THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

DEUTERONOMY

CLT Bible Study

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Continuing Lay Training
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DEUTERONOMY

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SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Welcome to the Continuing Lay Ministries series of Bible studies. You are engaged in a study venture that will be both helpful and enjoyable. Here are a few suggestions that will make this Bible study the most beneficial to you.

1. Since this is a Bible study, have your Bible near you at all times. This study outline is only designed to help you read the Bible.

2. The Bible version used for this study is the New International Version (NIV). The editor primarily used the language of the NIV to prepare the lessons. You may use other versions of the Bible if you choose. While the language may be different, the meaning will be the same.

3. Before you begin each section, read the entire Scripture passage. This is very important. The study outline will help you understand the particular Bible verses, but it does not tell what they say.

4. IMPORTANT: Note that scriptures from Deuteronomy may not have the book's name. In sections referring specifically to the Book of Deuteronomy, if the Bible reference is (1:6-8), you will find these verses (6-8) in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. Whereas other books of the Bible will include the name in the reference, for example, Isaiah 53:1 and John 17:1.

5. Go through the study outline carefully. Take time to look up all the Scripture verses in the outline.

6. You may want to mark your study Bible as you go. Marking your Bible will help the words become more and more your own. It will be well if you have colored pencils at hand to mark the Bible as you go along. A simple system is to mark promises in blue and warnings in red. But, however you do it, mark your Bible and it will become more and more your very own.

7. Finally, read the Bible passage again to better understand its meaning. Perhaps you may benefit from listening to the reading of Deuteronomy.

8. The editor has also included how to pronounce some of the more difficult proper names and other important words. The first time the word is introduced, the pronunciation will follow the word. At the end of each chapter, you will find a list of the words in the order in which they were introduced. Additionally, at the end of the document, all of the words and pronunciations will be listed alphabetically. For pronunciation of additional terms and their definitions, please refer to A Dictionary of the Bible & Christian Doctrine in Everyday English (Eby et al., 2004).

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

If a family or a few friends decide to take this study together, here are two suggestions:

1. Have one person read the Bible passage and another person read the Continuing Lay Ministries outline.
2. Then discuss the Scripture and outline. Ask questions of each other to help clarify the meaning of the Scripture.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

NOTES

A. AUTHOR AND DATE

The Book of Deuteronomy is made up almost entirely of speeches by Moses. Besides these there are short historical sections referring to Moses. It is part of the Pentateuch [PEN-tuh-tewk] which is referred to frequently in the Old and New Testaments as the law of Moses. For these reasons, conservative scholars have attributed its authorship to the great lawgiver of Israel. This does not mean that there are no comments and items of historical information by other writers. This view takes seriously the internal evidence in the book and the general testimony of the rest of the Bible.

A contribution to the subject is a book by M. G. Kline titled Treaty of the Great King. In this book, he asserts that the structure and content of Deuteronomy conform to the pattern of treaties drawn up between a superpower or overlord and the vassal. These began with a preamble identifying the superpower (note 1:1-5), followed by a historical prologue (note 1:5 – 4:49). Then came the stipulations of the treaty (note chapters 5-26), followed by a recital of curses in the event of nonobservance and of blessings attendant upon faithful observance (note chapters 27-30). The treaty closed with the enlisting of witnesses (note 31:16-22; 31:28 - 32:45), directions for depositing it and its periodic proclamation (note 31:9-13), and provisions for dynastic succession (see chapters 31-34). Kline also states that the structure of Deuteronomy has the closest affinity with the treaties of the second millennium B.C. His whole thesis gives impetus to the view that Deuteronomy is a unity belonging to the Mosaic [MOW·zay·uhk] era.

B. CHARACTERISTICS

It is probable that the English title of this book, Deuteronomy, is taken from the Septuagint [SEP-twuh-gunt] or Greek translation. It means "the second law". As most of the book consists of a restatement of the law by Moses on the eve of the crossing of the Jordan [JOHR-dihn] into Canaan [KAY-nun], it has been accepted as an appropriate title.

For the most part, Deuteronomy is a series of orations by Moses. They are in the language of the common people and are addressed to all of Israel. Their purpose is to remind the old and inform the young concerning the covenant with the Lord and its laws.

Utter loyalty to the Lord is demanded, as separation from all false gods and their worship (7:5). There are kindly and generous strains in the book. More than any other book in the Pentateuch, God declares his love for his people (7:13; 10:15; 23:8) and his desire for their love (6:5; 30:6). His people are taught to be merciful and generous to the fatherless, the widow, the poor, and the stranger (10:18; 15:7).

There is an uncompromising insistence on justice. Not only must justice be done indiscriminately

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to rich and poor, great and small (1:16-17), but it extends to correct weights and fair measures (25:13-16). Deuteronomy is a "neighborly" book. The neighbor's donkey must be prevented from escaping and, if in difficulty, must be given assistance (22:1-4).

Obedience to God is equated with life and blessing, and disobedience with death and cursing (11:26-28; 30:19).

C. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEUTERONOMY

There can be no question about the abiding value of Deuteronomy. It has played an important part in the development of the religion of Israel. The writer records the history of Israel and judges the monarchs from the viewpoint of the covenant and law of Moses.

Our Lord was evidently familiar with the book and met the threefold attack of Satan with a threefold thrust from its armory (8:3; 6:13, 16). He quoted part of the "Shema" [she-MAH] (6:4-5) when asked for the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-30).

D. DEUTERONOMY AND HOLINESS

Holiness expositors, influenced by Hebrews 3:1-11 and other New Testament scriptures, have seen in the land of Canaan a type of the Spirit-filled, entirely sanctified experience (note Acts 26:18). Deuteronomy abounds with promises concerning the land and exhortations to possess the divinely provided inheritance (1:8; 7:1; 11:8-9).

Besides this typical significance, Deuteronomy reminds us that a genuine religious experience is validated by righteous conduct. Religious ecstasy is false if it does not find an outlet in fair and neighborly relationships and commercial and social justice.

It teaches us that loyalty to God is the essence of true piety. This involves no compromise with anything intolerable to God and separation from all prohibited relationships and practices. The essence of holiness is love. The Shema sums up the supreme duty of people in terms of love. God loves his people and seeks their love. He desires them to serve him with joy. He will make this love possible by removing all that hinders it so that we may love the Lord with all our hearts (30:6)

Pentateuch [PEN-tuh-tewk]
Mosaic [MOW·zay·uhk]
Jordan [JOHR-dihn]
Canaan [KAY-nun]
Shema [she-MAH]

CHAPTER 2. INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS: HISTORICAL REVIEW (1:1 - 4:43)

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A. Time and Place (1:1-5)

"On this side of Jordan" is "the crossing," "the ford," or "valley" of the Jordan. It includes both the east side (4:41, 49) and the west side (3:20, 25; 11:30) of the Jordan. This might indicate that the opening verses were written in the land of Canaan as an editorial explanation of the place where the addresses were given.

The Hebrew for "wilderness" means any uninhabited tract of land, not necessarily a desert. "The plain is the Arabah [AA-ruh-baa], the deep valley running north and south of the Dead Sea. The exact position of the other places, "Paran [PAY-ruhn], Tophel [TOH-fuhl], Laban [LAY-buhn], Hazeroth [HAS-uh-roth], and Dizahab" is uncertain.

"There are eleven days' journey from Horeb [HAW-ruhb] by way of Mount Ser" (the eastern route skirting the borders of Edom) unto "Kadesh [kuh-DESH] Barnea [bruh-NAY-uh] (1:2); and it had taken them almost 40 years! How many condemn themselves for years of wandering in the wilderness of the second best when they could be enjoying the fulness of God's blessing of entire sanctification [sank-tuh-fi-KAY-shuhn] (note Hebrews 4:1-11)!

The Hebrew for "law" is torah [TAW-ruh]. "The word torah may refer to moral guidance, or to a single specific teaching, as in Proverbs 1:8, “do not forsake your mother’s teaching (torah).” It is also applied to a body of religious precepts or teachings such as from the central portion of the Book (chapters 1216). Often, it denotes the entire sum of Israel's religious doctrine and life - the Torah of Moses." The law (Torah) came to be the Hebrew name for the Pentateuch (see Ezra 7:6) and sometimes for the whole Old Testament (Romans 3:19).

B. From Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea (1:6-46)

The first address is mainly a historical review of the Lord's dealings with Israel.

1. *The Call to Possess the Land* (1:6-8)

Revelation calls for action. "The plain" is the northern part of the Arabah, the Jordan Valley, ending in the Dead Sea, while "the hills" are the central mountain range. Then, "the vale" is the Shephelah [SHEF-ee-luh], the foothills between the central mountain range and the Maritime Plain. The "sea side" is the plain extending inwards from the coast of the Mediterranean [MED-uh-tuh-RAY-nee-un] to a distance of from four to 15 miles, while "the south" is the Negeb [NEH-gehb], the dry steppe district south of Judah.

Verse 8 introduces a theme that recurs throughout the book: "I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore He would give to your fathers ... and to

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2. *The Appointment of Assistant Rulers* (1:9-18)

It was not long before Moses realized that he needed assistants. The suggestion came in the first place from Jethro his father-in-law (see Exodus 18:13-27), but it is possible that some such solution had already been in his mind. He adopted it and laid it before the tribes. Notice that he stipulated the qualifications for leadership: "wise, understanding, and respected men" (1:13, RSV).

The equity and compassion which are characteristic of Deuteronomy are shown in "judge fairly" (1:16); "do not allow partiality in judging" – no impartial dealing for "small and great alike" (1:17), the "brother Israelite" and "an alien" (1:16). They are not to be afraid of people for they are God's representatives (1:17).

3. *The Exploration of the Land* (1:19-25)

Moses spoke with realism and faith - a good combination. He took account of the hills and the Amorites [AM-uh-rietz], but he saw the land as a gift and a possession. To "possess" means to enter into ownership of a land or property by casting out or replacing its previous occupier, whether by conquest or by process of inheritance.

Notice the care to see that each tribe was represented in the investigation (1:23). The spies made an excellent beginning when they returned. They showed the fruit of the land and bore testimony to its goodness (1:25). But, they failed dismally when they lapsed into the language of unbelief.

4. *The Refusal to Enter* (1:26-33)

The refusal of the people to possess the land is stated forcefully and condemned in the most emphatic terms. First, they "were unwilling to go up" (1:26); secondly, they "grumbled in [their] tents" (1:27), they stayed at home and refused to take part in the forward march; and, finally, they charged God with hatred (1:27).

In reply to their absurd accusation that the Lord hated them, Moses speaks tenderly of the Lord's fatherly care in the wilderness (1:31), and he envisages God going before them like a shepherd to find the place for them to pitch their tents, giving his presence night and day (1:33).

5. *The Judgment of the Lord* (1:34-40)

It is worthy of note that the Lord is as displeased with the Israelites for refusing to enter the Promised Land as He was when they made the golden calf (see Numbers 14:11-12). Deliberate refusal to receive God's blessings can be as disastrous as positive transgression. "Not man of this evil generation shall see the good land" (1:35). The people disinherited themselves and held up God's purpose of blessing for an entire generation. But there were exceptions. Caleb and Joshua stood out against the movement of rebellion at the risk of their lives

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(Numbers 14:10), and God excluded them from the sentence on the rebels and promised them a place in the land.

The sentence God passed on the rebellious people reminds Moses of the sentence of exclusion which he himself had incurred at Kadesh when provoked by the complaints of the people; he had behaved in such a way as to displease the Lord. In a very real sense, this was vicarious suffering for if Moses had not identified himself so completely with the people, he would have consented to their destruction and have become the progenitor of another nation (Exodus 32:10; Numbers 14:12).

Instead, "the little ones," which they said "would be taken captive," would enter the promised land (1:39). God is always more concerned about the welfare of our children than we are. Going his way may often seem to impose hardship on them, but it is always the best way for them and us.

6. The Price of Presumption (1: 41-46)

It is characteristic of human nature, especially fallen human nature, not to appreciate a good until it is lost. This may be one of the chief pangs of hell. When told that they must not do the very thing they had refused to do, they immediately resolved to do it! To insist on doing the right thing at the wrong time is as much rebellion as to do the wrong thing at the right time (1:43). There could be only one result. The Amorites chased them like bees do. Small wonder they wept, but apparently, it was remorse rather than repentance, for the Lord "paid no attention" to their weeping (1:45).

