired a large number of cattle and sheep (cf. Num 32:1) and this region was especially well suited for raising cattle. At first Moses was angry at their request, fearing another defection like that at Kadesh Barnea (Num 32:6-8, 14-15). But when the warriors of the tribes promised to cross over the Jordan and fight till all Israel had won her land, Moses granted their request. Since the time for battle was drawing near, the tribes east of the Jordan needed this reminder of their prior commitment (Num 32:16-19). They could leave their new homes and family without fear because the Lord had given them this land. They could cross over the Jordan River and fight fearlessly for their brothers and then return to their families.

- 20] Until the LORD have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto you, and *until* they also possess the land which the LORD your God hath given them beyond Jordan: and *then* shall ye return every man unto his possession, which I have given you.
- 21] And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest.

These next two verses are a transition from the distribution of the land (vv. 12-20) to Moses' loss of leadership (vv. 23-29). Moses had reminded his audience that the time for the conquest of Canaan was near (vv. 18-20). Yet Joshua, not Moses, would lead the people in that conquest. By encouraging Joshua here Moses himself was obeying God's command (1:38; 3:28). Moses' firm assurance that the Lord had acted like a warrior for Israel in the past and would do so in the future greatly encouraged Israel's future leader. Joshua need not be afraid. Moses' words also represented a major theme in Deuteronomy's historical prologue: *the battle belongs to Yahweh* (the Lord your God will fight for you; cf. 1:30; 20:4; also note 2:24-25, 31, 33, 36; 3:2-3).

- 22] Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.
- 23] And I besought the LORD at that time, saying,
- 24] O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God *is there* in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?

God had told Moses that he would not be permitted to enter the Promised Land because of his poor witness at the waters of Meribah (Num 20:12).

However, in Moses' mind a new turn of events may have been indicated by his statement "You have begun to show to Your servant Your greatness." This probably refers to the Lord's omnipotence revealed in the conquest of Sihon and Og, Transjordan's two Amorite kings, rather than to the events of the Exodus from Egypt. Since God let Moses take part in conquering the Transjordan, he may have thought the Lord intended to rescind His earlier prohibition about his not entering Canaan. Therefore this seemed an opportune time for him to ask God about his going in after all to see the good land.

- 25] I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.
- 26] But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.
- 27] Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold *it* with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

God would not listen to Moses, that is, He would not grant his request. In fact the Hebrew sentence implies that Moses had kept on asking God for permission, and that God became "furious" (an intensive form of '*abar*') with him. This conversation reveals something of the intimacy of Moses' relationship with God. It also heightens the feeling of tragedy in the experience of a man who devoted his life to fulfilling God's promise for Israel but knew he would never see its completion. But Moses could at least look at the land from the peak of Mount Pisgah.

- 28] But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.
- 29] So we abode in the valley over against Bethpeor.

Since Moses could not lead the people across Jordan, God reminded him of his responsibility to prepare Joshua for leadership. Joshua's succession to leadership is an important theme in Deuteronomy. This is the third time it has been mentioned in only three chapters (1:38; 3:21, 28). By merely repeating God's words on this subject to the people, Moses was encouraging Joshua and showing the people that Joshua was their next leader.

## Deuteronomy 4

- 1] Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do *them*, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.
- 2] Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

“Now therefore harken” introduces the *practical conclusions* to be drawn from Israel’s experience in the wilderness. Because of the Lord’s faithfulness, mercy, and judgment displayed in her recent history, the nation was *responsible to obey* His decrees and laws unconditionally. “Statutes” (“Decrees,” NIV) may refer to permanent rules of conduct, statutory laws which are immutable; while “judgments” (“laws” NIV) may refer to case laws, decisions handed down by judges.

It was crucial that Moses teach Israel this Law, for the motive clause so that you may live and take possession of the land indicates that a full enjoyment of life is based on obeying God’s Law. Israel must not add to it and thereby weaken its power, as the Pharisees and later Christian legalists would do. Nor must Israel subtract anything from it to accommodate the willfulness or weakness of human nature.

- 3] Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal Peor: for all the men that followed Baal Peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.
- 4] But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God *are* alive every one of you this day.

Moses referred to the incident at Baal Peor in Moab to illustrate from the Israelites’ own history that their very lives depended on obeying God’s Law. At Baal of Peor all the Israelites who entered into spiritual and physical adultery with the Moabite women were either put to death by the sword or died in a plague (24,000 died in the plague). On the other hand all who held fast to the Lord lived. This incident is also mentioned in Num 25:1-9; Ps 106:28-29; Hos 9:10. (And is the key to understanding the letter to Pergamos, Rev 2:12-17.)

- 5] Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.
- 6] Keep therefore and do *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.

One purpose of the Law was to give the Israelites a full life as they obeyed God (vv. 1-4). In verses 5-8 another purpose of the Law is revealed: to make Israel morally and spiritually unique among all the nations and thereby draw other nations to the Lord. In contrast with all other nations Israel was not to be distinguished by her natural resources, wealth, or military might, but by her moral skill and close relationship to God, both of which would come from her obeying her moral constitution.

- 7] For what nation *is there so* great, who *hath* God *so* nigh unto them, as the LORD our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for*?
- 8] And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

If Israel would obey the Law she would be the envy of all nations. They would see her as a) being wise and understanding; b) having a God who is near her, and c) possessing righteous decrees and laws.

- 9] Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;

The solemn admonition to be careful and to watch implies that the Israelites constantly faced the danger of falling into a sin which would have brought them to the brink of annihilation as a nation. That sin was idolatry (vv. 15-31). The nation could become idolatrous in two related ways:

1) The depravity of the human mind is so great that the great deeds of God for His people (e.g., the Exodus and giving of the Law at Horeb) might slip from their hearts if they did not constantly remind themselves of God’s mighty works.

2) Through laziness or apathy parents might fail to teach them to their children and thus their children would become idolaters. Deuteronomy lays great stress not on the priests or other religious leaders, but on the *parents* as the ones responsible for their children’s spiritual education. God trusts His great events of revelation, such as His giving the Law at Sinai, to faithful stewards who must never forget them and who must pass them on to their children. (Not forgetting is another emphasis in Deut.)

- 10] *Specially* the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that* they may teach their children.
- 11] And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

The experience at Horeb was designed to produce a fear of God in the hearts of the people so that a covenant between them and the Lord could be possible. In the OT the fear of God is more than awe or reverence though it includes both. Fearing God is becoming so acutely aware of His moral purity and omnipotence that one is genuinely afraid to disobey Him. Fearing God also includes responding to Him in worship, service, trust, obedience, and commitment.

That day on Horeb God’s *omnipotence* was displayed in the fire black clouds deep darkness, and the voice of God that thundered from the heavens. His *moral purity* was displayed in His Ten Commandments, called His covenant.

- 12] And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice.
- 13] And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.
- 14] And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.
- 15] Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

From this experience the Israelites should have learned to fear God as a Person who is *spiritual* (no form; cf. v. 15; there was only a voice) and as a Person who is *transcendent*. This latter point was pressed home by the fact that He commanded the Israelites to follow His commandments, decrees, and laws (which Moses would teach them, vv. 1, 14). The giving of the Law that day thus taught the nation that their God was a spiritual Person who could not be manipulated but instead imposed His moral will on *them*. They brought away no images of God from Horeb on that day; God gave only two stone tablets (probably each tablet was complete with all Ten Commandments, in keeping with ancient Near Eastern practice to have duplicates of such covenant documents). Thus in contrast with all the religions the Word of Israel's God became the foundation of their religion.

- 16] Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,
- 17] The likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,
- 18] The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth:

Moses spelled out one of the implications contained in the experience at Horeb. Since the Israelites saw no form (cf. v. 12) of God on that day they were never to attempt to represent Him with any form. The religions of the ancient Near East worshiped idols in the shapes of various creatures mentioned in verses 16-18. Israel was never to limit her God in this way for it would call His transcendence into question and it would make them corrupt (cf. v. 25).

The worship of astral deities was also common in the ancient Near East. The sun was worshiped as the god Re or Aten in Egypt, and in the new land to which the Israelites were going astral worship was also common. (e.g., the city of Jericho [*Bet Yerah*] was dedicated to the worship of the moon god.) The Israelites were not to let themselves be enticed (v. 19) into the worship of the luminaries (cf. 17:2-5) which God has provided for all the nations under heaven.

- 19] And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.
- 20] But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, *even* out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as *ye are* this day.

Another reason Israel was to denounce all forms of idolatry is that she was taken out of Egypt, an idolatrous land where the images of dozens of false gods were worshiped. (The fact that Israel was taken out of Egypt is mentioned about 20 times in Deuteronomy.) In slavery to Egypt, Israel's condition was like being in an iron-smelting furnace. But now Israel was God's inheritance, that is, His own unique possession (cf. 9:26, 29; Ps 28:9; 33:12; 68:9; 78:62, 71; 79:1; 94:14; Joel 2:17; 3:2; Micah 7:14, 18).

- 21] Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance:
- 22] But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

Though Moses knew he would not enter the Promised Land (the good land; cf. 1:25) he still desired it. So again he mentioned God's displeasure with him, and reminded the Israelites that he would not be there to enforce the prohibition against idolatry. However, the Lord would enforce the command.

- 23] Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.
- 24] For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.

Like a consuming fire (4:24) He would purify what is precious (just as fire purifies precious metals) and destroy what is worthless. As a jealous God (cf. 5:9; 32:16, 21) He will not allow another to have the honor that is due Him alone (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). Therefore Israel needed to be extremely careful to remember the covenant (cf. Deut 4:9).

- 25] When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt *yourselves*, and make a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:

After the strong warning against idolatry (vv. 15-24) Moses spelled out the consequences of neglecting that warning (vv. 25-31). After the

Israelites had been in the land a long time and had become secure they might forget the Lord and their need to trust Him alone. They would then be easily seduced into idolatrous worship, which would corrupt them (cf. vv. 15-16) and provoke God's anger.

- 26] I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.
- 27] And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

Moses invoked heaven and earth as witnesses because of their permanence and unchanging character in contrast with the fickleness of human hearts. This certain judgment would take two forms, a dispersion among the nations with a great loss of life (v. 27) and a giving over to idolatry (v. 28). This prophecy was fulfilled in the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities, but its greatest fulfillment came in the dispersion of Israel after she rejected Jesus Christ.

- 28] And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.
- 29] But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.
- 30] When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, *even* in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

The later days (v. 30) may refer to any time after the initial dispersions, but their ultimate reference is to the time when the Lord Jesus will return to earth to establish His 1,000-year kingdom (Rev 20:4). At that time a repentant Israel will finally seek the Lord. (In Deut, Moses repeatedly stressed the need for wholehearted devotion to the Lord by the words "with all your heart and with all your soul"; see Deut 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:6, 10.)

- 31] (For the LORD thy God *is* a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.

Israel's final return to her Savior will be due not to any goodness of their human hearts, but rather to her merciful God. The Hebrew word translated "merciful" (*rahòum*) refers to the tender compassion of a mother toward her helpless infant. So even if Israel forgets her God He will not abandon His morally helpless children because He has the tender compassion of a mother and because He made an inviolable covenant with Abraham and confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob by oath (mentioned 16 times in Deut). Since God will not forget His covenant (Deut 4:31) neither should Israel (v. 23).

- 32] For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and *ask* from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any such thing* as this great thing *is*, or hath been heard like it?
- 33] Did *ever* people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

Having spoken of the future ("later days," v. 30), Moses then spoke of the former days—from Creation to Sinai. Israel had had a totally unique experience of her God. No other nation could claim to have heard the voice of God speaking out of fire. No other nation could point to a god who had created it by redeeming it from a stronger nation.

- 34] Or hath God assayed to go *and* take him a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Furthermore, the true origin of this historical redemption was not open to various explanations. The voice of God, the miraculous signs and wonders (cf. 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:3), great and awesome deeds (e.g., the plagues, the pillar of fire, the parting of the Red Sea, manna), and other phenomena made it clear that it was God who redeemed the Israelites. And He did so in a show of power and strength (by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; cf. 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; Ps 136:12; Ezek 20:33-34).

- 35] Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD *he is* God; *there is* none else beside him.
- 36] Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

The purpose of this miraculous deliverance was to enable the Israelites to know, not simply by their intellect but in their experience, that the Lord is God alone. The experience of hearing from heaven, His awesome voice and on earth seeing His great fire (at Sinai, Ex 19:16-20) was not primarily aimed at instructing their minds, but rather at the discipline of their moral nature. It was meant to instill a spirit of submission and to quell the natural inclination of the human heart to arrogance. The experience of His voice and the fire, then, was designed to give them more than the content of His commandments. It was designed to make them fear to disobey those commandments.

- 37] And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;



38] To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou *art*, to bring thee in, to give thee their land *for* an inheritance, as *it is* this day.

The reason the Lord had taken such care to give Israel this extensive moral education was that He had loved their forefathers and had promised in a covenant to love their descendants. Because of that love He delivered them from Egypt (cf. Deut 4:20), a nation stronger than Israel. And He would drive out from Canaan nations stronger than Israel. Also He would give that land to Israel as her inheritance.

39] Know therefore this day, and consider *it* in thine heart, that the LORD he *is* God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there is* none else.

40] Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong *thy* days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

In light of such electing grace and such unique revelation the Israelites were to acknowledge that the Lord is God alone (cf. v. 35) and to keep His decrees and commands. Only in doing these two things would the Israelites find prosperity and long life in the land (cf. 5:33; 6:2). The words so “that it may go well with thee” occur eight times in this book, undoubtedly to emphasize this motive for obedience (4:40; 5:16; 6:3, 18; 12:25, 28; 19:13; 22:7). The idea that righteousness lengthens life and sin shortens it is common in the OT (Prov 3:1-2, 16; 10:27).

41] Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;  
42] That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live:  
43] *Namely*, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

This may be an editorial note placed here between the first and second addresses because at that time Moses had designated these three cities east of the Jordan as cities of refuge. They were Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan. The significance of these cities will be discussed later.

44] And this *is* the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:  
45] These *are* the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt,

Moses set before the people God’s instruction (*Torah*, the word rendered Law, means “instruction”) in how to walk with Him. If the Israelites were to prosper individually and nationally they had to obey the stipulations of the covenant expressed in the form of decrees and laws. These were originally given three months after the Israelites came

out of Egypt (cf. Ex 20:1-17; 21-23). Thus Deuteronomy is not a new covenant but the renewal of a covenant previously made. But it was repeated east of the Jordan River near Beth Peor.

46] On this side Jordan, in the valley over against Bethpeor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt:  
47] And they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which *were* on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;  
48] From Aroer, which *is* by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which *is* Hermon,  
49] And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Why did the 2 ½ tribes east of the Jordan want that land? What were the subsequent implications of their separation?
- 2) What happened at Baal-Peor? What are implications relative to the Christ’s Letter to Pergamos (Rev 2:12-17)?
- 3) What are the parent’s responsibilities emphasized in these passages?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) What were the “Bulls of Bashan” in Psalm 22:12? What are the implications regarding the crucifixion of Christ?
- 2) What were the practical conclusions to be learned from Israel’s wilderness wanderings?
- 3) What is the purpose of God’s Law?
- 4) Why is idolatry such an emphasis in the Bible? What are the implications for us today?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Trace the deceptions of astrology in the Bible. Why was casting a horoscope a capital crime?



- 2) Trace the worship of the Moon God and its implications for today (Islam).

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 5 & 6. Also, Exodus 20.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 3 Chapters 5 - 6

- Moses' 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon 1:1–4:43
- Moses' 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon 4:44–28:68
- Moses' 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon 29:1–30:20
- Moses' Last Days 31:1–34:12

- 1] And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.
- 2] The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.
- 3] The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even* us, who *are* all of us here alive this day.

The solemn formula *Hear, O Israel* indicates that what follows (the decrees and laws) is not incidental but absolutely necessary for the survival of Israel as a nation. *Hear ... learn ... Keep... and do....* When Moses said that the Lord our God made a covenant *with us* at Horeb and not with our fathers, he was teaching the Israelites that this covenant was meant to govern *the living, not the dead*. Moses had the right to say this for he was the mediator of the covenant.

## Treaty Structure

**Historical Prologue (1:6-3:29):** Reviewing the relationship which the Ruler has with His subjects.

**Basic Stipulations (5:1-11:32):** Specifying the general principles that are to guide behavior.

**Detailed Stipulations (12:1-26:19):** Expanding on certain rules that are to be followed.

**Document Clause (27:1-26):** Calling for ratification by the subjects themselves.

**Blessings (28:1-14):** Explaining the benefits the Ruler provides for good subjects.

**Cursings (18:15-68):** Explaining the punishments due subjects who violate treaty stipulations.

**Recapitulation (29:1-30:10):** Summarizing the treaty.

- 4] The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,
- 5] (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,
- 6] *I am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

The Lord spoke with Israel face to face from the mountain of Sinai but did so through Moses (Ex 19:9). Verse 6 is crucial for understanding not only the first commandment but also the other nine. The Ten Commandments were given to a people *already redeemed* (brought out of Egypt), to enable them to express their love for and have fellowship with the holy God. The Decalogue, being itself not simply a moral code but the *text of a covenant*, exhibits the treaty pattern as follows: preamble (v. 6a), historical prologue (v. 6b), and stipulations interspersed with curse and blessing formulae (vv. 7-21). The Decalogue was never given to enable them to achieve justification, for that has always been granted freely through faith (cf. Gen 15:6; Rom 4). *The Law was never designed to give people salvation.*

- 7] Thou shalt have none other gods before me.
- 8] Thou shalt not make thee *any* graven image, *or any likeness of any thing that is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the waters beneath the earth:

Also since the Lord had taken the initiative in Israel's redemption the people were obligated to acknowledge His right of sovereignty over them and to bow to that sovereignty. The first commandment, to have no other gods before Me, called for a submission of *every area* of one's life to the rule of God. The phrase "other gods" is a technical term for pagan gods which of course existed in the form of idols and in the minds of their worshippers, but were not real.

- 9] Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me,
- 10] And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

The second commandment *did not prohibit art* in Israel (as the making of the tabernacle demonstrates), but rather the making of an idol to represent the Lord. The danger in this practice was twofold:

- Since other nations used idolatry to express their devotion to their gods there was always the danger that the worship of the Lord could

be *contaminated by idolatrous forms* of worship.

- Any attempt to represent God in any form from the natural world would have called into question *the sovereignty* of the One who cannot be limited by anything. As a jealous God, He does not share His sovereign position with any other.

11] Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

To misuse God's name means literally, "to lift it up to or attach it to emptiness." This command forbids using God's name in profanity but it includes more. The 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment is a directive against using God's name in a manipulative way (e.g., His name is not to be used in magic or to curse someone). Today a Christian who uses God's name flippantly or falsely attributes a wrong act to God has broken this commandment. Furthermore, as His ambassadors, we must seek not to represent Him in our conduct and actions!

12] Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.

13] Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:

Not a simple issue. It was instituted in Eden; observed before the Law. How did Noah know "clean" and "unclean" animals? Manna gathered *before* the Law was given...The Sabbath will be observed in the Millennium (the Temple only open then and new moons). This is the only one of the Ten Commandments *not* repeated in the New Testament, and Paul argued against enforcing it (cf. Rom 14:5-6; Col. 2:16-17).

14] But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

15] And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

God works, accomplishes his purpose, and, rejoicing, rests. Exodus 20:11 refers to the exhibition of the consummation pattern in *creation* for the original model of the Sabbath. Deuteronomy 5:15 refers to the consummation pattern manifested in *redemption*, where the divine triumph is such as to bring God's elect to their rest also.

16] Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

First commandment "with a promise" (Eph 6:2). This commandment was critical for the existence of the nation: that you (pl.) may live long (cf. 6:2; 11:9; 25:15; 32:47) and that it may go well with you (pl.) in the land. Parents, especially fathers, rather than the religious leaders, were to pass the covenant values to their children.

17] Thou shalt not kill.

רצח *ratsach* to murder, slay, kill. Murder means to take someone's life illegally. Since man was created by God and in His image, man should not take another human's life apart from divine permission. (This commandment, therefore, did not prohibit capital punishment nor engaging in war, both of which were regulated by laws in the *Torah*.)

18] Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

The marriage relationship should reflect a believer's relationship to God. Therefore extramarital sex (adultery) was forbidden. Though the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment does not refer explicitly to *premarital* sex, the Pentateuch prohibits it elsewhere (Gen 2:24; Ex 22:16; Deut 22:13-39). An Israelite who would be unfaithful to his or her partner would also be unfaithful to the covenant of God and would be inclined to go after other gods.

19] Neither shalt thou steal.

This can refer to opportunities as well as tangibles. It also is an endorsement of private ownership, and capitalism. (Socialism is the plundering of the productive by the unaccountable.)

20] Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

The most painful sin could be gossip (Lev 19:16; Prov 11:13; Prov 18:8; Prov 26:22; Prov 20:19; Prov 26:20; Prov 26:21; Jn 8:7). Though this commandment had its primary application in law courts, it could also seem to rule out gossip against one's neighbor. The sixth through ninth commandments thus acknowledge a person's right to his life, home, property, and reputation.

21] Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any *thing* that *is* thy neighbour's.

To covet: "to lust for another's property." It was different from the other commandments in that it did not deal with a specific act, but rather with an emotional, psychological sin. Therefore the breaking of this com-

mandment could not be prosecuted in a law court. Yet “lust for another’s property” often led to the breaking of the sixth through the ninth commandments. This was the point Jesus was making in His exposition of commandments six and seven (Mt 5:21-32). It may have been possible for someone to keep the first nine commandments but no one could have avoided breaking the 10<sup>th</sup> at some time. In this respect the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is the most forceful of all, because it made people aware of their *inability to keep God’s Law perfectly*. And this awareness threw them back to depend on God’s grace and mercy.

[Other notable Deuteronomic variations in the Decalogue are the reversal of the order of wife and house in the tenth commandment, and the addition there of his field. The latter is added because Israel was about to enter upon a settled existence in the land, whereas during the wilderness wanderings such legislation would have been irrelevant.]

22] These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

The uniqueness of the revelation of the ten “words” is underscored in this verse. That revelation alone was spoken directly by God to all Israel; *it alone was written by God*. This verse emphasizes the divine origin of the Ten Commandments and the awe-inspiring setting in which they were given (fire, cloud, and deep darkness; cf. Ex 19:18; 20:21).

- 23] And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, *even* all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;
- 24] And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.
- 25] Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die.
- 26] For who *is there* of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have*, and lived?
- 27] Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear *it*, and do *it*.
- 28] And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

The leaders’ request for a mediator grew out of their encounter with their holy and majestic God. The experience at Horeb impressed on them a sense of their own *moral inadequacy* and *mortality* (we will die) and their *responsibility to obey* God (we will listen and obey).

- 29] O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!
- 30] Go say to them, Get you into your tents again.

Though the Lord approved of the people’s response, He hinted that they would not carry through with their good intentions.

- 31] But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it.
- 32] Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.
- 33] Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* ye may prolong *your* days in the land which ye shall possess.

Again the *divine origin* of the Law is stressed. The people heard the Ten Commandments and then were dismissed to their tents. What Moses was about to tell them—all God’s commands, decrees, and laws, beginning with Chapter 6—was also from the Lord just as were the Ten Commandments. Their obedience to all that Moses was about to teach them was critical, for their prosperity in the land would depend on it (cf. 6:3, 24).

## Deuteronomy 6

### The Great Commands *and* Warnings

Having reminded his audience of the basic foundation, the Ten Commandments, which they heard at Horeb, Moses turned to details of the Law which they did not hear because they were afraid of the voice of God (cf. 5:25-27). Accordingly Ch. 6-11, which may be called “the great commands and warnings,” deal with the personal nature of the covenant relationship. Here the details relating to the total commitment of individuals to the Lord are discussed.

- 1] Now these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it:
- 2] That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

The legislation in Ch. 6-11 may be viewed as an expression of one great command, namely, to “love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . soul,

and strength” (6:5). Therefore obedience on the part of the Israelites demonstrated that they loved God. Jesus laid down a similar principle for Christians (cf. John 14:21)

- 3] Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

The Law was given so that the people could express their reverence for and obedience to the Lord in a concrete manner. (The need to obey Him is stressed repeatedly in Deut.) By fearing and obeying Him they would find prosperity and a long life in their new land (cf. 4:10; 5:33) which flowed with milk and honey.

- 4] Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD  
5] And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

These verses are called the *Shema*, from the Hebrew word translated “Hear.” The statement in this verse is the basic confession of faith in Judaism. The verse means that the Lord (Yahweh) is totally unique. He alone is God. The Israelites could therefore have a sense of security that was totally impossible for their polytheistic neighbors. [This confession of monotheism does not preclude the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity. “God” is plural (*'elohim*), implying the Trinity, and one (*'echòad*) may suggest a unity of the Persons in the Godhead (cf. Gen 2:24, where the same word for “one” is used of Adam and Eve).]

God’s demand of this exclusive and intensive devotion to himself Jesus identified as “the first and great commandment” (Mt 22:37, 38; Mk 12:29, 30; cf. Lk 10:25-28).

- 6] And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:  
7] And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Moses was not here making ceremonial requirements, but elaborating with concrete figures the demand for a constant focus of concern on the good pleasure of Israel’s Lord. God’s people were responsible to meditate on these commandments, to keep them in their hearts. This enabled them to understand the Law and to apply it correctly.

Then *the parents* were in a position to impress them on their children’s hearts also. The moral and biblical education of the children was

accomplished best not in a formal teaching period each day but when the parents, out of concern for their own lives as well as their children’s, made God and His Word the natural topic of a conversation which might occur anywhere and anytime during the day.

- 8] And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.  
9] And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

The commands to tie them and write them were taken literally by some later Jewish readers. However, the commands are probably emphasizing symbolically the need for the continual teaching of the Law (cf. Ex 13:9, 16). A literal practice of the injunctions of Deut 6:8, 9 came into vogue among later Jews in the form of the phylacteries worn on the person (cf. Mt 23:5) and the *mezuzah* affixed on the doorpost, an encased parchment scroll attached to the doorposts of Jewish homes; contains parchment inscribed with Deut 6:4-9 (or 11:13-21).

- 10] And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,  
11] And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;  
12] *Then* beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.  
13] Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.  
14] Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you;

The Lord was about to give the Israelites “instant prosperity” in their new land. But there is an inherent danger in prosperity, for when a person prospers he tends to forget God (cf. Prov 30:7-9). It was at the height of his own prosperity that David committed his greatest acts of unfaithfulness (2 Sam 11).

The command to swear (take oaths) by the name of the Lord reinforces the instruction to fear Him, for one swears by the God he fears, that is, by the God under whom he is *responsible to fulfill* his oaths. If they would forget God (v. 12) they would almost certainly follow other gods, for God created people not only with the *capacity* to worship but with the *need* to worship.

- 15] (For the LORD thy God *is* a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.



16] Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah.

And this act of unfaithfulness would result in judgment since the Lord is a jealous God (cf. 4:24; 5:9; 32:16, 21). This means He is *zealous to protect what belongs to Him alone*. Jealousy in this sense is ethically right. Jealousy in the sense of envy for another's possessions or privileges is, of course, wrong. Israel must not, therefore, presume to put God on trial; let Israel rather be faithful, and God would faithfully fulfill his good promises (vv. 17-19; cf. v. 10). [Exception! Mal 3:10.]

17] Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.

18] And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers,

19] To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken.

Moses envisioned another sin to which the Israelites might be tempted in the new land, that of testing the Lord (6:16). This implies that at times the people would face hardship as they did at Massah (cf. Ex 17:1-7) where they lacked water and thought they would die of thirst. Rather than trusting God in this trial they tested Him by complaining and quarreling. In the future the Israelites were to remember this embarrassing incident. They were to know that if they obeyed His commands, stipulations, and decrees (cf. Deut 4:44; 6:1, 20), doing what is right and good, then no matter what hardship they might encounter it would go well with them (cf. v. 3).

20] *And* when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *mean* the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?

21] Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:

Seeing generations come and go had lengthened Moses' perspective. His interest was not confined to the present assembly of Israel but took in the long future of God's kingdom (cf. v. 2).

22] And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:

23] And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers.

24] And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as *it is* at this day.

First, the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt (v. 21a).

Second, God miraculously delivered the Israelites (v. 21b; cf. 4:20) and judged the Egyptians (6:22).

Third, this marvelous work was in accord with His ancient promise to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) to build a nation of their descendants in the land of Canaan (v. 23; cf. Gen 15:18-21; 17:7-8; 26:3-5; 28:13-15).

Fourth, God gave His Word in the form of decrees so that the Israelites might always prosper (cf. Deut 5:33) by obeying it and fearing God (cf. 4:10; 6:13).

25] And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

This verse does not present a works principle of salvation. The stress falls on the function of law as disclosing the standard of conduct which is righteous in God's sight, a love for which is prerequisite to beatitude but not the meritorious ground of such a state.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the seven elements of the classic treaty structure as exemplified by Deuteronomy.
- 2) What does it mean to "not take the name of the Lord in vain"?
- 3) List the *prophetic* relevances of the Sabbath Day.
- 4) What does Exodus 20:11 imply relative to the age of the earth?
- 5) What does the Bible teach about private ownership of property?
- 6) What is "the most painful sin"? Why.
- 7) Explain the *Shema* and its implications for the concept of the Trinity.
- 8) What is the exception to the injunction to "not test" God?

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) The Ten Commandments were given to a people *already redeemed*. Discuss the significance.



- 2) Is there any basis for “generational sin”?
- 3) Discuss the relevance of the Sabbath Day. Does it have any relevance to non-Jewish people?
- 4) Discuss the Biblical basis for home schooling. Is it appropriate for today?
- 5) Discuss personal examples of Malachi 3:10.
- 6) Discuss the law as a means to salvation and righteousness.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) What does the Bible teach about *War*?
- 2) What does the Bible teach about premarital sex?

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 7 - 10. Also, Exodus 16, 32; Numbers 13, 14.

# The Book of Deuteronomy

## Session 4

### Chapters 7-10

## Deuteronomy 7

- 1] When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;
- 2] And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

The point of Deut 7:1-2 is that Israel was to destroy *all* the nations within the borders of Canaan (see comments on these groups in 20:17). The command to destroy them totally, that is, men, women, and children, has often been thought of as unethical for a loving God. However, several points must be kept in mind concerning these people.

## Tribal Genocide?

- They deserved to die for their sin (Deut 9:4-5)
- They persisted in their hatred of God (Deut 7:10)
- The Canaanites constituted a moral cancer (Deut 20:17-18; Num 33:55; Josh 23:12-13)

[Two mitigating factors may be mentioned. In some ways the death of a Canaanite child could have been a blessing. For if the child died before reaching the age of accountability it is likely that his or her eternal destiny would have been made secure in heaven.]

- Jesus Christ will return to slaughter the unrepentant wicked on the earth (2 Thess 2:5-10; Rev 19:11-21)

So there is *no dichotomy* between the God of the OT and the God of the NT. In both testaments He is revealed as a loving and righteous God. The command to engage in holy war is, of course, not applicable today since at the present time God is not working through one nation to set up His kingdom on the earth. But Christians today should learn from this command that they should be as ruthless with sin in their own lives as Israel should have been against the Canaanites.

- 3] Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.
- 4] For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

The command against intermarriage assumes something about human nature. Paul stated the principle well: “Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?” (1 Cor 5:6) Marriage to an unbelieving Canaanite meant disaster for an Israelite’s faith. Moses reminded the people (Deut 7:4b) that the Lord’s righteous sword cuts both ways. The Canaanites were being judged for their wickedness; if the Israelites joined them in wickedness they would also join them in judgment. Therefore everything—even the Canaanites’ religious objects—which might arouse the slightest curiosity about false worship, was to be totally eradicated. The sacred stones (cf. 12:3; Ex 23:24; 34:13) were possibly male fertility symbols and the Asherah poles were wooden poles in honor of the goddess Asherah, the consort of Baal. Similar commands were given in Ex 34:11-15; Num 33:50-52; Deut 12:2-3.