C. Dealings with Edom [EE-duhm], Moab [MOW-ab], and Ammon [AEM-aan] (2:1-23)

Before referring to the victories over Sihon [SY-hahn] and Og [ahg], Moses refers to the dealings of the Israelites with those related to them by blood.

1. Edom (2:1-8)

After "many days" in Kadesh Barnea (1:46), the Israelites journeyed in a southeast direction along the border of Edom to the "Red Sea" - Gulf of Aqaba [AA-kuh-buh]. Most of the 40 years were spent in this region, with perhaps one or more visits to Kadesh Barnea (see Chapter 14). They were to annex no territory, for the Lord had given this area to the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother (2:5). They were commanded to pay for whatever food or drink they required (2:6).

2. Baoab (2:8-15)

The Lord gave precisely the same instructions concerning Moab as He had given concerning Edom.

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Most of this paragraph is taken up with a historical note concerning the former inhabitants of Ar, the chief city, which may have been added later as an explanatory note after Israel was settled in the land.

Underlying these references is the philosophy of divine sovereignty in human history. Amid the movements and conflicts of nations, overruling human motives and endeavors, God works out his purpose.

3. Ammon (2:16-23)

The Ammonites [A-muh-nyts] occupied the territory between the rivers Arnon [AR-non] and Jabbok [JAH-bahk] to the west of the territories of the Amorite [AM-uh-riet] kings, Sihon and Og. As the Israelites moved along the eastern frontier of Moab, perhaps crossing it near Ar, they would approach the frontier of the sons of Amon. Hence, the warning is given again not to annex any of this territory. They are to be treated as brethren, even as Edom and Moab.

The original inhabitants of their land had also been "Rephaim" or giants (2:20-21). The fact that it was known that the brethren of the Israelites had all been able to drive the giants out of the territories given them by God to possess makes all the more culpable the unbelief of the Israelites concerning his power to give them the land of Canaan in spite of the Anakim [AHNA-kim].

D. The Conquest of Sihon and Og (2:24 - 3:29)

Moses now turns to the recent conquests of the two Amorite kings. These were epoch-making. They were not the first victories God had given to his people (see Exodus 17:8-13 and Numbers 21:1-3), but they were the beginning of the possession of the land.

1. Sihon of Heshbon (2:24-37)

The first step in the conquest of Sihon was God's call to action, buttressed by his assurance of victory. The victory and the land were Israel's by God's gift, but they had to be possessed and fought for, bit by bit.

As in the case of Pharaoh, so here God is said to have hardened Sihon's spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into the hand of Israel. In both cases there may well have been a judicial hardening as a climax to a course of deliberate rebellion and self-will on their part.

Moses attributes Israel's decisive victory to "the LORD our God" (2:33), and all the cities with all the inhabitants were put to the ban (cherem), that is, totally destroyed (see 20:16-18). It was not done in bloodlust nor malicious destruction, but lest the inhabitants should teach the Israelites "to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods" (20:18).

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These included child sacrifices, ritual prostitution, and sodomy. Nevertheless, our hearts turn sick at the thought of the total destruction of men, women, and especially the little children. And they should. But sin is a sickening thing with sickening results, and sometimes death alone can arrest its course. On the cross, the Son of God himself died to put it away.

2. *Og of Bashan* (3:1-29)

Chapter 3 deals first with the defeat of Og, then with the distribution of his territory, and concludes with the request of Moses.

a. The conquest (3:1-11). Og was a formidable contestant in himself, being one of the Rephaim or giants of the ancient world. But, Israel, enthused by the victory over Sihon and encouraged by God, invaded his territory and completely defeated him at Edrei [ed-reh-EE]. The spies had dwelt on the impossibility of possessing Canaan because of its "cities ... great and walled up to heaven" and the giant Anakim [ah-nah-KEEM] (1: 28). But trusting in God, Israel had been able to capture the strongly fortified cities of Bashan [bah-SHAN] and overthrow its giant king.

   Scholars are divided as to whether verse 11 refers to Og's iron bedstead or stone coffin (sarcophagus).

b. The distribution of the territory (3:12-22). A map of Palestine divided among the 12 tribes will assist in the understanding of these verses. Apparently, the best portion of the territory, though not the largest, was that between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok. This was given to the two tribes, Reuben and Gad (3:12, 16). The rest of the territory was given to the half-tribe of Manasseh (3:13).

   Moses reminds the two-and-a-half tribes of their obligations to do their part in enabling the other tribes to possess their inheritance even as the others had enabled them to possess the territory east of the Jordan.

c. The request of Moses (3:23-29). Moses makes no disguise of his deep longing to enter the Promised Land, and the places where he refers to this unfulfilled desire are among the saddest portions of this book. The tragedy is that the one who desired most to enter the land found it barred against him by an uncharacteristic attitude of unbelief and an act of folly on his part.

   Yet half of his prayer was answered. He was permitted to see the land from Pisgah's [pis-GAWZ] height (in the near vicinity) even though he was not allowed to enter. Also, he was assured that the enterprise he had begun would be carried through to a successful conclusion by Joshua (3:28). And, many years later, he stood in the land with Elijah at the transfiguration of his Lord (Matthew 17:3).

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E. Closing Exhortation (4:1-40)

Having brought the historical review to an end, Moses launches into his final exhortation.

1. *The Privilege of Israel's Revelation* (4:1-8)

Moses commences his oration by enlarging upon the great privilege of being the recipient of divine revelation. Some scholars make no distinction between statutes and judgments. However, other scholars regard statues as revelations of enduring validity, sanctioned by God and conscience. On the other hand, these scholars regard judgments as rules of law, laid down by authority or settled by ancient custom. Thus, judges must be guided them in related cases.

The law must be reverently preserved as well as observed. To keep God's word means life; to disobey means death, as the fate of those who died as a result of succumbing to the seductions of the Moabitesses in worshipping Baal-peor (Numbers 25:1-9). Baal means "Lord". Among the nations in and around Canaan each place had its local god or baal. Immorality was a regular part of Baal worship, and child sacrifices were also offered. Baal-peor was the name of the local deity of Peor. "Beth-peor" ("house of Peor") (3:29) may well have been the site of his temple.

2. *The Peril of Idolatry* (4:9-31)

a. The original revelation must be remembered (4:9-14). Time and again in Deuteronomy, Moses takes the nation back to the historic revelation of God at Horeb. As with Israel, so with Christians, we must constantly refer to the original revelation given in the New Testament and keep our faith and service pure.

b. It must not be corrupted with idolatry (4:15-24). The various forms of idolatry are given in this paragraph. Israel was warned against "cast idols" (Exodus 34:17). No figure or form was to be copied.

   Verse 19 prohibits Israel from worshipping the heavenly bodies, which were the dominant influence in Babylonian religion. "A consuming fire, a jealous God" indicates the burning love which will tolerate no rival and destroys everything contrary to his nature (4:24).

c. God will deal with Israel on the basis of the revelation (4:25-31). If the Israelites despise the unique revelation given by God, God will chastise them, but if they repent and turn to him again on the terms of the covenant, He will restore them. Moses foresees the peril of forgetfulness in the coming generations. As the first and greatest of the long succession of Old Testament prophets, he was given such insight into the character of God and the frailty of his people that he was able to lay down the pattern of future events. Besides this, like others of the prophets, he was no doubt given joyful visions of the future.

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3. The Privilege of Being God's Elect (4:32-40)

The speech of Moses moves to a magnificent climax in this paragraph.

a. A unique privilege (4:32-34). Verses 32-34 are in the form of rhetorical questions. Moses invites time (4:32) and space (4:32), history, and geography to furnish any other instance of a nation having the experience of God that Israel had. The redemption of Israel was grounded in history, as is ours in the Cross and the Resurrection.

b. The purpose of the privilege (4:35-38). God's purpose was, firstly, that they might "know that the LORD he is God; besides him, there is no other" (4:35). Secondly, that they might be taught ("disciplined") in his ways (4:36); and, thirdly, that He might settle them in the promised land (4:37-38).

c. The obligation of the privilege (4:39-40). To be God's elect people carried with it the obligation to honor him in the heart as supreme (4:39) and to "keep his decrees and commandments" (4:40).

F. The Appointment of Cities of Refuge (4:41-43)

For the purpose of a city of refuge see comments on 19:13. All the cities would be chosen so as to be readily accessible to the majority of the population in order that the unintentional slayer would have an opportunity of declaring his innocence.

Arabah [AA-ruh-baa]
Paran [PAY-ruhn]
Tophel [TOH-fuhl]
Laban [LAY-buhn]
Hazeroth [HAS-uh-roth]
Horeb [HAW-ruhb]
Kadesh [kuh-DESH]
Barnea [bruh-NAY-uh]
sanctification [sank-tuh-fi-KAY-shuhn]
torah [TAW-ruh]
Shephelah [SHEF-ee-luh]
Mediterranean [MED-uh-tuh-RAY-nee-un]
Negeb [NEH-gehb]
Amorites [AM-uh-rietz]
Edom [EE-duhm]
Moab [MOW-ab]
Ammon [AEM-aan]
Sihon [SY-hahn]
Og [ahg]

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Aqaba [AA-kuh-buh]
Ammonites [A-muh-nyts]
Arnon [AR-non]
Jabbok [JAH-bahk]
Amorite [AM-uh-riet]
Anakim [AHNA-kim]
Edrei [ed-reh-EE]
Anakim [ah-nah-KEEM]
Bashan [bah-SHAN]
Pisgah's [pis-GAWZ]

CHAPTER 3. MAIN ADDRESS: THE LAW OF GOD (4:44 - 26:19)

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The main section of the book is devoted to an exposition of the law of God. It begins with the Ten Commandments; then it proceeds to deal with religious, civil, and social laws.

A. Introduction (4: 44-49)

The law is here described in terms of "testimonies," "statutes," and "judgments" (ordinances). For "statutes" and "judgments," see comments on 4:1. “Testimonies" stands for solemn declarations of God's will on matters of moral and religious duty.

B. The Ten Commandments (5:1 - 11:32)

1. *Their Content and Communication* (5:1-33)

This chapter commences with a recital of the Ten Commandments, which are treated as the basis of the covenant between God and Israel.

a. *Their content* (5:6-21). This recital of the Ten Commandments should be compared with that in Exodus 20:1-17. There are slight differences, but the two accounts are substantially the same. Some think that the original words written on the tables of stone contained just brief commands and that Moses added inspired interpretations. Those in Deuteronomy are particularly suited to life in Canaan.

The first commandment begins with the mention of the Divine Name (5:6). No other god is to intrude between the Lord and his redeemed people.

The second commandment forbidding idolatry follows naturally upon the first. This is not a prohibition against carving statues or painting pictures as such, but only against making them objects of worship. That the children suffer for the sins of their parents is a fact of life. They also benefit from the piety of their parents. Ezekiel makes it clear that God readily receives the penitent children of evil parents (Ezekiel 18:14-17). And, whereas the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the third and fourth generation, the "mercy" ("steadfast love) of the Lord extends to "thousands" of generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

The third commandment teaches reverence and truth.

The fourth commandment relates to the keeping of the Sabbath day. The two main ideas are rest (shabbath, "to sit down" or "to cease") and sanctity (5:12). We would need fewer tranquillizers and have fewer nervous breakdowns if we observed this law

The fifth commandment of honoring one’s father and mother is quoted by Paul as "the

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first commandment with promise," and he applies the promise of long life and well-being to Christians who observe it (Ephesians 6:2-3).

The next five commandments all relate to social righteousness and are linked together by the Hebrew conjunction "and." They are brief and self-explanatory. Conscience and our own experience supply the rationale.

The sixth commandment (5:17) is better translated: "You shall not murder."

The seventh commandment (5:18) "You shall not commit adultery." This is a sin against both partners in the marriage and, if there are children, against them, too. It is both callous and cruel.

The eighth commandment (5:19) "You shall not steal."

These three commandments (6-8) are connected. Murdering is taking a person's life, adultery is taking his spouse, and stealing is taking another's property.

The ninth commandment (5:20) deals with the sin of the lips, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

The tenth commandment (5:21) deals with the sin of the heart. It was this commandment that brought home to Paul his need for salvation that could change the heart (Romans 7:7).