- 5] But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

- 6] For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

The basis for the command to destroy the Canaanites lay in God's election of Israel. The word translated *chosen* means "to be chosen for a task or a vocation." God had selected Israel as His means of sanctifying the earth. Thus they were holy (set apart for God's special use) and were His treasured possession (cf. 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Mal 3:17. Since the Canaanites were polluting the earth, and since they might endanger Israel's complete subordination to the will of the Lord, they either had to repent or be eliminated. For 400 years they had refused to repent.

- 7] The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people:  
8] But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God's election of Israel was never to become a source of pride for the nation. For God did not find any intrinsic merit in her which motivated Him to choose her. In fact her small size originally would have served as a hindrance to her election. On the positive side Moses offered two reasons for God's choice of Israel.

- 1) The Lord loved Israel. Ultimately this divine love is a mystery since it was not motivated by any goodness in the nation.
  - 2) He chose them because of an oath He swore to Israel's forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord had promised the patriarchs that their descendants would become a mighty nation and inherit the land of Canaan (Gen 17:7-8; 26:3-5, 24; 28:13-15), and He would always be faithful to His Word (cf. Heb. 6:13-18). For that reason He brought Israel out from the land of slavery (cf. Ex 13:3, 14; 20:2; Deut 5:6; 6:12; 8:14; 13:5, 10).
- 9] Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;  
10] And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

Moses meant for the Israelites to draw two conclusions from God's choice and redemption of them: The Lord alone is God. He is able to control history, to raise up nations, and to bring them down; and, He is

the faithful God. The thousand generations is a proverbial expression meaning "endlessly" or "forever."

- 11] Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.  
12] Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers:

Though He will never abandon His covenant of love (cf. v. 12) to Israel, rebellious individuals within the nation will be judged for their sin just as His enemies in other nations (those who hate Him) are judged by Him. Therefore each individual Israelite needed to be careful to follow His commands. This verse summarizes verses 12-16. If the nation is obedient to the Lord she will experience His covenantal love. Though God will not abandon the covenant because of His promises to the patriarchs (forefathers; cf. vv. 8, 13) the people could forfeit the *blessings* of the covenant through their own disobedience.

- 13] And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee.  
14] Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

For their obedience, God promised the blessing of fertility of human, animal, and plant life in Israel.

- 15] And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all *them* that hate thee.  
16] And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that *will be* a snare unto thee.

The Israelites could also count on freedom from the horrible diseases that were common in Egypt (possibly including boils; cf. 28:27, 60; Ex 15:26). The Israelites' obligation in entering the land was to destroy all the peoples within the borders of Canaan (cf. vv. 1-2). If Israel would not do so, they would become ensnared by them and their gods (cf. Ex 34:12-14) and as a result would not experience the blessings just mentioned (Deut 7:13-15).

Verse 16 naturally led Moses to the exhortation recorded in verses 17-26.

- 17] If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations *are* more than I; how can I dispossess them?
- 18] Thou shalt not be afraid of them: *but* shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;

Moses knew the hearts of his fellow Israelites. He remembered how 40 years earlier the Anakim had made their hearts melt (1:26-28). So he concluded this part of his speech (on holy war) by setting the battles in proper perspective. The Israelites were to concentrate not on the strength of their enemies but on the greatness of the Lord.

- 19] The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.
- 20] Moreover the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.

God would cause Israel's enemies to run from her in battle as if they were attacked by swarms of hornets (cf. Ex 23:28; Josh 24:12). (Some say the reference to the hornet is to be taken literally; others say it refers to the Egyptian army.)

- 21] Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God *is* among you, a mighty God and terrible.
- 22] And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.
- 23] But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

The enemies were in fact fearful of Israel (Ex 15:15; Num 22:3; Josh 2:9-11, 24; 5:1; 9:24). He would throw Israel's enemies into great confusion (Deut 7:23), that is, a divinely inspired panic would engulf the Canaanites and render them helpless in battle (v. 24). All this would happen according to a well-conceived plan so that the land would not be depopulated too quickly and overrun by wild animals.

- 24] And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.
- 25] The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it *is* an abomination to the LORD thy God.
- 26] Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing.

The Israelites could be assured of this glorious victory if only they had the faith to begin the battle and afterward the discipline to destroy the idols left behind with the silver and gold. Otherwise the Israelites would find themselves trapped by idolatry and *they* would become the objects of the Lord's holy war.

The Canaanites' idols, some of them suggestive of sexual perversions, were detestable to God. So His people were to detest them too, for the images were designated for destruction.

## Deuteronomy 8

### A Warning Against a Spirit of Independence

- 1] All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.
- 2] And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

This introductory verse reminded the Israelites again that the gifts of life and fertility in the land . . . promised by God did not come automatically to believers but were by-products of obedience. The wilderness experience was designed to produce both obedience and faith in the nation. The people were told to be careful (cf. 4:9) to follow every command from God. When Moses said that God tested the Israelites in order to know what was in their hearts he was using an anthropomorphism. God, of course, already knew what was in their hearts. The point is that their obedience or disobedience had to be proven in history.

- 3] And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.
- 4] Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

God led them into the desert where they had no alternative but to trust Him or to murmur against Him. In the desert they could not produce their own food but had to depend on God for food and thus for their very lives. When Moses reminded them that they did not live on bread alone he meant that even their food was decreed by the word of God. They had manna because it came by His command. It was therefore ultimately not bread that kept them alive but His word! "Bread alone," that is, bread

acquired independently of His word, could not keep them alive. This was why *Jesus refused Satan's temptation* to turn the stones into bread when He was in the wilderness (Mt 4:3-4). Jesus knew that God had not decreed those stones for His food, and also that His Father would provide food apart from the Son's working of a miracle at the suggestion of Satan (cf. Mt 7:9).

- 5] Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, *so* the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.
- 6] Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

The Lord disciplined Israel by making her depend on Him for everything: food, water, and clothes. Since all these were provided by His decree the only logical response was to observe (obey) the commands of the Lord, following and revering Him. "Revering" translates a word that means fearing, that is, fearing to disobey the One who is so powerful and holy.

- 7] For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;
- 8] A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;
- 9] A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any *thing* in it; a land whose stones *are* iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

In contrast with the severity of the wilderness these verses describe the abundance of Israel's new land. It was abundant in water (essential for crops as well as for sustaining animal and human life); in agricultural produce including grains (wheat, barley), fruits (grapes, figs, pomegranates), oil from olive trees, and honey; and in minerals. (Iron and copper have been discovered in the hills south of the Dead Sea.) The people then would lack nothing (cf. Ps 23:1).

- 10] When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.
- 11] Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:
- 12] Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein*;

Moses then spelled out the danger inherent in abundant prosperity. Whereas in the wilderness they had to depend on God for the necessities of life, their newfound prosperity might conceal their need for the same dependence. Moses prescribed a sure antidote for this danger: praise the Lord your God. In fact failure to praise Him for His blessings was a step toward forgetting God and then disobeying His commands.

- 13] And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;
- 14] Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

An Israelite who ceased to praise the Lord sincerely would find that his heart had become proud (v. 14) in his abundance (vv. 12-13; cf. Hos 13:6).

- 15] Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;
- 16] Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

He would forget (cf. Deut 8:11, 19; see comments on 4:9) the miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the land of slavery (cf. 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 13:5, 10; Ex. 13:3, 14; 20:2) and the wilderness (cf. Deut 1:19; 32:10) with its venomous snakes (cf. Num. 21:6-7) and scorpions. (This is the only reference in the Pentateuch to scorpions in the wilderness wanderings.)

Such a person who did not remember God's provisions of water (Ex 15:25, 27; 17:5-7) and manna (Ex 16) in the desert would be inclined to credit his own ability (my power and strength) for his wealth, when in reality it was as much a gift from God as the water out of hard rock had been in the wilderness. The provision of manna was a test, to see if Israel would depend on the Lord's word (cf. comments on Ex 16:4).

- 17] And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth.
- 18] But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

Such dependence is humbling (cf. Deut 8:3). The people could avoid pride in their wealth and strength if they would constantly remember the Lord and the lesson of the wilderness: all of life is a gift from God and nothing is possible apart from Him (v. 18).

- 19] And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.
- 20] As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

Just as failure to praise God would lead to forgetting Him, so forgetting Him would lead to worshiping other gods. That in turn would result in certain destruction (death).



If Moses' audience wanted an example of national destruction all they needed to do was to remember the nations the Lord destroyed, namely, the kingdoms of Sihon and Og (2:26-3:11).

## Deuteronomy 9

### A Warning Against a Spirit of Self-Righteousness

- 1] Hear, O Israel: Thou *art* to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,
- 2] A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of *whom* thou hast heard *say*, Who can stand before the children of Anak!

Moses remembered the people's shock when they heard the original report of the 12 spies concerning the size, strength, and number of the inhabitants of Canaan (Num 13:26-14:4). He did not want them to be surprised again or to underestimate the enormity of the task that lay before them. Therefore he emphasized that from a purely military and human point of view their victory was impossible. The enemy had superior strength, fortifications (large cities with high walls), experience, and numbers. And they had gained a terrifying reputation: Who can stand up against the Anakim?

- 3] Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God *is* he which goeth over before thee; *as* a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.

In each of these three verses Moses warned against the danger of developing a self-righteous spirit by telling them that their victories were not a result of their righteousness.

Though the Canaanites had all these things in their favor, they were doomed before the battles began. Just as in the desert the Lord went before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud and fire so now He would go before the Israelite army as a devouring fire to destroy the enemy. This principle is stated in Proverbs 21:31: "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord." But God's people could not remain passive. In faith they had to begin the battle and to annihilate the enemy with the strength God would supply as He promised.

- 4] Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.

In fact Moses gave three reasons why Israel would be victorious in the Conquest: 1) The wickedness of these nations (vv. 4-5) was so great that it demanded God's judgment. He is the God of Israel but He is also the God of all nations. They are all accountable to Him.

- 5] Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2) God would give Israel victory because He had sworn this to the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 15:13-21 which speaks of both God's judgment of the wicked Amorites and the promise of the land to Abraham).

- 6] Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people.
- 7] Remember, *and* forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.

3) The Lord was giving the land as a pure gift of grace, for the Israelites were a stiff-necked people, stubborn and unresponsive (Deut 9:6; cf. v. 13; 10:16; 31:27).

Later Moses pointed out that the Israelites actually deserved to be destroyed (9:13-14) rather than blessed with the gift of the land.

The emphatic exhortation, Remember this and never forget, (v.7) underscores the absurdity of Israel ever supposing that the land was given them as a reward for their righteousness. Moses used one incident from their past, the worship of the golden calf, to illustrate that Israelite history has nearly always been one of rebellion against God's grace.

- 8] Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you.
- 9] When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, *even* the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:

**The Golden Calf:** (vv.9-21) This section and what follows (v. 22-10:11) are a well-argued commentary on the meaning of the statement "you are a stiff-necked people" (9:6). This incident (Ex 32), perhaps more than any other until that time, illustrates Israel's sinfulness on the one hand and God's grace on the other.



- 10] And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them *was written* according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.
- 11] And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, *that* the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, *even* the tables of the covenant.
- 12] And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image.
- 13] Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:

While Moses was fasting for 40 days and 40 nights and therefore was completely dependent on God, the people were *feasting*. While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments by the finger of God (Ex 31:18), the people were breaking several of them by worshiping the golden calf. As the Lord had given the covenant to Moses, the people had become corrupt and turned away quickly (Deut 9:12). Even God Himself proclaimed that the people were stiff-necked (v. 13).

- 14] Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.
- 15] So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant *were* in my two hands.

Their rebellion was so great that He wanted to destroy the nation and start all over with Moses (cf. Ex 32:9-10).

- 16] And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, *and* had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.
- 17] And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

These verses record Moses' reaction to the people's sin. The fact that he mentioned they had turned aside quickly emphasized the people's fickleness and the gravity of their sin. When Moses broke the two tablets to pieces before the people he graphically illustrated what they had done to their covenant with the Lord. They had violated their agreement with Him (Ex 24:3). Therefore the Lord had the right to do away with the covenant of Law made at Sinai.

- 18] And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

- 19] For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also.

The second thing Moses did was fast and pray for 40 days and 40 nights (Deut 9:18; cf. v. 25; 10:10). In the Old Testament it was normal for people to fast in times of repentance (cf. Judg 20:26; 2 Sam 12:16; 1 Kgs 21:27; Neh 1:4). His fasting demonstrated his unity with the nation and his horror at their sin. Their evil had provoked God to anger (Deut 9:18-20).

- 20] And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.
- 21] And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, *and* ground *it* very small, *even* until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

The contents of his prayer are recorded in verses 26-29. Only in verse 20 does the Old Testament record that Moses also prayed for Aaron, thus saving his life too. Moses' total destruction of the golden calf—called in satire that sinful thing of yours—put the gold of the idol beyond recovery. Moses' demolishing the idol also illustrated that the people themselves deserved total destruction. Only God's grace invoked by Moses' intercession saved the people.

## Other Rebellious Incidents (9:22-24)

- 22] And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibrothhattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.
- 23] Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadeshbarnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

This verse suggests that Moses could have continued indefinitely reciting other rebellious acts of Israel which angered the Lord. For the incident at **Taberah**, where the people complained about their hardships, see Num 11:1-3 (*Taberah* means “burning.”); at **Massah**, (which means “temptation”), where the people complained about no water, see Ex 17:1-7; and at **Kibroth Hattavah** (“Graves of Lust”), where Israel complained about the manna and devoured the quail, see Num 11:31-34.

- 24] Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.
- 25] Thus I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights, as I fell down *at the first*; because the LORD had said he would destroy you.

After God displayed His grace in the incident of the golden calf by not destroying the nation, one might have expected a significant change in the people's hearts. But again they collectively rebelled against their

God by refusing to go up from Kadesh Barnea and begin the battle for the land. So Moses was completely justified in concluding that at every significant turn in their history the Israelites had been rebellious. *Christians too need to beware of the danger of rebelling against God as did Israel* (1 Cor 10:1-12) *by failing to trust Him or obey Him*. They are every bit as much indebted to God's grace as were the Israelites of the wilderness generation.

- 26] I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.
- 27] Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:

These verses record one of the model prayers in the Old Testament. The mention of the 40 days and 40 nights recalled Moses' fasting (v. 18) and indicated his sincerity as well as his understanding of the situation's gravity. He was totally concerned with God's glory and reputation on the earth.

This prayer contained no self-seeking on Moses' part. Instead it was out of concern for God's reputation and a desire for Him to demonstrate once again His grace by forgiving the stubbornness, wickedness, and sin (v. 27) of God's people, His inheritance, whom He delivered out of Egypt by His power (cf. v. 26) and outstretched arm.

- 28] Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.
- 29] Yet they *are* thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

He did not plead for Israel on the basis of any merit of hers. Rather he "reminded" God that Israel was His own inheritance (cf. v. 29). Therefore in the light of His promise to the patriarchs, God's destruction of Israel would call into question His ability to fulfill His promise (9:28).

## Deuteronomy 10

- 1] At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood.
- 2] And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark.

The Lord, acting on Moses' request not to destroy the people, rewrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets. This indicates that God *did*

annul the prior covenant, concluded in Ex 24:3. Probably each of the two tablets contained a complete copy of the Ten Commandments. This was normal in establishing the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties to which Deuteronomy has been previously compared.

- 3] And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand.
- 4] And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.

As God instructed, Moses made a wooden chest or ark (cf. Ex 25:10-16) in which he then placed the tablets. This construction was done, of course, in connection with building the tabernacle (Ex 37:1-5; 40:20-21).

- 5] And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me.
- 6] And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his stead.

These verses may be an editorial insertion. When Israel was at Moserah Aaron died. (According to Num 20:28; 33:38 Aaron died on Mount Hor. Probably Moserah was the district where Mount Hor was located.) The mention of Aaron's death indicates that the Lord also granted Moses' plea at Horeb years before to spare Aaron's life. Eleazar, Aaron's third son, became the high priest (Deut 10:6) and the Levites were given specific responsibilities in relation to the tabernacle (v. 8).

- 7] From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters.
- 8] At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.
- 9] Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD *is* his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him.
- 10] And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also, *and* the LORD would not destroy thee.

When Moses was on the mountain a second time (vv. 1-5) for 40 days and nights (cf. the first time, 9:9), he was involved in fasting and intercession for Israel (9:18, 25). Agreeing not to destroy the nation, God told Moses to lead the people on to possess the land.

- 11] And the LORD said unto me, Arise, take *thy* journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give unto them.
- 12] And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

These verses are an introductory summary to the general exhortation in verses 14-22. Having shown the impossibility of self-dependence (Ch. 8) and the impossibility of spiritual pride in light of her rebellious history (9:1-10:11), Moses called Israel to exercise her *only option for survival*: total commitment to the Lord. This is seen in the several infinitives used: to fear, walk, love, serve, and observe. Such commitment was for their own good. Cf. Micah 6:8: *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

- 13] To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?
- 14] Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is* the LORD'S thy God, the earth *also*, with all that therein *is*.
- 15] Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day.

The Lord is enthroned in the heavens, and therefore is *not a part of Creation* but is sovereign over all of it. Besides creating the universe, He *owns* it and all the nations on the earth. But He specially loved the patriarchs, and selected them to be intimately related to Him. And He chose their descendants, that is, He called them to be His witnesses. So the first reason Israel was to love the Lord is that He had initiated a relationship of love with this rebellious nation. *The same principle is true of God's relationship with believers today* (Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10).

- 16] Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.
- 17] For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:
- 18] He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

The proper response to their election by the sovereign Lord was to circumcise their hearts (cf. 30:6). An uncircumcised heart means a will that is hardened against God's commands. It is another way of saying the person is stiff-necked or stubborn (cf. 9:6, 13; 31:27). Thus the command to circumcise their hearts assumes that human hearts are naturally rebellious and need correction. Though human hearts are slow

to change, Moses warned the nation that no bribe or anything *less than an inward transformation* could satisfy the Lord, who is the great God. God's treatment of the helpless (the fatherless, the widow, and the alien) further illustrates His absolutely just character (showing no partiality) and highlights His requirement for Israel to be just.

- 19] Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.
- 20] Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.
- 21] He *is* thy praise, and he *is* thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

The mention of the alien in verse 18 recalls God's great deliverance of Israel with great and awesome wonders (v. 21) from being aliens in Egypt (v. 19; cf. Ex 23:9). Therefore the Israelites were to fear, serve, adhere to (cf. hold fast to in Deut 11:22; 13:4; 30:20), and praise Him.

- 22] Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

As a further encouragement to be faithful to the Lord, Moses called the people's attention to the fact that He had already fulfilled part of the promise to Abraham by multiplying their number like the stars in the sky (cf. Gen 15:5; 22:17; 26:4).

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What was the basis for the "genocide" mandated by God in their conquest of Canaan?
- 2) Why was God so insistent on eliminating all traces of paganism in Israel?
- 3) Why didn't Jesus "turn the stones into bread" when he was in the desert?
- 4) Did God annul the first covenant? What caused Him to renew it?
- 5) What does it mean: that God is *transcendant* (above) His creation?

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) How can the "pride after conquest" affect us in our day?

- 2) In what ways should Christians be aware of the dangers of rebelling against God?
- 3) Is fasting appropriate for today?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

There were 10 nations “usurping” the land that God had granted Israel: three defeated prior to the crossing of the Jordan, and seven defeated in the land by Joshua. Is there any “typological” implications anticipating the three that will be “put down” by the Coming World Leader that are indicated by the “seven heads and ten horns”? (Cf. Dan 7:24.)

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 11 & 12. Also Numbers 22-36.

# The Book of Deuteronomy

## Session 5

### Chapters 11-12

## Outline

- Moses’ 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon 1:1–4:43
- **Moses’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon 4:44–28:68**
- Moses’ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon 29:1–30:20
- Moses’ Last Days 31:1–34:12

## Chapters

- 1-4 Failure
- 5-11 Mutual Love
- 12-20 Obligations of a God-related people
- 27-30 Alternatives for a God-related people
- 31-33 Arrangements for continuity

Love for man was initiated by God; it did not come as a response to human activity. God’s love for Israel began with His choice of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob... They were expected to respond with wholehearted love and devotion, tapping all the resources of their being: heart, soul, strength, and mind—exclusively. No other gods allowed or tolerated in the relationship.

## Treaty Structure

A national constitution: a treaty between a ruler and his subjects:

- Historical Prologue** Reviewing the relationship which the Ruler has with His subjects.
- Basic Stipulations** Specifying the general principles that are to guide behavior.
- Detailed Stipulations** Expanding on certain rules that are to be followed.
- Document Clause** Calling for ratification by the subjects themselves.
- Blessings** Explaining the benefits the Ruler provides for good subjects.
- Cursings** Explaining the punishments due subjects who violate treaty stipulations.
- Recapitulation** Summarizing the treaty.

## Deuteronomy 11

- 1] Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.
- 2] And know ye this day: for *I speak* not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm,

Once again Moses laid special stress on the inseparability of love and obedience (cf. 6:5-6; 7:9; 10:12-13; 11:13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 8, 16, 20). The ultimate test of an Israelite’s love for God was whether he obeyed Him (cf. Jn 14:15). In Hebrew the command to love the Lord means to choose Him for one’s most intimate relationship and then to express that choice in obedience to His revealed will. All of Israel’s history had been guided by the Lord for the purpose of motivating them to love Him unreservedly. The discipline of the Lord refers to God’s moral education of His people. Because of the waywardness of the human heart, diligent and drastic measures were needed to quell that waywardness.

- 3] And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land;
- 4] And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and *how* the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day;
- 5] And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place;



So God sent Israel “to school” in Egypt so that she might learn of His majesty and power (mighty hand and outstretched arm; cf. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19) and respond with grateful obedience for her deliverance from Pharaoh. Israel was given distinct signs (11:3; the 10 plagues) so that she might understand her experience. The incident at the Red Sea (lit., “Sea of [Papyrus] Reeds”) and the consequent lasting ruin brought on the Egyptians (Deut 11:4) could be explained only by God’s miraculous deliverance and judgment.

After the Egyptian experience the Lord then sent His children “to school” in the desert for 40 years. Here their moral education was further refined as they had to depend on Him totally for all their needs. The vague reference what He did for you (v. 5) recalled God’s miracles for His people in the wilderness, including the water from the rock (Ex 17:1-7), the manna, and the quail (Ex 16).

- 6] And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their possession, in the midst of all Israel:
- 7] But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did.

God’s discipline, however, was not always positive. In the Exodus experience the people learned about God’s grace and power, and in the desert they learned of His providential care. Then in the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (Num 16) Israel learned about God’s holiness. Had it not been for Moses’ intercession, the Lord would have “put an end to” the entire nation (Num 16:45) for their grumbling unbelief (Num 16:41). Moses exhorted the people to learn from their past, for God had constructed their history with a didactic purpose. The stress on your own eyes and the double mention of the children not seeing the events of this period (Deut 11:2, 5) hint at the parents’ responsibility to set an example of obedient living for their children and to pass on the truths learned from these experiences.

- 8] Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it;
- 9] And that ye may prolong *your* days in the land, which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Moses wanted the people to draw an important conclusion from his brief review of their history (vv. 1-7). Since God had designed Israel’s past experiences to bring about her moral education, it should have been plain to the nation that their experiencing the Lord’s grace or judgment depended on their moral behavior. Therefore they could prosper in the new land only by observing (obeying) all God’s commands. The strength of the Israelites was directly related to their obedience. So the

supernatural ability to conquer enemies stronger than they and the ability to live long in the land (cf. 4:40; 5:16; 6:2; 25:15; 32:47) was ultimately *a question of ethics, not military skill*.

- 10] For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, *is* not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst *it* with thy foot, as a garden of herbs:
- 11] But the land, whither ye go to possess it, *is* a land of hills and valleys, *and* drinketh water of the rain of heaven:

Mentioning the contrasts between the Promised Land and Egypt might have been prompted by the reference to Dathan and Abiram (v. 6). These men had referred to *Egypt* as “a land flowing with milk and honey” and complained that Moses had not given them anything better (Num 16:12-14).

- 12] A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God *are* always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.
- 13] And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,
- 14] That I will give *you* the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.
- 15] And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

However, the land of Canaan had far more potential for agriculture. Whereas the people in Egypt had to depend on irrigation, God’s people would have rain from heaven, for He watches over the land year-round. But this rain, unlike irrigation, did not depend on human ingenuity or skill, but rather on the will of Israel to obey the commands of the rain’s Giver. This involved loving and serving Him (cf. Deut 10:12).

The autumn rains (also called the early rains) come in September-October, and the spring rains are in March-April (cf. Joel 2:23). Those rains begin and end the rainy season. The rains are necessary to help crops and trees grow, including grain (wheat, flax, and barley), grapevines (wine), olive trees (oil), and grass in the fields.

- 16] Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;
- 17] And *then* the LORD’S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and *lest* ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Through Moses, God again warned Israel against worshiping other gods. This was appropriately related to verses 13-15, because many of the gods worshiped in Canaan were fertility deities, that is, gods of grain,

oil, rain, etc. Unless the people of Israel were extremely careful they could easily be enticed by their pagan neighbors to enter into the sensual worship of these deities. It would simply be a matter of transferring their trust in the Lord for the fertility of their land to one or more of those false gods. And this worship, which was divorced from the realm of ethics and which emphasized ritual sex, was so appealing to human hearts that careless and morally undisciplined Israelites would be drawn into its fatal web.

The wrath of God expressed in famine (He will shut the heavens) could be avoided by abstaining from worshipping false gods. This was ironic, for Israel's attempt to guarantee rain by worshipping Canaanite gods would result in God's *withholding* rain!

- 18] Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.
- 19] And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
- 20] And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:

However, their will to avoid this sin was so weak that it could only be sustained by diligent attention to the words of Moses concerning divine grace and deliverance as well as sin and judgment. They were to fix those words . . . in their hearts (cf. 6:6) and minds. (On attaching those words to their hands and foreheads, see comments on 6:8.) Only by letting God's words invade every area of their lives and homes and by diligently teaching them to their children (cf. 6:7) could the nation hope to escape the seduction of false worship and find permanent prosperity in the land of promise given by the Lord on oath to their forefathers (see comments on 1:35).

The same principle applies to Christians today. Commitment to know and obey the Scriptures keeps believers from contemporary forms of false worship (cf. 2 Tim 3:1-9 with 2 Tim 3:14-17). Therefore Paul exhorted all Christians to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col 3:16).

- 21] That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.
- 22] For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

At this point in his speech Moses turned from the theme of longevity in the land to the successful conquest of the land. The people were to love the Lord (cf. 6:5). Obedience to the specific commands was essentially an expression

of one's love for God (cf. 11:1). And consistent allegiance to Him (hold fast to Him; cf. 10:20; 13:4; 30:20) was an evidence of love.

- 23] Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.
- 24] Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.

In return for their obedience the Lord would grant Israel supernatural success against superior (larger and stronger) enemy armies.

- 25] There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.
- 26] Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;
- 27] A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

He would put a terror and fear in their enemies so that they could not fight successfully against Israel. Rahab's words to the spies, "I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us" (Josh 2:9), are one example of the fulfillment of this promise (cf. Ex 15:15-16; Deut 2:25; 28:10; Josh 2:11, 24; 5:1). Had Israel continued to obey God faithfully, her boundaries would have been enlarged (Deut 11:24) to fulfill the promise made to Abraham (Gen 15:18). But because of Israel's disobedience the fulfillment of the whole land promise is still future.

- 28] And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.
- 29] And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.

Verses 26-32 of Chapter 11 form a fitting conclusion to this section of Moses' speech. Once again he emphasized that the history of Israel would be determined by her ethical relationship to the Lord.

- 30] *Are* they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh?
- 31] For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein.
- 32] And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day.

## Deuteronomy 12

- 1] These *are* the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

The decrees and laws that follow in this section of Moses' speech (12:2-26:15) were not meant to be exhaustive. Moses intentionally did not repeat many of the details and laws recorded in Exodus and Leviticus. Deuteronomy is law preached (or better, "instruction"). Moses was setting a quality of living before the nation rather than an exhaustive law code that covered every detail of life. The specific laws in this section were given to help the people subordinate every area of their lives to the Lord, and to help them eradicate whatever might threaten that pure devotion.

These laws were given with the Promised Land specifically in mind: be careful to follow these commands in the land. Because God's Word is certain of fulfillment, Moses could tell the Israelites on the plains of Moab, still outside the boundaries of the Promised Land, that the Lord *had given them the land*.

- 2] Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

Idoltrous shrines were to be demolished. מקומות *meqomot* places; **not** בָּמוֹת *bamot* high places. This negates the theory that Deuteronomy was written during Josiah times (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) to prohibit the use of "high places" found in accounts of Josiah's reform. (2 Kgs 23:5-20; 2 Chr 33:3, 17, 19; 34:3). They were already instructed to kill the Canaanite idolaters (7:1-6).

- 3] And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.  
4] Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

Mountains and hills were particularly significant in some of the religions of the ancient Near East for many deities were thought to have originated there and to live there. The spreading tree was also significant for the Canaanite worship of fertility deities.

The sacred stones (cf. 7:5; Ex 23:24; 34:13) were possibly male fertility symbols and the Asherah poles (cf. Ex 34:13; Deut 7:5; 16:21) were wooden symbols of the fertility goddess Asherah, Baal's consort. The idols were probably in stone.

The complete destruction of these cultic objects was intended to remove the temptation to worship their deities and to stop polluting the pure worship of the Lord with pagan rituals and objects (12:4). The Lord would not tolerate a partial commitment. By destroying these cultic objects and centers the Israelites could express their total allegiance to Him. Also the Israelites could show that they did not believe in the existence of the Canaanite deities and therefore had no fear of "retribution" from them.

- 5] But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

When Israel entered the Promised Land, God would choose a place to put His name (cf. vv. 11, 21; 14:23-24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2) that is, He would choose a site for the tabernacle, the place where God and the people would meet (cf. Ex 33:7-11).

- Shechem, between Mt. Ebal (cursing) and Mt. Gerizim (blessing) (Josh 24:1-8)
- Shiloh: Judges 21:19 – 1 Samuel 1:3; 2:4.

[No mention of Jerusalem!] The ultimate fulfillment of this command came centuries later when God let David move the tabernacle to Jerusalem where his son Solomon built the temple. The command for a single sanctuary promoted or emphasized the unity of three things: the unity of God (i.e., He is One, not many), *the purity of the Israelites' worship of the Lord*, and the *people's political and spiritual unity*.

- 6] And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

The burnt offerings (Lev 1) were to be completely burned on the altar. They were given at various times to express the worshiper's total dependence on the Lord. The word translated sacrifice (*zebahō*) refers to a sacrifice given as an expression of appreciation, and it involved a communal meal. It may have been given as a thank offering (Lev 7:12-15; 22:29-30) for something specific God had done for a worshiper. Or it may have been offered as a votive offering to fulfill a vow made to the Lord (Lev 7:16-17; 22:18-23). Or it may have been offered as a freewill offering in which the person thanked God (Lev 7:16-17; 22:18-23) but not necessarily for anything specific. The special gifts (lit., "what is lifted up in the hand") were for the priests.

- 7] And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

An Israelite “worship service” would be characterized by joy (you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice) if they lived faithfully in the new land for they could count on the Lord’s abundant blessing. “Rejoicing” in the Lord’s presence occurs several times in Deut (vv. 7, 12, 18; 14:26; 16:11; also note 16:14-15).

- 8] Ye shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every man whatsoever *is* right in his own eyes.
- 9] For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.
- 10] But *when* ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and *when* he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

Earlier in Israel’s wilderness experience, the Lord instructed Moses to command the people *not* to slaughter a cow, sheep, or goat without first bringing the animal to the entrance of the tabernacle to present it as an offering to Him (Lev 17:1-4). God had two reasons for this.

- First, the prohibition was designed to keep the Israelites from worshiping as pagans (Lev 17:5-9).
- Second, it was to keep worshipers from eating the blood of the sacrifice (Lev 17:10-13).

“Everyone does as he sees fit” may imply some laxity on the people’s part in observing the prohibition (Lev 17:3-4). Or Moses may have meant that there had been some confusion as to how to apply the original prohibition. The following legislation, however, removes any ambiguity about the eating and sacrificing of meat.

- 11] Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

The offerings, whether of flesh or grain, could be offered only at the tabernacle (cf. vv. 17-18), the place the Lord would choose as a dwelling for His name.

- 12] And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that *is* within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

These acts of worship were to be times of joy (v. 12). See Nancy Missler’s book, *Private Worship— the Key to Joy*.

- 13] Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:
- 14] But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.
- 15] Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.
- 16] Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

Wild game animals and animals acceptable for sacrifice could be eaten without taking them to the central sanctuary as long as they were not slaughtered for offerings. Since such an animal was not intended for sacrificial worship it did not matter whether the partakers of the meal were ceremonially unclean or clean. (The ceremonial laws, found mainly in Leviticus, were not of a moral nature, but were designed to teach the people truths about the nature of God, their human natures, and their relationship to God. For example, the ceremonial laws in Lev 12 regarding childbirth do not imply that the bearing of children is ethically wrong.) The prohibition against eating an animal’s blood, however, was still in force.

- 17] Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

For a second time (cf. vv. 12-13) Moses warned the people that anything intended for use in worshiping the Lord could only be eaten at the future site of the central sanctuary. In this way purity in worship was protected. Again Moses spoke of worship as a time of joy (cf. v. 12). Since the Levites had no tribal allotment of land (10:9; 12:12), they lived in towns among the tribes (v. 18; 14:29; 16:11). The people were to provide for them (cf. 14:27).

- 18] But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.
- 19] Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

The permission to eat meat not intended for use in worship without bringing it to the sanctuary was repeated here (cf. vv. 15-16) but with some added details. Modern readers may find this repetition a bit tedious. But it should be remembered that Deuteronomy was originally presented in sermon form to Israel. Normally repetition is important in the learning process, but it is doubly important in oral presentations as the audience does not have the opportunity to “read” over something missed the first time.



The earlier prohibition (Lev 17:1-12) against eating meat without offering it first at the tabernacle was only meant to apply while the Israelites were in the wilderness, when their “homes” were near the religious sanctuary. Now the people were about to move into the Promised Land where the majority would live too far away from the central sanctuary to bring all meat there. So permission was given to slaughter and eat animals at home for “secular” meals. Yet the permission was given in such a way that the original intent of the command (Lev 17:1-12) was preserved. There the prohibition was aimed at preventing the pollution of worship by Canaanite ritual, and at preventing the Israelites from eating the blood of the animals.

Here Moses warned against eating the blood whether the animal was killed at home (Deut 12:23-25; cf. v. 16) or at the sanctuary (v. 27). The blood symbolized life (the blood is the life, v. 23). By refraining from eating blood the Israelites demonstrated a respect for life and ultimately for the Creator of life. Also as Leviticus 17:11 indicates, the blood is a ransom price for sins, so blood is sacred and should not be consumed by people. Moses also preserved the original intent of Leviticus 17:3-4 by again insisting that all offerings to the Lord be given at the central sanctuary (Deut 12:26-27; cf. vv. 11, 17-18). The blood was to be poured beside the altar of burnt offering.

The New Testament has abrogated the Law of the single sanctuary because each Christian has become a sanctuary, a “temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16). However, the eternal principle expressed in the Law of the single sanctuary is still in force for God still demands purity in worship (Jn 4:24) and the unity of His people (Phil 2:1-5).

Each of three sections in this chapter concludes with the admonition to be careful in carrying out the instructions (Deut 12:13, 19, 28; also note vv. 1, 30). This is one of many emphases in Deuteronomy, given perhaps because the people tended to be careless and negligent.

- 20] When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.
- 21] If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.
- 22] Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat *of* them alike.
- 23] Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood *is* the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.
- 24] Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.

- 25] Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do *that which is* right in the sight of the LORD.
- 26] Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose:
- 27] And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.
- 28] Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest *that which is* good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.
- 29] When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;
- 30] Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

Once again Moses drove home the need to avoid all contacts with pagan cultic practices. This sin was offensive for two reasons. First, it would come in the wake of the Lord’s grace, that is, after the Lord would cut off . . . the nations before them. In spite of such divine grace simple curiosity can lead believers to be ensnared (cf. 7:26) by idolatrous practices. This graphically depicts the depravity of the human heart and the fragile nature of the human will’s commitment to the holy God. No wonder Moses again urged his people to be careful!

- 31] Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.
- 32] What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

The second reason for the offensive nature of pagan worship is the depth of the abominations into which they lead. In worshiping their gods, pagans do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. The worst of these “detestable things” was child sacrifice. This practice of burning their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices was frequently associated with the worship of the Ammonite god Molech (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). God’s penalty for child sacrifice was death (Lev 20:2-5).

Yet despite this Solomon built a high place for worshiping Molech on the Mount of Olives (1 Kgs 11:7), and both Ahaz (2 Chr 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:6) sacrificed their own children in fire. The practice of child sacrifice is listed as the culminating reason for the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the eighth century B.C. (2 Kgs 17:6, 17). Thus a simple curiosity about evil religious practices eventually led to the destruction of a nation. The same warning is repeated by the Apostle

Paul. “For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret” (Eph 5:12).

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What was the ultimate test of an Israelite’s love for God?
- 2) What were the main lessons that Israel should have gleaned from their experiences in Egypt?
- 3) What is the significance of the double mention of the children not seeing the events of this period?
- 4) Contrast the agricultural characteristics between Egypt and Canaan.
- 5) Why was the eating of blood prohibited (Lev 17:11)?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) How are we to avoid the risks of false worship today?
- 2) How does Israel’s present boundaries reflect their spiritual condition today? In the future?
- 3) Discuss the ethical and other implications of killing the Canaanite idolaters.
- 4) Discuss the real nature of worship—as opposed to praise, thanksgiving, and other actions. Distinguish from this use of the term for the musical aspects of a program.
- 5) Discuss the role of blood in the Levitical context.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compile a summary of the various offerings, compulsory and voluntary, and the principal characteristics of each.
- 2) Compile a comprehensive paper on the role of blood in the Levitical context.

## Preparation for Next Session

Read Leviticus 13 and 14. Be prepared to discuss practical hygiene.

## The Book of Deuteronomy

### Session 6

### Chapters 13 - 14

### Deuteronomy 13

After the general prohibition against involvement in pagan worship (12:29-31) Moses discussed *three* ways in which the temptation to idolatry was likely to come: 1) through a false prophet (13:1-5); a loved one (vv. 6-11); or, “revolutionaries” who had been successful in leading an entire town into apostasy (vv. 12-18).

- 1] If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,
- 2] And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

Miraculous signs alone were never meant to be a test of truth. Miracles happen in many religions because Satan uses false religions and false prophets to deceive the world (cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15; Eph 6:11; Rev 12:9). So Moses warned the people that the standard for truth must never be a miraculous sign or wonder (or other areas of human experience). The standard of truth is the Word of God.

- 3] Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
- 4] Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

A prophet’s or a dreamer’s prediction may come true. But if his message contradicted God’s commands, the people were to trust God and His Word rather than their experience of a miracle. If human experience seemed to contradict God’s clear teachings the Israelites were to bow in submission to God’s commands, for His Word is truth (cf. John 17:17).

- 5] And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust

thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

The Israelites were to view each solicitation to idolatry *as a test of their love for the Lord*. Though there was always the danger that they might succumb to a temptation, with each successful resistance to sin their faith in and love for Him would grow stronger (cf. James 1:2-4). They were to love, follow, revere, obey, serve, and hold fast, to Him (cf. Deut 10:20; 11:22; 30:20). The death penalty for a false prophet was appropriate for if he would successfully seduce people into idolatry he would bring them under God's judgment (cf. 7:26). Killing a false prophet was a way to purge the evil from Israel. The need to maintain national purity was emphasized by Moses, for the command, "You must purge the evil," occurs nine times (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21-22, 24; 24:7).

- 6] If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which *is* as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;
- 7] *Notably*, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth;

Perhaps the most tragic and painful of all situations which Moses could envision was a temptation to idolatry by a loved one. He showed he understood the depth of the tragedy as he deliberately described the various relationships involved with endearing terminology: your very own brother . . . the wife you love (lit., "the wife of your bosom"), or your closest friend. Often friends try to influence each other.

Unlike the preceding case in which false prophets openly attempted to seduce the people into idolatry (vv. 1-2), this temptation was offered secretly and individually. The absurdity of the temptation is heightened by Moses' explanation of the other gods. They are gods that neither you nor your fathers (ancestors) have known. Moses did not mean that the people had not known about these gods intellectually, but they had not known them experientially. These "other gods" had done nothing for Israel and never would because they did not exist.

- 8] Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:
- 9] But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

The person who was being tempted should respond first by not yielding to the temptation (do not consent). The command not to listen to him may have meant not to give in to his plea that his ways be kept secret. Since

the temptation came through a loved one the tempted person would naturally feel compassion or pity and would probably be inclined to cover up the sin of his loved one (shield him). But here again God's commands were to rule over human feelings and experiences.

- 10] And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.
- 11] And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

The tempted person was to expose his loved one and in fact to be the first in stoning him to death (cf. Zech 13:3). By casting the first stone the accuser was testifying to the truth of his testimony. The participation of the rest of the community then showed their allegiance to the Lord and their resolute hostility toward anything that might endanger that allegiance and turn them away from the Lord.

The result of such a severe action would be that all Israel would hear about this extraordinary devotion to the Lord and be afraid to disobey Him (cf. Acts 5:11). This is precisely what Moses was demanding of the people—an extraordinary commitment (superseding all other intimate relationships) to the God who had shown extraordinary grace to the nation (who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; cf. Ex 13:3, 14; 20:2; Deut 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5). This passage may have been in Jesus' mind when He demanded a similar commitment of His followers (cf. Mt 10:34-39; Lk 14:26).

- 12] If thou shalt hear *say* in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,
- 13] *Certain* men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

The situation Moses envisioned here was perhaps the most potentially dangerous for the nation as a whole. Certain wicked men may lead a whole town astray. The men's wickedness is highlighted by the fact that they deceived one of the towns the Lord would give to Israel.

- 14] Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, *if it be* truth, *and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought among you;
- 15] Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that *is* therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

The punishment of this sin was to be so drastic that before any action was taken the truth of the report must be confirmed by a thorough investigation. If the report was confirmed, then the town was to be treated like a Canaanite city: set aside for complete destruction of people and livestock. The fact that all its plunder was to be destroyed, and that it was never to be rebuilt, precluded any greedy or illegitimate motivations by those who were to carry out its destruction. Obedience to this command would bring about a moral cleansing of the land and a spiritual renewal. Then in mercy and compassion . . . the Lord would prosper the people by increasing their numbers, as He promised on oath (cf. 4:31).

For the most part Israel failed to apply the commands of this chapter. This failure resulted in both the Northern Kingdom and later the Southern Kingdom being exiled. The commands of this chapter are not directed to Christians, because they do not live in one nation ruled by God; that is, the New Testament church is not a theocracy. However, church discipline should be exercised (Mt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5) and there is a sin that leads to death (1 Jn 5:16-17; cf. Heb 10:26-31).

- 16] And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.
- 17] And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;
- 18] When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do *that which is* right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

## Deuteronomy 14

### Laws Reflecting the Holiness of the People

To be “a people holy to the Lord” (v. 2) meant being a people set apart to God for His use. In the preceding section (12:29-13:18) Moses stressed the need for the nation in her worship to be set apart from all pagan nations. In Chapter 14 Moses turned his attention to the everyday affairs of life and called for a distinctive lifestyle that would reflect Israel’s unique position among all the nations.

- 1] Ye *are* the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.
- 2] For thou *art* a holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.

Moses called the Israelites children (lit., “sons”) of YHWH (the covenant name). He meant Israel’s special privilege as the one nation on the face of the earth which had an intimate relationship with the Lord. All other nations were to come to the Lord through the ministry or testimony of the nation Israel. Because of this, Israel, a people holy (set apart) to the Lord, was to demonstrate her holiness before the other nations. A unique nation, Israel was God’s treasured possession (cf. 7:6; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Mal 3:17).

The other nations had peculiar and superstitious beliefs about dying and the dead. Some even worshiped dead spirits. The precise significance of the rituals mentioned here (Deut 14:1)—laceration and shaving the head for the dead—is unknown today. But cutting oneself was a sign of mourning (cf. Jer 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37). However, it is clear that these practices reflected beliefs about the dead that conflicted with faith in the Lord, the ultimate Source of life. Israelites were to demonstrate their faith in the Lord by refraining from these pagan practices. Christians may demonstrate even greater faith when a believing loved one dies (cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18).

- 3] Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.
- 4] These *are* the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat,
- 5] The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois.
- 6] And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, *and* cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat.

The exact identities of some of the animals and birds listed in verses 3-18 is uncertain. The animals in this first group are those that walk on land. Any animal could be eaten if it had a split hoof divided in two and chews the cud. Ten such animals are listed in verses 4-5. Those that meet only one of these criteria were considered ceremonially unclean. These included the camel, the rabbit, and the coney (the rock hyrax), and the pig. The lists are obviously representative rather than exhaustive.

### “Clean” and “Unclean”?

The precise meaning of these laws has been a source of debate since pre-Christian times. It is difficult to believe that God was concerned about the health of His people in the Old Testament, but abandoned that concern in the New Testament. Eating some of the “clean” animals may represent a greater danger to health than some of the “unclean” ones. Hygienic? Pork may be a source of trichinosis; the hare is a carrier of tularemia. However, no hygienic reasons are given as motives for observing the law of the clean and the unclean. And the Old Testament does not state that the Israelites considered the unclean animals



dangerous to their health. Plus:

- Jesus declared all foods should be considered clean (Mk 7:14-23);
- Confirmed to Peter (Acts 10:9-23);
- Pagan cultic rites? Said to be “detestable” (Deut 14:3);
- Symbolic of good and evil?
- Simply pedagogical distinctions;
- A final enigma: How many of each animal did Noah take into the Ark? How did he know which were which?

A second popular interpretation of the prohibition of unclean animals for food is that they were used in *pagan cultic rites*.

- Evidence for this is that the unclean animals are said to be “detestable” (Deut 14:3). The same Hebrew word is used elsewhere in Deuteronomy of idolatry and other pagan practices (7:25; 12:31). Also some unclean animals (e.g., pigs) were widely used in pagan rituals. However, this explanation clarifies so little of the data that it is not too useful. And one may adduce counter examples. For instance, the bull, a common symbol in the religions of the ancient Near East, was permitted as food for the Israelites.
- A third explanation is that the clean and unclean animals were *symbolic* of good and evil in the human realm.
- A fourth view is that the distinction between clean and unclean animals is purely arbitrary pedagogical illustrations: God made the distinctions so that Israel might have a way of expressing her unique relationship to Him, even in relation to food.

- 7] Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; *as* the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; *therefore* they *are* unclean unto you.
- 8] And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it *is* unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase.
- 9] These ye shall eat of all that *are* in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat:
- 10] And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it *is* unclean unto you.
- 11] *Of* all clean birds ye shall eat.
- 12] But these *are* *they* of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,
- 13] And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind,

Creatures that swim in the sea could be eaten if they have fins and scales. Others could not be eaten for they were unclean. Creatures that fly, the third classification, were subdivided into birds (vv. 11-18), and insects (vv. 19-20). The unclean birds—21 of them are listed—are birds of prey and/or eaters of carrion.

- 14] And every raven after his kind,  
15] And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,  
16] The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan,  
17] And the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the cormorant,  
18] And the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

Flying, swarming insects were unclean, but others (e.g., the locust, cricket, and grasshopper) were clean insects (v. 20).

- 19] And every creeping thing that flieth *is* unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten.  
20] *But of* all clean fowls ye may eat.  
21] Ye shall not eat *of* any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that *is* in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou *art* a holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother’s milk.

The prohibition against eating meat of an animal, bird, or insect found already dead was probably intended to prevent defilement from consuming blood, for the dead animal would not have had its blood drained properly. Other people could eat it but Israel was a distinct people, holy to the Lord.

No Israelite could eat without realizing that in every area of his life he was to be consecrated to God. Likewise an Israelite’s diet served as a testimony of his relationship to the Lord in the presence of Gentiles. New Testament God abolished the food laws of the Old Testament (Mk 7:14-23; Acts 10:9-23). However, Christians should demonstrate their unique relationship to God by the purity of their lives. Christians may demonstrate their faith and unique relationship with the Lord by offering sincere thanks at mealtimes to God, the Creator and Provider of all food (1 Tim 4:3-5).

## Meat vs. Dairy?

- Prohibition against cooking a young goat in its mother’s milk (Ex 23:19; 34:26).
- According to an ancient Ugaritic text this reflected a Canaanite fertility rite.
- Appears to be the basis for the present Jewish (*kosher*) practice of not mixing milk products with meat.

Perhaps the prohibition meant that the Israelites were not to take what was intended to promote life (goat milk) and use it to destroy life.

- 22] Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.
- 23] And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and

the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

The regulations about the tithe of the crops and livestock—which were to be eaten in a meal of fellowship at the central sanctuary—were connected to the preceding food laws (vv. 3-21). Eating the tithes in the Lord’s presence was another way in which the Israelites were to express their unique relationship to and dependence on the Lord in reference to their food. Their diet was restricted not only in what they could eat but also in how much of their food they might keep for themselves. The law of the tithe, with its provision for the care of the poor (14:28-29), also anticipated the following legislation (15:1-18) concerning debtors, slaves, and other impoverished people.

God emphasized the absolute necessity for the Israelites to tithe: Be sure to set aside a 10<sup>th</sup>. Previously Moses had indicated that the Israelites’ tithes were to go to the Levites (Num 18:21-32). Now Moses added a new feature to the legislation about the tithe. The Israelites were to take part of their tithe to the central sanctuary, and eat it there in a common meal before the Lord. Or this may be a second tithe (a 10<sup>th</sup> of the remaining 90%), part of which was to be eaten at the sanctuary with the remainder given to the Levites serving there (cf. Deut 14:27). This experience was designed to teach them to revere (lit., “fear”; cf. 4:10) the Lord their God always. As they ate this meal before Him with priestly instruction they would be acknowledging that their food (and thus their very lives) depended not on their agricultural skills but on the Lord’s blessing. So they would learn to fear Him, for only by obeying Him would they continue to eat and live in prosperity.

- 24] And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:
- 25] Then shalt thou turn *it* into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:

Some people would be living too far away from the future sanctuary to make it practical to herd or carry their tithe. So they could sell their tithe of produce and livestock for silver. Then they could travel to the central sanctuary and there buy cattle, sheep, wine, or fermented drink or whatever they wished and eat and drink it there in God’s presence. (Cf. another concession in 12:20-25.)

Both “wine” and “fermented drink” were permissible here in even an act of worship to the Lord. The Hebrew word for “wine” is *yayin*, which sometimes means an intoxicating beverage and other times means a

nonintoxicating drink. The Hebrew word for “fermented drink” (*sekIar*) is often rendered “strong drink” in some translations (e.g., KJV, NASB, RSV). This is misleading because it suggests that *sekIar* refers to distilled liquor. But the process for distillation was not used in the Near East until the seventh century A.D. The “fermented drink” was probably a kind of beer (this is the usual NIV trans.), brewed by the ancient Egyptians and Akkadians, and therefore low in alcohol content. (However, wine [*yayin*] drunk in excess can be intoxicating; cf., Isa 5:11; Prov 20:1; and drunkenness is sin.) Presumably one family could not eat all its tithe, so the remainder was to be given to the Levites at the sanctuary. In this way the Levites were provided for since they had no land inheritance of their own.

- 26] And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,
- 27] And the Levite that *is* within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.
- 28] At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay *it* up within thy gates:
- 29] And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which *are* within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

Every third year the second tithe was not to be taken to the sanctuary but was to be used to feed the Levites and less fortunate members of society. The aliens were foreigners who lived with the Israelites. Though those foreigners were to be treated fairly, they did not share all the privileges of Israelite citizenship. Widows and their children (the fatherless) were also given special consideration (cf. 24:19-21; 26:12-13). If the Israelites obeyed this command to share, then they could always expect to live in a prosperous society and could be generous, for God would bless them in all the work of their hands. Tithing is not commanded in the New Testament. Yet believers in the Church Age still indicate by their giving that God supports and cares for them. Christians are to give “generously,” knowing that they “will also reap generously” (2 Cor 9:6; cf. 2 Cor 9:7-9; 1 Cor 16:1-2).

## Ancient Hygiene (*Papyrus Ebers, 1552 BC*)

**Getting Gray Hair?** *To prevent the hair from turning gray, anoint it with the blood of a black calf which has been boiled in oil, or with the fat of a rattlesnake.*

*Papyrus Ebers, 1552 B.C.*

**Losing Hair?** *When it falls out, one remedy is to apply a mixture of six fats, namely those of the horse, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cat, the snake, and the ibex. To strengthen it, anoint with the tooth of a donkey crushed in honey.*

A special hair dressing the Egyptian Queen Schesch consisted of equal parts of a heel of an Abyssinian greyhound, date blossoms, and asses' hoofs, boiled in oil. This choice preparation was intended to make the royal hair grow...

**Splinters?** Embedded splinters were treated with worms' blood and asses' dung (since dung is loaded with tetanus spores, it is little wonder that lockjaw took a heavy toll of splinter cases!)

### The Proper Medicine Kit (as advised by *Papyrus Ebers*)

Lizards' blood, swines' teeth, putrid meat, stinking fat, moisture from pig's ears, milk goose grease, asses' hoofs, animal fats from various sources, excreta from animals, human beings, donkeys, antelopes, dogs, cats, and even flies.

At the time the *Papyrus Ebers*, the medical treatise, was written, Moses was born in Egypt. And the Scripture tells us that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22).

*And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.*

He would be well acquainted in what was the medical wisdom of the time. However, when Moses led the great company of Israelites out of Egypt, the Lord gave him a most remarkable promise for the new nation... It is astonishing that Moses did **not** incorporate a single current medical misconception into the inspired instructions recorded in the Torah!

### Modern Medicine Anticipated

The *Torah* anticipated modern medicine discoveries: avoidance of cervical cancer; isolation of contagious diseases; modern hygiene; and, a long list of discoveries 4,000 years later.

S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, 1963

**Leprosy:** Greatest blight of medieval humanity: emerged in Europe in 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> centuries; reached peak in 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> centuries; exceeded the Black Death of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century or syphilis at end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century

**The Black Death:** In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Bubonic Plague desolated Europe: 2/3 of population stricken, one out of four died; jews so universally escaped infection that they were accused of causing the mortality among the Gentiles by poisoning wells and springs.

**Basic Hygiene:** Cholera, Dysentery and Typhoid could have been avoided by one sentence (Deut 23:12,13).

**Cervical Cancer:** 25% of cancers in women; peak age between 31-50; 1900s, NY: Wineberg at Mt Sinai Hospital, Kaplan at Bellvue Hospital, both notice Jewesses comparatively free; 1949, Mayo Clinic: 568 consecutive cases: no Jewesses; 1954, Boston study: 86,214 women; non-Jewish women 8½ time more frequent. Bacteria: *Smegma bacillus*, deposits in the cervix of the uterus, if the mucous membrane is not intact (lacerations as after childbirth) can cause irritations and susceptibility to cancer. 4,000 years earlier (Gen 17:10-12); facilitates proper cleansing of virulent bacteria.

**Circumcision:** Vitamin K, clotting element, not formed until the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> day. Prothrombin, also necessary (3<sup>rd</sup> day: 30% of normal; 8<sup>th</sup> day: peaks at 110%, then levels off at 100% of normal). How did Moses know to circumcise on the 8<sup>th</sup> day? Gen 17:12 ("Trial and error" methods?).

**A Major Hygienic Challenge:** No known preventative vaccine; most people don't know they have it; yet they are carriers and are infecting others. It carries permanent genetic defects, results in death, and is subject of deliberate deceit and lies deceit by government, schools and media.

**Can AIDS be stopped?** Truth rather than lies to be promulgated; unfettered medical resources—it's an epidemic, not a "civil rights" issue; a national policy to protect the uninfected rather than the infected; that is the Biblical instruction; that was the way the plagues were topped in the Middle Ages in Europe.

**"Gay"?** Average age of men dying of AIDS: 39; of homosexuals of all causes: 41; only 1% lived to 65 or more; 3% to 55. Homosexual men are 3X as likely to have drug abuse problems, 14X more likely to have had syphilis; 23X more likely to get a venereal disease; 1000s of time more likely to get AIDS. Why are employers and restaurateurs who segregate smokers judged progressive, while those who decline to hire homosexuals or AIDS victims regarded as bigots? Is cigarette smoke more hazardous than homosexual sodomy?

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Why are miracles a poor test for truth?
- 2) How is idolatry a test? Of what?
- 3) What was the purpose of the designations “clean” and “unclean.” How are they appropriate today?
- 4) How serious is HIV/AIDs?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) What are examples of idolatry today?
- 2) Give examples of “extraordinary commitment” to the Lord today.
- 3) Give examples of wickedness in leadership positions and their impact today.
- 4) What unsubstantiated medical superstitions are still practiced today?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compile examples of medical science anticipated in the Bible.
- 2) Investigate the background of the “kosher” laws, separation of meat and dairy, etc. What purpose do they serve today?

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 15 - 16. Also, review the Feasts of Israel and the Hebrew calendar.

## The Book of Deuteronomy

### Session 7

### Chapters 15 - 16

### Deuteronomy 15

Cancellation of Debts	Deut 1-11
Freeing of Servants	Deut 12-18
Firstborn of Animals	Deut 19-23

- 1] At the end of *every* seven years thou shalt make a release.
- 2] And this *is* the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth *ought* unto his neighbour shall release *it*; he shall not exact *it* of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD’S release.

### The Cancellation of Debts (15:1-11)

The sabbatical year or **year of release** was also commanded in Exodus 23:10-11 and Leviticus 25:1-7. However, while these verses stated that in the seventh year the land was to lie fallow (without any crops being planted), they did not mention the cancellation of debts.

- 3] Of a foreigner thou mayest exact *it again*: but *that* which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;
- 4] Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance to possess it:
- 5] Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.

The debt was canceled completely and permanently. The practice of canceling the entire debt permanently in the seventh year was evidently meant to prepare the Israelites for the extravagant practices commanded for the Jubilee (50<sup>th</sup>) Year in which each one was to receive back his family property (Lev 25:8-17). Permanent cancellation of debts would help prevent poverty (Deut 15:4).

- 6] For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.

Israel had the opportunity to be the richest and most prosperous nation on the face of the earth (“He will richly bless you,” v. 4b; cf. v. 6a). This prosperity would **not** be due to any technological achievement on her part,



but because of her *wholehearted commitment* to God. Moses' statement, "you will lend to many nations but borrow from none," was, in effect, *a promise of world sovereignty* (you will rule over many nations).

- 7] If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:
- 8] But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth.

Moses left the realm of law for a moment to appeal to his fellow Israelites' *hearts*. The law of debt cancellation (vv. 1-6) was intended to instill a spirit of generosity within the Israelites and thus *a freedom from the love of money* and things.

- 9] Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Therefore a calculating Israelite was guilty of sin if he refused a loan for a poor or needy brother out of fear that it might not be repaid since the seventh year was near. *Being hardened or tightfisted meant he was not trusting the Lord to bless all his work*. Solomon may have been meditating on these words of Moses when he wrote, "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty" (Prov 11:24). Moses summarized the attitude the Israelites should have toward those in need: be openhanded (Deut 15:8, 11).

## Bankruptcy Laws

A means of a new beginning: Chapter 11: A procedure to reorganize in lieu of bankruptcy; Chapter 7: A dismissal of all pre-filing debts.

- 10] Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto.
- 11] For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

The sad confession, there will always be poor people in the land, is perhaps a tragic foreshadowing of Israel's refusal to obey the Lord fully (v. 5).

- 12] *And* if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

- 13] And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:
- 14] Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: *of that* wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

## The Freeing of Servants (15:12-18)

Sometimes a person unable to pay his debts would sell himself as a servant to his creditor. If the size of his debt meant he must work for six years, he was to be freed in the seventh year. This did not necessarily correspond to the year of debt cancellation (vv. 1-6), but was the seventh year of that person's work as a servant. The Lord had previously made it clear that six full years of a person's life were enough to make up for defaulting on a loan (cf. Ex 21:2). However, in Deuteronomy Moses added that the employer must do more than free the servant; he must also supply him liberally with livestock, grain, and wine in accord with the way the Lord had blessed him.

- 15] And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

After six years the servant would have little or nothing, so to send him away empty-handed would have jeopardized his freedom all over again. Obedience to this command would serve the valuable purpose of reminding employers of the grace God had shown Israel in redeeming her from Egypt (cf. Deut 24:18, 22). It would remind them that their own welfare also depended on that grace.

- 16] And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee;
- 17] Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust *it* through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.

Moses also provided for a servant who had become too attached to a family to leave it. The employer was to pierce the servant's earlobe with an awl to indicate he was the man's servant for life. *Duolos*: the Bondservant. [Cf. *Coeur d'Alene*: "heart of the awl."]

- 18] It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant *to thee*, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

Moses offered a double motivation to one who was perhaps too greedy to set his servant free. In fairness he should realize that it might have cost him at least twice as much if he had hired someone for six years. Second, if in faith he would obey the command to release his servant, the Lord

would bless him in everything he would do. This promise of blessing in return for obedience is stated often in Deuteronomy, four times in this chapter alone (vv. 4, 6, 10, 18).

- 19] All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.
- 20] Thou shalt eat *it* before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household.

### The Law of Firstborn Animals (15:19-23)

Like the laws of canceling debts and releasing servants, it involved giving up one's possessions. First recorded in Exodus 13:11-15, it was pedagogical: reminding the Israelites of their redemption from Egypt when all the firstborn Egyptian sons died. It was an occasion to teach their children about God's redemption of their nation. Every firstborn male was to be completely set apart for the Lord; its owner received no benefit on his farm from the animal: firstborn oxen were not to plow; firstborn sheep were not to be shorn. (Goats are also mentioned in Num 18:17.)

Annually (presumably during one of the annual feasts; cf. 6:16) the young firstborn animals were to be taken to the central sanctuary to be sacrificed. The sacrificed animals were then eaten there in a communal meal with one's family.

- 21] And if there be *any* blemish therein, *as if it be* lame, or blind, *or have* any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.
- 22] Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean *person shall eat it* alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart.
- 23] Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

An imperfect firstborn animal was not acceptable as a sacrifice (cf. 17:1), so it was to be treated like a game animal (cf. 12:15; 14:4-5)—eaten at home but not sacrificed. As stated previously (12:16, 23-24) the blood of such animals was not to be eaten. According to Exodus 22:29-30 the firstborn were to be sacrificed on the eighth day after birth. Firstborn animal sacrifices were also used to help support the priests (Num 18:15-18).

## Deuteronomy 16

Pilgrim Festivals           Verses 1-17  
Instruments of Theocracy   Verses 18-22

### The Pilgrim Festivals (16:1-17)

The three great annual feasts which all male Israelites were *required* to attend (v. 16). If possible their families were to go along (cf. vv. 11, 14). These feasts were so important to Israel's religious life that after the Dispersion some Jews residing far from Palestine still attended one or more of the festivals whenever possible (cf. Acts 2:9-11, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost). Attending these feasts gave the Israelites opportunity to acknowledge the Lord as their Deliverer and Provider. These festivals demonstrated that worshiping God should be a *joyful* experience in which the participants gratefully share in the bounty of His blessing (Deut 16:11, 14-15; cf. 12:7, 12, 18; 14:26).

- 1] Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.
- 2] Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.

### The Passover (16:1-8)

The most detailed instructions for the Passover are in Exodus 12:1-28, 43-49. The word "Passover" (*pesachò*) comes from the verb *pasahò* meaning "to pass over." This feast commemorated the night the Lord "passed over" the blood-sprinkled houses of the Israelites, sparing the lives of their firstborn people, and putting to death the firstborn Egyptians and their livestock. The lives of Israelite firstborn people and livestock were protected by the sacrificial blood. As a commemorative rite the Israelites were to use the Passover to teach their children about God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt (Ex 12:26-27).