The Ten Commandments are fundamental to right living and right thinking. No nation can be great which ignores them. No Christian would want to break them. Yet all of us have transgressed them in motive and spirit. We need a Savior who can redeem us from the curse of the law and give us the promise of the Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:13-14). Thus, we can have the law written in our hearts (Hebrews 10:16) and rejoice in that love, which is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:9-10).

b. *Their communication* (5:22-33). This section dwells on the historic occasion of the giving of the law to Israel with all the impressive accompaniments of its communication. The awe-inspiring majesty of it all was so overpowering that the leaders of Israel, fully convinced of the authenticity of the revelation, requested Moses to act as an intermediary between them and God so that they should not die (5:23-27). In this, Moses is a "type" of the one mediator between God and people, Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). The people were allowed to return to their tents (5:30), but the man of God was detained to wait upon God to receive the full revelation (5:31).

It is interesting to notice that in the "second giving of the law," none of the former supernatural phenomena were present. It needed no further authentication. It simply required obedience, and God's blessing would automatically follow. Likewise, we make a mistake if we seek the external phenomena ofthe original outpouring of the Holy

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Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The inward gift of the Spirit is available for all who ask, believe, and obey (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32; 15: 8-9).

2. *The Dedication They Deserve* (6:1-25)

The Ten Commandments are still the main theme since they are the basis of the covenant with God and the core of the Torah [TAW-ruh] (law).

a. *Inward and outward dedication* (6: 1-9). Verse 2 sums up the content of the entire chapter. Verses 4 and 5 are part of what is called the Shema the Hebrew term for "hear". This is the creed of Judaism. The words of verse 4 declare that the Lord is the God of Israel, that He is the only God, and that He is the same everywhere. The word "one" is not inconsistent with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity [TRIN-uh-tee], three Persons of the same substance in the one Godhead. Indeed, "God" is used regularly in the plural form in the Hebrew Scriptures and is so here.

The confession of faith is followed by an exhortation to love. This love has to include the total personality: "heart ... soul ... strength".

When asked for the first commandment in the Law, Jesus quoted the Shema, adding "mind." He also added Leviticus 19:18, "love your neighbor as yourself."

"These commandments ... are to be upon your hearts" (6:6). The heart of religion is in the heart. But, it must not be confined to it. It must issue into the activities of life. We may all ask ourselves whether what should be first in our lives is sufficiently prominent in our conversation.

There is a difference of opinion as to whether the next two verses were intended to be taken literally. It is more probable that the injunction is intended to be literally carried out. However, on the other hand there is little biblical or extra-biblical evidence of it being put into practice until the time of the Maccabees (about 167 B.C.).

Jesus' censure of the Pharisees was probably not because they wore phylacteries but because they showily displayed them as part of their tragic mistake of exalting the trappings of religion above the attitude of the heart.

b. *Constant dedication* (6:10-19). The commandments and covenant of the Lord call for constant dedication. This will be tested especially by prosperity. The very goodness of God, if not accepted in a humble and thankful spirit, can be a source of temptation.

Jesus quoted verse 13 when tempted to worship Satan (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4: 8). Did He see it as a temptation to conform to worldly methods?

Christ also quoted verse 16 when tempted to force God's hand to work a miracle (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12). He must have meditated much on this chapter. What a

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privilege to follow his example!

c. *Communicated dedication* (6:20-25). The covenant was not intended for one generation only. It was part of the dedication demanded of those given the law and the covenant that they would communicate them to their children. In Deuteronomy, there is a recurring emphasis on the fact that the divine commandments are for human benefit (6:24). His will and our summum bonum (highest good) are one.

3. The Separation They Demand (7:1-26)

This chapter indicates the division which must come between Israel and the Canaanites [KAY-nuh-neitz] because of the covenant with God.

a. From nations which defile (7:1-5). The Hittites [hi-TYTZ], or sons of Heth, were a powerful, civilized nation that held sway in Syria and Asia Minor from 1800 to 900 B.C. The Jebusites [JEB-yew-sightz] were a Canaanite people inhabiting the hills about Jehus (Jerusalem). Very little is known about the Girgashites [GIR-gash-ightz] except that they appear to have inhabited a part of Canaan west of the Jordan (Joshua 24:11). The Hivites [HIV-ightz] were located in the north at Lebanon and Hermon (Judges 3:3 and Joshua 11:3) and towards the south in Kirjath-jearim and Beeroth [buh-EH-roth] (Joshua 9:17).

The Amorites, or Amurru, entered Palestine from the north and settled in the hill country. The Canaanites, probably of Phoenician stock, occupied the plain. All six are listed in the line of Canaan (Genesis 10:15-18). The Perizzites [PER-iz-ightz] seem to have dwelt mainly in the hill country.

All those belonging to these nations were to be destroyed - "put to the ban" (cherem) - lest they should corrupt the Israelites. There are several things that should be borne in mind when reading such passages as this.

First, this command of God was given to a particular nation that had been chosen to receive his revelation and was to be trained to produce the Messiah and prepare the minds of people for his ministry (see Romans 9:4-5). It was to be given an object lesson of the dire results of idolatry and lack of moral restraint.

Secondly, the ban was given concerning nations that had become festering cancer in the human corpus, practicing child sacrifices, sodomy, sexual relations with animals, idolatry, and witchcraft (see 7:5; 18:9-12; Leviticus 18:21-25).

Thirdly, the command was given at a certain stage in the education of the chosen people when the distinction between mercy to the defeated and compromise with their evil ways was imperfectly understood. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes clear that the Old Testament is the record of a progressive revelation that finds its full expression only with the incarnation of the Son of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). No doubt, armed with the Christian Gospel and endued with the Holy Spirit, Paul would have entered Canaan as he

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entered Corinth to show God's triumph over evil in transformed lives (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Nevertheless, there is a permanent principle in the Deuteronomic judgments. God, as Lord of history, never judges nations that grossly break his laws using Assyria as his rod (Isaiah 10:5), Nebuchadnezzar as his servant (Jeremiah 25:9), or the legions of Rome as the messengers of his judgment (Luke 21:22; Matthew 22:7).

b. To God who blesses and gives victory (7:6-26). God calls Israel "holy" - separated and sanctified, a "special people" and "a people for his own possession" (see Titus 2:14). The cause of God's choice is to be found in his love (see Romans 5:6, 8, and 1 John 4:10). The result of his choice is the deliverance from Egypt, which demonstrates his faithfulness and love (8-9). In verses 12 to 15, the promises of blessing flow like a river over a faithful and obedient people.

The fact that God blesses his obedient and believing people is on every page of Scripture. It is natural that this should be manifest in nations in a visible and material way. In the case of the individual, the material blessing is often withheld so that greater and more abiding blessing may be given, as with the best and most beloved of all, Christ himself. Providing this is borne in mind, Deuteronomy's message is authentic and eternal.

The remainder of the chapter is taken up with the power of God to make his people victorious. Once the victory is gained, there must be no compromise with the evil overthrown (7:16, 24-26). The Canaanites will perish because of their abominations. The same fate will overtake Israel if there is any yielding to evil (7:25-26).

4. *The Danger of Forgetting Them* (8:1-20)

The basis of all the blessings which God has in store for Israel is his commandments. In order to keep this firmly in mind it is necessary to remember the lessons of the past.

a. Remember the lessons of divine discipline (8:1-6). God prepares us for his blessings. No one can stand success without the necessary divine training. Many of us would be more successful if we would submit to the necessary apprenticeship.

The discipline was good. It humbled, and it tested showed the real motives of the heart (8:2). But, chiefly, God humbled his people by making them dependent on his commands and his promises. The chief thing in life is to be rightly related to the Giver of food for soul and body (see Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4).

b. Remember the Giver of the land (8:7-20). It is human nature to move from scarcity to plenty with initial gratitude, which, after a time, gives place to a spirit of self-congratulation, complacency, and sometimes arrogant rebellion. This tendency is exposed in these verses, and safeguards are indicated. Happy, the person who can balance a full stomach with a thankful and lowly heart.

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Moses' prescription for the prevention of apostasy [uh-PAA-stuh-see] is to remember the Lord in the keeping of his commandments; to keep ever in mind his deliverance from Egypt, his guidance and protection and provision in the wilderness, and that behind all power to get wealth lies his ability (8:11, 14-18). Finally, apostasy to the false gods will bring on Israel the fate of the nations they dispossessed (8:19-20).

5. *The Divine Grace Behind Them* (9:1-10: 11)

Here, we see God's covenant with Israel, based on the Ten Commandments and rooted in divine grace.

a. *A warning against self-righteousness* (9:1-6). In 7:17-24, Moses encourages fearful people. Here he follows the assurance of the Lord's victory over the Canaanites with a warning against pride when once the apparently impossible task has been accomplished.

b. *A rehearsal of Israel's rebellion* (9:7-29). Most attention is given to the disgraceful apostasy of the golden calf at the very time of the establishment of the covenant (8-21; see Exodus 32-33). Moses reminds the people of his intercession on their behalf. The substance of Moses' intercession is that Israel is the Lord's people and heritage - an appeal to his love; that He has promised the land to the patriarchs - an appeal to his faithfulness (9:27); and that the Egyptians would misunderstand his action - an appeal to the honor of his name (9:28).

The other incidents to which Moses refers are at Taberah (Burning), where the people murmured (Numbers 11:1-3); Massah (Temptation, Trial; note 6:16); Kibroth-hattaavah (the Graves of Lust), where the people lusted for flesh (Numbers 11:4-35); and Kadesh-Barnea (see 1:19-46).

c. *God's renewal of the commandments* (10:1-11). It appears that the Lord supplied the first tables of stone for the covenant (Exodus 24:12). After the Israelites had broken the covenant, they, through Moses, were called upon to supply the tables for the renewal (10:1). The "ark of wood" refers either to the ark later made by Bezaleel [BEH-za-leel] (Exodus 37:1) or to a temporary one made until the permanent one was ready.

The next four verses are in the form of a historical insertion, though they bear directly on the context.

6. *Closing Exhortation* (10:12 - 11:32)

The section (5:1 - 11:32) reaches its climax in this magnificent exhortation.

a. *God's requirements* (10:12-22). "What does the LORD your God ask of you?" (10:12) Both Moses and Micah asked this question. Micah answered it in terms of justice, mercy, and humble piety (Micah 6:8). Moses puts supreme emphasis on the relationship to God. A total response is demanded, and five things are required:

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(1) "fear," awe at his deity;
(2) "walk," activity in his ways;
(3) "love," personal affection;
(4) "serve," dedication to his service;
(5) "keep" observance of his commandments.

This will result in good for ourselves and others. God's commandments lead to personal and social well-being. "He is your praise" (10:21), either "the Object of your praise" or "your honor and glory." The exhortation closes with an appeal to history and experience (10:22).

b. *Manifestations of God's power* (11:1-7). Genuine love and obedience go together (11:1). And Israel had good cause to both love and obey the One who had demonstrated his love in "miracles" and "acts" (11:3). "Chastisement" (11:2) has the meaning of both education and correction.

c. *Blessing and cursing* (11:8-32). The theme that runs throughout the book is prominent at the close of this section: obedience brings blessing, and disobedience brings a curse (see chapter 28). "Irrigated it by foot" (11:10) may refer to the channeling of water with the foot or the use of the foot in working irrigation machinery. Canaan, with its hills in contrast to Egypt's plains, has abundant rainfall.

In order to enforce the alternative of blessing and cursing, a natural drama was to be enacted, with Mount Gerizim [GER-ee-zim] representing blessing and Mount Ebal [EE-bal] the curse (11:29; see 27:11-26). They would be clearly visible from where Moses spoke, occupying a central position in the land “over against Gilgal” [GIL-gal] - probably not the Gilgal near Jericho but in the vicinity of Shechem [SHECK-um] "beside the oaks of Moreh" (11:26). Here God had said to Abraham, "To your offspring, I will give this land." (Genesis 12:7)

C. Other Commandments (12:1 - 26:19)

The second division of the main section of the book deals with the other commandments which, with the Decalogue [DEK-uh-log], made up the body of laws for the land.

1. *Laws Concerning Religion* (12:1 - 16:17)

At the head of these laws are the regulations concerning the central sanctuary.

a. *The central sanctuary* (12:1-32). All trace of Canaanitish worship was to be obliterated, including the "groves of Asherah poles" (see 7:5) and the "pillars of sacred stone" (12:3); Mazzebah, literally something "set up." It is possible that the pillar represented the male deity and the grove (Hebrew Asherah) the female deity.