The Passover was celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of *Abib* or *Nisan* (March-April). Originally the Passover sacrifice was from the flock, either a year-old sheep or goat (Ex 12:5). The words *or herd* (cattle) mean that Moses widened the choice. Or perhaps the sacrifice from the herd was to be offered in the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deut 16:3) immediately after the Passover. At any rate lambs became the traditional Passover sacrificial animals. The animals were sacrificed "at twilight."

Gentiles were excluded from the Passover feast unless they had become proselytes (Ex 12:43-49). Each year Passover was observed a month later for those unable to partake of the feast during *Abib* because of ceremonial uncleanness or absence on a journey (Num 9:6-12).

- 3] Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, *even* the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the

land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

The Passover was immediately followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, so in effect the two actually constituted one festival (cf. Lk 2:41; 22:7; Acts 12:3-4). Eating bread without leaven commemorated the haste with which the Israelites had to leave Egypt (Ex 12:33-34). This would help them remember their quick departure from Egypt. As bread of affliction it also symbolized the Israelites' slavery in Egypt.

- 4] And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there *any thing* of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

None of the meat sacrificed in the evening of the first feast day (the Passover lamb) was to be left over to eat the next morning. It was to be burned (Ex 12:10).

- 5] Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee:  
6] But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

The first Passover had been observed in the homes of the individual Israelites. But later after the central sanctuary was built (the place where God's name would dwell; cf. 12:5, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 11; 26:1, 15), the Passover could be observed only there. This may have symbolized Israel's birth as a nation at the Exodus, a nation meant to be a family with God as her Head. Even though "twilight" may have meant 3 to 5 p.m. that could still be called in the evening when the sun was beginning to go down.

- 7] And thou shalt roast and eat *it* in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents.  
8] Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day *shall be* a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work *therein*.

After roasting and eating the Passover animal the people were to return to their tents, the temporary homes of those who had come to the central sanctuary for the celebration. In the New Testament Jesus Christ was identified as the Passover Lamb sacrificed for believers (1 Cor 5:7; also cf. Jn 19:36 with Ex 12:46b). By applying the blood of Christ to themselves, that is, trusting in Him who died in their place for their sin, Christians are spared from eternal death.

## Passover

Examined on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan; offered "between the evenings": 14<sup>th</sup> ("Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup>" on the Gentile calendar...); not a bone to be broken... Jesus is our Passover (Jn 1:29, 36; 1 Cor 5:7).

## Feast of Unleavened Bread

*Hag haMatzah*: Leaven a symbol for sin; three *matzahs*: one token, hidden; Joseph: the baker and the wine steward; the four cups: "Bringing Out"; "Delivering"; "Blessing"; "Taking Out."

- 9] Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from *such time as* thou beginnest *to put* the sickle to the corn.  
10] And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give *unto the LORD thy God*, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

## The Feast of Weeks [Counting the Omer...]

The name Feast of Weeks was given this festival in light of Moses' command to count off seven weeks from the time they began to harvest the grain in March-April. This would mean the Feast of Weeks was in late May or early June. It was also known as the "Feast of Harvest" (Ex 23:16) and the "day of firstfruits" (Num 28:26). Later it was given the title "Pentecost" based on the Septuagint's translation of the "50 days" (Lev 23:16).

- 11] And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.  
12] And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

The Feast of Weeks was a celebration of God's rich provision for His people. Therefore each freewill (voluntary) offering was to be in proportion to one's blessings from the Lord (cf. v. 17; 15:14). Paul may have had this standard of giving in mind for Christians rather than a system of tithing when he directed the Corinthian Christians to give as each one "may prosper" (1 Cor. 16:2, NASB).

This feast was to be a time of joy and sharing. Since the Lord had been "generous" with the Israelites they were to be generous with others, especially with the less prosperous members of their society (cf. Deut 14:21; 16:14; 24:19-21). Appropriately the Holy Spirit was given to New

Testament saints during the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). This symbolized the end of the Old Testament system of worship and the beginning of the New (see comments on Acts 2:4). It also pointed to the fact that God's greatest provision for a Christian's daily living is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## Feast of First Fruits

"The morrow after the sabbath after Passover..." (Lev 23:11). The morning of the ultimate "First Fruits." When did the Flood of Noah end? When did the Flood end?

*And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*

Genesis 8:4

## The Two Calendars

*Rosh HaShana* (in the Fall): "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

Exodus 12:2

## The Feasts of Israel

### The Spring Feasts (1<sup>st</sup> Month: Nisan)

- Passover
- Feast of Unleavened Bread
- Feast of First Fruits

### The Fall Feasts (7<sup>th</sup> Month: Tishri)

- Feast of Trumpets
- Yom Kippur
- Feast of Tabernacles

### Feast of *Shavout*

- "Counting the Omer" (49 days)
- Only use of *Leavened Bread*.
- Prophetic: The Birth of the Church
- Acts 2: Feast of Pentecost

### The Mystery of Enoch

- Oldest Prophecy: 2nd Coming of Christ
- Born on *Shavout*
- Removed prior to the judgment

- on his birthday?
- Will the Jewish "clock" restart on the same feast day that it was stopped?

## Feast of Trumpets

- Coincident with *Rosh HaShanna*
- *Teki'ah Gedolah*, The Great Blowing
- "Last Trump?"
- vs. "Seventh Trumpet Judgment?"
- *Followed by Yomim Noraim*, Days of Affliction

## Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement

- Day of national repentance
- High Priest enters the Holy of Holies
- The Scapegoat

## Sukkot: Feast of Booths

- Feast of Tabernacles
- Cf. Transfiguration?
- Leave their temporary dwellings for their permanent ones. 1 Cor 5:2?

## The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles was so called because the Israelites, after the fall harvest (Lev 23:39), were to live for one week in tabernacles or "booths" (Lev 23:42) constructed of tree branches and foliage (Lev. 23:40). It was also called the "Feast of Ingathering" (Ex 23:16; 34:22). It began on the 15th day of the seventh month (Lev 23:34, 39), the month of Tishri (September-October). The fact that it was called "the Lord's Feast of Tabernacles" (Lev 23:29), and also simply "*the* feast" (Ezek 45:25) may indicate that this autumn festival became the greatest of the three Israelite pilgrim feasts.

- 13] Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:
- 14] And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within thy gates.
- 15] Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.

Joy was to characterize this festival, which was also true of the Feast of Weeks (vv. 10-11). The people were to be joyful in God's provision, but also



(as Lev 23:42-43 indicates) they were to rejoice in their deliverance from Egypt. The week of living in booths was to recall the journey through the desert after the nation had come out of Egypt. Thus the autumn festival celebrated the formation of the nation through God's grace and His continuing support of her, right up to the moment of the festival.

- 16] Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:
- 17] Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

In a summary Moses reminded the Israelite men of their obligation to go three times a year to appear before the Lord. This did not mean, of course, that a man's family members were not to take part in the feasts. The ideal was for all family members—along with servants, Levites, aliens, the fatherless and widows—to join in the celebration (cf. vv. 11, 14). Each man was to bring a gift because the keynote of each of the festivals was the joyful expression of thanks for God's rich spiritual and material blessings experienced in the past and the present. The gifts to the Lord were to be proportionate to the people's blessings (cf. v. 17; 15:14).

## Appointed Times (Leviticus 23)

*The Jew's catechism is his calendar.*

Samson Raphael Hirsch

### The Heptadic Calendar

- The Week of Days      *Shabbat*
- The Week of Weeks    *Shavout*
- The Week of Months    The Religious Year
- The Week of Years      The Sabbatical Year
- Seven Weeks + 1        The Jubilee Year
  - All land reverts to its owners
  - All slaves go free
  - All debts forgiven
  - “The time of the restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21)

*And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*

Genesis 1:14

“seasons”: הַמּוֹעֲדִים “the appointed times”

- Statistical expectation: 5 times in the 78,064 letters of Genesis;

- As an *equidistant letter sequence*, it appears **only once** in Genesis;
- At an interval of 70;
- It is centered on Genesis 1:14.
- Odds against this by unaided chance have been estimated at greater than *70,000,000 to one*.

- 18] Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.
- 19] Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

The preceding sections were mainly concerned with laws related to the worship of the Lord by His people. This next section (16:18-18:22) deals with the responsibilities of the officials to maintain pure worship within the Promised Land and to administer justice impartially. In the wilderness Moses at first had been the only judge of the people. But when the judicial burden became too great for him he appointed “leading men” of the tribes as military leaders, officials, and judges (1:15-18). So the judges appointed in each city were probably taken from that city's council of elders (the elders functioned as a judicial body; cf. Deut 19:12).

These leaders were to judge the people fairly (lit., “righteously”; cf. 1:17; Prov 18:5; 24:23). Their verdicts were to conform to the righteous standards set forth in the Word of God (The *Torah* at that time). They were not to pervert justice. This implies that God had given them a heavenly pattern for their actions toward each other. If their actions did not conform to this pattern, those actions were to be changed or punished. Any nonconformity to the pattern of justice was a perversion.

- 20] That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
- 21] Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee.
- 22] Neither shalt thou set thee up *any* image; which the LORD thy God hateth.

Moses summed up the requirements for the judges and officials with an emphatic command to follow justice and justice alone (lit., “righteousness, righteousness you must pursue!”). These words imply that impartial justice could be an elusive goal because of the weakness of human nature. Therefore it was absolutely essential that the standard set forth in the Law be followed precisely. Their lives and prosperity depended on their establishing impartial justice in the Promised Land.

# The Book of Deuteronomy

## Session 8

### Chapters 17 - 18

### Deuteronomy 17

The first responsibility of the judges was to prevent impure worshiping practices in the land. Anything that might lead to syncretism (*accommodating* worship of the Lord to pagan systems of worship) was prohibited. This included any wooden Asherah pole (symbolic of Asherah, goddess of fertility and consort of Baal) or a sacred stone, a stone pillar symbolic of male fertility (cf. 7:5; 12:3; Ex 34:13).

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What is the secret which ensures Israel's prosperity? Is it effective *today*?
- 2) Make a composite chart of the seven Feasts of Israel, highlighting their prophetic as well as their commemorative aspects.
- 3) Which three feasts were *compulsory*? Why?

### Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) What are the dangers involved in being excessive thrifty and tightfisted?
- 2) Which of the feasts of Israel is prophetic of the "Second Coming"? Of the "Rapture" of the Church? Why?
- 3) Are the "Bible Codes" really valid? Which ones? Which ones are not? How do you know?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compare the Biblical debt forgiveness laws with the bankruptcy laws today.
- 2) Explore the alternative methods of establishing the Jubilee Year *today*.

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 17 - 18.

Purity of Worship	Verses 1-4
Rules of Evidence	Verses 5-13
The King	Verses 14-20

- 1] Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God *any* bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, *or* any evilfavouredness: for that *is* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.
- 2] If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant,

To take a defective sacrifice to the Lord (Deut 17:1; cf. 15:21) was to bring something into the sanctuary that was foreign to the worship of God, just as Asherah poles and sacred stones were foreign to genuine worship. Such a sacrifice was detestable to the Lord. To offer less than the best to God was to "despise" His name (Mal 1:6-8). Offering a less-than-perfect sacrifice was, in effect, failing to acknowledge Him as the ultimate Provider of all that is best in life. Also it was a failure to acknowledge the vast gulf that exists between the perfectly holy God and sinful people. The priests were normally responsible to maintain pure worship at the sanctuary (i.e., no fertility symbols or defective sacrifices), but the ultimate responsibility rested with the judges. If the priests failed, it was necessary for the judges to intervene.

- 3] And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;
- 4] And it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it*, and enquired diligently, and, behold, *it be true*, *and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought in Israel:

The judges were also to see that false worshipers were executed. One who worshiped other gods deserved capital punishment because his act threatened the nation's very existence. Astral worship was also forbidden (cf. 4:19) for it honored inanimate creation rather than the living Creator. The execution could take place only after it had been proved by a thorough investigation.

## 10 Questions for Astrologers

- 1) What is the likelihood that 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the world's population is having the same kind of day today?
  - 2) Why is the moment of birth, not conception, crucial for astrology? Is that why identical twins always have the same personality?!
  - 3) If the mother's womb can keep out astrological influences until birth, can we do the same with a slab of steak?
  - 4) If astrologers are as good as they claim, why aren't they richer? (e.g.: stock market, etc. How many foresaw Black Monday, October 1987? None.)
  - 5) Are all horoscopes done before the discovery of the three outer most planets incorrect? (Uranus, 1781; Neptune, 1846; Pluto, 1930.)
  - 6) Shouldn't we condemn astrology as a form of bigotry? (i.e., refusing to hire a Leo or date a Virgo, etc.)
  - 7) Why do different schools of astrology disagree so strongly with each other? No convergence of consensus.
    - Precession of the Earth's axis.
    - How many planets and celestial objects to be included.
    - Allocation of personality traits, etc.
  - 8) If the astrological influence is carried by any known force, why do the planets dominate? [The obstetrician who delivers the child turns out to have about six times the gravitational pull of Mars and about 2,000 billion times its tidal force (less mass, but a lot closer!).]
  - 9) If astrological influence is carried by an unknown force, why is it *independent of distance*? The importance of Mars in a horoscope is identical whether the planet is on the same side of the sun as the Earth or seven times farther away on the other side, etc.
  - 10) If astrological influences don't depend on distance, why is there no astrology of stars, galaxies, and quasars? Doesn't the omission of Rigel, the Crab pulsar, and M31 render a horoscope incomplete?
- 5] Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even* that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.
- 6] At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.
- To insure against a capricious execution two or three independent witnesses were required. One witness was inadequate (cf. 19:15) because if he lied no one would be able to prove or disprove it.
- 7] The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

The witnesses were to be the first in the execution. So if their testimony was later proved false, they in effect would have committed murder and *would be liable to execution*. The whole community (all the people) would then join in the execution, thereby demonstrating their rejection of other gods (17:3) and their commitment to the Lord. Such idolatry was an evil to be purged from the people (cf. v. 12). New Testament churches have a similar responsibility to keep themselves pure. A Christian offender should be "cut off" from his local church's fellowship if a thorough investigation proves his sin and he is unwilling to repent of it. If he is a genuine believer he will not lose eternal life. But he will suffer loss on earth and receive less reward in heaven (Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 5; 1 Tim 5:19).

- 8] If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, *being* matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose;

Moses made a provision for future judges in the Promised Land similar to that provided for judges in the time of the wilderness wanderings (1:17). If a judge felt a case was too difficult for him to decide, he could take it to a central tribunal (consisting of priests and the officiating chief judge) to be established at the future site of the central sanctuary (the place the Lord would choose).

- 9] And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment:
- 10] And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee:

The decisions of the tribunal would be final. Any rebellion against the tribunal was considered "contempt of court" and was a capital offense. This made the rule of justice paramount in the land and helped prevent anarchy.

- 11] According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, *to* the right hand, nor *to* the left.
- 12] And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.
- 13] And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

There apparently were no prisons in ancient Israel.

## The King: Deuteronomy 17:14-20

After Moses and Joshua died, the people were to be governed by judges and priests. However, this system did not provide Israel with any semblance of a strong central government. It could only work if the leaders (the judges and the priests) *and* the people were committed to following the Lord. The Book of Judges records the sad failure of the people and the leaders in this system. Moses anticipated that failure by including this law in reference to the future king. One may ask why God allowed the priests and judges to fail. Or why did not God institute the monarchy immediately? The answer, at least partly, is that He was preparing the nation to appreciate the gift of the monarchy.

- 14] When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me;
- 15] Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

After Israel could no longer tolerate her unique position of being without a king, she would ask for and receive a king. Verses 14-15 speak of the king's qualifications, verses 16-17 of his behavior, and verses 18-20 of his education. The king was to have two qualifications:

**1) He had to be chosen by the Lord.** Later history made it clear that prophets, speaking on God's behalf, would declare His choice (e.g., Samuel's support for Saul, 1 Sam 9-12, and then for David, 1 Sam 16; Nathan's support of Solomon, 1 Kgs 1). The people could be sure that God would place no one on the throne whom He had not gifted to be king. Therefore if a king failed, the reason for his failure would not lie in his lack of ability but in his moral life.

**2) The king must be an Israelite.** An Israelite raised from childhood in the traditions and Scripture of Israel would be a far better choice than a foreigner to protect the purity of Israel's religion. (Herod would be an Edomite appointed by Rome.)

- 16] But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.
- 17] Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

Three things about the behavior of the king were singled out:

**1) The prohibition against acquiring great numbers of horses.** On human terms the king's army would be significantly weaker than an enemy's army with many chariots and cavalry. Yet this was precisely the point: to depend not on military strength but on the Lord alone. God had already demonstrated His ability to crush a large superior chariot army (Ex 14-15). Acquiring horses would mean the people would be going to Egypt, where many were available. Returning to the nation's former land of slavery was unthinkable.

**2) The prohibition against taking many wives** was given because many kings married foreign women to form political alliances. If the king followed the Lord he would not need political alliances. Also foreign wives would cause his heart to be led astray to worship their idols.

**3) The prohibition against large amounts of silver and gold** was intended to keep the king from developing a sense of independence and a lust for material wealth (cf. Prov 30:8-9). All three prohibitions, then, were designed to reduce the king to the status of a servant totally dependent on his Master, the Lord. The tragedy of ignoring these commands is seen in Solomon who broke all three prohibitions (1 Kgs 10:14-15, 23, 26-28; 11:1-6).

- 18] And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites:
- 19] And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

The *education* of a king consisted of his copying, reading, and following carefully the Law and these decrees, that is, the entire Book of Deuteronomy (not just this small section of vv. 14-20). This would insure a right spirit within the king (i.e., humility and obedience) and a long dynastic succession.

- 20] That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

## Deuteronomy 18

Priests and Levites	Verses 1-8
Occult Practices	Verses 9-14
The Prophets	Verses 15-22



## The Priests and Levites (18:1-8)

The tribe of Levi was divided into three families (Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites). Each division originally had different responsibilities regarding the tabernacle (Num 3-4). The Kohathites were further divided into those who were descendants of Aaron and those who were not (Josh 21:4-5). Only the descendants of Aaron were permitted to serve as priests (Num 3:10). They are generally referred to as “the priests” or “the sons of Aaron” (Num 10:8). The rest of the tribe, those not serving as priests, were designated as Levites. Thus priests were a minority in the tribe of Levi.

The Levites served as ministers to the priests (Num 18:1-7; 1 Chr 23:28-32), and in general as teachers of the Law in Israel (Deut 33:10a; 2 Chr 17:8-9). The priests officiated at the tabernacle and also had other duties. They served as judges (Deut. 17:8-9), guardians of the scroll of the Law (17:18; 31:9), teachers of regulations concerning skin diseases (24:8), and assistants to Moses in the covenant renewal ceremony (27:9).

- 1] The priests the Levites, *and* all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance.
- 2] Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD *is* their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

Unlike the other 11 tribes, none of the Levites including the priests was given an allotment of land to settle and cultivate. However, 48 cities were set aside for the Levites (Num 35:1-8; Josh 21:1-42). The priests (and the Levites who assisted them at the central sanctuary) were to be sustained by the people’s offerings made to the Lord. The Levites who did not assist at the central sanctuary were to be sustained by gifts from the people (Deut 14:28-29; 16:10-11).

- 3] And this shall be the priest’s due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether *it be* ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.
- 4] The firstfruit *also* of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

The people were responsible for supporting the priests who officiated at the central sanctuary. The priests were to receive parts of bulls and sheep that were sacrificed, the firstfruits of grain, new wine, and oil, and the first wool. This was because God had chosen Aaron and his descendants out of all the tribes to stand and minister in the Lord’s name, that is, on His behalf.

- 5] For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever.
- 6] And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose;

The New Testament broadened the priesthood to include all Christians (1 Pet 2:9). The reason for this is that Jesus Christ by virtue of His ministry, death, and resurrection superseded the Aaronic priesthood of the Old (Mosaic) Covenant and became the High Priest of the New Covenant (Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-5:10; 6:19-7:28). Every Christian has come into the family of Jesus (Heb 2:10-13) and therefore into Jesus’ priestly line.

- 7] Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites *do*, which stand there before the LORD.
- 8] They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

If a Levite wanted to go to the central sanctuary to minister there in the Lord’s name (on His behalf), he was permitted to do so and to receive equal support along with the other Levites. This does not imply that this Levite would minister as a priest as some have suggested. The Levites were to *assist* the priests (1 Chr 23:28-32). Even though a Levite had received money from the prior sale of his family possessions (cf. Lev 25:32-34) before moving to Jerusalem, he was to receive support for his work at the sanctuary. Paul restated this principle for the New Testament church (1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:17-18).

- 9] When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

**Dark Practices:** In these verses all the forbidden practices—called detestable ways (cf. v. 12) of the nations in the land—dealt with either foretelling the future or magic. By the use of magic one attempted to manipulate or force the “gods” into certain courses of action. Child sacrifice was mentioned here because it was used either as a means of foretelling or as magic to manipulate certain events.

The practices mentioned in verses 9-14 have led many into *satanic bondage*. [Anecdotal examples: William Blatty’s, *The Exorcist*; UFO abductions, et al. . . ] Such detestable practices were one reason the Lord used Israel to destroy the Canaanites. Therefore it was understandably detestable for an Israelite to become involved in those things.

## Dangers of the Occult

The future was “determined” by one’s moral behavior, not by magical manipulation. Using magic to manipulate one’s circumstances was in essence a futile attempt to flee from the Lord’s ethical laws which promoted life and blessing. The use of magic and divination was a denial of the sovereignty of the Lord. Reliance on these practices indicated a corresponding failure to trust the Lord with one’s life. All these practices are forbidden because they divorce life from morality.

- 10] There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,
- 11] Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

Divination (vv. 10, 14), from the verb *qasam*, “to divide,” means to give false prophecy or seek to determine the will of the gods by examining and interpreting omens. (*Qasam* is also used in Josh 13:22; 1 Sam 6:2; 28:8; 2 Kgs 17:17; Isa 3:2; 44:25; Jer 27:9; 29:8; Ezek 13:6, 9, 23; 21:21, 23, 29; 22:28; Mic 3:6-7, 11; Zech 10:2.) Sorcery (‘*anan*, Deut 18:10, 14; cf. Lev 19:26; 2 Kgs 21:6; Isa 2:6; Mic 5:12, “cast spells”) is the attempt to control people or circumstances through power given by evil spirits (demons).

To interpret omens is to tell the future based on “signs” such as the movements of birds, fire, or rain. Witchcraft (*kasapl*) involves practicing magic by incantations. One who casts spells is literally “one who ties knots” (*hòablar*), thus one who binds other people by magical mutterings. A spiritualist is one who supposedly communicates with the dead but who actually communicates with demons. One who consults the dead may mean the spiritist’s attempt to contact the dead to gain advice, information on the future, or help in manipulation.

- 12] For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.
- 13] Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.
- 14] For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.
- 15] The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;
- 16] According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.
- 17] And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that* which they have spoken.

## The Prophets

In contrast with the dark magic of Canaanite diviners, witches, and spiritists, Israelites were to listen to the Lord’s prophet. The Israelites could be sure that a “line of prophets” would follow in succession after Moses because of their original request at Horeb (Sinai) that God speak to them through Moses as a mediator (cf. 5:23-27). Each prophet God would raise up would be an Israelite, and because the true prophet would only speak the words of the Lord, the people were obligated to obey (listen to) those words.

The ultimate Prophet like Moses (18:15, 18) is Jesus Christ—the One who spoke God’s words and who provides deliverance for His people. Not even Joshua could be compared to Moses, for since Moses “no prophet has risen in Israel like” him (34:10) with such power before men and intimacy with God. However distinguished a future prophet’s role might be in Israel, none would be like Moses until the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, came. Moses set the standard for every future prophet. Each prophet was to do his best to live up to the example of Moses until the One came who would introduce the New Covenant. During the first century a.d. the official leaders of Judaism were still looking for the fulfillment of Moses’ prediction (cf. Jn 1:21). Peter said their search should have stopped with the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:22-23). (Other early and clear predictions of the Messiah may be found in Gen 49:10-12; Num 24:17-19.)

- 18] I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.
- 19] And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.

The Prophet of Moses: expected during John 1.

## Three Expected

*And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.*

Jn 1:19-21

- 20] But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21] And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

Since the people were to obey God's prophet without question (v. 19), to prophesy falsely was in effect to usurp the place of God. For this the false prophet was to be put to death. Two tests could be used to determine whether a prophet was speaking God's words. First, the prophet's message had to be in accordance with God and His Word. If he spoke in the name of (on behalf of) other gods then he contradicted the objectively revealed Word of God and was therefore a false prophet (cf. 13:1-5). Second, his prophecy must come true. If neither of these conditions was met, then no matter how powerful the would-be prophet seemed to be, the people were not to be afraid of him or of any reprisals he might predict against them.

22] When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

### “The Prophet of Moses”

- Was spared in infancy Ex 2; Mt 2:13-23
- Renounced a royal court Heb 11:24-27; Phil 2:5-8
- Had compassion for the people Num 27:17; Mt 9:36
- Made intercession Deut 9:18; Heb 7:25
- Spoke with God face to face Ex 34:29-30; 2 Cor 3:7
- Was mediator of a covenant Deut 29:1; Heb 8:6,7
  - Greatest revelation of their respective testaments; cf. Mt 21:11; Lk 7:16; Jn 5:46; Acts 3:22; 7:37; Heb 3:2-6

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What is a defective sacrifice? Give examples.
- 2) What is astral worship? Give current examples.
- 3) Why were witnesses against an accused the first to throw stones?
- 4) How could Moses prescribe procedures concerning a monarchy centuries before Israel had a king?
- 5) Why was the accumulation of horses considered prohibited?
- 6) What were the specific duties of the three families of the tribe of Levi?

- 7) Compare and contrast the priesthoods of Aaron, Melchizedek, Christ, and ourselves.
- 8) Who were the three personages that were expected when John the Baptist made his initial appearances? Why?
- 9) List the factors that would identify Moses as a prophet.
- 10) How does one “test” a prophet today?

### Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Is Astrology dangerous? Why?
- 2) Is capital punishment appropriate today? Justify your answer.
- 3) Are the courts, and their associated procedures, effective today?
- 4) Ancient Israel had no prisons. What does that suggest about our current practices?
- 5) Discuss the role of magic and the occult today. Can people really “cast spells”?
- 6) What is the difference between divination and statistical forecasting of markets, etc.?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Study the role of the “wooden chambers” (personal storerooms) of the priests. What do they signify in terms of the architecture of the Temple?
- 2) Compile a list of occult practices evident in our society today.

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 19 & 20, and the Book of Ruth.

# The Book of Deuteronomy

## Session 9

### Chapters 19 - 20

#### The Torah

Genesis	The Book of Beginnings
Exodus	The Birth of the Nation
Leviticus	The Law of the Nation
Numbers	The Wilderness Wanderings
<b>Deuteronomy</b>	<b>The Laws Reviewed</b>

#### Background

- Redemption Ex 1-19
- Instruction, for worship Ex 20-Num 10
- Failure (38 yrs for 11 day journey) Num 10:11-22:1
- Conquests E of Jordan Num 22-36
- Relationship Deuteronomy

#### Basic Message

- God has not changed since then
- Man has not changed since then
- Basic Message: Love
  - Not do's and don'ts; not legalism
  - Relationship
- Jesus fulfills (Deut 18:15-19; Jn 1:21; 6:14; 7:40; Mt 22:35-40; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-28)

Love for man was initiated by God; it did not come as a response to human activity. God's love for Israel began with His choice of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob... They were expected to respond with wholehearted love and devotion, tapping all the resources of their being: heart, soul, strength, and mind—exclusively. No other gods allowed or tolerated in the relationship.

#### Outline

- Moses' 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon 1:1-4:43
- **Moses' 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon 4:44-28:68**
- Moses' 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon 29:1-30:20
- Moses' Last Days 31:1-34:12

#### “The Prophet of Moses”

- Was spared in infancy Ex 2; Mat 2:13-23
- Renounced a royal court Heb 11:24-27; Phil 2:5-8
- Had compassion for the people Num 27:17; Mt 9:36
- Made intercession Deut 9:18; Heb 7:25
- Spoke with God face to face Ex 34:29-30; 2 Cor 3:7
- Was mediator of a covenant Deut 29:1; Heb 8:6,7
  - Greatest revelation of their respective testaments (Cf. Mt 21:11; Lk 7:16; Jn 5:46; Acts 3:22; 7:37; Heb 3:2-6)

Deuteronomy:	1-4	Failure
	5-11	Mutual Love
	<b>12-27</b>	<b>Obligations of a God-related people</b>
	27-30	Alternatives for a God-related people
	31-33	Arrangements for continuity

## Deuteronomy 19

### The Cities of Refuge; The Goel; Lex Talionis

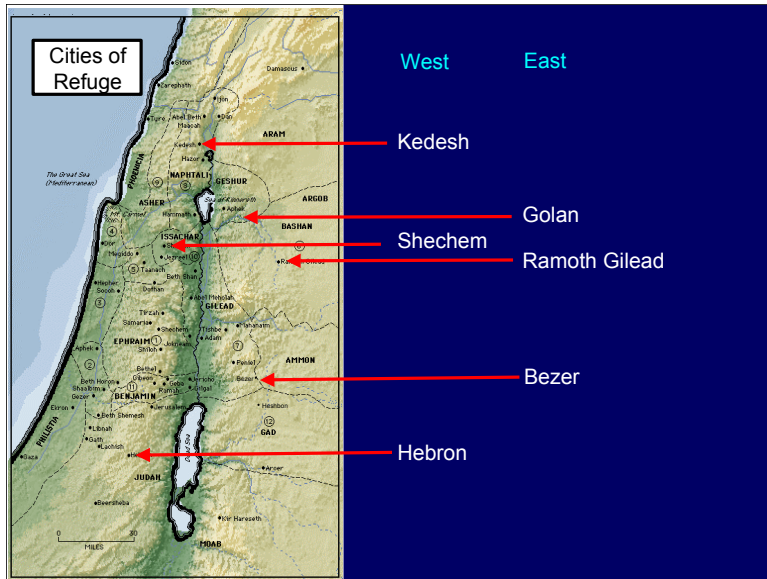
#### Anticipations for Settlement

- Decentralization of administration of justice.
  - Under Moses, the altar became an asylum for someone who killed another person accidentally (Ex 21:24-14).
  - (Even the slaying of animals was now decentralized) Deut 12:15.
  - So, too, the law of asylum for geographical practicality...
- 1] When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses;
  - 2] Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.
  - 3] Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither.

#### Three Cities of Refuge for Manslaughter (19:1-13)

Moses had previously set aside three cities in the Transjordan (4:41-43). Since he knew that the Lord would not let him cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land with Israel, he now instructed the nation to set aside three more cities of refuge in accord with God's original instruc-





tions (Num 35:9-34). The cities of refuge were to be equally spaced throughout the land (build roads to them and divide into three parts the land) so that they might be easily reached by anyone who kills a man. The word translated “kills” (*rasàahò*; cf. Ex 20:13) means “to take life without legal sanction.” It could refer to murder when life was taken intentionally or to manslaughter done unintentionally. Forty-eight cities were assigned to the Levites: 13 were for the family of Aaron; 9 were in Judah; 4 were in Benjamin; and, 6 were cities of refuge.

The Levitical cities were to have a space of 1,000 cubits (583 yards) beyond the city walls for pasture and other purposes (Num 35:4,5). Their sacred boundary was a square, having its four angles at the four cardinal points (*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, Oct. 1874 ).

## Cities of Refuge

- Kedesh (Naphtali)
- Shechem (Mt. Ephraim)
- Hebron (Judah)
- Bezer (Reuben)
- Ramoth (Gad)
- Golan (Manasseh)

The cities on each side of the Jordan were nearly opposite one another (Deut 19:2; Num 35:6,13,15; Josh 20:2,7,9). See map above. If manslayers

had been driven out of the country as among the Greeks, they would have been exposed to the temptation of worshipping strange gods (1 Sam 26:19).