"You must not worship the LORD your God" (12:4). Obviously, this refers to the multiplication

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of shrines by the Canaanites, as the following verse makes clear.

"Seek the place which the LORD will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there, for his dwelling" (12:5). To this place "burnt offerings" and "sacrifices" (Leviticus 1-7), "tithes" (see 14:22-29), "special heave offerings" (terumah, the priest's portion of sacrifices, Exodus 29:27-28; Leviticus 7:14, 32;), "vows" ("votive offerings), "and firstborn of your herds and flocks" (Exodus 13:12-13) were to be brought.

Ever since the deliverance from Egypt the nation had been a unit under the leadership of Moses. Now, the leader is to be taken away; the land is to be entered and conquered, leaving the Israelite women and children on the eastern side of the Jordan. "But you will cross the Jordan ... and He will give you rest from all your enemies around you" (12:10), and "then to the place" (12:11) - the center of worship and also a court of appeal and a place of guidance. This had been in mind from the beginning in the earliest days of the covenant. In its primary forms, it had envisaged the appearance of every male before the Lord three times a year, at the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17; 34:18-3). Now, on the eve of entering the land, the provision is made explicit.

The occasions of the visits were to be festivals of social fellowship and joy. They would also safeguard against apostasy to false gods. The chief peril of the Israelites was that they might lapse into the practices of the Canaanites, use their shrines, build altars in their localities, and worship the Lord or even the local Baal with the rites of the Canaanites (see 12:29-31). Therefore, regular sacrificial worship was confined to the central sanctuary (12:13-14).

Previously, all slaughter of beasts for food had been done at the Tabernacle. Now, the regulation was relaxed, and the slaughter of beasts purely for food, not as an act of sacrifice (12:17-18, 26-28), was secularized. The only restriction was that the blood must not be eaten, for it belonged to God and normally was offered to him on the altar. But, so it would be offered on a heathen altar, the command was given for it to be poured out upon the earth. This had been the practice in the case of wild animals such as the "gazelle" and the "deer" (12:22) and also, as in such a case, the "clean and unclean" were permitted to eat of domestic animals so killed since they were not offered in sacrifice (12:15, 22).

How far did this law of the central sanctuary prohibit sacrifice elsewhere? It certainly prohibited the ordinary individual from erecting an altar according to one's inclination (12:13). But, while altars could not be erected according to the individual's inclination, an inspired prophet or authorized leader could erect one and use it in special circumstances. An altar could also be erected in the place of a theophany [thee-AA-fuh-nee] (a special appearance of God - see Judges 6:25-26; 13:15-20; 2 Samuel 24:17-18). There was also the time when the central sanctuary at Shiloh was destroyed, and Samuel sacrificed at different altars (1 Samuel 7:9; 9:12; 16:5), and the time of the divided kingdom when Elijah rebuilt an altar on Mount Carmel (2 Kings 18:30-31).

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b. *Apostasy* (13:1-18). This chapter deals with three cases of possible apostasy.

(1) Through a "prophet or a dreamer of dreams" (13:1-5). It is conceded in the text that it was possible for a false prophet to give "a sign or a wonder" which would be fulfilled, in other words, to do something that appeared to be supernatural or miraculous. The Lord would permit this to test his people's love and loyalty (13:3). The test that they were to apply to the prophet was not whether he could perform the spectacular but whether he adhered to the law of God (13:2). We may well take to heart this evidence of a true prophet (see Isaiah 8:19-20).

The false prophet or dreamer of dreams must be put to death because he is guilty of attempting to entice the people from their loyalty to their God and their Redeemer and to "thrust" them out of his way of life (13:5).

(2) Through a relative or friend (13:6-11). These verses deal with instances of seduction through natural affection. Note the intimacy of the relationships: "your very own brother" is a much closer relationship than the son of the same father but different mothers in the case of plural wives; "your closest friend." The prophet "says" (13:2), and the beloved associate "entices" (13:6).

If it is a choice between repudiating God or the most beloved associate, there must be no hesitation. God must be cleaved to (13:4), and the relative or friend exposed.

(3) Through "children of Belial" (13:13), that is, "sons of worthlessness." The term is used repeatedly in scripture for uncontrolled criminals, corrupt in word, thought, and action. There is no pretext in this case. It is disregard of God's requirements and embracing a religion that appeals to the worst aspects of one's character.

What is of particular interest in this case is the trustworthy care that must be exercised to establish beyond doubt that such an apostasy has taken place before the judgment is executed. We should be as rigorously fair to our brothers and sisters when gossip is circulated about them and refuse to believe anything detrimental to their character unless it is established beyond doubt.

Three reasons are given for taking drastic action with confirmed apostates. First, "You must purge the evil from among you." (13:5). Secondly, as a warning to others: "Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again." (13:11). Thirdly, "so that the Lord will turn from his fierce anger; He will show mercy, have compassion on you and increase your numbers" (13:17).

c. *Clean and unclean food* (14:1-21). The purpose of this section is indicated in the two opening verses. "You are the children of the LORD your God." (14:1). Because of this, practices inconsistent with such a privileged relationship must be shunned. The cutting of the flesh and the hair of the forehead in connection with the dead had heathen associations.

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The Israelites must not "eat any abominable thing" (14:3). In some cases, the animals listed were unfit for human consumption, and these may be regarded as dietary laws to safeguard the health of the Lord's people. In other cases, the reason for the prohibition is not readily apparent. In addition to the health reasons, the Jews regarded the keeping of the dietary laws as having two values. First, they separated them from the other nations and made manifest their elect character. Secondly, they gave an opportunity to exercise faith in and obedience to the divine statutes, which transcended human reasoning. In the New Testament dispensation, such laws no longer apply (Mark 7:19; Romans 14:14; 1 Timothy 4:4), though common sense in the care of the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) will dictate avoidance of harmful food.

d. *Tithes* (14:22-29). The regulations for tithing in these verses are plain and straightforward. Each year, the increase of the seed sown in the fields was to be tithed by the Israelites; that is, a tenth of it was set aside for a special purpose. This, with the firstborn of the herds and the flocks, had to be taken to the central sanctuary and be eaten in a religious feast "before" the Lord (14:23). If the central sanctuary was too far from the home of the tither, one was permitted to sell a tenth of the produce and the firstborn of the herds and flocks and with the money purchase whatever he desired for the feast at the central sanctuary. In this feast, the Levites had a share (14:24-27).

Every third year, the tithe and firstborn of the herds and flocks were to be laid up within the gates of the tither to provide a feast for the Levite "and the aliens and the fatherless and the widows" (14:28-29).

Since every seventh year, the ground was allowed to lie uncultivated (Leviticus 25:1-7), there would be no tithing during that year.

In Numbers 18:21, 24, it is clearly stated that the Levites should receive the tithe from their brother Israelites. The question arises: how can the regulations of Deuteronomy be reconciled with this statement? Broadly speaking, there are two views. Some think that the regulations in Deuteronomy refer to the official presentation of the tithe, which takes place in a ceremonial feast that the tither and his family share with the Levite. This takes place in the tither's locality every third year, and the alien, the fatherless, and the widow share in the feast, too. On each occasion, the Levite retains the bulk of the tithe, which remains after the religious feast.

The Jewish view is that the provisions in these verses refer to a second tithe over and above the first tithe, which was given in full to the Levite according to Numbers 18:21, 24. This is not only a theoretical opinion of the passage but has been a practice among the Jews.

e. *Release for debtors* (15:1-11). The word translated "cancel" (15:2) means to remit a debt, as here, or to let ground lie fallow, as in Exodus 23:11, both of which were commanded for the seventh year.

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The remission of debts on this occasion was limited to the fellow Israelite, "fellow Israelite," and "brother" (152).

The context of these verses is the conditions of an agricultural community in which debt is incurred because of poverty. It does not apply to a commercial nation where credit is an essential part of the economy. When conditions changed, in the first century A.D., the Jewish religious leader Hillel [HI-lel] modified the regulations here to apply to a commercial community.

Two characteristics of Deuteronomy are present in these verses: a concern for the poor and an emphasis on the attitude of the heart. "Be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy." (15:11). If one's hand is shut, it is a sign that one's heart is hard.

f. *Release for slaves* (15:12-18). Slavery was a part of that contemporary environment, but the Mosaic legislation modified its harshness and saw to its termination on generous terms. The woman slave is included as well as the man. After serving six years, the slave must be discharged in the seventh. According to verse 14, with gifts from the master's "flock," "floor," and "winepress," the discharged slave would be able to commence life anew with sufficient supplies to be independent. But, provision is made for the slave to remain if wishing to do so. In such a case, on confession of love for the master and the household, such slaves receive the mark of lifelong love-slavery at the threshold of the master's house.

g. *The firstborn* (15:19-23). It is here emphasized that the firstborn males of the herd and flock must be dedicated to the Lord to be used according to his commandment. There must be no tampering with the dedication by using the firstborn bullock in the work of the farm nor by taking the wool of the firstborn sheep for the use of the household. If there is any blemish in the firstborn animal, it must be treated as ordinary livestock.

h. *The national gatherings* (16:1-17). The feasts described in this chapter are the three feasts that were to be celebrated at the central sanctuary when Israel was settled in the land.

(1) The Passover and feast of unleavened bread (15:1-8). The word "Abib" means "the green ears of corn." The name for the month after the exile was "Nisan." It is equivalent to March-April in our calendar. The reference to the "flock and the herd" (15:2) is probably to the lamb or the kid goat for the Passover sacrifice and the bullocks for the festival sacrifice (see Numbers 28:16-19).

The Passover is to be eaten with unleavened bread reminiscent of the affliction of Egyptian slavery and the haste with which they left the land (15:3). For the significance of the Passover for a Christian, see 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

(2) The feast of weeks (15:9-12). This is to be held seven weeks (50 days, hence the Greek word "Pentecost" or "fifty") after the beginning of the barley harvest. It was to be a time of grateful, joyous, and compassionate giving.

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(3) The Feast of Tabernacles (15:13-15). This celebrated the final ingathering, not only of the harvest of barley and wheat but of the vineyards and the fruit trees (15:13).

2. *Laws Concerning Government* (16:18 - 21:23)

From religious laws, the theme of the book passes on to laws concerning government.

a. Officials (16: 18-18: 22)

(1) Judges (16:18 - 17:7). Provision is made for judges and officers (see 1:15) to be appointed in the various localities of the land. Here special emphasis is laid on refusing bribes, the greatest evil in corrupting the administration of justice. One must aim at justice, justice, justice (16:20). The command to appoint judges is followed by three cases of religious offenses. The first is a prohibition to "set up any wooden Asherah pole (see 7:5) beside the altar of the Lord nor to "erect a sacred stone" (16:21-22, see 12:3). The second religious offense mentioned is the sacrificing of any animal to the Lord with any defect (17:1; see 15:19-23). The third is the case of apostasy (17:2-7).

(2) The Supreme Court (17:8-13). In the event of the local judges being unable to come to a decision, they must go to the central sanctuary (17:8). There, the Levitical priests (see 18:1) and "the judge" (the chief judge, for example, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel) would try the case and give a verdict in keeping with the law (see 2 Chronicles 19:5-11).

(3) The king (17:14-20). The monarchy is treated as a permitted institution but not commanded, a concession to the people's desire to be like the nations around them. The king must avoid the vices of the oriental monarchs: love of power, women, and wealth (17:16-17).

(4) Priests and Levites (18:1-8). The priests and Levites are considered next in the list of officials responsible for administering the law (16:18 - 18:22). Although primarily a religious functionary, the priest also had legal responsibilities. The modern distinction between sacred and secular was foreign to the ancient Israelites; the whole of life was regarded as God's. This explains the ease with which the book moves from religious to civil and back again.

The phrase, "The priests, the Levites, indeed the whole tribe of Levi" (18:1), simply means: "All Levites who are priests and all other Levites who are not priests." There are no grounds for supposing, as do some modern scholars followed by some modern translators, that all Levites were priests. Leviticus 1:5 clearly distinguishes the two, as does this passage in legislating separately for their needs (18:3-5 and then 6-8).

The purpose of this passage is to provide for the material support of the priests and the entire tribe of Levi, which, since it was dedicated to the service of God, was apportioned no territorial area of Palestine as were the other tribes but was given the

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Lord for its inheritance. What this meant in practice was that they should share in the offerings made to the Lord (18:1). Having laid down the general principle (18:1-2), the author defines in turn the respective shares of the priests and the Levites (18:3-8). It is significant that as early as this in the history of God's people, provision should be made for the support of his ministers. Paul appeals to this principle in 1 Corinthians 9:8-18.

(5) The prophet (18:9-22). A crucial question throughout the history of religion has been, "How may the will of God be known?" It was important that it be answered for the Israelites before they entered Canaan for there they would find many other answers which did not agree with their faith in Yahweh. Against this background, three points are made:

(a) They are not to be guided on this point by current Canaanite practice (18:9-14), which included everything from child sacrifice (18:10) to necromancy (communicating with the dead). God will guide clearly, not through the mutterings of wizards.

(b) God will give his guidance through his servants, the prophets (18:15-19). Moses is but the first of a succession of prophets (see 18:20-22), whose task is to be the mouthpiece of God (18:18). However, the fulness of God's revelation will be given through the Greatest of all prophets for whom Israel looked from that time forward (see John 1:21; 7:40) and found in Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 3:22-23).

(c) They must be on their guard against false prophets (18:20). One test for discovering false prophets has already been given: no prophet is true who tries to lead Israel after other gods (13:1-5). A further test is given here: no prophet is true whose predictions do not come to pass (18:21-22).

b. *Laws for nation and family* (19:1-21: 23). From dealing with the administrators of justice, the author now turns to the laws themselves. These are of two kinds: "statutes" or direct commands ("You shall/ shall not ...") and "judgments" or case laws ("If a person ..."). Both were common in the ancient Near East.

(1) Justice for the defenseless (19:1-21). The three examples given, though of unequal length, are of equal importance and reflect the needs and standards of an early society.

(a) Justice for the unintentional killer (191-13). In ancient Israel, as in other primitive societies, the right of blood revenge lay with the kin of the deceased. This was not designed to encourage vengeance but to safeguard the sanctity of life, and the present law is concerned not with abolishing it (see 19:12) but with preventing unjust applications of it. Chief among these was the possibility that an outraged relative might exact retribution from an unintentional killer (19:4-6).

To guard against this, places of refuge were appointed where the killer might find

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sanctuary until the case could be investigated. In the earliest times the altar was such a place (Exodus 21:14). But, in the changed circumstances of Canaan, in which one could be far from the central altar (see 19:6), further provision was needed. This God had promised (Numbers 35:9-29) and partly provided (4:41-43). Orders are now given for three more cities of refuge (19:2, 3, 7) with the possibility of a further three (19:8). To the willful murderer, however, they afford no protection (19:11-13), although to demonstrate that in such cases justice is being done the criminal must be handed over for execution by the elders of his own city (19:12).

(b) Justice for the landowner (19:14). In a society in which wealth was based on land ownership, it was important, especially for the poor, that possession should be guaranteed. This was done by the use of marking stones on which the boundaries of the property were inscribed. To remove these was to undermine an owner's claim and livelihood; hence, it was forbidden.

(c) Justice for the accused (19:15-21). The purpose of the requirement of two witnesses (17:6; 19:15) could be defeated by perjury. Convicted perjurers are, therefore, to receive the punishment they sought to bring on their intended victim (19:16-19).

(2) Justice and war (20:1-20). Justice is to characterize Israel's treatment of her enemies. Yahweh fights Israel's battles (20:4), and therefore, He lays down the rules for the conduct of war. The whole idea of the "holy war" is expounded in this chapter.

(a) The presence of God in battle and its implications (20:1-9). Israel's lack of sophisticated weapons such as horses and chariots should not strike terror into her; the presence of Yahweh will more than compensate for it (20:1-4). As proof of this, and also out of justice, certain classes of people are exempted from military service: in principle, those who have undertaken certain responsibilities and have not yet enjoyed the privileges accruing from them (20:5-7), plus those who are fearful (20:8).

(b) Rules for the conduct of war (20:10-20). A distinction is made between the treatment meted out to "the cities which are at a distance from you" (20:15) and "the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you" (20:16). The former is to be offered the option of peace on condition that they become tributary to Israel (20:10-11). If they reject it, they are to be overthrown, although the ban is to be executed against men only (20:13-15). The Canaanites, on the other hand, are to receive no such consideration but are to be totally destroyed as a menace to the preservation of Israel's faith (20:16-18; also 7:1-6). A final law forbids the destruction of fruit-bearing trees, a common policy among invaders, on the ground that everything that supports human life should be preserved.

(3) Justice in nation and family (21:1-23).

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(a) In the case of unknown murderers (21:1-9). Since the shedding of innocent blood must be requited (Genesis 4:10; Numbers 35:33), victims of unknown murderers presented a problem. It then became the responsibility of the nearest city to kill an unused heifer in an area unused by people and so secure forgiveness for the people.

(b) In cases of marriage with captive women (21:10-14). Such women must be treated with respect. First, they must formally break with heathenism, symbolized by shaving the head, trimming their nails, and putting off the captive's clothes. Second, they must be allowed a month to adjust to their new surroundings. If later their husbands ceased to like them, they were not to be returned to the slave status from which marriage to the conqueror had released them.

(c) In cases of unwanted heirs (21:15-17). Polygamy produces strife, and dislike of the mother of his firstborn might prompt a father to seek to transfer the right of primogeniture, which carried with it a double share of the inheritance (21:17). This was forbidden.

(d) In the case of wicked sons (21:18-21). Even here, paternal rights of punishment were limited. If family discipline proved ineffective, then help was sought from the authorities, the elders meeting in the gateway of the city, who alone could pass the death sentence. In Israel, in contrast to the rest of the ancient Near East, this was imposed for offenses against the purity of worship, the sanctity of life, and illicit sexual relationships.

(e) In cases of hanging executed criminals (21:22-23). Hanging was not a means of execution but a sign of disgrace, a public declaration that the criminal had broken the covenant law of God and was therefore cursed (Numbers 25:4; 2 Samuel 4: 12). Since the land was regarded as being defiled by the display of cursed corpses, they were not allowed to remain hanging all night (21:23). For the Christian application of these ideas see Galatians 3:13; John 19:31.

3. Laws Concerning the Covenant Community (22:1 - 25:19)

This section of Deuteronomy is concerned with the practicing of righteousness within the bounds of the covenant community and among its members.

a. The community and divine institutions (22:1-20). Society is based upon certain divine institutions which must be recognized and respected.

(1) The basis of obedience - love (22:1-4). Laws are largely useless where the law-abiding spirit is absent. The laws in these verses deal with situations where there are no witnesses; the honesty of the individual concerned is the only safeguard. This is but another way of stating the message of the entire book: that religion and law are one, and the ignoring of the former leads to the breakdown of the latter.

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(2) The covenant and the order of nature (22:5-12). The natural world must be used in accordance with the laws of its Maker. This is the principle that is illustrated by the examples in verses 5-11, which seem to refer to heathen abuses of nature. Thus, the wearing by one sex of articles peculiar to the other is forbidden as a blurring of the distinction between the sexes, which, in pagan practice, led to gross immorality. The command to spare the mother bird (22:6-7) may be to safeguard the balance of nature. Verse 8 underlines the high value placed upon human life. Verses 9-11 forbid practices which probably had fertility significance in pagan rites. The wearing of fringes or tassels on the four borders of the outer garment is a sign of submission to the rule of God (see Numbers 15:37-41).

(3) The covenant and the institution of marriage (22:13-30). The divinely ordained boundaries extend to marriage. Various transgressions of these are considered here. The first law relates to a bride whose husband has tired of her and seeks to divorce her by accusing her of premarital relations (22:13-21). If evidence was produced at the trial that proved the bride's innocence, the husband was flogged, fined, and deprived of his right to divorce. If, however, the charge was true, the woman was stoned.

The second law relates to adultery, the penalty for which was death for both parties (22:22). The next three laws relate to the seduction of unmarried girls (22:23-29). Betrothed virgins are treated separately (22:23-27) because betrothal was equivalent to marriage since the bride price was already paid. (See 22:24, where the virgin girl is referred to as "another man's wife"; and Matthew 1:20.) The touchstone of the woman's guilt or innocence was whether she had called for help if it was available. The seducer of an unengaged virgin must pay the bride price, marry her, and never divorce her (22:28-29).

The final law forbids the taking of a stepmother as a wife (22:30). Such unions were common as late as the time of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 22:10), probably because such intercourse was regarded as proof of the right to inherit the father's property (2 Samuel 3:7; 16:22).

b. *Righteousness and the covenant congregation* (23:1-18). Righteousness is now shown to regulate entry into and conduct in the covenant community.

(1) Membership in the congregation (23:1-8). The basic principle is that God demands the perfection of his people. Various categories are excluded permanently: those who are physically maimed (23:1) because such mutilations were part of pagan worship; offspring of incestuous marriages (23:2); and the Ammonites and Moabites [MOW-uh-byts] because of their unfriendly treatment of the Israelites in the wilderness. The Edomites [EE-duh-myts] and Egyptians are to be excluded only to the second generation (23:8); the former because although they displayed hostility (for example, Numbers 20:18-1), they are their kin; the latter because, despite their enslavement of the Israelites, they saved the family of Jacob in a time of famine (Genesis 48:1).

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(2) The purity of the camp (23:9-14). The camp itself must be holy. Provision must be made outside the camp for the necessities of nature (23:10-13). Besides their sanitary value, these laws also secured a decency consonant with the presence of Yahweh.

(3) Two examples (23:15-18). The righteousness of the congregation is illustrated in the treatment of runaway slaves (23:15-16) and the banning of prostitution. Escaped slaves are to remain free. Prostitution, male or female, which was a leading feature of pagan worship, was to find no place in Israel.

c. *Righteousness and the covenant members* (23:19 - 25:19). Righteousness must also govern the treatment of fellow members of the congregation. Various groups are now considered.

(1) Neighbors (23:19-25). No Israelite may act in such a way as would threaten the ruin of a fellow Israelite. Hence the taking of interest upon loans is forbidden (23:19-20). The same spirit must dictate conduct when passing through the fields of others: hunger may be satisfied but not greed (23:24-25). Sandwiched between these laws is the law of vows (23:21-23). Even more than with their neighbor, the Israelites must keep covenant loyalty with God. No one was obliged to vow, but if one did, one must keep one's word.

(2) Wives (24:1-5). Verses 1-4 are a single sentence, verses 1-3 stating the conditions, and verse 4 the conclusion. Thus, this is not a general statement about divorce but a law restricting divorce in the particular case of a twice-divorced woman or widowed divorcee. The law is that she may not return to her first husband, the implication being that her second marriage has placed her in an adulterous relationship to him. Approval for divorce is not inferred here, only guidance in case it occurs.

(3) The needy (24:6-22). Special care must be taken of those unable to care for themselves. The laws in this section are concerned with three main themes:

(a) Goods given in pledge (24:6, 10-13, 17-18). While the taking of interest on loans was forbidden (23:19-20), the taking of security was not. Since the poor would possess only the necessities of life, laws were made to ensure that the taking of security would not threaten their existence. Thus, neither of the millstones used to grind corn must be taken (24:6), and if the outer garment was taken, it must be restored before nightfall since the peasant used it as a blanket (24:12-13, 17). Further, the choice of the pledge was to be made by the borrower, not the lender, who was therefore forbidden to enter the borrower's house (24:10-11).

(b) Security of the person (24:7-9, 16). The life of a fellow Israelite is not to be endangered by kidnapping (24:7) or careless behavior during epidemics of disease (24:8-9). The foundation of personal security is laid down in the principle of individual responsibility (24:16).

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(c) The care of the poor (24:14-15, 19-22). A poor servant is not to be kept waiting for his wages (24:14-15), and at harvest time, no field or olive tree or vineyard is to be stripped. Anything missed is to be left for the needy (24:19-22).

These laws are notable, not only for their concern to help the needy but to help them in a way that makes it easy for them to accept help. They remain individuals despite their poverty.

(4) The helpless (25:1-19). Situations are now considered in which individuals are largely or wholly at the mercy of others.