Everything was to be done to facilitate the flight of the manslayer, lest the avenger of blood; i.e., the Goel, nearest of kin, should pursue him with hot heart, and, overtaking him, should smite him mortally. Upon reaching the city he was to be received by the elders and his case heard. If this was satisfactory, they gave him asylum until a regular trial could be carried out.

They then took him to the city or district from which he had fled, and there, among those who knew him, witnesses were examined. If it were proved that he was not a willful slayer, that he had no grudge against the person killed, and had shown no sign of purpose to injure him, then he was declared innocent and conducted back to the city in which he had taken refuge, *where he must stay until the death of the high priest*. Then he was free to return home in safety. Until that event he must on no account go beyond the city boundaries. If he did, the avenger of blood might slay him without blame. On the other hand, if he were found guilty of deliberate murder, there was no more protection for him. He was handed over to the avenger of blood who, with his own hand, took the murderer’s life.

## Kedesh: “Holy”

- Kedesh Naphtali, or Kedesh in Galilee (Josh 19:37).
- Levitical city of refuge assigned to the Gershonite Levites (Josh 20:7).
- Barak’s birthplace where he and Deborah assembled Zebulun and Naphtali (Judg 4:6,9,10).
- When the Assyrians invaded the land under Tiglath-pileser, it was among the first cities to be captured, and its inhabitants were deported (2 Kgs 15:29)
- Not to be confused with Kadesh-Barnea in the south...

## Shechem: “Shoulder”

- Here God appeared to Abraham and he pitched his tent and built an altar under the oak of Moreh (Gen 12:6).
- Jacob reentered the promised land and “bought a parcel of a field where he had spread his tent,” from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father (Gen 33:18,19).
- Bequeathed subsequently to Joseph (Gen 48:22; Josh 24:32; Jn 4:5).
- Joshua gave his farewell charge (Josh 24:1-25).

- Joseph was buried there (Josh 24:32; Acts 7:16).
- At Shechem Rehoboam was made king by Israel (1 Kgs 12:1).
- Here, the Israelites revolted to Jeroboam, who made Shechem his capital.
- Shechem was for a time Ephraim's civil capital as Shiloh was its religious capital (Judg 9:2; 21:19; Josh 24:1,25,26; 1 Kgs 12:1).
- Present day Nablus. Vespasian named it Neapolis; coins are extant with its name, "Flavia Neapolis"; now Nablus by corruption.

## Hebron: "Alliance, Fellowship"

- Earlier name: Kirjath-Arba (Gen 23:2 Josh 14:15 15:3).
- Favorite home of Abraham:
  - Pitched his tent under the oaks of Mamre.
  - From here he went to the rescue of Lot and brought him back after the defeat of Chedorlaomer (Gen 14:13).
  - Here his name was changed to Abraham (Gen 17:5).
  - Here the Lord and 2 angels gave the promise of a son (Gen 18:1f).
  - Here Sarah was buried in the cave of Machpelah purchased from Ephron the Hittite (Gen 23:17-20).
- It was taken by Joshua and given to Caleb (Josh 10:36,37 12:10 14:13).
- When David became king of Judah this was his royal residence
  - He resided here for 7 1/2 years (2 Sam 5:5).
  - Here he was anointed as king over all Israel (2 Sam 2:1-4, 11 1 Kgs 2:11).
- It also became the residence of the rebellious Absalom who expected to find his chief support in the tribe of Judah (2 Sam 15:10).

Hebron is one of the most ancient cities of the world, rivaling Damascus. The third resting place of Abram; Shechem was the first, Bethel the second. It is a city in the south end of the valley of Eshcol, about midway between Jerusalem and Beersheba, from which it is distant about 20 miles in a straight line. Hebron would appear to have been the original name of the city, and it was not till after Abraham's stay there that it received the name Kirjath-arba.

"Arba was a great man among the Anakims, father of Anak." Cf. Josh 21:11; Judg 1:10. (*Arba* was not the founder but the conqueror of the city, having led thither the tribe of the **Anakim**, to which he belonged). It retained this name till it came into the possession of Caleb, when the Israelites restored the original name Hebron (Keil, Commentary). It is found about 40 times in the OT. Caleb drove out from Hebron the "three sons of Anak" (Josh 14:12; 15:14); it became one of the cities of Judah (Josh 15:54). One of Samson's exploits was the carrying of the gate of Gaza "to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron" (Judg 16:3).

David, when a fugitive, received kindness from the people of this city (1 Sam 30:31); here Abner was treacherously slain by Joab at the gate (2 Sam 3:27), and the sons of Rimmon, after their hands and feet had been cut off, were hanged "beside the pool" (2 Sam 4:12).

After the death of Saul, David was here anointed king (2 Sam 5:3) and reigned in Hebron until he captured Jerusalem and made that his capital (2 Sam 5:5); while here, six sons were born to him (2 Sam 3:2). In this city Absalom found a center for his disaffection, and repairing there under pretense of performing a vow to Yahweh, he raised the standard of revolt (2 Sam 15:7 f).

## Bezer: "Fortress"

- A city of the Reubenites (Deut 4:43; Josh 20:8).
- Assigned by lot to the children of Merari of the Levite tribe (Josh 21:36; 1 Chr 6:63,78).
- It has been identified with the modern ruined village of Burazin, some 12 miles north of Heshbon.

Heshbon was a city ruled over by Sihon, king of the Amorites (Jos 3:10; 13:17). It was taken by Moses (Num 21:23-26) and became afterwards a Levitical city (Josh 21:39) in the tribe of Reuben (Num 32:37). It lay on the southern border of Gad (Josh 13:26) and is reckoned among the cities of Gad given to the Merarite Levites (Josh 21:39). In later literature (Isa 15:4; 16:8 f; Jer 48:2,34,45; 49:3) it is referred to as a city of Moab. It passed again into Jewish hands, and is mentioned by Josephus (Ant., XIII, xv, 4) as among their possessions in the country of Moab under Alexander Jannaeus. The city with its district called Hesebonitis, was also under the jurisdiction of Herod the Great (Ant., XV, vii, 5, where it is described as lying in the Peraea). It is represented by the modern Chesban, a ruined site in the mountains over against Jericho, about 16 miles East of the Jordan.

## Ramoth-Gilead: "Heights"

- Here Ahab, who joined Jehoshaphat in an endeavour to rescue it from the hands of the king of Syria, was mortally wounded (1 Kgs 22:1-36).
- A similar attempt was made by Ahaziah and Joram, when the latter was wounded (2 Kgs 8:28).
- In this city Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, was anointed by one of the sons of the prophets (2 Kgs 9:1,4).

## Golan: “Exile”

- A city of Bashan (Deut 4:43).
- Assigned with its “suburbs” to the Gershonite Levites (Josh 21:27; 1 Chr 6:71).
- Og united principalities that were before distinct.
- Golan was destroyed by Alexander. It had already given its name to a large district, Gaulonitis
  - It formed the eastern boundary of Galilee.
  - It was part of the Tetrarchy of Philip *Ant.*, XVII, viii, 1; XVIII, iv, 6.

Golan was one of the three cities of refuge east of Jordan, about 12 miles NE of the Sea of Galilee (Josh 20:8). There are no further notices of it in Scripture. After the Babylonian captivity, four provinces of Bashan became distinct: Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Batanaea.

## Are the Cities of Refuge a Type of Christ?

*Everything*—even in the *Torah*—points to Jesus Christ. Every “jot and tittle.” Was the death of Jesus premeditated or manslaughter?

- From God’s point of view: (Acts 2:23). Premeditated; 1st degree.
- From man’s point of view (ours); (Lk 23:34). Thus, manslaughter..

He, indeed, is our “city of refuge.” No one can touch us as long as we abide in Him. This was to endure *until the High Priest died*. (What has *that* got to do with anything? Why should the death of an official in far off Jerusalem have any impact on a fugitive in one of the six designated cities?) Then, however, the accused was free, indeed.

And so are *we*. And our High Priest “*ever liveth to make intercession*” for us! (Heb 7:25). “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 Jn 2:1).”

## Similarities

- Wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).
- God’s appointed refuge (Acts 4:12).
- Easy reach; “way” (Deut 19:3).
- Open to all (Rev 22:17).
- Doors never locked
- Stocked with provisions
- No other help available (Heb 10:28-29).
- *Until* the death of the High Priest (Heb 7:23-27).

## Differences:

- Only innocent saved; we know we’re guilty!
- Christ is more available (Jn 6:37; Rev 3:20 Heb 6:16-20; Acts 3:12-18; Lk 23:34; 1 Cor 2:7-8).

## Cities of Refuge

- Kedesh: *righteousness* (we never can be accused again).
- Shechem: *shoulder* (like a shepherd, He carries us...).
- Hebron: *fellowship* (we enter into fellowship with Him).
- Bezer: *fortress; strong* (He is our fortress; we are safe).
- Ramoth: *heights* (we dwell in the heights, even though...)
- Golan: *exile* (...we are exiles, pilgrims, strangers to this world).

\* \* \*

- 4] And this *is* the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past;
- 5] As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:

These cities were to be “set aside” (v. 2) to prevent any further calamity from arising from a tragic situation. Only a person who killed his neighbor unintentionally, without malice (v. 4) could flee to one of these cities and save his life (v. 5). These cities offered protection from an avenger of blood. The word translated “avenger of blood” is was essentially a “family protector.” He was a “near kinsman” responsible for redeeming (buying) a relative out of slavery (Lev 25:48-49), for redeeming a relative’s property (Lev 25:26-33), for marrying a relative’s widow and raising up children in the name of the deceased (Ruth 3:13; 4:5-10), and for avenging the death of a relative (Num 35:19-28).

## The Goel (Ruth 2-4)

The Kinsman-Redeemer redeems the land inheritance and performs the Levirate Marriage. He must be: a kinsman, willing, able to assume all obligations of the beneficiary, and be the Avenger of Blood.

- 6] Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he *was* not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.
- 7] Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee.

One who killed his neighbor unintentionally (e.g., by an ax head that accidentally flew off the handle and hit and killed his neighbor) had to stay in the city of refuge until the death of the current high priest. The elders of that city were obligated to protect him from the avenger of blood (Num 35:25). If the person guilty of manslaughter left the city before the high priest's death then the avenger could kill him "without being guilty of murder" (Num 35:27). The cities of refuge taught Israel how important life is to God. Even though a man had killed his neighbor accidentally he still had to give up a large measure of his freedom for an extended period of time.

- 8] And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers;
- 9] If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

If the Israelites had been faithful in following the Lord fully, then He would have enlarged their territory to the boundaries promised in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:18-21). In that case three more cities, a total of nine, would have been needed to prevent the land from being defiled with innocent blood.

The plural of these laws (19:9) is literally, "this command." By using the singular Moses was emphasizing the unity of the Law; it is all one and to be obeyed in its entirety. But he also was pointing to the fundamental requirement of the Law; namely, to love the Lord your God. The Law was given so that Israel might have a means to express her love for Him. In the Church Age Christians express their love for the Lord by obeying Jesus' commands (Jn 14:21).

- 10] That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance, and *so* blood be upon thee.
- 11] But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities:
- 12] Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.
- 13] Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away *the guilt of* innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.

A city of refuge could not provide sanctuary for a murderer. He was to be returned to his town and killed by the avenger of blood (see comments on v. 6). If the nation was to prosper under God's blessing Israel could not show the murderer pity. This sin of shedding innocent blood was to be purged from the nation.

- 14] Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

It is not clear why Moses placed this law about the boundary stone between the legislation about the cities of refuge (vv. 1-13) and the false witnesses (vv. 15-21). Moving a neighbor's boundary stone was equivalent to stealing his property. According to extrabiblical literature this was a widespread problem in the ancient Near East (cf. Job 24:2). Apparently it became widespread in Israel (Deut 27:17; Prov 22:28; 23:10; Hos 5:10).

- 15] One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

Moses laid down the principle that more than one witness was necessary to convict a man of a crime (cf. 17:6). This principle was to act as a safeguard against a false witness who might bring an untruthful charge against a fellow Israelite because of a quarrel or out of some other impure motive. By requiring more than one witness—at least two or three—greater accuracy and objectivity was effected. Cf. Christ's trials...

- 16] If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him *that which is* wrong;
- 17] Then both the men, between whom the controversy *is*, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;
- 18] And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, *if* the witness *be* a false witness, *and* hath testified falsely against his brother;

Inevitably in some cases there would be only one witness. A single witness still was obligated to bring a charge against the offender. However, such a case would be taken to the central tribunal of priests and judges (cf. 17:8-13) for trial. If on investigation the testimony was found to be false then the accuser (a malicious witness, 19:16, and a liar, v. 18) received the punishment appropriate for the alleged crime. When the fate of the false witness became known in Israel it would serve as a great deterrent against giving false testimony in Israel's courts. Violating the ninth commandment (Ex 20:16) was another evil to be purged from the nation (cf. Deut 19:13 and see comments on 13:5). Modern sociological theories which maintain that punishment, particularly capital punishment, does not deter crime contradict the Biblical understanding of human nature.

- 19] Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.



- 20] And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.
- 21] And thine eye shall not pity; *but* life *shall go* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

### **lex talionis**

The law of retribution, known in Latin as the *lex talionis*, was previously given in Exodus 21:23-25 and Leviticus 24:17-22. This law was given to encourage appropriate punishment of a criminal in cases where there might be a tendency to be either too lenient or too strict. The law codes of the ancient Near East did provide for the maiming of a criminal (e.g., gouging out an eye, cutting off a lip, etc.). With one exception (Deut. 25:11-12) Israelite law did not explicitly allow such mutilation. Apart from this one instance, therefore, only the first part of this law, life for life, was applied to indicate that punishment ought to fit the crime (punishment in kind). Thus a slave who lost his eye was freed (Ex 21:26). The *lex talionis* also served as a restraint in cases where the punisher might be inclined to be excessive in administering punishment. Jesus did not deny the validity of this principle for the courtroom, but He denied its usage in personal relationships (Mt 5:38-42). There should be no personal retaliation or revenge.

Law is *law*—we have developed such a careless attitude about it today—but God *enforces* His Law. It was eye for eye, tooth for tooth. How I thank God that Jesus Christ paid the penalty of the Law so that there is pardon for sinners. The *throne of God has become a mercy seat* because Christ died and His blood has been sprinkled there—and that’s the blood of the covenant. God saves us by His grace. We have not kept the Law; we have broken it. We are all guilty before God. Christ paid the penalty; so the requirements of the Law have been fulfilled.

## **Deuteronomy 20**

### **Holy War and Military Service**

- 1] When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, *and* a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
- 2] And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,

Similar principles for battle and legislation on holy war were given earlier (2:24-3:11; 7) and the subject was addressed again later in Moses’ speech (21:10-14; 23:9-14; 24:5; 25:17-19). Israel was never to fear an

enemy’s horses and chariots because the outcome of a battle would never be determined by mere military strength (cf. Isa 31:1-3; Hos 14:3). The command not to be afraid of them was based on the fact of God’s faithfulness. He had already been proved faithful to the nation in bringing her up out of Egypt. In times of adversity believers today ought also to recall God’s past faithfulness to them for this helps alleviate fear in their present circumstances.

- 3] And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;
- 4] For the LORD your God *is* he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

The role of the priest in battle was not only to care for the ark, which symbolized the Lord’s presence with Israel’s army, but also by God’s Word to encourage the soldiers to be strong in faith. A lack of trust in God’s ability to fight for them (cf. 1:30; 3:22) would affect the strength of their will, that is, they could easily become fainthearted. If a weak will was not controlled by faith from the very first, it would lead to fear, terror, and even to panic before their enemies. So if the soldiers failed to listen to the priest they would become fearful and experience defeat.

- 5] And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man *is there* that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.
- 6] And what man *is he* that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not *yet* eaten of it? let him *also* go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

The priests were responsible for encouraging the army by God’s Word (vv. 2-4). The officers were responsible for making sure that the army was composed of qualified men. However, the most qualified were not necessarily those most gifted for battle. They were rather the men most committed to the Lord and free from any distractions that might dampen their spirits for battle. Therefore for humanitarian reasons as well as for the morale of the army anyone who had built a new house and not begun to “use” (this sense of the Heb. word *hòanak* is preferable to “dedicated”) it was granted an exemption. The same exemption was granted to anyone who had planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it. This particular exemption could last up to five years (cf. Lev 19:23-25).

- 7] And what man *is there* that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.
- 8] And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What

man *is there that is* fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

A man engaged to be married was also exempt from military service. The length of the exemption for a newly married man was one year (24:5). These exemptions (20:5-7) bring one of the basic purposes of holy war into sharp focus. Though it was waged as a punishment for the wickedness of the Canaanite population, it was also fought so that Israel might have a land in which to live a stable and peaceful life—building homes, planting crops, and raising families under God's rule. Since God was fighting for Israel it was not necessary for the war to take total priority over all domestic functions.

Whereas the previous exemptions had been granted for compassionate reasons, the exemption of a fainthearted soldier was given for reasons of army morale. Since the best army was the one most committed to the Lord, anything or anyone who might affect the faith and confidence of the Israelite troops was to be removed. Cowardice here was reckoned to be a spiritual problem. Since there was no court-martial, the officers removed a fainthearted soldier before he had opportunity to defect in battle and/or cause other soldiers to become disheartened too. Moses' instruction that the officers appoint commanders over the army implies that Israel's army was not yet permanently organized with officers of every rank.

- 9] And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.  
10] When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.  
11] And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, *that* all the people *that is* found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

Moses then gave instructions for Israel's foreign policy (vv. 10-18). The people at a distance (v. 15) included those nations outside Canaan but within the extensive territory promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 15:18-21). The command make a city's people an offer of peace meant to offer them a vassal treaty. In this way the city acknowledged the sovereignty of Israel's God and of Israel. If a city became a vassal to Israel, then her people were to become forced laborers (cf. Josh 9).

- 12] And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it:  
13] And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:

But if a city refused terms of peace, the men were to be executed and everything else was to be taken as plunder for the Israelites. Apparently then the women and children had opportunity to be introduced to Israel's religion (also see comments under Deut 20:16-18).

- 14] But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, *even* all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.  
15] Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *which are* very far off from thee, which *are* not of the cities of these nations.

The women in the nations mentioned here (i.e., from the Aramean culture) were not as degenerate as those from the Canaanite culture. Also Aramean women adopted the religions of their husbands. Abraham, for example, insisted that his servant get a wife from the Aramean culture for Isaac and not a Canaanite woman (Gen 24). Thus the women and children of those nations could be spared. But one only needs to remember the influence of Jezebel who brought her husband Ahab under the worship of Baal to see the destructive effects of marriage to a Canaanite wife.

- 16] But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee *for* an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

But inside Canaan absolutely nothing was to be spared. Six nations are listed in verse 17 as representing all the nations living in Canaan. These people were so degenerate and committed to evil that unless they were completely destroyed, they could easily influence (teach) the Israelites to follow their detestable ways in idolatry (cf. 18:9-12).

- 17] But thou shalt utterly destroy them; *namely*, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:  
18] That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

The Hittites were from Anatolia (Turkey) but some early migrants had settled in Canaan (e.g., Ephron the Hittite in Gen 23). The Amorites were hill-dwellers). Their origin is uncertain (they are first referred to in ancient texts of the third millennium B.C.). Canaanites was a general term for the inhabitants of Palestine. The Perizzites were perhaps village-dwellers or nomads. The Hivites were possibly in northern Palestine by the Lebanon mountains (Josh 11:3; Judg 3:3). The Jebusites lived in the hill country (Num 13:29) of and around Jebus, later known as Jerusalem (Josh 15:8).

Another nation not mentioned here but included in Deut 7:1 are the Girgashites, whose locality is unknown.

- 19] When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's *life*) to employ *them* in the siege:

In the ancient Near East military powers punished their enemies by indiscriminately laying waste to the land. This practice made no sense in relation to the land of Canaan for it was to become Israel's own possession. Why should Israel cut down trees whose fruit she could eat? And why should trees, that were not men, be besieged? Even in lands outside Canaan the practice was to be avoided because it showed a lack of respect for God's creation and an infatuation with the harsh and excessive use of destructive power.

- 20] Only the trees which thou knowest that they *be* not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the six "cities of refuge" and their locations. Highlight their significance historically.
- 2) In what way do the "cities of refuge" reflect Jesus Christ?
- 3) What are qualifications, obligations and responsibilities of a *Goel*?
- 4) Contrast Luke 4:17-20 with Isaiah 61:1, 2. What does that imply prophetically?
- 5) What were the exemptions from military service in Israel? Contrast them with today.
- 6) How was the genocide within Canaan justified? How does that affect us today?

### Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Discuss *lex talionis* and its role today.

- 2) Discuss the pros and cons of capital punishment.
- 3) Is it appropriate for Christians to bear arms today? Under what circumstances?
- 4) How did Israel's foreign policies contrast with ours today?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Explore the role and *destiny* of the Mercy Seat (and its distinction from the Ark of the Covenant). What is the Scriptural basis for its ostensible current residence in Ethiopia?

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 21 & 22.

## The Book of Deuteronomy

### Session 10

### Chapters 21 - 22

### Deuteronomy 21

This chapter covers unsolved murders, captive war brides, and rebellious sons...

- 1] If *one* be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, *and* it be not known who hath slain him:
- 2] Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which *are* round about him that is slain:

If a man was found slain, either as a result of murder or manslaughter, the elders and judges of the central tribunal (17:8-13) were to summon the elders of the town nearest the body.

- 3] And it shall be, *that* the city *which is* next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, *and* which hath not drawn in the yoke;
- 4] And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley:

With the priests (presumably also from the central tribunal) before them the elders of that town were to break the neck of a young heifer and

declare their innocence. Since the animal was slain in the field, and not at the altar, the sacrifice was not cultic but judicial.

- 5] And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be *tried*:
- 6] And all the elders of that city, *that are* next unto the slain *man*, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley:

Breaking the heifer's neck symbolized that the crime deserved capital punishment, and the washing of the elders' hands over the heifer symbolized their innocence in the matter.

- 7] And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen *it*.
- 8] Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.
- 9] So shalt thou put away the *guilt of* innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do *that which is* right in the sight of the LORD.

This ritual demonstrated how extremely valuable God considers life. For even though no murderer was found, the land and the people both incurred the guilt of shedding innocent blood. The animal sacrifice, accompanied by the petition of the elders, made atonement, that is, turned the wrath of God away from the people.

- 10] When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive,
- 11] And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;
- 12] Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails;

## Family Laws (21:10-21)

An Israelite was permitted to marry a beautiful woman from the captives of a particular battle. This assumes the battle in question was against one of "the cities that are at a distance" (20:15), not a city within the borders of Palestine. Therefore the prospective wife would not have been a Canaanite woman (cf. the prohibition against marrying a Canaanite man or woman, 7:1, 3-4).

If an Israelite soldier genuinely desired one of the captives he could have her only through marriage. This helped protect the dignity of the women captives and the purity of the Israelite soldiers. Israelites were not to

rape, plunder, or otherwise mistreat captives as other armies of the ancient Near East did. The purifications acts were observed to remove her from the status of a slave (Lev 14:8; Num 8:7), and one month was allowed to her for mourning (Num 20:29; Deut 34:8).

- 13] And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.
- 14] And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

A soldier's marriage to a foreign captive could not take place immediately. The prospective wife was first prepared psychologically for her new life as an Israelite. This was accomplished by her shaving her head, trimming her nails, having a change of clothes, and mourning for her parents for one month. The mourning may indicate either that her father and mother had been killed in battle or that she was now separated from them by her new marriage. The other rituals mentioned may also have symbolized her mourning for cutting herself off from her former life.

The full month allowed the captive woman a proper amount of time for mourning, and it also gave the prospective husband opportunity to reflect on his initial decision to take her as his wife. For with a shaved head she would be less attractive. The phrase "If you are not pleased with her" may refer not to some trivial problem in their relationship, but to the new wife's refusal to accept her husband's spiritual values. In this case the husband could dissolve the marriage by giving up all rights over her. By forbidding him to treat her as a slave, even though she was dishonored through the divorce, the woman still retained a measure of dignity. This law underscored the value of human life; it contrasted with the terrible treatment of war captives common throughout the ancient Near East.

- 15] If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, *both* the beloved and the hated; and *if* the firstborn son be hers that was hated:
- 16] Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit *that which* he hath, *that* he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, *which is indeed* the firstborn:

## The Right of the Firstborn

Monogamy was always the divine ideal for marriage in the Old Testament (Gen 2:20-24). Polygamy, though practiced by some, never appears in a



positive light in the Old Testament; the Bible never describes a truly happy polygamous marriage. One reason was that one of the wives would always be loved more than the other(s). The husband was forbidden in this case to follow his feelings and disregard the Law. His firstborn son must be given the double share of the father's inheritance even though he was the son of his father's unloved wife.

17] But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

Can you imagine the shock when Jesus related the parable of the "Prodigal Son"! Aren't you glad that we are *not* under the law? When we come to God, and we confess our sins, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9). Instead of judgment, there is mercy for us. How wonderful and how merciful God is to accept us and receive us when we come to Him!

18] If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

19] Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;

## A Rebellious Son

An extreme violation of the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother" (5:16), was to be punished by death. In view here was not an occasional lapse into disobedience but a persistent rebellion against one's father and mother even after the parents had warned their son of the consequences of his rebellious actions. The son was ultimately rebelling against the Lord's authority and therefore attacking the foundations of the covenant community. The legislation here was not cruel nor did it give parents a right to abuse their children.

20] And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton, and a drunkard.

21] And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

The son was to be taken to the elders at the gate (i.e., the place where the Law was administered; cf. 22:15; Josh 20:4; Job 29:7). The elders were required to make an impartial judgment. The son was not judged for being a profligate and a drunkard, but for being rebellious. *His self-indulgent living and drunkenness were simply examples of his rebellion against*

*parental authority*. All the men (rather than the parents) were required to stone the son if the charges were proved correct. Again mention is made of the deterrent effects of capital punishment: All Israel will hear of it and be afraid (cf. Deut 13:11; 17:13). [No record in the Bible or in extrabiblical literature has come to light which indicates that this punishment was ever carried out. The fear of death apparently deterred Jewish sons from being stubborn rebels.]

22] And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:

23] His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

Hanging a criminal on a tree was not for the purpose of putting him to death. The form of capital punishment which was used in Israel was stoning. So what this really means is that a person who was put to death by stoning was then hung on a tree. It would be a warning to others. The body was to be taken down from the tree by nightfall and buried.

**A Macrocode?** This text was used by the Apostle Paul (Gal 3:13) to support the doctrine of Christ's penal substitutionary death for sinners. Christ's being under God's curse enabled Him to redeem "us from the curse of the Law."

*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

Galatians 3:13

## Macrocode Examples

- Brazen Serpent Num21
- The Bread and the Wine
  - Melchizedek Gen 14
  - Joseph's Interpretation of dreams Gen 40
- The *Akedah*: Abraham offering Isaac
- The Book of Ruth: the role of the *Goel*
- The Feasts of Moses

*The Volume of the Book is written of me.*

Ps 40:7, Heb 10:7

\* \* \*

## Deuteronomy 22

### Domestic & Personal Relations

This chapter brings us to another division of the Book of Deuteronomy. We have seen the repetition and interpretation of the Ten Commandments in Chapters 5–7. Then there are the religious and national regulations in Chapters 8–21. Now we come to regulations for domestic and personal relations in Chapters 22–26.

- 1] Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.
- 2] And if thy brother *be* not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again.

The law about lost livestock was a concrete expression of the eternal moral principle to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18), and to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Mt 7:12). The regulation in Deut 22:1-4 refers not primarily to taking someone else's lost animal but rather to the natural tendency to ignore it because of the extra time and labor involved in restoring it. If the animal's owner lived far away or was unknown, the finder could take it home till the owner came looking for it.

- 3] In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.
- 4] Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift *them* up again.

Today this law would apply in any circumstance where a believer is tempted “not to get involved” with someone else's needs (Jas 2:15-16; 1 Jn 3:17).

- 5] The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.

The adoption of clothing of the opposite sex was forbidden because it obscured the distinction of the sexes and thus violated an essential part of *the created order of life* (Gen 1:27). It was also perhaps associated with or promoted homosexuality.

The same Hebrew word translated “detests” (lit., “a detestable thing”; קִי, “an abomination”) is used to describe God's view of homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 20:13). (Also some evidence exists that transvestism may

have been connected with the worship of pagan deities.) Since this law was related to the divine order of Creation and since God detests anyone who does this, believers today also ought to heed this command.

*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.*

Lev 28:22

- 6] If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, *whether they be* young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:
- 7] *But* thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and *that* thou mayest prolong *thy* days.

### Birds in the Nest: a Lesson in Ecology

Many have suggested that this law was given to teach the Israelites compassion or reverence for parental relationships by using an object lesson from the animal world. However, the fact that the Israelites were permitted to take the young bird seems to militate against that view! More likely, Moses was teaching the Israelites to protect this food source. By letting the mother bird go they could anticipate the production of more young in the future. Obeying this stipulation, like obeying many others, would result in blessing (it will go well with you; cf. 4:40; 5:16; 6:3, 18; 12:25, 28; 19:13).

- 8] When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

The roof of a house in the ancient Near East was used for a variety of purposes, as an open veranda for evening social purposes, etc. (Cf. Mt 24:17, “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house”: making a parapet (low wall or railing) on one's roof would help prevent someone from falling from the roof. This then was an opportunity to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18) by being concerned about his safety. It also emphasized again the value of human life.

Also, in civil law, *Res ipsa loquitur*: “the thing speaks for itself.” The rebuttable presumption that the defendant was negligent, which arises upon proof that instrumentality causing injury was in defendant's exclusive control, and that the accident was one which ordinarily does not happen in absence of negligence.

- 9] Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.
- 10] Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.
- 11] Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, *as* of woollen and linen together.

## Prohibition Against Mixtures

(What's wrong with wool and linen mixtures? Try washing them: wool shrinks, linen doesn't.) The reason for these prohibitions against planting two kinds of seed in a field, yoking together an ox and a donkey for plowing, and weaving wool and linen together is uncertain. They may have had a symbolic function in teaching the Israelites something about the created order. Or the mixtures mentioned in these verses may reflect certain pagan cultic practices. God desires order. Mixed marriages are an example. God warns against mixtures. The child of God cannot mix with the world. I hear Christians say that they go the way of the world in order to reach the people of the world. That is not the way to reach them. If you ever hear of anybody being reached because a Christian went the way of the world, let me know.

- 12] Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest *thyself*.

**Tassels:** The significance of this instruction about tassels is not explained here, but its meaning is made clear in Num 15:37-41. The tassels were to serve as a reminder of the Lord's commands and Israel's obligation to obey them.

- 13] If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,  
14] And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:  
15] Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth *the tokens* of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

This law was meant to enforce premarital sexual purity and to encourage parents to instill within their children the value of sexual purity. The law might be misused, however, by an unscrupulous husband against his wife for personal reasons, or perhaps to recover the bride-price he originally paid to the girl's father. If such a husband charged that his wife was not a virgin when they were married then her parents were obligated to produce proof of her virginity. The evidence was to be a cloth, a bloodstained garment or a bedsheet from the wedding night. Records from various cultures in the ancient Near East refer to this kind of evidence being made public.

- 16] And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;  
17] And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech *against her*, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these *are the tokens* of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

If the parents offered such evidence of her virginity before marriage then the man making the false charge was to be whipped (the probable meaning of the word punish, v. 18) and fined 100 shekels of silver (about two and one-half pounds). Apparently this was double the original bride-price (v. 29 seems to indicate that 50 shekels was the usual bride-price). The fine was given to the girl's father because he too was slandered by the accusation which called into question his desire or ability to pass on to his children God's values regarding sexual purity. Also his daughter was given a bad name. Support for the wife (and perhaps also the legal right of her firstborn child) was protected by the forfeiting of the man's right ever to divorce his wife (v. 19).