(a) Fair punishment for the guilty (25:1-4). Among the most vulnerable, then as now, are condemned prisoners. To avoid injustice, conditions were laid down for the administering of corporal punishment: it must be in the presence of the judge, proportionate to the crime, and the strokes must be counted to avoid excess. The prisoner, although guilty, must not be humiliated. Prisoners have rights even as a criminal (25:1-3). Verse 4 applies this principle to dumb animals guilty of no crime.

(b) Fair treatment for the dead (25:5-10). The practice described is known as Levirate marriage (from the Latin levir, husband's brother). In Israel, it probably arose from fear of extinction of a family line (Ruth 4:5, 10), the continuance of which was regarded as a form of immortality (the later understanding of personal immortality was not yet revealed). The obligation arose only if brothers shared a common household (25:5), but it could be repudiated, though this was regarded as shameful (25:8-10). Just as walking on land was the symbol of taking possession, losing the shoe indicated the opposite (Ruth 4:7).

(c) Fair treatment for the attacked (25:11-12). The forbidden act is not only grossly immodest but is an attack on the covenantal sign of circumcision.

(d) Fair weights and measures (25:13-16). Though set standards were fixed in the time of David (2 Samuel 14:26), the use of a heavyweight for buying and a light for selling was not unknown (Amos 8:5).

(e) Fair treatment for the Amalekites [uh-MAL-uh-kyts] (25:17-19). The Israelites were not to return evil for evil by unfair treatment of the Amalekites even though they had suffered at the hands of the Amalekites.

4. Two Liturgies for Acknowledging God as Covenant Lord (26:1-15)

The legal section of this document, containing the terms of the covenant between God and Israel, closes with two liturgies: rituals for services in which the people acknowledge God as their Benefactor and declare that they have observed the terms of the covenant.

a. A liturgy for the offering of first fruits (26:1-11). After their arrival in Canaan, the Israelites

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each year were to take the first fruits of their crops in a basket to present to the Lord. This would symbolize the fulfillment of God's promise (26:3; also 1:8). They would then recall his great deliverances: of Jacob (described as a Syrian because his mother was one and he lived there for many years) from famine in Canaan (Genesis 46); and of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Following the liturgy, there would be a feast (26:11).

b. *A liturgy after the distribution of tithes* (26:12-15). The tithes, used in the first and second years for sacred feasts (14:22-27), were given to the Levites and the poor in the third year (14:28-29). When this was done, the worshipper would appear before the Lord and affirm that he had obeyed the divine commandment. Verse 14 specifies three ways in which the tithe could be ritually polluted.

5. *Conclusion: Mutual Declarations of Loyalty* (26:16-19)

Now that the terms of the covenant have been read out in full, Israel commits herself to observe them, and God commits himself to accept Israel as his people. In short, this is the renewal of the covenant made at Sinai [SIE-nie] (Exodus 24:7).

This is the end of the main legal section of Deuteronomy (12:1 - 26:19), and it may be useful to make some observations on the arrangement of the laws. Very often, it is difficult to see why a particular law comes where it does, and it is easy to suggest a better place for it. For example, 19:14 has no context; 21:10-14; 23:9-15 would fit better in Chapter 20. No complete solution of the problem is known. However, it is known that covenants were brought up to date from time to time and that additions were made where there was space, whether the theme was similar or not. Again, the outdated laws were not necessarily removed. What we seem to have, then, is basically a Mosaic code that was modified and augmented to meet the needs of an ever-changing situation.

Torah [TAW-ruh]
Trinity [TRIN-uh-tee]
Canaanites [KAY-nuh-neitz]
Hittites [hi-TYTZ]
Jebusites [JEB-yew-sightz]
Girgashites [GIR-gash-ightz]
Hivites [HIV-ightz]
Beeroth [buh-EH-roth]
Perizzites [PER-iz-ightz]
apostasy [uh-PAA-stuh-see]
Bezaleel [BEH-za-leel]
Gerizim [GER-ee-zim]
Ebal [EE-bal]
Gilgal [GIL-gal]
Shechem [SHECK-um]
Decalogue [DEK-uh-log]
theophany [thee-AA-fuh-nee]

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Hillel [HI-lel]
Yahweh [YAH-way]
Moabites [MOW-uh-byts]
Edomites [EE-duh-myts]
Amalekites [uh-MAL-uh-kyts]
Sinai [SIE-nie]

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUDING ADDRESSES: THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT (27:1 - 30:20)

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Now that the terms of the covenant have been read in full, the next stage is its ceremonial acceptance by the people. Chapters 27-30 embody this ratification procedure.

A. The Ratification Ceremony (27:1-26)

A covenant imposed by a conqueror upon his vassal was usually renewed in two stages: the first before the overlord's death, the second after the accession of his successor. Chapter 27 seems to contain the ritual for this second stage. The order of parts in ancient treaties was not constant. Moses may have changed it here to enjoin obedience to God in days when he would no longer be leading God's people.

1. *The Ceremonial Writing of the Law* (27:1-8)

On entry into the Promised Land the Israelites are to write the covenant on large stones. This was common in the ancient world. The method described here was Egyptian and involved writing on a layer of stucco, which had been applied to the surface of the stone. This public writing of the covenant at the moment of Israel's arrival in Canaan signified the nation's acceptance of it as the rule of her life in her new land.

The offering of sacrifice (27:5-7) was a standard part of the covenant ratification procedure (see Genesis 15:9-18; Jeremiah 34:18). Since the altar was the place of making peace between God and people, nothing suggestive of violence was to be used in constructing it. It was to be made of whole, unhewn stones.

2. *A Solemn Reminder* (27:9-10)

In the middle of directions for the future comes the reminder that Israel is already God's people (27:9). Obedience is, therefore, a present as well as a future obligation (27:10).

3. *Blessings and Curses* (27:11-13)

Directions for the ratification ceremony are resumed. The blessings and curses are the sanctions of the covenant (11:26-28); their content is indicated in chapter 28. Joshua 8:30-35 indicates how the ceremony was carried out.

4. *The Covenant Oath* (27:14-26)

These verses represent a different ritual from that of the blessings and curses. Here, the Levites pronounce the curses, and there are no blessings. Ancient covenants contained a formal oath of obedience in which the vassal called down curses on himself if he broke the provisions of the treaty. This appears to be what we have here (Exodus 24:7; Joshua 24:15, 21). As the curses

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were read out, the people indicated their assent by responding with the Amen. (For biblical instances, see Numbers 5:22; 1 Kings 1:36; Nehemiah 5:13.)

All of the misdemeanors cursed here are outlawed elsewhere in the Pentateuch, though not in a single place. The striking thing about this group of sins is the note of secrecy, stated or implied. Such offenses might escape human eyes and evade human justice, but they would not evade the sight and justice of God.

B. The Covenant Sanctions (28:1-68)

Now that the second stage in the covenant ratification has been dealt with, Moses returns to the first: the submission of the people to God "today" (28:1) as he speaks to them in the plains of Moab. In thought, therefore, 28:1 is the sequel of 26:19 and 27:9-10. See also comments on 27:11-13. Two notable features of chapter 28 are that the blessings come first, whereas, in secular treaties, the order is reversed. The other is that the curses outnumber the blessings, probably because of Israel's tendency to go astray.

1. Blessings (28:1-14)

After a comprehensive series of beatitudes (28:3-6), the obedient nation is promised blessing in three specific areas: victory over enemies (28:7), material prosperity (28:8), and moral and spiritual well-being (28:9). These blessings are repeated in reverse order in 8:10-14.

2. Curses (28:15-68)

After the blessings came six groups of curses. The first (28:15-19) consists of the reversal of the blessings in verses 3-6. Then follow three cycles of curses (28:20-26, 28:27-37, and 28:38-48) on the pattern of the blessings of verses 28:7-14. Whereas the nation may be blessed militarily, materially, and
spiritually, she will be cursed in these same areas if she breaks the covenant. Next, the most dire of these curses military defeat - is taken up and expounded as a single curse (28:49-57).

The chapter ends with a warning curse summarizing all others (28:58-68). Whereas most of the earlier curses are indicative, the conditional is resumed here (28:15, 58) to remind Israel that these drastic results are not inevitable but will be unleashed only because of disobedience. The whole sequence is one of the most solemn and eloquent in Scripture and produces much of its effect through repetition.

This chapter is the most sustained exposition in the book of one of the central doctrines of Deuteronomy: that obedience brings prosperity and disobedience disaster. The author of the book was well aware that this was not always true, that sometimes obedience to God brought persecution. But, it is generally true - that in a world ordered by God, to live according to his order and will bring peace and vice versa (Matthew 6:33). This was the lesson the Israelites needed to be taught as they entered Canaan with all its temptations.

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C. The Covenant Oath (29:1 - 30:20)

Now that the covenant and its sanctions have been read, there remains the taking of the oath. To emphasize the solemnity of the oath the leading elements of the covenant are repeated in brief. Thus, 29:1-9 corresponds to the sanctions of 28:1-68, while 30:8, 10-14 allude to the stipulations of the covenant in 5:1 - 26:19, and 30:15-20 contains the summons to the oath and the invocation of witnesses to follow in 32:1-47. In these chapters, there is a strong note of exhortation, for Deuteronomy is not just a legal document but a "preached covenant."

1. Exhortation on the Basis of History (29:1-9)

Moses first exhorts Israel to renew the covenant with Yahweh on the basis of the blessings she has received in the past. Three are specified: the deliverance from Egypt (29:2-3), the miraculous provision in the wilderness (29:5-6), and victories over superior forces (29:7-8; see 2:30; 3:1).

2. The Parties to the Covenant (29:10-15)

The covenant is made not only with all living Israelites (29:10-11) but with those as yet unborn (29:14-5). The purpose of the covenant is stated in verse 13.

3. Exhortation on the Basis of the Covenant Sanctions (29:16-29)

The covenant is to be observed because of the dire consequences of disobedience. The chief threat to Israel would be idolatry (29:16-18). No one should imagine that the covenant ("curse") brings unconditional security (29:19). Such a person would merely be the source of infection for the whole nation, which would suffer the penalty of disobedience. This is depicted in a dramatic dialogue (29:22-28) between the Israelites of the future and foreign visitors for whom Israel has become a grisly tourist attraction, a second Sodom.

4. Obedience as a Cure for National Overthrow (30:1-10)

The tone is now unmistakably predictive. Exile is not a threat but a certainty (30:1). This passage looks beyond "the blessings and the curse" to the period of restoration. The future overthrow of the nation need not be final. If idolatry brings disaster, obedience will bring restoration. Even more, in the days to come, God will do an inward work in them to enable them to obey him. The covenant sign of physical circumcision will be succeeded by the spiritual circumcision of the new covenant whereby, from renewed and willing hearts, they will yield the voluntary obedience which He requires (30:6; see Ezekiel 36:26-28; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:10-11).

5. Summons to Decision (30:11-20)

The thought of that future obedience reminds the lawgiver that present obedience is his first concern, so he returns to the challenge to his present audience. For them also, obedience is

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possible. The will of God is neither obscure nor unknown; it is "very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it" (30:14).

Consequently, the time for exhortation is past. Now is the time for a decision. The alternatives are set forth bluntly - "declare" (30:18), and opportunity for free choice has been offered (30:19-20).

CHAPTER 5. THE PERPETUATION OF THE COVENANT (31:1 - 32:47)

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An important concern of an overlord was to ensure that, after his death, his vassals would remain faithful to his successor. In many covenant documents, therefore, directions were given for the succession, for placing a copy of the covenant in the Temple, and for the regular public reading of it. A list of witnesses guaranteeing the covenant was added, together with an account of what would happen if the vassal rebelled. Precisely, these elements are present in this final section of Deuteronomy and seem to indicate a renewal of God's covenant with Israel in view of the impending death of Moses.

A. Preparatory Safeguards (31:1-30)

1. *The Naming of a Successor* (31:1-8)

The death of Moses is certain. Age and sin have conspired to keep him out of the Promised Land (31:2). The Divine Overlord has named Joshua as his successor, though God himself will be their real Leader (31:3-8).

2. *Orders for the Regular Reading of the Covenant* (31:9-13)

Among the Hittites, to whose treaties Deuteronomy bears the closest resemblance, covenants were read publicly every one to three years. Israel's covenant is to be read every seven years (31:10; see 15:1; 16:13), when "all Israel" (women and children, not just men who were obliged to attend the annual feasts, 31:11-12) would be present to hear it. The responsibility for doing so is entrusted jointly to the religious and civil authorities (31:9).

3. *The Charge to Joshua and the Prediction of Israel's Faithlessness* (31:14-23)

Two themes are fused in these verses: the commissioning of Joshua and the writing of the Song of Moses. Already commissioned through Moses (31:7-8), Joshua is confirmed in his commission by the immediate presence of God (31:14-15). It is made plain to him that the nation will defect from following God (31:16-18), and together with Moses (31:19), he is charged to write a Song of Witness and teach it to the people. When Israel plays false the song will testify by its existence and contents that she is knowingly breaking her word (31:20-21).

4. *The Depositing of the Covenant Document with the Ark* (31:24-27)

It was customary for a copy of any covenant to be placed in the temples of the contracting parties. Israel's covenant is to be placed alongside the Ark of the Covenant, already so known because it contained the tables of the Sinai covenant.

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5. The Public Reading of the Song (31:28-30)

The song must be read publicly so that when in the future God punishes the Israelites for their disobedience (31:29), none will be able to plead ignorance as an excuse.

B. The Procedure for Impeachment (32:1-47)

The Song of Moses was written to fill the role of a witness of Yahweh's covenant with Israel (31:19-21). A further function was to outline the procedure for taking action against Israel if she rebelled. The standard way in which this was done in ancient treaties was to recast the covenant in the form of a lawsuit. The Song of Moses fuses these two elements of witness and lawsuit.

1. The Summons of Witnesses (32:1-3)

The procedure for bringing the rebellious people to trial begins with the summoning of the covenant witnesses to give evidence that the compact was legally made. As in some Hittite treaties, "heaven and earth" are included among these (see 31:28). Verses 2-3 affirm the rightness of the covenant.

2. Preliminary Statement of the Charge (32:4-6)

In contrast with the perfection of God, his people are sadly blemished (32:5). They have rejected the very Maker of the nation (32:6).

3. The Indictment in Detail (32:7-18)

The basic charge against Israel is ingratitude. As stated briefly in verses 4-6, the idea is now developed, verses 7-14 recounting God's goodness, and verses 15-18 Israel's ingratitude. From "the days of old," God provided for Israel by allotting her a place among the nations (32:8-9). In the wilderness wanderings, his eye was constantly upon her (32:10); "apple" should read "pupil"; since God watched her constantly, her image was reflected in the pupil of his eye). Finally, God brought her to the Promised Land (32:13-14).

Israel's response has been that of an unappreciative person. Jeshurun [JE-shur-uhn] (“the dear upright people” - another name for the people of Israel) has behaved like an overfed beast. Not content with ignoring Yahweh, Israel has turned to other gods and their abominations (32:16-17).

4. The Sentence (32:19-25)

The sentence now follows in two parts. In verses 19-21, the principle is emphasized. It is that of strict justice. They have hidden from God; He will hide from them (32:20). They have worshipped no-gods; He will provoke them with a no-people - invading barbarians who are a

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denial of everything civilized (32:21).

Verses 22-25 spell out the details of the sentence, the covenant curses (28:15-68). Like a hunter in hot pursuit, God will send his arrows upon them, sparing neither age nor sex.

5. The Promise of Mercy (32:26-43)

God's punishment of Israel will stop short of total destruction because the invading enemy might claim the glory for themselves (32:26-29). Neither their god (32:31) nor their moral superiority - for they are children of Sodom (32:32) could accomplish anything unless Yahweh had deserted Israel (32:30). Judgment hangs over their own heads (32:35).

Meanwhile Israel herself is saved at the eleventh hour. The ruin to which she has been brought by trusting false gods will expose the folly of her ways. Divine judgment upon her enemies and mercy to herself will restore her once more (32:36-43).

6. Moses' Exhortation (32:44-47)

Joshua was associated with Moses in both writing the song and teaching it to Israel (31:19). "Hoshea" [hoh-SHAY-ah] was his original name, which Moses changed to Joshua (Numbers 13:16). Moses exhorts all Israel to pay attention to the words of the song. Their life depends on it.

Jeshurun [JE-shur-uhn]
Hoshea [hoh-SHAY-ah]

CHAPTER 6. THE DEATH OF MOSES (32:48 - 34:12)

NOTES

With the Song of Witness, the treaty pattern in Deuteronomy comes to an end. However, the remaining chapters are more than an appendix. If Deuteronomy embodies the covenant between God and Israel, renewed in the plains of Moab in view of the impending death of Moses, then the death of Moses is tantamount to the activation of the covenant. The death of Moses and the succession of Joshua are proof that the nation is faithful to its words.

A. The Blessing of Moses (32:48 - 33:29)

1. The Impending Death of Moses (32:48-52)

The death of Moses is imminent. "On that same day" (32:48), he is summoned to Mount Nebo, the highest peak of the Abiram [ah-BEE-rahm] range, to die. First, however, he must view the Promised Land (see 34:1-4) although he was not then to enter it (see Matthew 17:1-2; Mark 9:2-3; Luke 9:30-31).

2. The Blessing of Moses: Introduction (33:1-5)

The blessing of their offspring by those about to die was commonplace in many ancient societies. It was also important because, where writing was used little, a spoken blessing had the validity of a last will and testament (see Genesis 27:34-38). The blessings here are placed in a framework that refers to Moses in the third person and, therefore, would have been added after his death.

The opening verses of the blessing are a poem in praise of the greatness and goodness of Yahweh, especially for his gift of the Law. The giving of the covenant through Moses (33:4) and its acceptance by Israel (33:5) was the recognition of God as Israel's king.

3. The Individual Blessings (33:6-25)

Blessings are now invoked on each of the tribes except Simeon, soon to be absorbed into Judah (Joshua 19:2-9). The number 12 is made up by counting Joseph as two (33:17). The tribes of the sons of Jacob's wives are blessed first, followed by the tribes of the sons of the handmaids.

The blessing upon Reuben is the prayer that the tribe will not be extinguished (33:6). The blessing upon Judah (33:7) seems to be a prophetic prayer that God will heal the breach between Judah and the northern tribes (1 Kings 12:16-20).

Levi is confirmed as the priestly tribe (33:10-11); for, although the Levites failed God at Massah [MASS-ah] and Meribah [MER-ee-bah] (33:8; see Exodus 17:1-7), they remained faithful during the episode of the golden calf, even at the expense of disowning their kinsmen (33:9; see Exodus 32:26-29).

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The sons of Rachel are blessed next. Benjamin is as beloved of Yahweh as he was of Jacob. "Shoulders" means "hills," and is a reference to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem within the boundaries of Benjamin (33:12).

Joseph's blessing is the longest. Verses 13-16 pray material prosperity upon him - "with the best gifts of the earth"; while verse 17 predicts military strength.

Zebulun and Issachar share the next blessing (33:18-19) the men of Zebulun as seafarers, Issachar in agriculture. "Treasures hidden in the sand" probably refers to the manufacture of glass known to have taken place in the sands of Accho [AK-oh].

The remaining blessings are upon the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, the handmaids of Leah and Rachel respectively. Gad is blessed (33:20-21) because of his military prowess, which he used for the nation as a whole even after his own inheritance had been secured (33:21). Dan has the capacity for sudden attack (33:22). Naphtali will possess the lake (Galilee, not the "west") and the south. The final blessing is upon Asher, who is to be rich in population, popularity, and wealth (33:24; to use oil on the feet is a sign of wealth). Strength is also promised (33:25).

These blessings show the qualities God desires in his people: worship (Levi), honest work (Zebulun and Issachar), selflessness (Gad), security (Benjamin), and strength (Asher). Not all had the same, but what was needed God provided.

4. The Blessing of Moses: Conclusion (33:26-29)

These verses look forward to the successful occupation of the land. The ground of this confidence is Israel's unique, incomparable God.

B. The Death of Moses and Succession of Joshua (34:1-12)

Chapter 34 records the fulfillment by Moses of the command received in 32:48-52. How long after the death of Moses it was written is uncertain; verses 10-12 imply that enough prophets had arisen since then to make a comparison possible.

1. The Death of Moses (34:1-8)

Before he dies, Moses is shown the Promised Land. From Mount Nebo, the highest point of the ridge (pisgah) of the mountains east of Jericho [JEHR-ee-koh], most of western Palestine is in sight as far as the Mediterranean [MED-uh-tuh-RAY-nee-un] ("the western sea"). In Hebrew thought the look was a symbol of acquisition (see Genesis 13:14). Moses is thus accepting ownership of the Promised Land on behalf of the entire people of Israel. This merely underlines the tragedy: he sees but will not possess it; he owns it legally but never actually.

NOTES

2. *The Succession of Joshua* (34:9-12)

Moses has gone, but there is no crisis of obedience. The leaders change, but God's work goes on (Joshua 1:1), even when the successor is not as great as his predecessor (34:10). The prophet "like Moses" (18:15-19) did not appear until centuries later when Jesus of Nazareth offered to his assembled followers the cup of the new covenant sealed in his own blood (Mark 14:23-24).

Abiram [ah-BEE-rahm]
Massah [MASS-ah]
Meribah [MER-ee-bah]
Accho [AK-oh]
Jericho [JEHR-ee-koh]
Mediterranean [MED-uh-tuh-RAY-nee-un]

NOTES

Deuteronomy Study Questions

Chapter 1: Introduction to Deuteronomy

1. The name of Deuteronomy comes to us from the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament and means:
   A. the fifth book
   B. the fifth law
   C. the second law
   D. the second history

2. What is true of the authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy?
   A. The book was mostly written by Joshua.
   B. The book was mostly written by Ezra.
   C. The view of conservative scholars is that Moses wrote most of this book.
   D. The book was mostly written by Samuel.

3. Deuteronomy is the fifth of five books that make up what is called
   A. the Torah
   B. the Law
   C. the Pentateuch
   D. all of these

4. What is true of most of the contents of the Book of Deuteronomy?
   A. speeches of Aaron
   B. speeches of Joshua
   C. speeches of Moses
   D. poems of Miriam

5. The structure and content of Deuteronomy conform to the pattern of treaties drawn up between a superpower or overlord and the vassal.
   A. true
   B. false

6. The purpose of Deuteronomy is to remind the old and inform the young concerning the covenant with the Lord and the laws which are a part of it.
   A. true
   B. false

7. Deuteronomy demands utter loyalty to the Lord and separation from all false gods and their worship.
   A. true
   B. false

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8. Deuteronomy contains an uncompromising insistence on justice.
   A. true
   B. false

9. What is true about the importance of Deuteronomy?
   A. It has abiding value.
   B. It played an important part in the development of Israel.
   C. Jesus quoted from it when He was tempted by Satan.
   D. all of these

10. What is true about Deuteronomy and holiness?
   A. Canaan is seen as a type of the Spirit-filled life.
   B. It teaches us that loyalty to God is the essence of true piety.
   C. It reminds us that a genuine religious experience is validated by righteous conduct.
   D. all of these

Chapter 2. The Introductory Address (1:1 - 4:43)

11. What is true about the time and place of the Book of Deuteronomy?
   A. Deuteronomy covers 50 years of wandering in the wilderness.
   B. The events of Deuteronomy were accomplished in a few weeks.
   C. The eleven-day journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea took almost 40 years.
   D. The places the Israelites traveled are not mentioned in Deuteronomy.