- 18] And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;  
19] And they shall amerce him in an hundred *shekels* of silver, and give *them* unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.  
20] But if this thing be true, *and the tokens* of virginity be not found for the damsel:  
21] Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

On the other hand if the husband's charge could not be disproved, then the wife was to be stoned at the door of her father's house. This harsh punishment was not only intended for the sin of fornication (being promiscuous) but also for lying to her prospective husband and presumably for implicating her father in the deception. This evil too was to be purged from the nation.

- 22] If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

Though the death penalty was to be administered for sexual unfaithfulness in marriage (cf. Lev 20:10), the precise manner in which it was to be carried out was not specified. In Mesopotamia an adulterous couple was bound and thrown into the water (Code of Hammurabi, Law 129), though no extant court records from Mesopotamia indicate that this penalty was ever enforced.

The official leaders of Judaism in Jesus' day interpreted the penalty to mean death by stoning (cf. Jn 8:5) but later Rabbinic tradition prescribed death by strangulation. How frequently this penalty was enforced is unknown. (On the seriousness of the sin of adultery see comments on Deut 5:18.)

- 23] If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;
- 24] Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

A virgin pledged to be married was to be treated like a married woman. It was assumed that the sexual union which took place in a town was not rape (vv. 23-25) but adultery (i.e., the girl gave her consent). If it had been a case of rape her screams for help would have been heard whether or not she could have been rescued. If the assault occurred out in the country, then the betrothed girl was given the benefit of doubt and only the man was put to death (vv. 25-27). Rape was considered as serious as murder and therefore deserving of death.

- 25] But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die:
- 26] But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; *there is* in the damsel no sin *worthy* of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so *is* this matter:
- 27] For he found her in the field, *and* the betrothed damsel cried, and *there was* none to save her.
- 28] If a man find a damsel *that is* a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;
- 29] Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

A man who raped an unbetrothed virgin was forced to marry her (after paying the bride-price of 50 shekels to her father) and had to forfeit the right of divorce. This protected, to a degree, the girl's honor and assured her (and her child if she became pregnant from the rape) permanent support. This stipulation may also have served as a deterrent against rape since the man would have to live with that woman for the rest of his life.

- 30] A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

Rather than referring to adultery, this verse probably refers to a man marrying his stepmother after his father died. Such a marriage would have been regarded as incestuous (cf. Lev. 18:8).

## Broken Families

The most basic form of society is the family. The family serves as the seedbed for virtues. National policies contribute to family instability and

breakup. This is the first generation in the nation's history to do *worse* psychologically, socially, and economically than its parents. [Heterosexuals reproduce; homosexuals recruit.]

Postwar generation: 80% grew up in a family with two biological parents who were married to each other. By 1980: less than 50% expected to spend their entire childhood in an intact family. An increasing number of children will experience family breakup two or even three times during childhood. Empirical evidence demonstrates that children in disrupted families do worse than those of intact families: they are 6X more likely to be poor; 22% of one parent families will experience poverty during childhood for 7 years or more, vs. 2% of children in two-parent families. Children of single parent families were: 3X as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems; more likely to drop out of high school, get pregnant as teenagers, abuse drugs, or be in trouble with the law. They are also at higher risk for physical or sexual abuse, less likely to be successful as adults, especially in love and in work, and have a harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job.

National Center for Health Statistics, 1988

The teen suicide rate has tripled; juvenile crime has increased and become more violent; school performance has continued to decline. Welfare dependency tends to be passed on from one generation to the next.

## Roots of Family Instability

- 33% of children born in America today are illegitimate (22% of white births; 65% of black births)
- 10% of live births exposed to illegal drugs in the womb
- 70% of juvenile crimes: grew up in single-parent or no-parent families

## Each Day in America

- 2,795 teen pregnancies
- 1,106 teen abortions
- 4,219 teenagers contract a sexually transmitted disease
- Every 64 seconds a baby is born to a teenage mother
  - 5 minutes later, a baby will have been born to a teenager *who already has a child.*
  - 10 hours later, 560 babies will have been born to teenagers . . .



Daughters of single parents are: 53% more likely to marry as teenagers; 111% more likely to have children as teenagers; 164% more likely to have premarital birth; and, 92% more likely to dissolve their own marriages.

Each divorce is the death of a small civilization. It inflicts wounds that never heal. Survey after survey demonstrates that Americans are less inclined than they were a generation ago to value sexual fidelity, lifelong marriage, and parenthood as worthwhile personal goals. Fewer than half of all adult Americans today regard the idea of sacrifice for others as a positive moral value. The adult quest for freedom, independence, and choice in family relationships conflicts with a child's developmental needs for stability, constancy, harmony, and permanence in family life. "The love of many will grow cold." (Mt 24:12).

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) How does the laws regarding the firstborn relate to the Parable of the Prodigal Son?
- 2) In what way was hanging a body on a tree a type of "macrocode" (anticipatory reference)?
- 3) Why is transvestism an abomination to the Lord?
- 4) What is the Biblical perspective on homosexuality? List the references.

### Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Discuss the appropriateness of "corporate guilt" for unsolved murders.
- 2) Discuss the problems of rebellious children and parental authority in Israel in contrast to today. How can our own situation be improved?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compile a list of macrocodes in the Bible.

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 23 & 24; Numbers 22 - 24. Also Ruth 4:18 - 22; Matthew 19:8,9.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 11 Chapters 23 - 24

### Key Themes

- God's love for them as a covenant people.
- Their obligations to manifest His Holiness.
  - Not "taking His Name" in vain.

## Deuteronomy 23 Family Life and Love for Neighbors

- 1] He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD.
- 2] A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

Exclusion of eunuchs. Significant in light of contemporary pagan practices. Not to practice mutilation of the body (14:1). In NT times such disabilities no longer enter into consideration even in the external administration of the church (cf. Isa 56:4, 5; Acts 8:27, 28). [vs. "plucking out the eye," suggested by Jesus (Mt 5:29-30)??]

The sacredness of the congregation of the Lord was signified by the exclusion from participation in the official theocratic assembly of those disqualified in various ways. Excluded were the eunuch (v. 1) and the bastard (v. 2) together with his descendants—even to his tenth generation; Cf. Pharez (Perez) to Jesse: Ruth 4:18-22.

### Ruth 4:18-22

- 1) Now these *are* the generations of Pharez:
- 2) Pharez begat Hezron,
- 3) Hezron begat Ram,
- 4) Ram begat Amminadab,
- 5) Amminadab begat Nahshon,

- 6) Nahshon begat Salmon,
- 7) Salmon begat Boaz,
- 8) Boaz begat Obed,
- 9) Obed begat Jesse,
- 10) Jesse begat David.

“May your house be like Pharez”!? (Ruth 4:12 was a prophecy, not an epithet or indictment! A macrocode, from the days of the Judges, predicting David! Ruth links the house of David to Bethlehem...)

- 3] An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:
- 4] Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

The unique sacredness of Israel in their relationship to surrounding nations is uniquely delineated through Moses. The Moabites and Ammonites—offsprings of incest—though not dispossessed of their land by Israelites (2:9,19), were excluded from participation in the Israelite congregation because of their endeavor to bring a divine curse upon God’s chosen people instead of offering them hospitality.

God’s love for Israel had been manifested in a peculiar way in turning the intended curse into a blessing when Balaam had been hired by Balak the Moabite king (cf. Num 22-24; Rev 2:14).

- 5] Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.
- 6] Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.
- 7] Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he *is* thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.
- 8] The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.
- 9] When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.

In the case of the Edomites’ and Egyptians’ exclusion was again the rule because of their past enmity (cf. the Egyptian oppression, Ex 1:8ff., and Edomite opposition, Num 20:18ff.), but it was modified (Deut 23:8; cf. Ex 20:5), in the one case, because of ties of Abrahamic kinship (cf. Gen 36:1ff.) and, in the other, because of hospitality shown to Abraham and Jacob’s family when distressed by famine (Gen 12; 42–47).

- 10] If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp:
- 11] But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash *himself* with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp *again*.

Hygiene for camp life (vv.9-14). Cleanliness is critical. Even in modern times where this is not done or where the excretions are used for fertilizing produce, the health of the community is endangered. Holiness was symbolized by physical cleanliness among God’s covenant people.

- 12] Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:
- 13] And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:
- 14] For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.
- 15] Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee:
- 16] He shall dwell with thee, *even* among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.
- 17] There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.
- 18] Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Note the equivalence of “whores” and “sodomites.” Homosexuality: “dog” is term for male prostitute (Cf. Rev 22:15). Even the money involved was an “abomination” and abhorrent to God. The body of the giver was more important than any gift that they might bring!

The Canaanite practices of the misuse of the body in their sacred rites of prostitution and child sacrifice precipitated their destruction. [We sacrifice our babies in the “holy of holies”: the mother’s womb!]

- 19] Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:
- 20] Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Improverished Israelites were protected from exploitation at the hands of their richer brethren by the prohibition of interest on loans granted to them (cf. Ex 22:25; Lev 25:35ff.; Deut 15:1ff.). Interest might be exacted

from foreigners (*a stranger*, v. 20), however, because the loans made to them would not be for the relief of destitution but for business capital to be employed by these traveling merchants for profitable enterprise. Limitations on the nature of pledges are also indicated in Chapter 24 (10-13), etc.

- 21] When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.
- 22] But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.
- 23] That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; *even* a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

Vows were not mandatory, but once given they were expected to keep them—out of reverence for a God who keeps His promises! Nazarite vows: Num 6:1-21. Paul kept his (Acts 18:18; 21:23f).

- 24] When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put *any* in thy vessel.
- 25] When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

This is not to be confused with the Law of Gleaning (next chapter).

## Deuteronomy 24 Laws of the Family

- 1] When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.
- 2] And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's *wife*.

Divorce as permitted in the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num 30:9), because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts (Mt 19:8; Mk 10:5), endangered the dignity of women within the theocracy. Hence, easy abuse of the permission was forestalled by circumscribing it with technicalities and restrictions (Deut 24:1-4). Priests were forbidden to marry divorced people (Lev 21:7, 14; and 22:13).

- 3] And *if* the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth *it* in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her *to be* his wife;
- 4] Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that *is* abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

Adultery required the death penalty (22:13-20; Lev 20:10). Reasons are not mentioned in the text; a public official would apparently certify the documents given to the woman for her protection.

Subsequently they could not be remarried if the woman had married another in the meantime (Cf. Jer 3:1). Stability of the home seems to be the primary intention. The main point of the present law, however, was that a man might not remarry his wife after he divorced her if she had meanwhile remarried, even though her second husband had divorced her or had died. With respect to the first husband, the remarried divorce was *defiled* (v. 4). Such was the abnormality of this situation, tolerated in OT times but abrogated by our Lord in the interests of the original standard (Mt 19:9; Mk 10:6-9; cf. Gen 2:23, 24).

Mosaic law under certain circumstances permitted divorce because of the hardheartedness of the Israelites: Mt 19:8; Mk 10:5).

*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

Mt 5:31-32

*He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*

Mt 19:8-9

The RSV is correct in regarding Deut 24:1-4 as one sentence, with 1-3 the condition and 4 the conclusion. (The AV is liable to the interpretation that divorce was mandatory in the situation described. Actually, what was mandatory was not divorce, but (if divorce was resorted to) a legal process which included four elements:

- 1) There must be a serious cause for the divorce. The exact import of the words *some uncleanness* (v. 1; cf. 23:14) is uncertain. Adultery is not meant, for the law prescribed the death penalty for that (22:13ff.; Lev 20:10; cf. Num 5:11ff.).
- 2) A writ of separation was to be placed in the woman's hand for her subsequent protection. The preparation of this legal instrument implies the involvement of
- 3) a public official who might also have to judge of the adequacy of the alleged grounds of divorce.

4) The man must give her a formal dismissal—*send her out of his house* (v. 1).

5] When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: *but* he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

The establishment of a home was not to be interrupted during the first year by military service (Cf. other considerations: 20:5-8). Conjugal respects: 22:13-20.

6] No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh *a man's* life to pledge.

7] If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

A mill or millstone could not be taken as security for payment of debt since they were indispensable for the preparation of daily food. Their absence would threaten or endanger life itself.

Slave traffic and man stealing were forbidden under penalty of death. The rights and dignity of the individual person were to be properly safeguarded and protected. (A courtesy and integrity too often violated in the behavior of many Christians: slander and gossip is also a form of betrayal...)

8] Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, *so* ye shall observe to do.

9] Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt.

One of the most impressive warnings was the reminder of the incident which precipitated Miriam's leprosy (Num 12:10-15). If the sister of Moses—through whom God had revealed Himself to Israel—was smitten with leprosy for her murmuring and rebellion, how much more should the average Israelite take care lest he transgress and be smitten my divine judgment?

10] When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge.

11] Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.

Though interest on loans to Israelite neighbors was forbidden (23:19, 20), a pledge might be taken as security; but even this was not to be

acquired in such a way as to prejudice the dignity, let alone the life, of the debtor. Men were not to be deprived of articles indispensable to life and health. In this category were the millstone (v. 6), the quadrangular mantle used as cover in sleeping (vv. 10-13; cf. Ex 22:26, 27), and the day laborer's wages (Deut 24:14, 15; cf. Lev 19:13).

12] And if the man *be* poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

13] In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

Their attitude toward the needy would be reckoned by God as righteousness (when performed by one who was in a love relationship with God.)

14] Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant *that is* poor and needy, *whether he be* of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that *are* in thy land within thy gates:

15] At his day thou shalt give *him* his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he *is* poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

The love for one's neighbor shows up in many pragmatic ways: remaining current on payables is one that should receive more attention even today! Mistreatment of fellowmen reflected a lack of proper respect and reverence for God. Withholding that which was due from the needy might result in poor man's appeal to God for help so that a divine rebuke was pending.

16] The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

17] Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, *nor* of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

Personal responsibility was emphasized. The guilty individual alone was to be punished, and not innocent members of his family (cf. 2 Kgs 14:6). There is no contradiction between this and the divine judgment as described in the Decalogue (Deut 5:9; Ex 20:5), for the latter does not say that God afflicts the innocent. Those who share in the visitation of judgment upon the fathers' iniquities are such as share also in the fathers' hatred of God. On the other hand, there is no repudiation of the principle of the corporate responsibility which obtains in certain group situations.

(This seems to be abrogated by trends in the legal environment where the assignment of blame goes to the deepest pockets rather than to the one who made the decision. *Caveat vendor* has replaced *caveat emptor*. "Thou shalt not steal" enforces the right to property.)



Hate and revenge for wrongdoings will be dealt with in the next chapter.

- 18] But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.
- 19] When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

They were repeatedly reminded that they had come out of bondage (vv.18,22). [*We have, too!!*] They had been the recipients of God's mercy. [*We have, too!!*] Their love for God was to be wholehearted and reflected in their consideration of their fellowmen. [*We should, too!*] The Law of Gleanings (cf. Ruth 2, 3).

- 20] When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.
- 21] When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean *it* afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.
- 22] And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What does it mean "to take the name of the Lord in vain"?
- 2) What does the Deut 23:2 have to do with Ruth 4:18-22?
- 3) How was Balaam's curse turned into a blessing?
- 4) Contrast the role of divorce in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in the church today.

### Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Give practical examples of "taking the name of the Lord in vain."
- 2) Discuss the role of usury today.
- 3) Discuss the role of divorce today. When is it "*Biblical*"?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Review the origin, career, and errors of Balaam.
- 2) Research the origin and practices of the Canaanites. Why did God abhor them?

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 25 and 26. Also, Numbers 27 and Joshua 17.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 12 Chapters 25 - 26

### Deuteronomy 25 Sanctification of the Kingdom

Verses 1-12, the final laws on the sanctification of the kingdom (23:1–25:12), guarded the sanctity of man as individual image-bearer of God. Verses 13-19 conclude the laws of reverence for the natural, family, and theocratic orders (vv. 22-25) as they began (cf. 22:1-4), with the golden rule principle.

### Sanctity of the Individual (Deut 25:1-19)

- 1] If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that *the judges* may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.
- 2] And it shall be, if the wicked man *be* worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

Hate and revenge could not be gratified at the pleasure of the offended but must always be regulated by judges in the court.

- 3] Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.
- 4] Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*.

This doesn't just refer to the beast of burden. It is often cited as justification for wages earned: twice in the NT for ministry:

*For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

1 Corinthians 9:9-11

*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.*

1 Timothy 5:18

## Measuring Success

**The Role of an “Objective Function”:** sports teams; sales teams; military in wartime. In its absence: **Rule by Hearsay:** schools; hospitals; churches.

- 5] If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.
- 6] And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which* is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

**Levirate Marriage** (from Latin *levir*, “husband's brother”), vv.5-10. Cf. Lev 18:16; 20:21. Not compulsory; yet refusal required consideration by the elders. (Cf. Ruth 4:1-17). Perpetuation of the deceased name as member of the covenant is in view. (Daughters could inherit under special circumstances: Cf. Daughters of Zelophehad, Num 27:4-8; Luke 3).

The son-in-law was adopted by the father of the bride (Cf. Luke 3). [In view of the provision of Num 27:4ff., there would be no need for the levirate marriage if the deceased had daughters. Hence the AV seems preferable to the RSV in rendering in Deut 25:5—*no child* rather than *no son*.]

- 7] And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.
- 8] Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and *if* he stand *to it*, and say, I like not to take her;

- 9] Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.
- 10] And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

## Boaz's Redemption

- Boaz is the “type” of the *Goel*, the Kinsman-Redeemer
- Four conditions: his kinship; his ability; his willingness; and assuming *all* the obligations of the beneficiary.
- He confronts the next of kin and obtains his shoe, permitting him to take Ruth to wife.

## Daughters of Zelophehad

- Torah exception on rules of inheritance (requested of Moses in Num 27:1-11 and granted by Joshua in Josh 17:3-6).
- Husband is *adopted* by father of the bride (Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63; Num 32:41, cf. 1 Chr 2:21-23, 34-35).

Every detail—even in the regulations of the Torah—are there by deliberate design; *and always point to Christ!*

## The Blood Curse on Jeconiah (Jehoiachin)

*Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.*

Jeremiah 22:30

Jeconiah, Coniah, are alternative names for Jehoiachin.

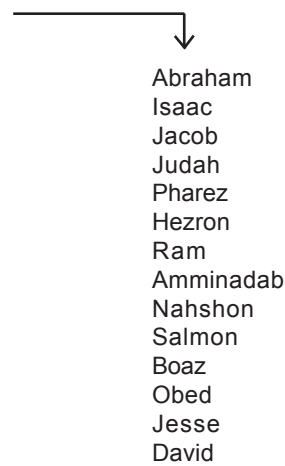
## The Genealogies (see chart, next page)

Matthew: Begins with “the first Jew”: Abraham. Luke: Begins with Adam (“Son of God” vs. ourselves: sons of Adam) Next 10 familiar from Genesis 5. From Abraham to David the two genealogies are identical.

**Note:** Blood Curse on Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) Jer 22:30. Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, all died violent deaths; God thus dealing with idolatry literally “to the 3rd and 4th generations (Ex 20:4,5), their names therefore “blotted out” according to the Law (Deut 29:20). Jehoiakim and Jeconiah likewise, since the kingdom ended as an independent kingdom with Josiah's death at Megiddo. Thus, these were “blotted out” of the groups of “14 generations” in Matthew's account.

— E. W. Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, Appendix 99

Luke	Matthew & Luke	Luke	Matthew
Adam		Nathan	Solomon
Seth		Mattatha	Rehoboam
Enosh		Menan	Abijah
Kenan		Melea	Asa
Mahalalel		Eliakim	Jehoshaphat
Jared		Jonan	Jehoram
Enoch		Joseph	Ahaziah*
Methuselah		Juda	Joash*
Lamech		Simeon	Amaziah*
Noah		Levi	Uzziah
Shem		Matthat	Jotham
Arphaxad		Jorim	Ahaz
Salah		Eliezer	Hezekiah
Eber		Jose	Manasseh
Peleg		Er	Amon
Reu		Elmodam	Josiah
Serug		Cosam	Jehoiakim*
Nahor		Addi	Jehoiachin*
Terah		Melchi	Salatheil
		Neri	Zerubbabel
		Salathiel	Abiud
		Zerubbabel	Eliakim
		Rhesa	Azor
		Joanna	Sadoc
		Juda	Achim
		Joseph	Eliud
		Semei	Eleazar
		Mattathias	Matthan
		Maath	Jacob
		Nagge	Joseph
		Esli	
		Naum	
		Amos	
		Mattathias	
		Joseph	
		Janna	
		Melchi	
		Levi	
		Matthat	
		Heli	
		(Mary)	



[Matthew's 3<sup>rd</sup> "14" only 13. Matt 1:11 copiest's error? Jehoiakim omitted between Josiah and Jeconiah. Josiah did not beget Jeconiah; and Jeconiah did not have "brethren."]

**Salathiel**, the son of Jeconiah (Mt 1:12 1Chr 3:17) is also called the son of Neri (Lk 3:27). [*If* these are the same person, a probable explanation is that the son of Neri, the descendant of Nathan, was deemed heir to the throne of David on the death of Jeconiah (Jer 22:30) due to the blood curse. ]

**Daughters of Zelophehad:** There is a peculiar exception recorded in the Torah, the result of a petition by the **daughters of Zelophehad**, which provided for inheritance through the *daughter*, if no sons were available and she married within her tribe. (Num 26:33; 27:1-11; 36:2-12; Josh 17:3-6; 1 Chr 7:15.) **It became traditional in such cases that the father would legally adopt his son-in-law** (Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63; Num 32:41, cf. 1 Chr 2:21-22, 34-35; Num 27:3-8). Joseph was the *son-in-law* of Heli (Luke 3:23) νομίζω, *nomizo*, reckoned as by law.

- 11] When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:
- 12] Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity *her*.

Verses 11 -12 also are concerned with the dignity of the individual and indeed precisely with his dignity as God's covenant servant, who in his circumcision bears in his body the sign of the covenant. (The reference to the organ of reproduction might account for the immediate conjunction of this prohibition with the law of levirate marriage.) That the act forbidden includes contempt for the covenant sign and not just indecency is suggested by the apparent similarity in the nature of the punishment and the sign, both involving a mutilation of the body. Weight is added to this interpretation by the fact that apart from this case, only the *lex talionis* (19:21) calls for such penal mutilation.

- 13] Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.
- 14] Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.
- 15] *But* thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
- 16] For all that do such things, *and* all that do unrighteously, *are* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Just weights and measures are expected: integrity in the marketplace (Cf Lev 10:35-37). Even "arms length" dealings were to be honest. Fiduciary relationships are required of Christians (Eph 6).

## Fiduciary Relationships

- Two Basic Relationships
  - “Arms length” (*Caveat emptor; Caveat vendor*)
  - Fiduciary (doctor/patient; lawyer/client)
- “Singleness of heart” (Eph 6:5)

- 17] Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;
- 18] How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, *even all that were* feeble behind thee, when thou *wast* faint and weary; and he feared not God.

The mistreatment of widows, orphans, and immigrants was an index to sins of society at large in the preaching of the prophets in subsequent centuries.

- 19] Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance to possess it, *that* thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget *it*.

On the charge to exterminate Amalek (see Ex 17:8-16).

Throughout these extended instructions and admonitions in which the Israelites are encouraged to constantly express their wholehearted devotion to God in their daily lives, there are also the promises and assurances of God’s continued goodness and mercy as well as warnings. In this manner a vital relationship with God was not only initially established, but it could also be *maintained*. These promises undoubtedly were designed to provide a stimulant to their total pattern of living.

## Deuteronomy 26

- 1] And it shall be, when thou *art* come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;
- 2] That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put *it* in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.

## Confession in Worship

Having delineated the rights and obligations of his people in their divine relationship, Moses instructs the Israelites in the liturgies of two confessions and a reaffirmation of the covenant. Through these confessions, acts of dedication and worship, they are to maintain a continued consciousness of God as their redeemer and sustainer and

impart this to each successive generation. The first confession is the offering of the firstfruits (Ex 23:19; 34:26; Num 18:12-17). Elements of first-fruit offering are found in connection with each of the annual feasts (Deut 16). For example, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread a sheaf of first fruits was waved (Lev 23:10ff.). Also, the Feast of Weeks was called “the day of firstfruits” (Num 28:26; cf. Ex 23:16; 34:22) and two first-fruit loaves (leavened?) were offered at it (Lev 23:15-17). [Misunderstood: the first “day of firstfruits” was “the morrow after the sabbath” after Passover].

The grape harvest was late in the year, the firstfruits of the vine could not be offered until the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. (Jesus deferred again drinking of the wine until His return...!)

- 3] And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.
- 4] And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.
- 5] And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish *was* my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:
- 6] And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage:

Second Confession: Jacob referred to as “a wandering Aramean” (RSV)... (connotes “lost” or “in peril”). He is called **Aramean** because the patriarchal origins were geographically, though not racially, Aramean, and because Jacob himself sojourned in Aram-naharaim during the period of the birth of his sons, the future tribal fathers of Israel.

When Jacob fled from his home in Beersheva he passed through Syria (Aram) to Mesopotamia (Aram Haharaim, Gen 24:10, *Jerusalem Bible*) to live with Laban his uncle. Returning from there, Jacob was overtaken by Laban after he came through Syria at the Jabbok River where he not only face the wrath of Laban but also that of Esau his brother. Later, the famine in Canaan necessitated his migration to Egypt. When the Israelites became populous, they were oppressed by the Egyptians, but it was God who responded to their prayers and miraculously delivered them out of Egypt. It was God who enabled them to enter and conquer the land from which the firstfruits were now presented before the altar.

- 7] And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression:
- 8] And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders:



Essential aspects: rejoicing in the Lord's goodness extended to earlier generations and evidence of His sustaining grace at that time. [Shouldn't we, also?!!]

- 9] And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, *even* a land that floweth with milk and honey.
- 10] And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:
- 11] And thou shalt rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.
- 12] When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, *which is* the year of tithing, and hast given *it* unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;

Third year tithe to the poor and needy (Cf. 14:28-29). It was not brought to the central sanctuary but distributed to the Levite, the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow in the local communities.

- 13] Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of *mine* house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten *them*:
- 14] I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away *ought* thereof for *any* unclean *use*, nor given *ought* thereof for the dead: *but* I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, *and* have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

The Israelite publicly acknowledges before God that he as actually shared with his fellow citizens the tithe of his income according to the divine instructions. Defilement, uncleanness, and offerings to the dead—contemporary pagan practices—had been carefully avoided (Lev 22:3; Num 19:11; Hos 9:4).

- 15] Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.
- 16] This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

The Israelites had ratified their covenant with God at Sinai (Ex 24:7). Here on the Plains of Moab, Moses had plainly declared the stipulations or requirements of the covenant renewal: Deut 5-25.

- 17] Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:
- 18] And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldst keep all his commandments;
- 19] And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

In accepting the terms of this agreement—acknowledging that the Lord is their God, promising wholehearted obedience, and an attitude of listening to God's voice—the Israelites were assured that they were His people and that they would be the foremost of all nations (vv16-19).

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Explain the idiom, “muzzling the ox.”
- 2) What is a “levirate marriage”? Under what conditions was it employed?
- 3) Explain (and list) how Boaz was a “type” of Christ.
- 4) Contrast “arms length” vs. “fiduciary” relationships; give examples of each.
- 5) Is tithing expected in the New Testament church?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Discuss the “rule by hearsay” in today's organizations.
- 2) To what extent does a Christian owe a “fiduciary” attitude to a stranger?
- 3) Discuss the distinctions between confession, praise, thanksgiving, and worship.
- 4) Discuss the role of tithing among Christians today.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compile a list of “levirate” marriages in the Scriptures and their significance.
- 2) Explore the distinctions between confession, praise, thanksgiving, and worship. Organize a guide for *personal* worship.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 27 and 28. Review the background of the Holocaust, 1930-1945.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 13 Chapters 27 - 28

The fourth standard division in the ancient suzerainty treaties was the curses and blessings, the woe and weal sanctions of the covenant. In Deuteronomy this section is found in Chapters 27–30. While 26:16-19 forms a conclusion to the stipulations, it also introduces the element of covenant ratification, the nucleus around which the curses and blessings of these chapters cluster.

The ratification of the new covenant which Moses was making with the second generation was to unfold in two stages. That was customary procedure in securing the throne succession to the appointed royal heir. When death was imminent, the suzerain required his vassals to pledge obedience to his son; then, soon after the son’s accession, the vassals’ commitment was repeated.

Similarly, Moses and Joshua formed a dynasty of mediatorial representatives of the Lord’s suzerainty over Israel. Hence the succession of Joshua, which symbolized the continuing lordship of Israel’s God, was ensured by the oath elicited from Israel before Moses died, and again later by a ratification ceremony after Joshua’s accession. The pronouncing of curses and blessings is prominent in each of these ratification.

## Outline

- Moses’ 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon Deut 1:1–4:43
- **Moses’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon Deut 4:44–28:68**

- Moses’ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon Deut 29:1–30:20
- Moses’ Last Days Deut 31:1–34:12

## Overview

- Deut 1-4 Failure
- Deut 5-11 Mutual Love
- Deut 12-20 Obligations of a God-related people
- **Deut 27-30 Alternatives for a God-related people**
- Deut 31-34 Arrangements for continuity

## Deuteronomy 27 Alternatives for a God-Related People

## Treaty Structure

- Prologue
- Basic Stipulations
- Detailed Stipulations
- **Document Clause**
- **Blessings**
- **Cursings**
- Recapitulation

- 1] And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.
- 2] And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister:

Covenant consecration must be an act of intelligent, informed faith and devotion. Therefore, the content of the covenant was to be published preparatory to its ratification by the people.

That was one purpose of writing the covenant on the plastered stones, an Egyptian technique, as is confirmed by the fact that in the historical fulfillment Joshua read this law to the people (Josh 8:34). Comparable were Moses’ reading of the Book of the Covenant to Israel at the ratification of the Sinaitic Covenant and the proclamation of the Deuteronomic Covenant in the plains of Moab. The fact that durable stones were selected invites comparison with the two stone tables of the law written by the finger of God and suggests that a further purpose was to provide a symbolic witness to the *permanence of the covenant* (cf.

Deut 31:26; Josh 24:26, For the historical performance of what is here prescribed, see Josh 8:30-35:

*Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.*

Joshua 8:30-35

Predicted by Moses (Deut 27-30). 3X: “unhewn stones” (Ex 20:35; Deut 27:5; Josh 8:31). God’s workmanship not to be polluted by man’s additions. Also, a denial of humanism! Peace offerings: shared (Lev 7:15); communion; (*koinonia*). Knowledge demands action. (Deut 11:26-28)

The law is not read until there was an altar (first mention in Joshua). There must be a *remedy* present for your failure to keep the law! Notice that the altar is at Mt. Ebal, not Gerizim.

- 3] And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee.
- 4] Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, *that* ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister.

The significance of this act was twofold: First, it commemorated God’s faithfulness in giving them the land (“as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you”). “God of your fathers” occurs six times in Deut. The stones were to be set up on Mount Ebal (about 35 miles north of Jerusalem) at the base of which lay the city of Shechem. Second, the writing of the Law when they entered the Promised Land symbolized the nation’s mission to bring Canaan under the dominance of the Lord’s Word.

## Shechem

- Where Abraham had built his first altar 600 years earlier;
- Where Jacob, while fleeing from Laban, carried the teraphim, his father-in-law’s stolen gods;
- Where Joseph sought his brothers before going on to Dothan;
- Where he was sold into slavery; (and where he is buried);
- Where Jacob dug a well; and
- Where Jesus met the Samaritan woman John 4.

It was at Shechem that the Lord first “appeared” to Abraham, and there Abraham built his first altar to the Lord (Gen 12:6-7). The choice of this location emphasized God’s faithfulness to the original Abrahamic promises and hinted that the time for their complete fulfillment might be near if only Israel would obey Him.