12. What is true about the Hebrew word “torah”?
   A. It means “law.”
   B. It may refer to moral guidance.
   C. It may refer to a body of religious teachings.
   D. all of these

13. The first address in Deuteronomy is mainly a historical review of Moses’ dealings with Israel.
   A. True
   B. False

14. The dominant theme which recurs throughout the Old Testament is: "I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore He would give to your fathers.
   A. True
   B. False

NOTES

15. Who first suggested that Moses appoint assistants?
    A. Aaron
    B. Miriam
    C. Jethro
    D. Joshua

16. Which tribes had representatives to spy on the promised land?
    A. Simeon, Reuben, Levi, and Joseph
    B. Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar and Gad
    C. Dan, Naphtali, Asher, Judah
    D. all of these

17. What is true about Israel's response to the spies' report?
    A. They refused to try to enter the promised land.
    B. They grumbled.
    C. They complained that God hated them.
    D. all of these

18. What is true about Moses' response to Israel's accusation against God?
    A. He spoke tenderly to them.
    B. He envisioned God as a Shepherd.
    C. He assured them of God's presence night and day.
    D. all of these

19. What is true of God's judgment on Israel for refusing to move on to the promised land?
    A. He was as displeased as when they made the golden calf.
    B. He considered them an evil generation.
    C. He condemned them for holding up His plans for them.
    D. all of these

20. Who were the exceptions to God's condemnation of Israel for refusing to move on to the promised land?
    A. Aaron and Miriam
    B. Moses and Jethro
    C. Joshua and Caleb
    D. James and John

21. What are some places that Israel was forbidden to annex?
    A. Edom
    B. Moab
    C. Ammon
    D. all of these

22. Sihon was the king of Bashan.
    A. True
    B. False

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23. Og was the king of Heshbon.
    A. True
    B. False

24. What is true of the tribes who possessed the land of the Amorites?
    A. a portion went to Reuben
    B. a portion went to Dan
    C. a portion went to the half tribe of Manasseh
    D. all of these

25. One tragedy in Deuteronomy is that Moses desired most to enter the land but found it barred against him by an uncharacteristic attitude of unbelief and act of folly on his part.
    A. True
    B. False

26. To keep God's word means life; to disobey means death.
    A. True
    B. False

27. Time and again in Deuteronomy Moses takes the nation back to the historic revelation of God in Egypt.
    A. True
    B. False

28. Among the nations in and around Canaan each place had its local god or baal.
    A. True
    B. False

29. What is true of the purpose and privilege of Israel being God's elect people?
    A. They would know the LORD is God.
    B. They would be disciplined in God's ways.
    C. They would honor God in their hearts.
    D. all of these

30. What is true of the purpose of the cities of refuse?
    A. They must be close to Jerusalem.
    B. There must be at least one in each tribal area.
    C. They must be readily accessible to the majority of the population.
    D. There should be one in the North and another in the South.

NOTES

Chapter 3. Main Address (4:44 - 26:19)

31. The main section of the book is devoted to _____.
    A. the life of Moses
    B. the life of the Israelites
    C. the law of God
    D. the law of Canaanites

32. The first of the 10 Commandments begins with the mention of the Divine Name (5:6). No other god is to intrude between the Lord and his redeemed people.
    A. True
    B. False

33. The second of the 10 Commandments teaches reverence and truth.
    A. True
    B. False

34. The fourth of the 10 Commandments relates to the keeping of the Sabbath day.
    A. True
    B. False

35. The fifth of the 10 Commandments is better translated: "You shall not murder."
    A. True
    B. False

36. The seventh of the 10 Commandments is "You shall not commit adultery."
    A. True
    B. False

37. The eighth of the 10 Commandments deals with the sin of the lips, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”
    A. True
    B. False

38. It is interesting to notice that in the "second giving of the law" all of the former supernatural phenomena were present.
    A. True
    B. False

39. What is true of the “Shema” presented in 6:4-5?
    A. It is the Hebrew term for “hear”.
    B. It is the creed of Judaism.
    C. It is not inconsistent with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.
    D. all of these

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40. What is true about the time Jesus asked for the first commandment in the Law?
    A. He quoted the Shema.
    B. He added, "Mind."
    C. He added Leviticus 19:18, "Love your neighbor as yourself."
    D. all of these

41. In Deuteronomy there is a recurring emphasis on the fact that the divine commandments are for human benefit.
    A. True
    B. False

42. Chapter 7 indicates the division which must come between Israel and the Canaanites because of the covenant with God.
    A. True
    B. False

43. God, as Lord of history, ever judges nations that grossly break his laws.
    A. True
    B. False

44. The basis of all the blessings that God has in store for Israel is his obligation as Ruler of the universe.
    A. True
    B. False

45. Both Moses and Micah ask the question: “What does the LORD your God ask of you?” What things are required?
    A. "fear" awe at his deity and "love" personal affection
    B. "walk" activity in his ways
    C. "serve" dedication to his service and "keep" observance of his commandments
    D. all of these

46. What is true of the theme that runs throughout Deuteronomy?
    A. Obedience brings a curse.
    B. Disobedience brings blessing.
    C. Obedience brings blessing, whereas disobedience brings a curse.
    D. none of these is true

47. What is true of the natural drama to be enacted to enforce the alternative of blessing and cursing?
    A. Mount Gerizim represented blessing.
    B. Mount Ebal represented the curse.
    C. These mountains would be clearly visible from where Moses spoke.
    D. all of these

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48. All traces of Canaanite worship were to be obliterated.
    A. True
    B. False

49. The false prophet or dreamer of dreams must be put to death because he is guilty of attempting to entice the people from their loyalty to their God.
    A. True
    B. False

50. Each week, the increase of the seed sown in the fields was to be tithed by the Israelites.
    A. True
    B. False

51. Every seventh year, the tithe and firstborn of the herds and flocks were to be laid up within the gates of the tither to provide a feast for the Levite "and the aliens and the fatherless and the widows."
    A. True
    B. False

52. What is true of the Passover celebration?
    A. It is to be eaten with unleavened bread.
    B. It is reminiscent of the affliction of the Egyptian slavery.
    C. It is reminiscent of the haste with which they left Egypt.
    D. all of these

53. What is true of the provision made for judges and officers in chapter 16?
    A. They should be appointed in the various localities of the land.
    B. They must refuse bribes.
    C. They must administer justice.
    D. all of these

54. Although primarily a religious functionary, the priest also had legal responsibilities.
    A. True
    B. False

55. God promised to give his guidance to Israel through his servants the prophets.
    A. True
    B. False

56. Society is based upon certain divine institutions which must be recognized and respected.
    A. True
    B. False

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57. Righteousness must also govern the treatment of fellow members of the congregation.
    A. True
    B. False

58. What is true of the practice of Levirate marriage in chapter 25?
    A. The term comes from the Latin levir, referring to “husband's brother.”
    B. It probably arose from fear of the extinction of a family line.
    C. It could be rejected, though this was regarded as shameful.
    D. all of these

59. What is true of the liturgy for the offering of first fruits (26:1-11)?
    A. Each year, the Israelites would take the first fruits of their crops in a basket to present to the Lord.
    B. It would symbolize the fulfillment of God's promise.
    C. They would recall God’s great deliverances.
    D. all of these

Chapter 4. Concluding Addresses (27:1 - 30:20)

60. What is true about covenants imposed by a conqueror upon his vassal?
    A. They were usually renewed in two stages.
    B. They were usually renewed before the overlord’s death
    C. They were usually renewed after the accession of his successor.
    D. all of these

61. . On entry into the Promised Land, the Israelites are to write the covenant on large boards.
    A. True
    B. False

62. Ancient covenants contained a formal oath of obedience in which the overlord called down curses on himself if he broke the provisions of the treaty.
    A. True
    B. False

63. None of the misdemeanors cursed in chapter 28 are outlawed elsewhere in the Pentateuch.
    A. True
    B. False

64. The covenant is to be observed because of the dire consequences of disobedience.
    A. True
    B. False

NOTES

Chapter 4. The Perpetuation of the Covenant (31:1 - 32:47)

65. An important concern of an overlord was to ensure that, after his death, his vassals would remain faithful to his successor.
    A. True
    B. False

66. What is true of the naming of Moses' successor in chapter 31?
    A. Age and sin would keep Moses out of the promised land.
    B. God named Joshua as Moses' successor.
    C. God himself will be their real Leader.
    D. all of these

67. What is true of the regular reading of the Covenant?
    A. The requirements in Deuteronomy bear the closest resemblance to the Hittites.
    B. Israel's covenant is to be read every seven years.
    C. The responsibility for doing so is entrusted jointly to the religious and civil authorities.
    D. all of these

68. The Song of Moses was written to fill the role of witness of Yahweh's covenant with Israel
    A. True
    B. False

69. In contrast with the perfection of God, his people are sadly blemished.
    A. True
    B. False

70. Miriam was associated with Moses in both writing the Song of Moses and teaching it to Israel.
    A. True
    B. False

Chapter 6. The Death of Moses (32:48 - 34:12)

71. If Deuteronomy embodies the covenant between God and Israel, then the death of Moses is tantamount to the activation of the covenant.
    A. True
    B. False

72. Moses never saw nor entered the Promised Land.
    A. True
    B. False

NOTES

73. What was important about Moses' blessing in chapter 33?
    A. The blessing of their offspring by those about to die was commonplace in many ancient societies.
    B. Where writing was used little, a spoken blessing had the validity of a last will and testament.
    C. It contains praise of the greatness and goodness of Yahweh, especially for his gift of the Law.
    D. all of these

74. Which tribe was to soon be absorbed into Judah?
    A. Reuben
    B. Levi
    C. Simeon
    D. Zebulun

75. What is significant about the succession of Joshua?
    A. Moses has gone, but there is no crisis of obedience.
    B. The leaders change, but God's work goes on.
    C. The successor is not as great as his predecessor.
    D. all of these

NOTES

Methods of Study

Have you enjoyed this study of the Book of Deuteronomy? Do you wish to study further? If so, here are a few more suggestions.

1. Compare the authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy to the other writings of the Pentateuch.

2. Compare the relationship of the Book of Deuteronomy to the other writings of the Pentateuch.

3. Compare the change of leadership expressed in 31:1-29 to that seen in the Book of Joshua.

4. Examine the "Song of Moses" in 31:30 – 32:47 to blessings and curses expressed elsewhere in the Pentateuch.

5. Compare the priesthood presented in the Book of Leviticus to that offered in the Book of Deuteronomy.

6. Compare the expression of the Great Commandment in the Book of Deuteronomy to that in the Gospels.

Allow God, our Leader, to even more fully guide your life as you study the Book of Deuteronomy!

Pronunciation Guide

NOTES

Abiram [ah-BEE-rahm]
Accho [AK-oh]
Amalekites [uh-MAL-uh-kyts]
Ammon [AEM-aan]
Ammonites [A-muh-nyts]
Amorite [AM-uh-riet]
Amorites [AM-uh-rietz]
Anakim [ah-nah-KEEM]
Anakim [AHNA-kim]
apostasy [uh-PAA-stuh-see]
Aqaba [AA-kuh-buh]
Arabah [AA-ruh-baa]
Arnon [AR-non]
Barnea [bruh-NAY-uh]
Bashan [bah-SHAN]
Beeroth [buh-EH-roth]
Bezaleel [BEH-za-leel]
Canaan [KAY-nun]
Canaanites [KAY-nuh-neitz]
Decalogue [DEK-uh-log]
Ebal [EE-bal]
Edom [EE-duhm]
Edomites [EE-duh-myts]
Edrei [ed-reh-EE]
Gerizim [GER-ee-zim]
Gilgal [GIL-gal]
Girgashites [GIR-gash-ightz]
Hazeroth [HAS-uh-roth]
Hillel [HI-lel]
Hittites [hi-TYTZ]
Hivites [HIV-ightz]
Horeb [HAW-ruhb]
Hoshea [hoh-SHAY-ah]
Jabbok [JAH-bahk]
Jebusites [JEB-yew-sightz]
Jericho [JEHR-ee-koh]
Jeshurun [JE-shur-uhn]
Jordan [JOHR-dihn]
Kadesh [kuh-DESH]
Laban [LAY-buhn]
Massah [MASS-ah]
Mediterranean [MED-uh-tuh-RAY-nee-un]
Mediterranean [MED-uh-tuh-RAY-nee-un]
Meribah [MER-ee-bah]

NOTES

Moab [MOW-ab]
Moabites [MOW-uh-byts]
Mosaic [mow·zay·uhk]
Negeb [NEH-gehb]
Og [ahg]
Paran [PAY-ruhn]
Pentateuch [PEN-tuh-tewk]
Perizzites [PER-iz-ightz]
Pisgah's [pis-GAWZ]
sanctification [sank-tuh-fi-KAY-shuhn]
Shechem [SHECK-um]
Shema [she-MAH]
Shephelah [SHEF-ee-luh]
Sihon [SY-hahn]
Sinai [SIE-nie]
theophany [thee-AA-fuh-nee]
Tophel [TOH-fuhl]
torah [TAW-ruh]
Torah [TAW-ruh]
Trinity [TRIN-uh-tee]
Yahweh [YAH-way]

This recital of the Ten Commandments should be compared with that in Exodus 20:1-17.