In the valley: North Mt. Ebal (3,077 ft above sea level); South Mt. Gerizim (2,895 ft a.s.l.) They form an amphitheater: 500 yards apart at the bottom; 1 ½ miles at the top. Both mean *barren*. Altar is at the site of the curses, not the blessings... (Altar is made to deal with the curse.) This will later become the capital of the Samaritans. Cf. John 4: Jacob’s well was *between* Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. Mt. Ebal, the curses of the law; Mt. Gerizim, the humanism of works. Jesus rather pointed to neither—but to Himself.

- 5] And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up *any* iron *tool* upon them.
- 6] Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God:
- 7] And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

For the purpose of the sacrificial offerings, a special altar was to be erected on Ebal. It may be that the mount of cursing was selected because the Mosaic economy, in its distinctive emphasis, was a ministration of death and condemnation (cf. 2 Cor 3:7-9), though, like a schoolmaster, conducting men to the grace of Christ. Or possibly the altar was to be erected on Ebal because the peace of the covenant was to come through the infliction of the curses on the Redeemer-Servant, sacrificed for the sins of God’s people.

The altar was to be made of unhewn stones, in accordance with the requirement of the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20:25). Clearly the Deuteronomic law of the permanent central altar was not intended to be

a repudiation of the altar law of the Book of the Covenant. Nor was the principle of the centralization of the altar so absolutely restrictive that there might not be the special altar for extraordinary occasions. [Denial of “iron tool” was not just to avoid dependence upon Canaanite monopoly.]

- 8] And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly.  
 9] And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.  
 10] Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.  
 11] And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,  
 12] These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin:  
 13] And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

This ceremony was commanded earlier by Moses (11:26-32). After the altar was set up on Mount Ebal (27:1-8) six tribes were to assemble on Mount Gerizim to bless the people and six were to assemble on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses. Actually the people were to stand in front of the mountains (Josh 8:33). A valley runs between these two mountains in Samaria, with Mount Gerizim to the southwest of Mount Ebal. Shechem is nearby in the valley.

**Mt. Gerizim** Mount of Blessings

- Simeon
- Levi
- Judah
- Issachar
- Joseph
- Benjamin

**Mt. Ebal** Mount of Cursings

- Reuben
- Zebulun
- Gad
- Asher
- Dan
- Naphtali

**Two groups:** In order of seniority: The six tribes on Mount Gerizim descended from Jacob’s wives, Rachel and Leah. Four of the six tribes stationed on Mount Ebal for the curses were descended from Jacob’s concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. The other two were Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, who forfeited his birthright through incest (Gen 35:22; 49:3-4), and Zebulun, Leah’s youngest son.

- 14] And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,  
 15] Cursed *be* the man that maketh *any* graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth *it* in a secret *place*. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

- 16] Cursed *be* he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

In Chapter 28 there appear matching sets of six blessings (vv. 3-6) and six curses (vv. 16-19). Joshua apparently read Deuteronomy 28 before all the assembly of Israel as part of the entire renewal treaty (cf. Josh 8:34, 35).

The Levitical priests were to be stationed between Ebal and Gerizim (Deut 27:14; cf. Josh 8:33). They must lead Israel in the oath of ratification, consisting in a series of twelve self-maledictions (Deut 27:15-26). In the march Levi was divided into two parts—the Gershonites and Merarites going fourth with the tabernacle furniture, while the Kohathites went eighth with the ark and sanctuary. But they unite at Mount Gerizim. Nothing could more clearly indicate the mercy and blessing embodied in the whole ceremonial law which the Levites represented.

***Exclusive devotion to God could under no circumstances include any toleration or recognition of other gods.***

**12 Curses**

- Sins of idolatry v.15
- Sins against fellowmen vv.16-19
- Sexual sins vv.20-23
- Guilt in bloodshed vv.24-25
- Concluding curse v.26

- 17] Cursed *be* he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.  
 18] Cursed *be* he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.  
 19] Cursed *be* he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

The repeated “cursed be” identifies the covenant-breaker’s fate with that of the serpent (cf. Gen 3:14). The “Amen” response was the customary formula of assent (cf. Num 5:22; 2 Kgs 1:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6; Ps 72:19). The fact that only curses and not blessings are given in this passage indicates that this is not the detailed account of the curse and blessing proclamation by the two pairs of six tribes mentioned in Deut 27:12, 13.

- 20] Cursed *be* he that lieth with his father’s wife; because he uncovereth his father’s skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.  
 21] Cursed *be* he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.  
 22] Cursed *be* he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.



23] Cursed *be* he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen.

A similar indication is the fact that verses 15-26 were to be addressed to and receive response from all the Israelites (v. 14). This section rather describes a separate feature of the covenant ceremony, the actual oath, which characteristically took the form of provisional self-maledictions, but not benedictions.

In contrast to the curses in Chapter 28, the several members of this series differ not in variety of curse but in kind of sin. The area of transgression covered is that of secret sins likely to escape human detection and punishment (note esp. 27:15, 24; cf. Job 31:24ff.) and, therefore, peculiarly the judicial province of God as divine Witness to the oath. Those are imprecated who secretly violate God's demands for respect to himself (v. 15), to rightful authority (v. 16), to truth (vv. 17-19), to family (vv. 20-23), to human life (vv. 24, 25), and, in sum, to God's covenant (v. 26). Sexual perversions: Lev 18:8, 9, 17, 23.

24] Cursed *be* he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.

25] Cursed *be* he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

26] Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This last curse demonstrates that the preceding list was representative. The summary nature of the 12<sup>th</sup> curse (v.26) indicates that God desired a wholehearted obedience to the Law both in public and in private.

*Paul used this verse to teach that no one could find eternal life by obeying the Law* (Gal. 3:10). Eternal life is received only through God's grace when one places his faith in Jesus Christ as his substitutionary Sacrifice for sin (Rom 3:24-25; Eph 2:8-9).

## Deuteronomy 28

### The Blessings and The Curses

In the corresponding section of the Sinaitic Book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-33), the blessings predominated. Now, the 40 years' history of Israelite apostasy having intervened, Moses' emphasis falls heavily on the curses; thus, blessings (Deut 28:1-14) and curses (vv. 15-68). This emphasis was anticipated in the promises and threats of a similar section in Leviticus (Ch. 26), written after Israel's earliest rebellion against the Sinaitic Covenant. [The remarkable preview in Deuteronomy 28-30 of Israel's history, especially of the far-off exile, has been a major stumbling

block, for some, to the recognition of the Mosaic origin of this document by naturalistic "higher criticism."]

1] And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

2] And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

Although Israel's inheritance and continued enjoyment of the promises was not a matter of legal merit, there was a connection between the nation's corporate piety and her prosperity. For the OT theocratic kingdom prefigured the consummate kingdom of God, in which righteousness and glory are to be united. Since any righteousness that Israel possessed was a gift of grace from the God of her salvation, the principle which informs Deut 28 has no affinities with a religion of works-salvation.

3] Blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the field.

4] Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

5] Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store.

6] Blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou comest in, and blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out.

Verses 3-6 present six blessings which are paralleled by six curses in 16-19.

7] The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

8] The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

What was concisely presented in liturgical formulae in the six beatitudes is elaborated in verses 7-14. The arrangement of the blessings is chiasmic: thus, foreign relations (vv. 7 and 12b, 13); domestic affairs (vv. 8 and 11, 12a); and in the center position, relationship to the Lord (vv. 9, 10).

9] The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.

10] And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.

From the manifest tokens of God's favor to Israel, all the earth would recognize that *the name of the Lord is called upon thee* (v. 10). That is,

it would be clear that God's covenant was established with Israel and that he, the Suzerain, was Israel's Owner and Defender (cf. Isa 63:19; Jer 7:10, 11; 15:16). Once and again the prerequisite covenant loyalty is recalled (Deut 28:9b, 13b, 14).

- 11] And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
- 12] The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.
- 13] And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*:
- 14] And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Once and again the prerequisite covenant loyalty is recalled (Deut 28:9b, 13b, 14).

- 15] But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:
- 16] Cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the field.
- 17] Cursed *shall be* thy basket and thy store.

Banishment from the promised inheritance was the extreme of malediction. It signified the loss of God's special presence and favor, loss of the appointed sacramental access to him on his holy hill of Zion, and loss of status as the people of God's kingdom. In this long section of curses, therefore, siege and exile repeatedly appear as the climax of woe.

Verse 15 corresponds to verses 1 and 2, and 16-19 are the counterpart to 3 through 6. The vengeance of the covenant (cf. Lev 26:25) would overtake the oath-violating people even within the asylum of their inherited paradise land.

- 18] Cursed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.
- 19] Cursed *shalt* thou *be* when thou comest in, and cursed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out.
- 20] The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.

There is a series of parallel pictures of the disastrous future looming before this nation so prone to unfaithfulness (vv. 20-26, 27-37, 38-48, 49-57, 58-68). The first three and the last of these pictures culminate in the

doom of conquest by the enemy, with its dreadful sequel (vv. 25, 26; 36, 37; 48; 63-68); the fourth is completely devoted to that accursed event (vv. 49-57). This extended description of particular evils follows an introductory, ritualistic formulation of the covenant's curse sanctions (vv. 15-19).

- **Thou hast forsaken me.** Such was the essence of Israel's sin—violation of the first commandment of the covenant.
- **The Lord shall send.** It was the right and duty of the forsaken Lord himself, the One to whom and by whom Israel swore the covenant oath, to avenge the oath. Whatever the human or earthly origin of the several curses, the Lord was their ultimate Author.
- **Until thou be destroyed** (cf. vv. 24, 45, 51, 61). It is repeatedly stated here that the final issue of the various types of curses—epidemic (vv. 21, 22a), drought (vv. 22b-24), and war (vv. 25, 26)—would be nothing short of Israel's destruction (vv. 20-22, 24, 26).

- 21] The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.
- 22] The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.

- **Until thou be destroyed** (cf. vv. 24, 45, 51, 61). It is repeatedly stated here that the final issue of the various types of curses—epidemic (vv. 21, 22a), drought (vv. 22b-24), and war (vv. 25, 26)—would be nothing short of Israel's destruction (vv. 20-22, 24, 26).

- 23] And thy heaven that *is* over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee *shall be* iron.
- 24] The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

- **The rain of thy land powder and dust.** The sirocco would fill the air with sand and dust. Verse 25 is the reversal of verse 7 (cf. Lev 26:17).

- 25] The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.
- 26] And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray *them* away.

- **Thy carcase ... meat unto all fowls ... and ... beasts.** The curse principle is essentially the prostration of man under the subhuman realms over which God appointed him in the beginning as king. Hence, the Scripture depicts the doom of rebel mankind as an eschatological feast in which slain men are devoured by birds and beasts (cf. Ps 79:2; Ezek 39:4, 17ff.; Rev 19:17, 18).

- 27] The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

28] The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:

Vexation and frustration characterize the curses of this section. Observe the references in almost every verse either to the utter impotence of the Israelites to cope with their afflictions or to their helplessness in the face of oppression. God created man as one who, entering into the program of His kingdom, might rejoice to follow the divine sabbatic pattern of labor crowned with the joy and satisfaction of consummation. But accursed Israel's undertakings in the areas of marriage and labor would be rewarded always and only with *failure*. Instead of attaining to the sabbath joy of accomplishment, the people of Israel would be driven mad with the vanity and frustration of their exertions (vv. 28, 34).

29] And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save *thee*.

30] Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.

31] Thine ox *shall be* slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass *shall be* violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep *shall be* given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue *them*.

32] Thy sons and thy daughters *shall be* given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail *with longing* for them all the day long: and *there shall be* no might in thine hand.

Now we come to one of the most remarkable passages of Scripture. It is the history of Israel in the land, pre-written. Scripture prophesied concerning Israel's being dispossessed out of the land three times and regathered into the land three times. There are to be three dispossessions and three regatherings of Israel.

The **first** of these was prophesied by God to Abraham. "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years .... But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again ... (Gen 15:13, 16). They went down into Egypt for 430 years; then God brought them out of Egypt. That is what we are following now in Deuteronomy. They are on the east bank of the Jordan River, and God is bringing them back to the land for the first regathering. In the Book of Joshua, we will find them entering into the land, and in the Book of Judges we will find them settled in the land, which is a complete and literal fulfillment. Now, before they have even entered the land, the **second time** they are to be put out of the land is mentioned here.

33] The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway:

34] So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

35] The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head.

Verse 34 was accurately fulfilled in Judah's last king, Zedekiah, whose sons were slain before him; then his eyes were put out. Blind and helpless, he was carried away into Babylonian captivity:

Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword: *But* thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn *odours* for thee; and they will lament thee, *saying*, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

Jer 34:4-5

Jeremiah indicates that he shall not die by the sword, but in peace.

My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon *to* the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

Ezek 12:13

Ezekiel seems to contradict himself, indicating that Zedekiah will never see the Babylonian captivity...

So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

2 Kgs 25:6-7

The precision of prophecy is chilling. God says what He means and means what He says.

36] The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.

37] And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee.

The section ends (vv. 36, 37) with the curse of conquest by a foreign nation—which neither thou nor thy fathers have known—which was anticipated in verses 32, 33. Israel was regathered from the Babylonian Captivity. Their return to the land is recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. The

prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi tell of their return to the land. So then, this is the second prophecy concerning their return to the land. This has been literally fulfilled. The third scattering of Israel was the result of being conquered by Rome.

- 38] Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather *but* little in; for the locust shall consume it.  
 39] Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress *them*, but shalt neither drink *of* the wine, nor gather *the grapes*; for the worms shall eat them.  
 40] Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint *thyself* with the oil; for thine olive shall cast *his fruit*.

The curses of 28:38-42 are the opposite of the blessings of verses 8, 11 ff. 38, ...*the locust... worms*. The crop pests, another sector of man's erstwhile total dominion (cf. Gen 1:26), in effect would make the Israelites their servants, who must labor to feed them.

- 41] Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity.  
 42] All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.  
 43] The stranger that *is* within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low.  
 44] He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.  
 45] Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee:  
 46] And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.

In verses 45-48 there is a summation of the preceding threats of curse, both as to cause (cf. v. 20) and as to result. The cause would be Israel's breaking of the covenant oath; the result would be that Israel would suffer the full vengeance of the covenant to the extremity of exile's devastation.

- 47] Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all *things*;  
 48] Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all *things*: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

The punishment (Deut 28:48) was to fit the crime (v. 47). Israel's curse-yoke (v. 48) would amount to a return to the status from which God had called her in covenant love (cf. Lev 26:13). The two volumes of Flavius Josephus' history tells about the coming of the Romans under Titus.

Rome, known as the iron kingdom, fulfilled the prediction, "He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck." Though Moses does not at this point detract from the impressiveness of these curses by any qualifications, elsewhere he proclaims the triumph of covenant grace through the restoration of an elect, repentant remnant (Deut 4:29ff; 30:1ff.).

- 49] The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;  
 50] A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young:

Rome, coming all the way from the West, spoke a language that was entirely different from Hebrew. Our English is based on Latin and the European languages, but Hebrew is a language that is related to the Asian and African and Oriental languages. It is altogether different. God says the conquerors would be "whose tongue thou shalt not understand."

[It is interesting that Rome carried standards bearing the emblem of the eagle. I am of the opinion that many an instructed Israelite, when he looked over the battlements of the wall and saw the standards of Titus with an eagle on them, said, "This is *it!*"]

With unsparing vividness Moses exposes the appalling distress and degradation to which this people, once the head of the nations, would be reduced when caught in the curse of siege.

- 51] And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which *also* shall not leave thee *either* corn, wine, or oil, *or* the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.

It is repeatedly stated here that the final issue of the various types of curses—epidemic (vv. 21, 22a), drought (vv. 22b-24), and war (vv. 25, 26)—would be nothing short of Israel's destruction (vv. 20-22, 24, 26).

- 52] And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.  
 53] And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:

But the inhumanity of the enemy warrior would pale beside that of even the tenderest Israelite mother, turned cannibalistic in the horror of the siege (vv. 52-57; cf. Lev 26:29; Lam 4:1-10).



“The fruit of thy land.... the fruit of thine own body”: The passage contrasts the natural appetite of the barbarian and the unnatural lust of the Israelites. There would be no refuge from the siege anywhere in the land (vv. 52a,c, 55, 57) for those who had put their trust in human defenses rather than in God, their true Refuge. Josephus tells in his history how mothers were forced to give up their babies, and the flesh of the babies was eaten. The people died, and their corpses collected inside the city. They had to throw them over the wall. May I say to you that this prophecy was literally fulfilled. Old Testament history witnessed successive executions of this curse, until the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

- 54] *So that* the man *that is* tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:
- 55] So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.
- 56] The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,
- 57] And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all *things* secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.
- 58] If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD;

Not the Book of Deuteronomy, which was not then written, but the Book of the Law, the Torah, delivered by Moses to Israel from God; and of which he had been, in his addresses to the people, recapitulating some of the principal points (cf. verses 60, 61).

In this closing paragraph Moses harks back to the conditional form with which the pronouncing of the curses began (cf. v. 15), for in the day of assembly in Moab the decision between the curses and the blessings was still to be made by Israel. To avoid the curses the people of Israel must obey the stipulations of this covenant document out of true reverence for the Lord who had revealed his glory and fearful works in saving them from Egypt.

- 59] Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, *even* great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.
- 60] Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.
- 61] Also every sickness, and every plague, which *is* not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

“Until thou be destroyed” (cf. vv. 24, 45, 51, 61): It is repeatedly stated here that the final issue of the various types of curses—epidemic (vv. 21, 22a), drought (vv. 22b-24), and war (vv. 25, 26)—would be nothing short of Israel’s destruction (vv. 20-22, 24, 26).

- 62] And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God.
- 63] And it shall come to pass, *that* as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Disobedience would bring loss of the blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant, namely, the multiplication of the people and the possession of a homeland. In place of the blessings would be every possible extraordinary and persistent affliction (vv. 59-61).

- 64] And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone.
- 65] And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:

Prophetically following the besieged and conquered people into their exile (vv. 64-67), Moses catches with a few strokes all the pathos of unbelieving, homeless Israel *down through the centuries*—once the people of God, but become in their exile like unto the heathen, without Christ, having no hope, without God in the world (Eph 2:12). By repudiating their election and covenant calling, in virtue of which they had been delivered from Egyptian slavery to become God’s theocratic sons, the people of Israel were doomed to fall back into a worse Egyptian bondage (v. 68), into bondage to Satan and sin, death and Hell.

- 66] And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:
- 67] In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.
- 68] And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy *you*.

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the seven standard divisions in the ancient suzerainty treaties; which ones were addressed in this session?
- 2) Why were the stones of an altar *unhewn*? What was that intended to signify?
- 3) Why was the altar at the foot of Mt. Ebal rather than at Mt. Gerizim?
- 4) List the right of succession among the 12 patriarchs: how did it devolve unto Judah?
- 5) Explain the difference between the tribes that were assembled at Mt. Gerizim and those assembled at Mt. Ebal.
- 6) Where were the Levites? Why?
- 7) How did Paul use 27:26 in his epistle to the Galatians?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Discuss the roles of the law and grace to the New Testament believer. What is the Christian’s attitude toward “the law”?
- 2) How do you reconcile God’s grace to the Christian with the burden of obedience levied on Israel? If their enjoyment of the promises was based on their obedience, that would link their prosperity to corporate piety. How is that different from the NT teachings?
- 3) List and explain the three dispossessions and subsequent regatherings prophesied upon the nation Israel.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compile a comparison of Israel’s history and the prophecies in Deut 28-30.
- 2) Compile a summary of the history of Gentile nations in the light of Genesis 12: 2.

- 3) Compile a history of the Holocaust: 1930-1945.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 29-30. Explore background on the Holocaust, 1930-1945.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 14 Chapters 29 - 30

### Outline

Moses’ 1 <sup>st</sup> Sermon	1:1–4:43
Moses’ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sermon	4:44–28:68
<b>Moses’ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon</b>	<b>29:1–30:20</b>
Moses’ Last Days	31:1–34:12

### Treaty Structure

Prologue  
Basic Stipulations  
Detailed Stipulations  
Document Clause  
Blessings  
Cursings  
**Recapitulation** (summarizing the treaty)

## Deuteronomy 29 The Palestinian Covenant

Chapters 29 and 30 are considered the Palestinian covenant. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer considered Chapters 28–30 to be the covenant. *The Scofield Reference Bible* considers it to be 29–30:10 with Chapter 29 as the introduction. J. Vernon McGee takes Chapter 29 through the first ten verses of Chapter 30 as being the covenant.

In a direct, personal appeal to the generation standing before him, Moses confronted them with the central purpose of the ceremony of this great day (vv. 10-15) This central demand for the oath of allegiance, which reflects the overall pattern of the suzerainty treaty, is preceded by a reminder of the Lord’s past works of salvation (vv. 2-9) and followed by a warning that the curses of the covenant would be visited on an unfaithful nation throughout their generations (vv. 16-29).

- 1] These *are* the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.
- 2] And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land;

(Hebrew Bible 28:69). There is essential continuity in God's Covenant of Redemption from Genesis through Revelation. Nevertheless, the successive administrations of that Covenant, as it is repeatedly renewed by divine grace, are to be distinguished.

## Covenants

Adam	Gen 3:15
Abraham	Gen 12
Sinai (Horeb)	Ex 20-23
Moab	Deut 5

The covenant made in Moab renewed the one made at Sinai, which renewed the covenant God made with Abraham, which renewed the covenant He made with Adam (cf. Gen 3:15; Deut 5:2, 3). The mercy and the miracle of the deliverance from Egypt and the passage through the wilderness should have opened the eyes of this generation to the supreme wisdom of giving themselves in wholehearted love to so great and gracious a Lord.

- 3] The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles:
- 4] Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.
- 5] And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

“Not given ... an heart to perceive”: In spite of seeing all the signs, they still did not perceive. Isaiah has a great deal to say about that. Paul in Romans deals with the blindness of Israel. “According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day” (Rom 11:8).

But the simplest spiritual knowledge is beyond the perception of man the sinner unless the Spirit of God grants him understanding as a sovereign gift of grace. This people, so signally favored as to have lived forty years in the atmosphere of supernatural providence, lacked that necessary gift (cf. 9:7, 24).

- 6] Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I *am* the LORD your God.
- 7] And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them:
- 8] And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh.
- 9] Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

The responsibility for this spiritual dullness was Israel's, and by this reproof the people were incited to a better response to their Lord. The imperceptible way in which the appeal of Moses becomes the direct appeal of the Lord (v. 5ff.; cf. 7:4; 11:15; 17:3; 28:20) evidences the reality of the supernatural revelation which came through Moses, God's mediator.

- 10] Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, *with* all the men of Israel,
- 11] Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that *is* in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water:

The terms indicate the solemnly formal nature of the assembly and stress the fact that the entire covenant community was present for participation in the oath. Women and children, non-Israelites (cf. Ex 12:38; Num 10:29; 11:4), and servants (Deut 29:11c; cf. Josh 9:21) were included.

- 12] That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day:
- 13] That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and *that* he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

“Enter into ... covenant of the Lord (RSV). The Hebrew phrase, found only here, means literally, *pass over into*, or *pass through*. According to the latter translation, the expression might derive from a ceremony of oath-taking like that in Gen 15:17, 18.

The equating of the Lord's covenant with his oath is a significant linkage to the nature of the covenant as an instrument of God's rule whereby he secures the commitment of a people to his service.

“That he may establish thee”: This verse is to the same effect, but it shows, too, that God's establishment of covenant relationship with man is not a humiliating subjugation but *an act of redemptive favor*. It fulfills the promise and oath in which the children of God have found hope and consolation (cf. Heb 6:17, 18).

- 14] Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath;  
 15] But with *him* that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with *him* that *is* not here with us this day:  
 16] (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by;

“And also with him that is not here with us this day”: This means that there was to be genealogical continuity to the covenant. Such is the case not because salvation is an inalienable family heirloom but because God is faithful to his promise to extend his covenant mercies to the thousandth generation of those who love him and because covenant administration respects parental authority (vv. 14, 15). Accordingly, the covenant with its sacramental sign of consecration is administered to believers together with their children.

- 17] And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which *were* among them:)  
 18] Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go *and* serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

(Remember), lest idolatry take root among you and you reap a bitter, poisonous harvest (v. 18; cf. Heb 12:15). The danger figuratively depicted in verse 18b is developed in verses 19-28 (the root in verses 19-21 and the bitter fruit in verses 22-28).

- 19] And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:  
 20] The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

“...drunkedness to thirst”(KJV): “on the watered land as well as the dry” (NIV): The reference of this proverbial phrase is to plants; watered and thirsty plants means all plants. It continues the figure of verse 18b, warning again that if idolatry took hold in Israel, its ultimate issue must be deadly, indeed must be the ruin of the entire people.

This thought is resumed in 29:22ff. As for the individual who would hypocritically mouth the self-maledictory oath of the covenant (v. 19b), the Lord would not hold him guiltless for having taken his name in vain. Though the individual might think himself hidden in the assembled host of Israel and suppose his hypocrisy concealed within his own heart, the Lord, the avenging divine Witness of the oath, would single him out and mercilessly pour on him all the curses he had idly invoked.

- 21] And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law:  
 22] So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it;

Abruptly changing his standpoint to the future (Deut 29:22) beyond the desolation of the theocracy and the Exile (v. 28), which he had before threatened in the covenant curses, Moses again traced the cause of Israel’s fall to her having forsaken the covenant by transferring her allegiance to idol god-kings (vv. 25-28).

- 23] *And that* the whole land thereof *is* brimstone, and salt, *and* burning, *that* it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:  
 24] Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what *meaneth* the heat of this great anger?

“Wherefore hath the Lord done thus ...?”: He used the device of a dramatic dialogue of Israelites and foreigners standing amid the charred ruins of the theocratic land, a former paradise turned, like the cities of the plain, into a barren waste by the fury of God’s judgment (v. 23). The Vale of Siddim, once a paradise, a visible witness of God’s devastating judgment (Gen 13:10, 19:24-25).

*And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.*

Gen 13:10

- 25] Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:  
 26] For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and *whom* he had not given unto them:  
 27] And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:  
 28] And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day.  
 29] The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are* revealed *belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

Attention to the Lord’s revealed demand for consecration *is the life business of his servants* (cf. 30:11ff.), not lusting after knowledge of divine mysteries (cf. Gen 3:5). There are, of course, many “Mysteries”



in the Bible, which comes from the Greek word, *Musterion*, which actually means *a revealed secret*, rather than an secret unknown.

## Mysteries ( מְסֵתֵרִים *musterion*)

- Kingdom of God            Mark 4:11
- God's Will                 Eph 1:9
- Christ                      Col 2:2; 4:3
- The Gospel                Rom 16:25 Eph 6:19
- Rapture                    1 Cor 15:51
- Israel's Blindness        Rom 11:25
- The Church                Eph 3:3-9; 5:32; Col 1:26,27; Rev 1:20
- Iniquity                    2 Thess 2:7
- Babylon                    Rev 17:5,7

## Deuteronomy 30 Ultimate Restoration

Beyond the curse of exile opened *the prospect of restoration* (vv. 1-10; cf. 4:29-31; Lev 26:40-45). The redemptive program is not to be frustrated by the fall of those who were of Israel yet were not faithful Israelites. An obedient remnant, together with the remnant of the Gentiles, will be restored to the covenant Lord in his glorious kingdom. Of this ultimate restoration, the OT return from Babylonian exile was typical. The one vast complex of typical and antitypical restoration is embraced in this prophetic blessing of Moses.

The section of the treaty concerned with covenant ratification (Deut 27–30) closes with the call for decision, in which Moses reminded the people of Israel that they could not plead ignorance of God's demands (vv. 11-14) and warned them that the alternatives set before them in the covenant curses and blessings were those of life and death (vv. 15-20).

- 1] And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

There are seven great promises which God makes here. He makes these statements which are unconditional. They will be dispersed among all the nations. The nation would be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness. That has taken place.

- 2] And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

There will be a future repentance of Israel in the dispersion. They are going to come back to God. It seems logical that if they were dispersed because of disobedience, they will return because of their obedience. No, this is the order of grace, not law. *They will not be returned because of their obedience, but they will be obedient because of their return.* God will bring them back to the land. The regathering of Israel into her own land is the theme of at least twelve major prophecies in the Old Testament.

- 3] That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.
- 4] If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

This is the first mention of the return of Christ to the earth that is recorded in Scripture. (In the Book of Jude we find that Enoch, even before the flood of Noah, mentioned the fact that He is coming back, but that was not recorded in the Old Testament.) Here is the fourth great promise of God. Israel is to be restored to the land. This is an unconditional promise. No amount of scattering can change the fact that in the future God will bring them into the land. The fifth promise is that there will be a national conversion.

- 5] And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.
- 6] And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

The origin of that repentance and heart—love for the Lord would be in a divine work of qualification—*the Lord ... will circumcise thine heart.* What had been externally symbolized in circumcision, the OT sacrament of consecration, would be spiritually actualized by the power of God (cf. 10:16; Jer 31:33ff.; 32:39ff.; Ezek 11:19; 36:26, 27). This same promise is reaffirmed in Jeremiah and Hosea and stated by Paul in the Book of Romans. The sixth thing mentioned here is that Israel's enemies will be judged. Israel will return and then obey the voice of the Lord. That is the order of grace. And then their enemies will be judged.

- 7] And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee.

- 8] And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.

Finally, the seventh wonderful thing is that Israel will then receive her full blessing. (But this after Hos 5:15!)

*I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.*

Hos 5:15

- 9] And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:

Along with the spiritual gifts of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification by which the rebels are transformed into faithful servants, the Messiah will give them a new world of prosperity and peace as their inheritance (vv. 3a, 5, 9; cf. 28:4, 62). The restored theocratic kingdom in Canaan is used as a typical figure for the antitypical reality, the eternal kingdom of God in the renewed universe. That will be secured by a divine judgment, for while the people of God are to inherit the earth, their enemies will be plagued with every curse (v. 7). The Messianic salvation is, thus, a new exodus and conquest, a renewal of the covenant mediated through Moses and Joshua, first at Sinai and afterwards in Moab and at Ebal and Gerizim.

- 10] If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, *and* if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.  
11] For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off.

The Lord did not require of Israel something incomprehensible or unattainable (v. 11).

- 12] It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?  
13] Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?  
14] But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

Israel's duty was not hidden at some inaccessible height (v. 12) or beyond some insuperable barrier (v. 13). Note Paul's similar use of these proverbial questions in Rom 10:5, 6.

There are the secret, incomprehensible things which belong to God (cf. 29:29a; Ps 131:1), but the covenant demand is one of the revealed things given to God's people to be obeyed (cf. 29:29b; 6:6, 7; 11:18, 19; 31:19): The Word: Prov 8:22-23; John 1:1; Rom 10:6-8. As Job affirmed, exhaustive knowledge is the possession of God alone, but to man God assigns, as his portion of wisdom, the fear of the Lord, which is the way of the covenant (Job 28, esp. v. 28).

- 15] See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;  
16] In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

Moses concluded his setting forth of the covenant blessings and curses with an appeal of memorable simplicity and sublimity. He reminded Israel that in her experience as a kingdom, blessing and obedience would be inseparable, as would also rebellion and the curse (vv. 16-18).

- 17] But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;  
18] I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that* ye shall not prolong *your* days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.  
19] I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

One of the standard divisions in the secular suzerainty treaties was that containing the invocation of the gods of the Lord and vassal as the divine witnesses of the covenant oath. It is significant that the Deuteronomic treaty contains at least a rhetorical parallel to that feature (cf. 4:26; 31:28; 32:1). The Lord was, of course, the divine Witness as well as the Suzerain of this covenant.

- 20] That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, *and* that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Over and over again Moses traced the work of salvation which God was accomplishing through him to the promises sworn unto Abraham (v. 20c). Paul, in speaking about salvation in NT terms, makes use of this appeal by Moses (30:10-20) in Romans 10:1-21.

## The Law of Love: Their Key Decision

To love God so wholeheartedly that they will live in accordance with God's revealed will as outlined in His written revelation: Paul (Romans 10); Jesus (John 3).

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the distinctive "dispensations" commonly reckoned within Biblical history.
- 2) List the major covenants highlighted in the Torah. Which ones are still operative today?
- 3) Profile the periods of "blindness" evidenced by Israel. What is their condition today and how will it change?
- 4) List the major prophecies of the *Return* of Christ in the OT.
- 5) Explain the Law of Love: Deut 30, Rom 10, John 3.

### Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) How is the Palestinian Covenant relevant to today's foreign policies?
- 2) How is the Vale of Siddim relevant to today's geopolitical challenges?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Compile a comprehensive list of the "mysteries" in the Bible and summarize each.
- 2) Compile a profile of the 12 major prophecies regarding the regathering of Israel in the OT.
- 3) Compare the geography of the episodes in the Book of Judges with the disputed lands in Israel today.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 31- 32. Also, Genesis 49.

## The Book of Deuteronomy Session 15 Chapters 31 - 32

### Outline

Moses' 1 <sup>st</sup> Sermon	1:1-4:43
Moses' 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sermon	4:44-28:68
Moses' 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sermon	29:1-30:20
<b>Moses' Last Days</b>	<b>31:1-34:12</b>
Deut 1-4	Failure
Deut 5-11	Mutual Love
Deut 12-20	Obligations of a God-related people
Deut 27-30	Alternatives for a God-related people
<b>Deut 31-34</b>	<b>Arrangements for continuity</b>

## Deuteronomy 31 Passing the Baton

This is the last section of the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a requiem to Moses and extends from Chapter 31 to 34. It begins with the fifth oration, which Moses gave to the children of Israel and is recorded in this book. We are coming to the end of the life of Moses. The entire Bible up to this point has been written by him and a great deal of it has been *about* him. He has been a key person ever since they came out of the land of Egypt. He has been concerned with Israel for forty years, and he has left us a record of the 120 years of his life. *Yet, even he was not indispensable to the fulfillment of God's purpose.* Now he is getting ready to die.

Moses had finished his work as the legislator and ruler and leader of Israel. He now had to establish his successor to the leadership: committing the keeping of the Law to the priests; admonishing the people to obedience; encouraging them to go forward in the conquest of Canaan; assuring them of the Divine favor and blessing; and, pronouncing on them his parting benediction.

- 1] And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.

- 2] And he said unto them, I *am* an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.
- 3] The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, *and* he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: *and* Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.

When Moses stood before Pharaoh he was eighty years old (Ex 7:7); since then forty years had elapsed during the wanderings in the wilderness. Moses did not choose Joshua; *God* selected him to be the leader to succeed Moses. I doubt whether Moses would have chosen Joshua if the choice had been left to him. Actually, Caleb seems more impressive than Joshua, and it would seem more natural for him to be the new leader.

- 4] And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed.
- 5] And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.

Though Moses was no longer to be their leader, he assures them that the Lord would fulfill his engagement to conduct them to the possession of Canaan, even as he had already given them the territory of the kings of the Amorites; and he therefore exhorts them to be of good courage and fearlessly go forward to the conquest of the land (cf. Deut 1:21; 10:3).

- 6] Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.
- 7] And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

Moses is encouraging these people not to fear the enemy tribes that are in the land. He encourages this generation over and over, telling them to cross over into the land. He had lived through the experience of Kadesh-Barnea. He had seen the older generation turn yellow and run back into the wilderness.

- 8] And the LORD, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.
- 9] And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.

This was the same lesson that Isaiah had to learn. Isaiah Chapter 6 starts, “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne....” Poor Isaiah! Uzziah had been a good king, and now that he

was dead, Isaiah thought things were really going to be bad, but he found that God was still on the throne, that the real King of Israel and of Judah was still on the throne. He wasn’t dead. He wasn’t even sick. Isaiah learned that although Uzziah had died, God was still very much alive.]

Deuteronomy began, “These are the words which Moses spoke.” There are about eight orations of Moses in the book—given orally, then written down. Moses wrote this Law. (Seventy elders assisted him; scribes also likely. They probably were the ones who wrote Chapter 34.) The Graf-Wellhausen theory rejects the Mosaic authorship, considering the Pentateuch as historical documents compiled shortly before 400 B.C. The original argument for this theory was that writing was not in existence at the time of Moses. Of course archaeologists have found that writing was in existence long before Moses’ day, but the Graf-Wellhausen theory is still held by the liberal wing of the church for the obvious reason that the prediction of Israel’s declension after entering the land is so accurate that the unbeliever would like to think it was written as history rather than prophecy. Furthermore, Jesus attributes each of the books of the *Torah* to Moses. That’s enough for me.

- 10] And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of *every* seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,
- 11] When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

The septennial reading of the Law to Israel (v. 10) at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 16:13ff.) in the year of release (cf. 15:1ff.) was intended not as the sole means of teaching the people of Israel their covenantal obligations but as an especially impressive reminder, at this time of sabbatical renewal and consummation, of the need for an ever fresh self-consecration by the servants of the Lord if they would enjoy full covenant. If they had faithful to so this after Joshua’s day, the history in the Book of Judges would have been different, indeed!

- 12] Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that *is* within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:
- 13] And *that* their children, which have not known *any thing*, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.
- 14] And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.



- 15] And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

After nominating Joshua as his successor, and assigning the keeping of the Law to the priesthood and body of elders, Moses was summoned by the Lord to appear with Joshua in the tabernacle, that Joshua might receive a charge and appointment to his office. Joshua, like Moses (cf. Ex 3:1–4:17), was personally commissioned by the Lord himself.

At the same time, God announced to Moses that after his death the people would go astray, turn to idolatry, and violate the covenant so that God's anger should be kindled against them, and he would leave them to suffer the consequences of their folly and sin. In view of this, Moses was directed to write a song and teach it to the people, that it might abide with them as a witness against them, rising up, as songs will do, in the memory of the nation, even after they had apostatized from the path in which the author of the song had led them.

- 16] And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

“Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers”: Cf. 2 Sam 7:12; Ps 13:3; 76:5; Dan 12:2; Mt 27:52; Jn 11:11; 1 Thess 4:14. “The death of men, both good and bad, is often called a *sleep*, because they shall certainly awake out of it by resurrection” (Peele).

- 17] Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us?  
18] And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

There are people who say today, “We are different today. We’ll not turn away from God.” Do you know that Jesus said the same thing about the church? In Luke 18:8 He said, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth.” “Faith” is *the* faith, the whole body of revealed truth. The answer to that is no, He won’t. In fact, the way the question is couched in the Greek *demand*s a *negative answer*. In the New Testament there is predicted the apostasy of the church, just as it was predicted of Israel, and you and I are living in it today.

- 19] Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

- 20] For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

The Song which Moses and Joshua wrote together is the next chapter.

- 21] And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.  
22] Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.  
23] And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee.  
24] And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished,  
25] That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,  
26] Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.  
27] For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?

In the side of the ark; *at or by the side of the ark*. According to the Targum of Jonathan, it was in a coffer by the right side of the ark that the book was placed; but the Talmudists say it was put within the ark, along with the two tables of the Decalogue (‘Baba Bathra,’ 14); [but 1 Kgs 8:9 indicates that only the Decalogue was in the Ark then.]

- 28] Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.

He calls the tribes around him just as old Jacob had called the twelve sons around him (Gen 34.) The twelve sons have now become the twelve tribes, and they are a great nation. Moses calls them to him.

- 29] For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt *yourselves*, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

This statement is still true. It has been fulfilled quite literally. It is also true of the entire human family, for God has said that mankind apart from God will utterly corrupt itself. All we need to do is look around us today and we can see that this is true.

- 30] And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

The song is rather different from the preaching style found in most of the rest of the book. It is, in contrast, poetic, and in both substance and style it anticipates passages in the Psalms and the prophetic Scriptures. It is rock music. It is all about the Rock, who is Christ!

## Deuteronomy 32 Song of Moses

This chapter should be studied in concert with Gen 49, when Jacob blessed (prophesied over) the 12 tribes.

- 1] Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

Isaiah records this same call; it is the way the Book of Isaiah opens: “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me” (Isa 1:1–2). When God put Israel *into* the land, He called heaven and earth to witness. When God is ready to put them *out of* the land, about 700 years later, He again calls heaven and earth to witness.

- 2] My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:  
3] Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.  
4] *He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he.  
5] They have corrupted themselves, their spot *is* not *the spot* of his children: *they are* a perverse and crooked generation.  
6] Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

Rock song, indeed (7X). Heb. *tsur*, employed as a symbol of God in the Old Testament (1Sam2:2; 2Sam22:3; Isa 17:10; Ps 28:1; 31:2,3; 89:26; 95:1) New Testament (Mt 16:18; Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 10:4). In Dan2:45 the Chaldaic form of the Hebrew word is translated “mountain.” It ought to be translated “rock,” as in Hab 1:12. Chief cornerstone: 1 Pet 2:6.

### The Rock (as a symbol)

Repeatedly in the song of Moses (Deut 32:3,4,18,30,31; Cf. 2 Sam 22:32) “Yahweh is my rock, and my fortress” (2 Sam 22:2; Ps 18:2; 71:3)

“God, the rock of my salvation” (2 Sam 22:47; Cf. Ps 62:2,7; 89:26)  
“My God the rock of my refuge” (Ps 94:22)  
“The rock of thy strength” (Isa 17:10)  
“Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Ps 61:2)  
“And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense” Isa 8:14 (Cf. Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:8)  
The rock smitten in the wilderness (1) Ex 17 (2) Num 20:11 [Smitten Rock (2<sup>nd</sup> time) cause for Moses being denied entrance into Promised Land! If Moses had followed directions, it would have “modeled” the *two advents!*]  
Christ as the source of living water (1 Cor 10:4)

- 7] Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.  
8] When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

Astonishing: The nations of the earth are measured according to the number of the children of Israel. In other words, the bounds that the nations have are arranged according to the number of Israelites. Jewish commentators, following the Masoretic text, saw a correspondence of the seventy nations of Genesis 10 to the seventy Israelites of Gen 46:27. [It is also interesting that there was a mythical tradition that El, head of the Canaanite pantheon, had seventy sons...]

- 9] For the LORD’S portion *is* his people; Jacob *is* the lot of his inheritance.  
10] He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.  
11] As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:  
12] *So* the LORD alone did lead him, and *there was* no strange god with him.  
13] He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;  
14] Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.  
15] But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.  
16] They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

**Jeshurun:** a poetical name for the people of Israel, normally used as a token of affection, meaning, “the dear upright people” (Deut 32:15 33:5,26 Isa 44:2). Here, it is used reproachfully...

- 17] They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.
- 18] Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.
- 19] And when the LORD saw *it*, he abhorred *them*, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.

“Rock” again: 1 Cor 10:4, et al: Christ!

- 20] And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith.
- 21] They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is* not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are* not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

[Is there any sillier—or more insulting to the Creator Himself—than the insistence, in every aspect of our society, that no “creation” was even necessary: that everything just “evolved”?!]

- 22] For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.
- 23] I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.
- 24] *They shall be* burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.
- 25] The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling *also* with the man of gray hairs.
- 26] I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:

As a result of the siege, Israel would be removed from God’s kingdom and become herself a “*no-people*” (cf. Hos 1:9). In the further unfolding of redemptive revelation God was to promise a renewal of his mercy whereby the no-people would become again “my people” (cf. Hos 1:10; 2:23). And Paul has interpreted that as fulfilled in the coming of Gentiles as well as Jews into the New Covenant in Christ Jesus (Rom 9:25, 26). In that connection Paul also gives a turn to the idea of Israel’s jealousy at the favor shown by God to the Gentiles (Rom 11:11 ff.; cf. 10:19). The Mosaic Song of Witness itself anticipates the redemptive mercy and blessing that lie beyond the predicted cursing of Israel (see what follows: Deut 32:26-43).

- 27] Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, *and* lest they should say, Our hand *is* high, and the LORD hath not done all this.
- 28] For they *are* a nation void of counsel, neither *is there any* understanding in them.

- 29] O that they were wise, *that* they understood this, *that* they would consider their latter end!

*God’s own glory is at stake in the complete destruction of Israel.* If their enemies were successful, then the enemy would triumph and boast about his victory. [What are the implications for today?!]

- 30] How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?
- 31] For their rock *is* not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves *being* judges.
- 32] For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes *are* grapes of gall, their clusters *are* bitter:
- 33] Their wine *is* the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.
- 34] *Is* not this laid up in store with me, *and* sealed up among my treasures?
- 35] To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.
- 36] For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that *their* power is gone, and *there is* none shut up, or left.

For NT quotation of 32:35, 36, see Rom 12:19 and Heb 10:30.

- 37] And he shall say, Where *are* their gods, *their* rock in whom they trusted,
- 38] Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, *and* drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, *and* be your protection.
- 39] See now that I, *even* I, *am* he, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand.
- 40] For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.
- 41] If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.
- 42] I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; *and that* with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

As the Lord added oath to promise in the Abrahamic Covenant, so also he did in this New Covenant, swearing by himself, for there is no other (cf. Isa 45:22, 23; Heb 6:13), that his judgment would be terrible against those who hate him (Deut 32:41, 42; cf. v. 35; Isa 63:1 ff.).

- 43] Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people.
- 44] And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun.

“Hoshea” = Joshua. Significantly, Joshua was associated with Moses in proclaiming the song to Israel (32:44).

- 45] And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:  
 46] And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.  
 47] For it *is* not a vain thing for you; because it *is* your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong *your* days in the land, whither ye *go* over Jordan to possess it.  
 48] And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying,  
 49] Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, *unto* mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, that *is* over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession:  
 50] And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:

Aaron had been informed that he and Moses would not be among those entering Canaan because of their failure (Num 20:10-13; cf. Num 27:14; Deut 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Enroute, Aaron died at Mount Hor (Num 20:22-29; 33:37-38; Deut 10:6)]

**Mt. Nebo:** The promontory of Pisgah is 2,740 feet above sea level. It lies just 12 miles east of the place where the Jordan empties into the Dead Sea, itself 1,292 feet below sea level. Looking toward Canaan Moses would have seen the snowy peak of 9,232-foot Mt. Hermon over a hundred miles to the north, as well as the rocky highland and lush Jordan Valley of the Promised Land.

- 51] Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.  
 52] Yet thou shalt see the land before *thee*; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and **speak ye** unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he **smote** the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*

Num20:7-9

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Summarize the three 40-year segments of Moses' life and the challenges of each.
- 2) Why was Moses so concerned for Israel to enter land?
- 3) Contrast the prophecies of Jacob (Gen 49) with the prophecies of Moses (Deut 33), for each of the 12 tribes (14 in all!).
- 4) Reconcile the 66 (Gen 46:26), the 70 (Gen 46:27), and the 75 of Stephen (Acts 7:14).

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) If Israel *had* continued the septennial reading of the Law as Moses had instructed them to, how would that have changed the subsequent history recorded in the Book of Judges?
- 2) Discuss the implications of Luke 18:8. How does that impact us today?
- 3) What is the probable significance—and connection—of the 70 of Genesis 10, and the 70 of Jacob's family entering Egypt, in light of Deut 32:8?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

Outline and analyze the presentation of Stephen before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7. What surprises did it include (not normally visible in the OT)? What was the overall premise that Stephen was making? Why did he not finish it?

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 33 and 34. Review your notes for the entire series.



# The Book of Deuteronomy

## Session 16

### Chapters 33 - 34

## Deuteronomy 33

### Blessing the 12 Tribes

- 1] And this *is* the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.
- 2] And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them.

**Patriarchal blessings:** (Cf Gen 27:26-29; Gen 49:1-28) The words of a dying father to his sons were considered to be an irrevocable testament, acceptable as decisive evidence in court cases. Beyond any legal recognition, these patriarchal blessings also had the supernatural aspect of the spirit of prophecy, whereby these men of God spoke what was divinely revealed to them.

- 3] Yea, he loved the people; all his saints *are* in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; *every one* shall receive of thy words.
- 4] Moses commanded us a law, *even* the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.
- 5] And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people *and* the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

## The Patriarchs

### The 12 Tribes

Leah	Gen29:32	Reuben	“Behold a son”
	Gen29:33	Simeon	“Heard”
	Gen29:34	Levi	“Joined to”
	Gen29:35	Judah	“Praise”
Bilhah	Gen30:6	Dan	“Judge”
(Rachel)	Gen30:8	Naphtali	“Wrestling”; “Struggles”
Zilpah	Gen30:11	Gad	“Troop;” “fortune”
(Leah)	Gen30:13	Asher	“Happy”
Leah	Gen30:18	Issachar	“Recompense”
	Gen30:20	Zebulun	“Exalted”

Rachel	Gen30:24	Joseph	“YHWH has added”
	Gen35:18	Benjamin	“Son of the right hand”

### Succession?

- Reuben, natural heir, disavowed because of illicit relations with father’s concubine;
- Simeon and Levi, because of their crime at Shechem;
- Judah next in line;
- Joseph, favored as firstborn from Rachel, Jacob’s favorite.

### Reuben

- 6] Let Reuben live, and not die; and let *not* his men be few.

The last clause in v.6 may be translated “let his men be few” (cf. NIV marg.) or “let not his men be few.” The negative, though not expressed in the Hebrew, is to be carried into this clause from the preceding. Though the rights of primogeniture had been withdrawn from Reuben, and Jacob had declared that he should *not* excel, Moses here assures the tribe of continuance, and even prosperity. Their number was not to be small; which was, perhaps, said to comfort them, in view of the fact that their numbers had greatly diminished in the course of their wanderings in the desert (cf. Numbers 1:21 with 26:7). At no time, however, was this tribe numerous as compared with the others; nor was it ever distinguished either by the enterprise of its members or by the eminence of any of them in the councils of the nation or the management of affairs.

### Reuben

- The firstborn of Jacob by Leah (Gen 29:32); the name is connected with the phrase, “the Lord has looked upon my affliction.”
- His incestuous act with Bilhah, his father’s concubine (Gen 35:22);
- It was Reuben who advised his brothers not to kill Joseph, and returned to the pit to release him (Gen 37:21, 29);
- Reuben’s forfeited birthright given to Joseph (1 Chr 5:1,2);
- The tribe of Reuben was involved in the rebellion in the wilderness (Num 16:1);
- “Unstable as water, thou shall not excel, have preeminence” (Gen 49:4);
- That tribe, as not aiming to excel, unfortunately chose a settlement on the other side Jordan.

- Prophecy of Moses: “Let not his men be few” (Deut 33:6):
  - 1st numbering 46,500 (Num 1:21);
  - 2nd numbering 43,730 (Num 26:7);
  - most others increased;
- No judge, prophet, nor prince, is found of that tribe.

## Judah

- 7] And this *is the blessing* of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help *to him* from his enemies.

*Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:*  
Gen 49:8-11

Rev 5:6: Title of the Redeemer: “Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” The term “Shiloh” was understood by the early rabbis and Talmudic authorities as referring to the Messiah. **Sceptre:** Tribal rod or staff of office; tribal identity. Even in their 70-year Babylonian captivity (and five centuries under the Persian and Greek Empires) the tribes retained their tribal identity. They retained their own logistics, judges, etc. (Ezra 1:5,8).

## Judah

- Name means “praised,” root הדי, “to praise.” (Gen 49:8)
- Intercedes for Joseph’s life when brethren were about to slay him; proposes sale to the Ishmaelites (Gen 37:26,27);
- Incest with Tamar, his daughter-in-law (Gen 38:12-26);
- Loyal to the house of David at the time of the revolt of the ten tribes (1 Kgs 12:20);
- Led first division of Israel in their journeys (Num 10:14);
- Commissioned of God to lead in the conquest of the promised land (Judg 1:1-3; 4-21);
- Made David king (2 Sam 2:1-11; 5:4,5).

## Levi

- 8] And of Levi he said, *Let* thy Thummim and thy Urim *be* with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, *and with* whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;
- 9] Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.
- 10] They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.
- 11] Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

## Levi

- Name לוי is linked with the root “to join”;
  - Avenged the seduction of Dinah (Gen 34; 49:5-7);
  - Zeal against idolatry a cause of their appointment (Ex 32:26-28; Deut 33:9,10; Mal 2:4,5);
  - Exempt from enrollment for military duty (Num 1:47-54, with 1 Chr 12:26);
  - Subordinate to the sons of Aaron (Num 3:9; 8:19; 18:6);
  - Teachers of the law (Deut 33:10; 2 Chr 17:8,9; 30:22; 35:3). Were judges (Deut 17:9; 1 Chr 23:4; 26:29; 2 Chr 19:8-11);
  - Guarded king’s person and house in times of danger (2 Kgs 11:5-9; 2 Chr 23:5-7).
- 12] *And* of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; *and the LORD* shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

“...between his shoulders”: That is, on his sides or borders. Mount Zion, on which stood the city of Jerusalem, belonged to Judah; but Mount Moriah, the site of the sacred edifice, lay in the confines of Benjamin.

## Benjamin

- The youngest son of Jacob, called “son of the right hand” by his father;
- “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf” (Gen 49:27);
- Known as ferocious (Judg 19:16; 2 Sam 2:15,16; 1 Chr 8:40; 12:2; 2 Chr 17:17);
- Notable heroes include:
  - Ehud, who delivered Israel from the Moabites;

- Saul, the first king (1 Sam 9:1);
- Queen Esther (Esther 2:5);
- Apostle Paul (Rom 11:1).

The tribe earned a high reputation for bravery and skill in war, and was noted for its slingers with their traditional left-handed action (Judg 3:15; 20:16).

## Joseph

- 13] And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD *be* his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,
- 14] And for the precious fruits *brought forth* by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,
- 15] And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,
- 16] And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and *for* the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let *the blessing* come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him *that was* separated from his brethren.
- 17] His glory *is like* the firstling of his bullock, and his horns *are like* the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.

## Joseph

- Name means “may he (God) add sons” (Gen 30:24);
- Firstborn of Rachel, Jacob’s loved wife (Gen 30:22-24);
- Favored, despised, sold, exalted (Gen 37-50);
  - Over 100 ways a type of Christ.

## Ephraim

- Second son of Joseph (Gen 41:52);
- Adopted by Jacob; Blessed before Manasseh (Gen 48:5);
- Leading tribe of the kingdom of Israel (Isa 7:2-17; Jer 31:9,20).

Later, sometimes used as a synecdoche for the Northern Kingdom. The Northern tribes never did desire to yield to David’s reign...

## Manasseh

- (“Making to forget”): First son of Joseph and Asenath (Gen 41:50,51;46:20);
- Adopted by Jacob (Gen 48:1,5-20);
- The tribe was renowned for its valour:

- Gideon in the W (Judg 6:15);
- Jephthah in the E (Judg 11:1);
- Inheritance
  - ½ tribe east of Jordan (Num 32:33,39-42);
  - ½ tribe west of Jordan (Josh 16:9; 17:5-11).

- 18] And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.
- 19] They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck *of* the abundance of the seas, and *of* treasures hid in the sand.

## Zebulun

- “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *shall be* for an haven of ships; and his border *shall be* unto Zidon.” (Gen 49:13)
- In Galilee, to the north of Issachar and south of Asher and Naphtali, between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean (Josh 19:10-16).
  - According to ancient prophecy this part of Galilee to enjoy a large share of our Lord’s public ministry (Isa 9:1,2 Mt 4:12-16).

## Issachar

- Jacob’s 9<sup>th</sup> son, by Leah;
  - *sekhari*, “my hire” (Gen 30:18);
- The prophetic blessing pronounced by Jacob corresponds with that of Moses (Gen 49:14,15; Deut 33:18,19);
- Only Judah and Dan stronger;
  - 64,300 (Num 26:25);
  - to 87,000 (1 Chr 7:5);
- Richest portion: Jezreel Valley (1Chr 12:40).

- 20] And of Gad he said, Blessed *be* he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.
- 21] And he provided the first part for himself, because there, *in* a portion of the lawgiver, *was he* seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

## Gad

- Jacob’s 7<sup>th</sup> son, by Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid;
  - The brother of Asher (Gen 30:11-13;46:16,18);
  - “fortune; luck”;

- This tribe was fierce and warlike;
  - They were “strong men of might, men of war for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, their faces the faces of lions, and like roes upon the mountains for swiftness” (1Chr 12:8 5:19-22);
  - Elijah was of this tribe (1Kgs 17:1).

In the KJV of Gen 30:11 the words, “A troop cometh: and she called,” etc., should rather be rendered, “In fortune” RV, “*Fortunate*”: and she called,” etc., or “Fortune cometh,” etc.

The portion allotted to the tribe of Gad was on the east of Jordan, and comprehended the half of Gilead, a region of great beauty and fertility (Deut 3:12) bounded on the east by the Arabian desert, on the west by the Jordan (Josh 13:27) and on the north by the river Jabbok. It thus included the whole of the Jordan valley as far north as to the Sea of Galilee, where it narrowed almost to a point.

22] And of Dan he said, Dan *is* a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

Bashan??? [Land of Og, king of the Giants; cf. Ps 22:12 !?]

## Dan

- “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.” (Gen 49:7)
- First to fall into idolatry (Judg 18:30);
- Slighted in genealogies:
  - Names of his sons omitted (Gen 46:23; Num 26:42);
  - Name blotted out (1 Chr 1-10; Rev 7);
  - Mentioned last (Num 10:25; Josh 19:47-49; 1 Chr 27:16-22).

23] And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.

## Naphtali

- The 5<sup>th</sup> son of Jacob, the 2<sup>nd</sup> born to him by Rachel’s handmaid, Bilhah. He was the full brother of Dan (Gen 30:7);
  - At his birth Rachel is said to have exclaimed, “wrestlings of God”—i.e., “mighty wrestlings”—“have I wrestled”;
- “Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words” (Gen 49:21);
- N & NW of Sea of Galilee: Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin.

- 24] And of Asher he said, *Let Asher be* blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.
- 25] Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass; and as thy days, *so shall* thy strength *be*.

North of Carmel. The vine, the fig, the lemon and the orange flourish. Olive trees abound, and the supplies of olive oil which to this day are exported from the district recall the word of the old-time blessing, “Let him dip his foot in oil.”

## Asher

- “Out of Asher his bread *shall be* fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.” (Gen 49: 20);
  - Settled in northern part (Josh 19:24-31);
- “Royal Dainties” workmen and materials: to David (2 Sam 5:11) and Solomon (1 Kgs 5:1-10);
- Kept Passover under Hezekiah (in contrast to others): (2 Chr 30:1,10,11);
- To this tribe belonged the prophetess Anna (Lk 2:36).

## Simeon

- 2<sup>nd</sup> son of Jacob by Leah (Gen 29:33);
- Associated with Levi in the terrible act of vengeance against Hamor and the Shechemites (Gen 34:25,26);
- Detained by Joseph in Egypt as a hostage (Gen 42:24);
- His father, when dying, pronounced a malediction against him; to be “divided and scattered” (Gen 49:5-7);
  - Decreased in the wilderness by 2/3 (Num 1:23, 26:14);
  - Dwindled in number; sank into insignificance;
- Moses pronounces no blessing on this tribe.
- They didn’t lose their identity:
  - 13 Simeonite princes in days of Hezekiah (1 Chr 4:34-38).

The words in the KJV of Gen 49:6 “they digged down a wall,” ought to be, as correctly rendered in the RV, “they houghed an ox.” This tribe received as their portion a part of the territory already allotted to Judah (Josh 19:1-9). The subsequent notices of this tribe are but few (1Chr 4:24-43). Like Reuben on the east of Jordan, this tribe had little influence on the history of Israel.

26] *There is* none like unto the God of Jeshurun, *who* rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.



**Jeshurun**, a poetical name for the people of Israel, used in token of affection, meaning, “the dear upright people” (Deut 32:15; 33:5,26; Isa 44:2).

- 27] The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them*.
- 28] Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob *shall be* upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.
- 29] Happy *art* thou, O Israel: who *is* like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who *is* the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

## Listing of the 12 Tribes

The Twelve Tribes are listed 20X in the Bible, in different orders, according to birth, mothers, numeration, encampment, blessing, geography, etc.:

### Genesis:

- 29-35 Origin; natural order of Jacob’s 12 sons  
 46 Entering Egypt  
 49 Jacob’s Prophetic Blessing

### Exodus:

- 1 Entering Egypt (Joseph omitted, being in Egypt.)

### Numbers:

- 1:1-15 Leaders (Levi omitted)  
 1:20-43 1st Census (Levi omitted)  
 2 Order of the camp (Only order given three times: 2, 7, 10)  
 7 Offerings  
 10 Order of March  
 13 Spies (Levi omitted)  
 26 2nd Census (Levi omitted)  
 34 Dividing the Land (Eastern tribes omitted)

### Deuteronomy:

- 27 Blessings and cursings  
 33 Blessing of Moses (Simeon omitted).  
 Order is geographical: Benjamin is before Joseph.)

### Joshua:

- 13-22 Allocation of territories. (In four groups to furnish cities for four classes of priests.)

### Judges:

- 5 Song of Deborah. (Judah and Simeon omitted.)

### 1 Chronicles:

- 2:1,3-8 Genealogies. (Zebulun omitted; Dan in v.7?)  
 12,27 Officers under David (Gad and Asher omitted in 1 Chr 27.)

### Ezekiel:

48 Kingdom Divisions, Millennium

### Revelation:

7 Sealing of 12,000 from each tribe (Dan omitted).

## Revelation 7

Judah	Praise the Lord,
Reuben	He has looked on my affliction (and)
Gad	granted good fortune.
Asher	Happy am I,
Naphtali	my wrestling
Mannasah	has made me forget my sorrow.
Simeon	God hears me;
Levi	has joined me,
Issachar	purchased me, (and)
Zebulun	exalted me (by)
Joseph	adding to me
Benjamin	the Son of His right hand.

## Deuteronomy 34 The Death of Moses

- 1] And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that *is* over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,
- 2] And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,
- 3] And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

Altitude: 2740 ft., 12 mi. E of Dead Sea, 1292 ft *below* sea level. (Looking north, beyond the Sea of Galilee: snow-capped peak of Mt. Hermon, 120 mi. N, 9232 ft. above sea level. The question arises whether Moses wrote of his own death. He could have. The Lord had told him he would die. (He had 70 assistants and also scribes, who probably finished these verses.) Also, a great many believe that this is actually the beginning of the Book of Joshua.

- 4] And the LORD said unto him, This *is* the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see *it* with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.
- 5] So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

- 6] And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.
- 7] And Moses *was* an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.
- 8] And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses were ended.
- 9] And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.
- 10] And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,
- 11] In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,
- 12] And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

Moses introduced a new era into the history of God’s people, the Age of the Law. The Israelites waited for God to raise up the *Prophet like Moses* (18:15); (they were looking for him among the three conjectures in John 1:20,21).

Thus the book (*and the Torah*) ends on a prophetic note looking forward to the day when “another Moses” would be given to Israel. That day finally arrived when the Lord Jesus Christ came as a Servant but also as the very Son of God, surpassing even Moses (cf. Heb. 3:1-6).

He offered to take Israel into a new era, the Age of His Grace. The Israelites culminated centuries of rebellion by rejecting that gracious offer. However, *the Song of Moses still points forward to the day when that offer will be accepted* and God will heal and avenge His people (Deut 32:36,43).

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

Contrast the prophecies of Jacob (Gen 49) with the prophecies of Moses (Deut 33), *for each of the 12 tribes (14 in all!)*.

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

What were the most significant lessons you have gleaned from the Book of Deuteronomy?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

Compile a notebook with sections (14?) for each of the “12 Tribes” to accumulate your own continuing notes on each.

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# About The Cover Design

*(on the tape cassette volumes)*

## The “Front” cover:

The Greek border: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).” The center design element symbolizes the Word of God Incarnate, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

## The “Back” cover: (the “front” to the Jewish reader)

The Hebrew border: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (from the Sh’ma, Deut 6:4-5).”

The center design represents the Burning Bush, made up of Hebrew letters which proclaim “the Eternal One cannot lie.”

## The Spine:

The spine includes a Menorah from the Old Testament, a Maranatha Dove suggesting the New Testament, and the Koinonia House logo at the base.



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